INFORMATION TO USERS

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

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

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

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

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

UMI
University Microfilms International
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700  800/521-0500
The new school: Creating a role for the architect in America's urban landscape

Jenkins, John Michael, M.Arch.
Rice University, 1994
THE NEW SCHOOL:
CREATING A ROLE FOR THE ARCHITECT IN AMERICA'S URBAN LANDSCAPE

by

JOHN M. JENKINS

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

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE

Mark Wamble, Assistant Professor,
School of Architecture, Director

Lars Lerup, Dean
School of Architecture

Albert Pope, Professor
School of Architecture

Houston, Texas
May, 1994
ABSTRACT

THE NEW SCHOOL:
CREATING A ROLE FOR THE ARCHITECT IN AMERICA'S URBAN LANDSCAPE

by

JOHN M. JENKINS

This thesis looks for ways that architects can reassert their presence in America's urban centers. Through a series of investigations, the research phase examines both the architectural semiotics of the late 20th Century city and the languages of the streets, particularly rap music. The architect's role in the upper-class's current sociological agenda is called into question. The design phase proposes a new direction for architectural input by seeking out ways to empower the architect and, through him, establish a level of social equality. By acting on his own agenda, the architect attempts to restore importance to the downtown area and all of its inhabitants.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank:

MARK WAMBLE, for being a dedicated and supportive advisor. When everyone else thought I was nuts, you saw some shred of logic to my thinking and encouraged me to press on. Your open-mindedness and creativity are inspirational; I couldn't have done this without you.

MY QG CLASS (known to the rest of the school as the SLACKER STUDIO), for putting up with four years of Prince and Madonna at 3 a.m. You're like a family to me and I will miss most of you (you know who you are).

ANDY TODD, for tossing me in with the rest of the inmates. Your criticism rang the truest (and we both know it).

KATHLEEN ROBERTS, for keeping my $#! together for four years. Kathleen for Dean!!!

RICHARD INGERSOLL, for not asking "the question" during my final review. Thanks!

My family, ANN JENKINS, BOB JENKINS, and JACK JENKINS, for your love and support (spiritually as well as financially). Bonus gracias for Mom's pep talks.

Finally, the soon-to-be Mrs. Jenkins, BETH TOLLE, for your love, patience, support and courage to tell me when the B.S. was getting too deep... I love you.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE i
ABSTRACT ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS iv

RESEARCH PHASE

INVESTIGATION ONE
THE ROLE OF ARCHITECTURE IN THE LATE-20TH CENTURY CITY 1
INVESTIGATION TWO
FIGHTING BACK: MARGINS ON THE OFFENSIVE 6
INVESTIGATION THREE
AN ANALYTICAL VIEW OF RAP 11
INVESTIGATION FOUR
INDEX OF RAP WORDS AND PHRASES 30
CONCLUSIONS
THE IMPORTANCE OF DOWNTOWN 35

INVESTIGATION FIVE
ARCHITECTURE: AN ELITIST PROFESSION? 37
CONCLUSIONS
THE ARCHITECT AS AGENT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE 42

SUMMARY 46

DESIGN PHASE

INTRODUCTION
DESIGN POSITIONS 49
FOUNDATION 50
THE PROJECT 51
SITE SELECTION AND STUDENT POPULATION 52
FUNDING CONCERNS 53
SCHOOL ORGANIZATION 54

COLLAGE STUDY
DEGREES OF PROXIMITY AND INTERACTION 60

COLLAGE STUDY
STUDENTS IN DOWNTOWN HOUSTON 64
MAPPING EXERCISE 67
PHOTO ESSAY
LOCKERS IN THE CITY 76
URBAN FURNITURE AND INSTALLATIONS 84

FINAL JURY NOTES 91
BIBLIOGRAPHY 92
APPENDIX 94
INVESTIGATION ONE

THE ROLE OF ARCHITECTURE IN THE LATE 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN CITY

The contemporary American city can be discussed in terms of the worker and the inhabitant – today they are rarely the same person. The distinction is made through the separation of social classes, which are defined more by money than race. As America approaches the end of the 20th Century, the rift between economic classes is growing. Since the 1950's, an exodus of urban white-collar workers to the suburbs has further distinguished the "haves" from the "have nots." In the 1990's, power is established financially. Therefore, the money-controlling "haves" possess the means to define and shape the urban landscape. Architecture is the tool used to visibly represent this power; the architect suggests the maintaining of control over the landscape through a building's size, orientation, and relationship to other buildings. Society's elite sit atop their high-rises, much like the girls in Spanish painter Remedios Varo's "Bordando el Manto Terrestre (Embroidering Earth's Mantle)," who sat, "prisoners in the top room of a circular tower, embroidering a kind of tapestry which spilled out the
slit windows and into a void: for all the other buildings and creatures, all the waves, ships, and forests of the earth were contained in this tapestry, and the tapestry was the world."¹ They both shape their environment within their tower and impact the world outside it. Residents left within the residual rubble become the "dangerous masses" from whom the white-collar workers must defend themselves. Thus, the high-rise enclave does more than project corporate might; the fortified way that it addresses the street seems to challenge passersby to, in the words of Clint Eastwood, "make its day."

These fortified "stealth buildings" employ what Mike Davis, in his book City of Quartz, calls "the semiotics of class war" — ramparts, battlements, reflective glass, elevated walkways, and various security devices. Davis argues that such architectural moves antagonize the passerby. He questions whether, through the implementation of these design strategies, architects provide a solution to the crime problem in the inner city or actually perpetuate it. "... as William Whyte has observed of social intercourse in New York, "fear proves itself."² Amid this landscape of fortress-like towers, the person on the street is left unprotected.

In the years following World War II, the opportunity for interaction between the various social classes has all but disappeared, due in part to an increased reliance upon the automobile and its ability to travel quickly from the city to the country. The resulting exodus of upper- and middle-income families to the suburbs has created a social vacuum in the city. Furthermore, the availability of usable, public land outside the city has superseded the need for usable public space within the city. Public space has been replaced by marginal space, such as parking lots and garages, street corners, and highway underpasses. While these spaces do allow for some degree of social interaction, it is limited to the city's more impoverished residents.

One can observe the transformation of the American cityscape over the last forty years by contrasting downtown Houston's Main Street with nearby Louisiana Boulevard. The high-rises along Main were conceived at a pedestrian scale, with storefronts lining each side of the street. As a result, the sidewalks are congested even today, affording some degree of interaction between white-collar workers, those in the service industry, and downtown's homeless population. By contrast, Louisiana Boulevard, located two blocks west of Main, is a vast, scale-less canyon of glass and steel. The "semiotics of class war" are
employed with staggering success — the sidewalks are always deserted.

As a whole, downtown Houston today is more like Louisiana than Main. Throughout the city, pedestrians are kept at bay by the recurrent use of moats, sky bridges, gates, fences (with and without barbed wire) and surveillance cameras within the architecture. Along some streets, empty parking lots occupy every other block. In other areas, the blacktop is replaced by pre-fabricated, concrete parking garages. "Although architectural critics are usually oblivious to how the built environment contributes to segregation, pariah groups — whether poor Latino families, young black men, or elderly homeless white females — read the meaning immediately."\(^3\)

Within the city, verticality can be seen as a means of perpetuating class distinction. In her essay "A Taste of Money," architecture critic Diane Ghirardo cites downtown Houston as a prime example of how a vertical hierarchy of power can exist:

Despite the outlay of money and the cooperation of prestigious designers, urban Houston is, to borrow a phrase from the local publication Cite, "great from afar, far from great." The downtown streets are barren from 6:00 P.M. until 7:30 A.M.; more startling is their daytime emptiness. A system of people collectors (sky walks and underground tunnels), the predominance

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 226.
of parking garages at street levels, periodic statue-studded, windswept, and empty plazas – all render the streets so boring, so hazardous that pedestrians deliberately avoid them. Only those denied admission to the tunnels by guards – the poor, the undesirable – are forced to use the streets. Walking on the street here becomes less an urban delight than an index of poverty or low status.4

The fictional world depicted in Fritz Lang’s 1926 film Metropolis has become today’s urban reality. Society’s powerful elite rule from atop their steel and glass towers, exercising their control over the drone-like masses far below. However, control over the masses is exercised horizontally as well. Lower-income neighborhoods are separated physically from the rest of the city by highways and politically through insufficient representation in city government. Furthermore, as children of the suburbs flee their past and return to the city, displacement of the poor occurs through reclamation and gentrification. These issues of displacement and control threaten to boil over in the next several decades as the impoverished minority population becomes the majority in America’s urban centers. The 1992 rioting in Los Angeles is an explosive indicator of these mounting tensions.

FIGHTING BACK: MARGINS ON THE OFFENSIVE

To their credit, the victims of physical and economic control are far from silent. They react by attempting to obtain power for themselves and through it control over their environment. Their means are simultaneously subtle and overt. Roving "gangbangers" cruise the city streets in cars that serve as armored vehicles, unleashing a barrage of throbbing bass and angry voice. The weapon being employed is rap music, a reaction to the hostile environment created by economic isolation.

Rap music — a form of "rhythmic talking over a funk beat"\textsuperscript{5} — has emerged as the voice of America's marginalized. Rap is the musical form of expression that, like breakdancing and graffiti art, originates from the urban "hip-hop" culture. However, unlike these other expressive media, rap's influence has spread beyond the urban underground to become the most dominant youth music in America since the advent of rock and roll. Two decades into its existence, rap has outlived the label of "fad"; it has become arguably the most creative, potent force in music today.

These guys (rappers) have made a breakthrough that is something like Picasso's in painting, Eliot's and Pound's in poetry, Faulkner's and Joyce's in the novel, Parker's in jazz. They have brought the noise of streets and schoolyards and social clubs into the thick of modernist culture. They have created a new ball game: now nobody and nothing in the world is safe from rap.  

Rap presents itself as a soapbox for the disenfranchised, a tool used to voice their complaints with "the system." Controversial rapper Ice-T asks, "If there wasn't rap, where would the voice of the eighteen-year-old black male be?" Chuck D., front man for the rap group Public Enemy, calls rap "the Cable News Network (CNN) of the (American) ghettos." Rap is used as a weapon that is aimed at the collective American psyche.

Rap is infiltrating mainstream America, where young, middle-class, white males make up a surprising percentage of rap's audience. As a result, nation-wide opposition to the music is mounting. For example, the uproar surrounding Ice-T's "Cop Killer" record did not surface until months after its release (Fig. 6). Ice-T and his then-record label, Warner

---

8 Fred Braithwaite (a.k.a.Fab 5 Freddy), Fresh Fly Flavor (Stamford, CT: Longmeadow Press, 1992), p. 50.
Brothers, believe that the controversy stemmed from mainstream exposure to the album resulting from sales to middle-class, suburban children.

While existing urban tensions are economically derived, it is difficult to bypass the topic of race. Cornel West uses the title of his essay, "The New Cultural Politics of Difference," to describe the current political climate in America in respect to gender, race, and marginalization. He notes the features of this new cultural dynamic as follows: the urge to trash the monolithic and homogenous in the name of diversity, multiplicity, and heterogeneity; the need to reject the abstract, general, and universal in light of the concrete, specific, and particular; and an obligation to historicize, contextualize, and pluralize by highlighting the contingent, provisional, variable, tentative, shifting, and changing. In other words, as the world expands and unifies, a new cultural dynamic has assumed responsibility for dragging the rest of society into the new age. "To put it bluntly, the new cultural politics of difference consists of creative responses to the precise circumstances of our present moment — especially those of marginalized First World agents who shun degraded self-representations, articulating instead their sense of the flow of history in light of the contemporary terrors, anxieties and fears of
highly commercialized North Atlantic capitalist cultures."\(^9\)

West traces the current situation back to Eurocentric tradition, where the exclusion of women and people of color created an "us" against "them" mentality. He further suggests that culture is linked with safety. This notion still holds true today, where "academist forms of expression have a monopoly on intellectual life."\(^10\) The emergence of the United States as a world power in the early 20th Century paralleled the rise of a powerful middle class. However, the advent of this new, homogenous "mainstream" was countered by non-WASP intellectual subcultures, including those surrounding bebop jazz music, to challenge "an American male WASP elite loyal to order and eroding European tradition."\(^11\)

Over the years, these new voices for diversity have brought about a re-examination of American history in light of the struggles and achievements of the marginalized, chipping away at the WASP elite's vision of reality. Also of note is "the impact of forms of popular culture such as television, film, music videos and even sports, on highbrow literate culture. The

---


\(^10\) Ibid., p. 20.

\(^11\) Ibid., p. 24.
Black-based hip-hop culture of youth around the world

is one grand example.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 26.
AN ANALYTICAL VIEW OF RAP

I don' like rap. Why am I frightened by it? Because a great deal of it is deranged and violent beyond all reason. Rap is music to get dead by.


Rap is the most inspirational, positive music today. We tell the kids, go get your jimmy hat (condom) if you want to have sex, leave the beers alone, don't smoke, be cool, go to school, say no to drugs. Most other music just talks about love me this, love me that.

It's a shame that a lot of parents don't realize this. They say, "Turn off that rap." Kids need to school parents about what's really going on out there.

D.M.C., Run-D.M.C., 1992.

According to one ex-high satanist, it (rap) is identical with the voodoo chants and rituals used within satanism to summon up demons of lust and violence.

Jack Chick, Battle Cry newspaper, 1986.

Rap is like the polio vaccine. At first no one believed in it. Then, once they knew it worked, everyone wanted it.

Grandmaster Flash, 1991.13

13 All four quotes: Small, Break It Down, p. 4.
The preceding four quotes are all describing the same thing — rap music. While the individuals quoted may disagree as to the value of the medium, few can argue its success. As previously stated, rap music is best described as "rhythmic talking over a funk beat," and over the last two decades it has become the most dominant form of youth music in America since the advent of rock and roll. Originating in the Bronx in 1979 as part of the burgeoning hip-hop sub-culture, rap, along with graffiti art and breakdancing, became a popular form of expression within the underground community. However, rap was quickly transformed from an inner-city novelty to a world-wide phenomenon with the release of the song "Rapper's Delight" by a trio of unknowns called the Sugarhill Gang. "Rapper's Delight" was charting new ground on pop radio in that it layered syncopated vocal speaking over a remixed melody lifted from Chic's disco hit "Good Times."

While rap was perceived as a form of expression unique unto itself, its roots could be traced deep in the history of black culture. In his book The Rap Attack: African Jive to New York Hip-Hop, author David Toop finds a correlation between rap and African wordplay, including "Gulla abusive poems, Yoruba song contests, and the vocal virtuosity of those West African verbal
assassins known as griots -- as well as in such Afro-American language rituals as the dozens."\textsuperscript{14}

The praise singing, social satires and boasting of savannah Griots that appeared to reincarnate in groups like Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, Afrika Bambaataa and Cosmic Force, The Treacherous Three and The Funky Four Plus One More, had all been present in black music over the last 80 years... 'Rap is nothing new', says Paul Winley [of Winley Records, one of the first underground rap labels]. Rap's forbears stretch back through disco, street funk, radio DJs, Bo Diddley, the bebop singers, Cab Calloway, Pigmeat Markham, the tap dancers and comics, The Last Poets, Gil Scott-Heron, Muhammad Ali, a cappella and doo-wop groups, ring games, skip-rop rhymes, prison and army songs, toasts, signifying and the dozens, all the way to the griots of Nigeria and Gambia.\textsuperscript{15} (Fig. 20)

In their book Signifying Rappers, authors Mark Costello and David Foster Wallace refer to rap as "a fortress protected by twin moats of talk and technology."\textsuperscript{16} Rap's structure consists of the lyric and the music. These two "moats" are guarded by the rapper and the disc jockey respectively. The two performers operate co-dependently within the loose framework of the medium. The rapper provides the lyrical message, usually a narrative or parable, the

\textsuperscript{14} Tate, \textit{Flyboy in the Buttermilk}, p.155.
\textsuperscript{15} Toop, \textit{The Rap Attack}, pp. 8&19.
content of which is firmly rooted in the reality of America's inner cities. The D.J., on the other hand, is responsible for providing the wall of percussion and "acquired" media that will act as a backdrop to the rapper's story. In addition to his musical duties, the D.J. often acts as the rapper's foil, responding to the rapper's calls in order to add complexity to the rhythm and meter of the rhyme.

The emphasis of a rap song rests squarely on the shoulders of the rapper; it is his lyrics that provide the song with its power and that the average American finds objectionable. For the unschooled: rap words are never sung; they are rhythmically spoken. The role of the rap lyric can be understood when contrasted to the role of the horn in jazz music. Where in jazz the horn melody is the variable that weaves in and out of a steady, repetitive datum of bass and percussion, in rap the \textit{vocal} is the variant.

The pop tradition by which rhythm and lyric became melody's supporting cast is here inverted. The rap is primarily \textit{the rap}: that which is said must in hip-hop be the intraScenic locus of assessment, appreciation, complaint. So a thesis: the theme, energy, wit, and formal ingenuity of the rap are where any meanly dressed, unMarginal spectator outside the window will and must look for aesthetic access to a music self-defined as not for him. That is, the outside listener must not only take
the rap "on authority"; he must read
that rap as story. 17

More than a mere lyricist, the rapper is a
modern-day storyteller and the tales he tells reflect
the hard, gritty reality of the city streets, where life is
governed by the forces of poverty, oppression, exclusion,
and exploitation; in Public Enemy's "Can't Truss It,"
frontman Chuck D. raps, "Classify us in the have nots/
Fightin' haves." Told in the form of first-hand, eye-

ewitness accounts, the rapper conveys the fear and anger
that accompanies his urban condition. The effect of
these stories within the marginalized culture can be
seen as cathartic; the rap format provides an open
forum for dialogue and commiseration, an opportunity
to rally around an issue or cause. "...serious rap has,
right from the start, presented itself as a Closed
Show... (there is) no question that serious rap is, and is
very self-consciously, music by urban blacks about same
to and for same." 18 However, the power of rap as a
medium lies in its ability to carry its message beyond
the confines of the inner city. Statistics show that over
the last five years, the rap market has seen a
proliferation of white, middle-class, suburban
consumers. Attracted especially to the graphically
violent, hard core rap records, suburban teens today

17 Ibid., p. 97.
18 Ibid., p. 23.
account for a staggering percentage of all rap records sold. Why do they find rap's message so appealing? It could be because they too are paying the price for society's excesses. Perhaps they too feel helpless against the system sustained by their parents and are looking for a voice to share in their frustration. Costello and Wallace offer their own take on the question, suggesting curiosity more than voyeurism:

Serious Hard raps afford white listeners genuine, horse's-mouth access to the life-and-death plight and mood of an American community on the genuine edge of im-/explosion, an ugly new subnation we've been heretofore conditioned to avoid, remand of the margins, not even see except through certain carefully abstract, attenuating filters: cop show and news special, etc.\(^{19}\)

The vocabulary used in the rap is as fascinating as the rhythmic pattern it follows or the message it imparts. Rap music has its own unique collection of words and phrases that originate early in African-American history. "In hip-hop culture, Black English is the language of verbal expression, spoken within the context that reflects the pain and struggles of Black life in the United States."\(^{20}\) Once-considered low-brow, Black English has become relevant, indeed hip, with American youth today. Hip-hop language and

---

\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 33.
wordplay are viewed on the streets as contributors to a productive, necessary, and useful education. A statement written over thirty years ago in Die Nigger Die by H. Rap Brown, ex-minister of justice in the Black Panthers, continues to be the thinking of the day.

The street is where young bloods get their education. I learned how to talk in the street, not from reading about Dick and Jane going to the zoo and all that simple shit. The teacher would test our vocabulary each week, but we knew the vocabulary we needed. They'd give us arithmetic to exercise our minds. Hell, we exercised our minds playing the dozens.21

The bragging, boasting and verbal abuse commonly found in rap lyrics descend from ritualistic African-American word games such as "signifying" and "playing the dozens." The dozens involved a back-and-forth, call-and response exchange of personal yet playful insults, usually at the expense of loved ones.

The dozens contests were usually between men and boys from the ages of 16 to 26 -- a semi-ritualized battle of words which batted insults back and forth between players until one or the other found the going too heavy. The insults could be a direct personal attack but were more frequently aimed at the opponent's family and in particular at his mother. According to linguist William Labov, who studied these verbal shout-outs in Harlem in the 1960's... the dozens seem to be even more specialized, referring to rhymed

21 Ibid., p. 118.
couplet of the form: *I don't play the dozens, the dozens ain't my game, but the way I fucked your mama is a goddamn shame.*

The leap from talking tough on the streets to playing the dozens in a club over percussive music was a natural one. This form of street-smart wordplay was introduced to middle America through the rhyming of heavy-weight champion boxer Muhammad Ali in the early 1970's.

Minds continue to be exercised by rap wordplays, which rely heavily upon new words and new meanings. A critical aspect of this language is the imbuing of a traditionally negative word, such as "bad," "dope," or "stupid," with a positive meaning. There seems to be a cultural significance to this type of inversion that should be explored.

A language is on the hither side of Literature. Style is almost beyond it: imagery, delivery, vocabulary spring forth from the body and past of the writer and gradually become the very reflexes of his art. Thus under the name of style a self-sufficient language is evolved which has its roots in the author's personal and secret mythology. Its secret is recollection locked within the body of the writer.

Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*23

---

23 Tate, *Flyboy in the Buttermilk*, p. 136.
While the boundaries of the rap medium continue to be pushed experimentally in New York, the style of rap that has surfaced on the West Coast, particularly in Los Angeles, is generally less creative musically and more aggressive lyrically. As a whole, L.A. rappers such as Ice-T and Ice Cube tend to focus their energies on advancing an ongoing public commentary on the social ills that are witnessed every day on the streets of South Central. More and more, hard-core, "gangsta" rap of this type is becoming the dominant style; it is emerging in practically every major U.S. city as the quality of urban life across the nation continues to deteriorate. Hard-core rap is known for its predisposition to messages of violence, obscenity, poverty, and misogyny.

It is important to distinguish between soft raps and hard raps, as well as between the male and female rappers. Soft rappers, such as LL Cool J, De La Soul, Run D.M.C. and the Beastie Boys, focus on generic and mundane issues, love being chief among them. Hard rappers such as Ice-T, Public Enemy, the Geto Boys, and N.W.A. (Niggas With Attitude) up the ante in reality and specificity, concentrating on the violently political, economically- and racially-charged situations found within the inner city and offering their own, often-controversial solutions. "Ideology in Hard rap's always informed by incident or named
condition, and thus anger by cause, threat by some kind of recognizable (to the Scene) provocation.  

Rappers are also notorious for their use of profanity, a dimension of the music that prevents a wider accessibility through radio. However, offensive as it is, profanity is a superficial barrier that seems to be daring the listener to dig beneath the surface and pay attention to the real message of the rap. "Rap after all is an art form where shit and motherfucker and pussy are little more than tics or punctuation." Profanity is intended to resemble actual talk on the street and nothing more. It provides realistic credibility to the story.

Hard rap is frequently linked with street gangs, the illegal drug trade, urban violence and other forms of "anti-social" behavior that provide subject matter for the rap. Rap is often criticized for the way that it "not only relentlessly and self-consciously presents but glorifies (these) themes, romanticizes them, influences, nay, exhorts its audience to understand, respond to, maybe even embody certain worsts of those themes." Does rap advocate violence, or is it merely documenting a pre-existing condition, as many rappers claim? There is no public consensus on rap's impact on the urban community.

---

24 Costello and Wallace, Signifying Rappers, p. 33.
25 Ibid., p. 44.
26 Ibid.
Sexism is as abundant as profanity and violence in the predominantly-male world of rap; it seems that every woman is either a "bitch" or a "ho (whore)". However, the sexist views expressed by many male rappers are beginning to be challenged by their female counterparts. Queen Latifah, MC Lyte, Monie Love, and Salt-N-Pepa have become strong, positive role models for urban women, dealing with issues such as sex, infidelity, rape, and abortion in their raps. Salt-N-Pepa's 1994 hit single, "Shoop", turns the tables on the men by treating them as sex objects.

You're packed and your stacked, 'specially in the back
Brotha wanna thank your mother for a butt like that
Can I get some fries with that shake-shake booty?
If looks could kill you would be an uzi or a shot gun – BANG!
What' up with that thang? I wanna know, how does it hang?27

While the rappers call for revolution, the D.J.'s are actually staging one within the music community. "For the first time in history, pop music is being created without anything that resembles a musical instrument."28 The construction of a rap song by the D.J. can be likened to making a collage or a patchwork quilt. Portions of any given song are

28 Ibid., p. 136.
borrowed or "sampled" from previously-existing recordings. Sampling involves digitally recording a portion of an existing song or sound and then incorporating that portion into a new song. "The most recognizable of these samples range from staccato record scratches to James Brown and Funkadelic licks, to M.L.K.'s public Dream, to quotidian pop pap like 'The Theme from Shaft,' Brady Bunch dialogue, and 50's detergent commercials." Rap seems to embody the saying "everything old is new again" — much of the music one hears is not original. However, what is original is the way the samples are arranged and worked into a new message. "The beauty of dismembering hits lies in displacing familiarity." The rap D.J. creates an aural palimpsest, layering pieces from the extensive history of recorded music on top of one another in order to form something that is radically new yet hauntingly familiar.

His (the D.J.'s) responsibility is the song behind and around the rap — the backbeat, krush groove, and the "sound carpet," i.e. a kind of electric aural environment, a blend of snippets, squeaks, screams, sirens, snatches from pop media, all mixed and splattered so that the listener cannot really listen but only feel the mash of "samples" that results.

The purpose of the D.J.'s repetitive, "sound carpet" is to focus attention on the message of the rapper's lyrics. Whereas rap lyrics are specific and immediate, expressing the timely views and perspectives of a particular group or subculture, rap music is universal, traversing national and cultural boundaries to draw from music's large, historical context.

Sampling too is not without precedents. Borrowing portions of previously-existing and all-too-familiar hits was a trademark of jazz musician Charlie Parker. "It gives the same thrill that visitors must have felt in the 1940s hearing Charlie Parker carve up standards like 'I Got Rhythm'. Parker wrote many tunes in this way, of course, including 'Ornithology', a bebop standard based on the chords of 'How High the Moon'. When Babs Gonzalez added words he was creating one of the many Harlem-based antecedents of rap -- jive lyrics superimposed on a dislocated version of a popular tune of the day."

In recent years rap has returned to its jazzy roots, incorporating samples of jazz greats and speaking bebop lingo into the format. Of particular note is English group Us3, the first rap act to sign on the Blue Note jazz record label. Part of their contract gives them exclusive rights to sample the entire Blue Note back catalogue.

Before the advent of digital sampling, D.J.'s resorted to "scratching," a technique in which portions of existing songs were physically extracted portions by scratching them off of the rotating vinyl record with the phonograph needle. Originating from the normal technique of cueing a record, scratching was invented by disc jockeys who were looking to avoid law suits by recording artists for copyright infringement. The development of scratching is as follows: the D.J. controls two independent turntables that patch into the same receiver. With one record playing on the loudspeakers, he moves the record manually with the needle in the groove and listens through headphones for the right starting point of or in the song. At the appropriate time, the D.J. releases the second record, which overlays its song on the one previously playing. At first, this process was used in discos to eliminate pauses between songs in order to facilitate continued dancing. However, D.J.'s soon began to create their own versions, or mixes, of songs, often butchering the original songs so badly that the resulting song was something completely new.

What followed was a method of assembling new compositions piecemeal from other songs -- a guitar lick here, a vocal phrase there. "D.J.'s like Grandmaster Flash began experimenting by switching the mixer from the headphones to the speakers for
isolated brass-section chords and drum slaps – augmenting the record that was already playing on the turntable – and then learning how to use a record percussively by quickly moving it back and forth over the same chord or beat.\textsuperscript{33} The rapid, back-and-forth movement of the record obscures the sample, making it difficult to identify and copyright infringement almost impossible to prove. Scratching provided early rap with an instantly-recognizable percussive sound that still surfaces in today’s digitally mastered compositions (often as a digitally-sampled sample). While scratching has all but become a thing of the past in the recording studio, it still pervades live rap performance, where it continues to lend a human sense of unpredictability, as it is virtually impossible to scratch a record the same way or in the same place twice.

The rap D.J. can be described as a modern-day "bricoleur" or fix-it man, mixing and scratching temporary marriages between riffs from several distinct pieces of vinyl and fusing them together with a relentless computerized drumbeat.

And in our time, the 'bricoleur' is still someone who works with his hands and uses devious means compared to those of a craftsman. Unlike the engineer, the

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 26.
rules are to make do with whatever is
at hand.\textsuperscript{34}

Rapper Fab 5 Freddy defines rap music as
"poetry or rhymes set to throbbing, funk rhythm
patterns."\textsuperscript{35} Although he defines rap in traditionally-
musical terms, it is anything but traditional. Many are
unconvinced of rap's heritage; it has been closely
scrutinized particularly by those in the music
community, where it has caused no small amount of
controversy. While some critics herald rap as "the
single most creative force in music," others have
labeled it as senseless noise. In a way, both remarks are
correct. Rap is certainly unconventional and can easily
be discounted as music -- it does not adhere to any
traditional sense of structure, patterning, or order. The
dominant musical trait is a mountain of dense,
unrelenting percussion. "For listeners who aren't
diehard fans, rap tends to be the same as blues, reggae
or jazz -- it's 'boring', it's 'repetitive'.\textsuperscript{36}

Rap is a "music" essentially without
melody, built instead around a
digitally synthesized drum- and
backbeat often about as complex as five
idle fingers on a waiting-room table,
enhanced by "sampled" (pirated)
"krush grooves" (licks or repetitive
chord series) conceived and recorded by

\textsuperscript{34} Claude Levi-Strauss, \textit{The Savage Mind} (Chicago:
\textsuperscript{35} Braithwaite, \textit{Fresh Fly Flavor}, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{36} Toop, \textit{The Rap Attack}, p. 8.
pre-rap icons, the whole affair comprised by a distinctive, spare, noisy, clattering "style" whose obsessive if limited thematics revolve with the speed of low-I amperage around the performative circuit of the MC/rapper and his record-scratching, sound-mixing Sancho Panza, the DJ.

One inevitably must ask whether or not rap, as a form of expression, is "music" at all. Costello and Wallace believe that rap falls outside the conventional definition of music.

Music is "the art of organizing tones to produce a coherent sequence of sounds intended to elicit an aesthetic response from a listener," or "vocal or instrumental sounds having some degree of rhythm, melody, and harmony" (both quotes from O.E.D.). Even on the casuallest surface, rap is a genre without harmonics or counterpoint. And the response it's aimed to elicit is to aesthetics what maybe a demo derby is to a Vermeer... The only bona fide "music" in rap issues from computerized matrices, hand-scratched records, and digitally-manipulated samples of other people's music... plus of course the rhymes of the rapper, and often the ad-lib of his call's responder, the DJ.

The differences between rap and traditional forms of music become immediately evident when one attempts to translate a rap song into sheet music. For example, the first thing one notices upon examining the score to Eric B. & Rakim's rap classic "Paid in Full" is

---

the sparseness of notation (Appendix A). Only the vocal, bass line, and variations in the percussion sequencing are recorded in detail. The drum machine, "whose part does not change until measure 93, has not been notated."^39 The remaining, unfilled bars contain numerous, sporadic parenthetical cues for samples and scratches, including fragments by Middle Eastern folk singer Ofra Haza, R&B legend James Brown, actor Peter Lorre, Saturday Night Live announcer Don Pardo, and a "male voice from a junior high science film."^40 One becomes acutely aware that this traditional method of notation is inappropriate to rap music, as it is absolutely impossible to reproduce the complexity within the recording by simply reading the sheet music.

During the course of his critique of Chopin's music in Metamagical Themas, Douglas Hofstadter divides the idea of "pattern" into two groups: syntactic, or "head pattern," and semantic, or "heart pattern."

"The notion of syntactic pattern in music corresponds to the formal structural devices used in poetry: alliteration, rhyme, meter, repetition of sounds, and so on. The notion of semantic pattern is analogous to the pattern or logic that underlies a poem and gives it reason to exist: the inspiration, in short."^41 This

---

39 Ibid., p. 144.
40 Ibid., p. 142.
41 Hofstadter, Metamagical Themas, p. 181.
Its values and foci are different, its precedents un-Anglo. Like the drum machine and the scratch, sample and backbeat, the rappers "song" is essentially an upper layer in the dense weave of rhythm that, in rap, usurps melody and harmony's essential functions of identification, call, counterpoint, movement, and progression, the play of woven notes... until "rhythm" comprises the essential definitions of rap itself: dance beats that afford unlimited bodily possibility, married rhythmically to complexly stressed lyrics that assert, both in message and meter, that things now can never be other than what IS. It's the contrapuntal tension between the music's celebration of freedom-in-Space (dance) and the rap's tightly rhythmized and metered rhetoric of imprisonment-in-Time, of a poverty of "set" and self that allows only status and power as value and only neighborhood as audience... it's this tension that gives rap's "talk-on records" their special and poignantly post-Reagan edge.42

---

42 Costello and Wallace, Signifying Rappers, pp. 52-3.
INDEX OF RAP WORDS AND PHRASES

ACTION — Something that was going on, good, bad, or otherwise.

AIN'T GOIN' OUT LIKE THAT — 1. Not the situation you expect to be involved in. 2. Don't like the way you're being treated.

AIN'T HALF STEPPIN' — 1. Doing the best possible job you can do. 2. Going all the way with a situation.

AIN'T NO THANG — Not a big deal.

ALL THE WAY LIVE — An extremely positive appraisal of a situation or thing.

AMAZON — A shapely woman about six feet tall, built for speed, and ready for duty.

B-BOY — An abbreviation for "break boy", a totally devoted male fan and participant in hip-hop music and culture.

BAD — Excellent, good, stylish, and cool.

BASE HEAD — Someone addicted to cocaine, who free-bases it or smokes crack.

BEAT DOWN — A serious physical beating by one or more persons.

BELIEVE DAT — The equivalent of telling someone it's the absolute, cross your heart and hope to die truth.

BITING — To copy someone.

BLOCK PARTY — A summer celebration common in all five boroughs of New York City, where streets are closed to traffic and music, fun, B-B-Q, and games are enjoyed by all.

BOOGIE — To enjoy one's self with dance and music.

BOOK — To leave a situation or place.

BOOSTIN' — Shoplifting.

BOX — A portable stereocassette/radio.

BREAK IT DOWN — 1. To further explain. 2. The change of the flow in a piece of music.

BREAK BEAT — Song containing an instrumental drum dominated section, ideal for the purpose of making hip-hop music.
BREAKOUT -- To leave with haste.

BUCK WILD -- To act rambunctious and aggressive.

BUM RUSH -- To forcefully enter when not invited.

BUST A MOVE -- Check this out.

CHEEBA -- Marijuana.

CLOCKIN' -- 1. To watch someone intently. 2. To admire with a sexual desire. 3. To accumulate large sums of money.

COLD -- 1. Derived from cold blooded. Cool, stylish. 2. Extreme.

COLORS -- 1. Proof of belonging in a gang in the form of jackets with the gangs' names across the back. 2. Red or blue, the colors that represent the Bloods and the Crips, California's two largest gangs.

COME OFF -- Appear.

COOL -- 1. A form of approval. 2. A mellow, relaxed attitude.

COOLIN' OUT -- The act of resting or relaxing.

CRAZY LARGE -- 1. Doing extremely well. 2. Having success. 3. Having lots of money.

CREW -- 1. Your immediate group of close friends. 2. The people who travel with a DJ or rapper.

CRIB -- Home.

DEAD PRESIDENTS -- An old-school hustlers' expression for American money.

DEF -- A high form of praise; slang for "death." Def, like dope and bad, is an example of the way urban black English has made the negative seem positive or made that which is unpopular in the eyes of mass culture, popular in the eyes of underground culture.

DISS -- To disrespect.

D.J. -- Disc jockey, radio, or party.

DOG YOU OUT -- Talk about you in a negative way.

DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE -- Don't believe anything you read, see, or hear in the media.

DOPE -- A high form of praise, as in excellent.

DOWN -- 1. To get closely involved with a person or situation. 2. To be in agreement.

DROP SCIENCE -- To inform, explain, and educate in a knowledgable fashion.
FAKE THE MOVE -- Appearing to do one thing while actually doing another.

FIGHT THE POWER -- Fight the system that oppresses you.

FLAVOR -- 1. The tone or vibe of a person, place, or situation. 2. Something good.

FLY -- High form of praise.

FREAK -- A wild, sexually-active person.

FRESH -- The ultimate positive assessment and appraisal of anything.

FRONTIN' -- 1. Trying to impress someone. 2. Telling lies.

FULL EFFECT -- To be at your fullest and your presence is seen, heard, and felt.

GET BUSY -- To start doing something.

GET DOWN -- 1. To start something. 2. Have sex. 3. Play music hard and well. 4. Party hard.

GET STUPID -- 1. To act silly. 2. To have a raucous good time.

GIG -- A job.

GROOVY -- A pleasantly flowing situation.

GUMBY -- Lopsided hair cut that looks like the popular animated clay figure's head.

HARD -- 1. Mean and ruthless. 2. A positive appraisal, usually addressing music or attitude.

HIP -- 1. To know the ins and outs of what's going on around you. 2. To be attuned to street culture.

HIP-HOP -- 1. Term used to specify the type of rap music that is close and true to the original attitude. 2. Style and state of mind as established by the originators of hip-hop music and culture.

HIT IT -- Start the music.

HOMEBOY/HOMEGIRL -- A person from your place of origin or hometown.

HOOD -- 1. The neighborhood where you live. 2. A gangster.

HOUSE -- To attack someone violently.

HYPE -- 1. To overly build up and exaggerate. 2. Also means something is really good.

ICE -- Cool.

ILLIN' -- Acting wild and crazy.

IN THE HOUSE -- At a party.
IN THE MIX -- Involved in the situation.

JACKED -- Robbed or assaulted.

JAM -- 1. A record. 2. A party where hip-hop music is played. 3. In trouble.


JOCKIN' -- To persistently and shamelessly try to emulate someone or beinvolved in their life.


JUICE -- Clout.

KICK IT -- To start.

LIVING LARGE -- Term to describe wealth, prestige, success, or all three.

MACKIN' -- 1. A flamboyant life style supported by women. 2. Being in control of a situation with your wit as the chief tool.

MAN, THE -- Police.

M.C. -- 1. Master of ceremonies. 2. One who raps hip-hop music to the funky beat.

NEW JACK -- A person new to a situation making an attempt at being the best.

NEW JACK SWING -- A type of R&B music with a strong street feeling added to give, at times, a hip-hop feel.

ON -- A very flattering form of praise.

ON THE SMART TIP -- Cool.

OUT BOX -- From the beginning.

PEACE -- A final greeting as you depart.

THE PILL -- A basketball.

PLAYED YOURSELF -- 1. To make a stupid mistake. 2. To embarrass yourself in front of others.

POSSE -- A group of people that you travel with, hang out with, and who will look out for you if trouble arrives.

PSYCH -- To fool people.

PUMP IT UP -- 1. Turn up the volume. 2. An expression sometimes chanted at parties.

RAW -- Hard, direst, truthful, and uncensored.

RIDE -- An automobile.
SAME OLD SAME OLD -- Unchanged.

SAMPLING -- To digitally record a portion of an existing record or sound and later incorporate it into a hip-hop record.


SLICK -- To obtain your goals in a smooth and possibly unorthodox manner.

SMOOTH -- 1. An easygoing person or situation. 2. Not harsh to the ear, eye, or touch.

SPORT -- To wear or have.

STEPPIN' -- 1. To leave. 2. Dance.

STUPID -- 1. Very. 2. High form of praise as in stupid fresh, stupid large, or stupid crazy.

SWEAT -- To bother someone.

SYSTEM -- Car or home stereo where you blast hip-hop music.

TENDERONI -- Attractive young female.

TIP -- Way of describing the mood or situation you're in or dealing with.

TRIBE -- A group of close friends.

TRIPPIN' -- Acting crazy or irrational.

TURN IT OUT -- 1. To have a raucous good time. 2. To display rapping or dancing skills to a crowd's approval.

WACK -- Not good or acceptable.

WHAT'S UP WITH THAT? -- Explain what you're doing.

WILD STYLE -- 1. An elaborate type of graffiti writing. 2. The first film on hip-hop music and culture.

WILDIN' -- Raucous and rowdy group activity.

WORD (UP) -- Derived from the phrase "My word is my bond," which means this is not a lie.

YO -- 1. Greeting. 2. Way of getting one's attention.
CONCLUSIONS

THE IMPORTANCE OF DOWNTOWN

Before going any further, it is necessary to question the importance of the downtown area to the city's overall identity. Clearly, the 20th-Century city, such as Los Angeles or Houston, is characterized by several decades of rapid growth that has resulted in a sprawling metropolitan area comprised of suburban enclaves and strip shopping centers connected by miles and miles of highway. The "downtown" found in this city is an anemic copy of its older American predecessors. It appears that the notion of an urban center has all but vanished from the collective psyche of its residents. As a result, a true downtown "culture" has failed to emerge.

Downtown culture is an ephemeral concept that relies heavily on interaction, for better or for worse, between various ethnic and socio-economic groups. America's heterogeneous mix, the "great melting pot", is best represented in these city centers. The lessons learned there are both valuable and necessary to the survival of a society that bases itself on fundamental equality. Avoidance and segregation create stereotypes, and these general assumptions lead to misunderstanding, resentment and conflict. The only
way to really "increase the peace" is through personal interaction.
ARCHITECTURE: AN ELITIST PROFESSION?

Having identified the problems of the contemporary city, one might be inclined to seek out an ideal. However, the ideal, heterogeneous social mix has yet to exist, and the chances of it ever existing are slim. Still, there are means of evening the odds. One possibility is outlined by Mickey Kaus in his book, The End of Equality. Kaus, a senior editor for The New Republic, levels a sharp critique of what he considers to be a failed concept of equality on the part of the U.S. government and the American people. His critique uncharacteristically places the blame on all political parties but especially on liberals for their preoccupation with narrowing what they see as an ever-widening economic gap between rich and poor. The gap, says Kaus, has always existed and will continue to exist -- the redistribution of wealth is directly contradictory to the capitalist principles upon which America was founded. He believes that the gap between the classes is growing at an alarming rate not on an economic level but on a social level. The problem with the rich is not that they are rich, but that they think they are better than those who are poor. Today, an individual is judged not by the type of person he or
she is, but by how much money he has -- dignity and
mutual respect among the classes is non-existent.

You don't have people like Martin
Luther King on the streets right now. If
you tell somebody out there doing all
this shit that money is not a priority,
they'd be like, "Fuck you. Money is the
priority. We gotta have money. Gotta
survive."

Eazy-E, rapper, N.W.A.
(Niggas With Attitude)\(^{43}\)

Kaus advocates bridging the gap between rich
and poor not through the redistribution of money, but
rather through restricting money's influence in the
public sphere. He calls for "class-mixing" -- creating
government-mandated aspects of public life where all
are included, none are restricted, and everyone is equal
-- in education, health care, the use of public space, and
military service. Kaus also refers to architecture as a
privileged profession that exists to serve society's
wealthy elite, equating architects with doctors and
lawyers. In a sense, he is absolutely correct. Architects
cater to the rich by default (or, for many, by choice)--
for the most part, they are the only ones who can afford
an architect's services. However, architecture is
perceived among the middle to lower classes as a
symbol of power, prestige, and wealth.

\(^{43}\) Michael Small, *Break It Down* (New York: Citadel
The link between architecture and high art is made early in the education of the architect. Architecture curricula are built upon the foundations of antiquity and Euro-aristocratic excesses, and the precedent persists even today. More often than not, architects are employed by those few who can afford their special and refined services, namely the wealthiest members of society.

Like Mickey Kaus, Joel Barna sees the link between architecture and the elite. In *The See-Through Years*, he agrees that economic values have supplanted all others in society. To Barna, each building reflects the social relationships through which it was created. More often than not, he says, these relationships can be diagrammed as a triangle, with the economic forces (represented by developers) coming from one end, the cultural forces (represented by architects) coming from another end, and the public, implicated by the politics of the first two, as audience coming from the third end. The forces of economy, i.e. the developers, preach homogeneity to the masses, for sameness equals less cost. The impact on the inhabitant or the greater context outside are not considerations. Architects, on the other hand, tend to endorse heterogeneity, citing individuality and specificity as desirable qualities to be found in a building. Further, they are sensitive to the building's impact on its
neighboring structures and attempt to enhance (or at least not destroy) the character of the surrounding public space. Unfortunately, few architects are involved in the design of office buildings, shopping malls, or other high-impact projects. As a result, the developer assumes most of the responsibility in shaping the built environment, particularly the city.

Architects have had to accept the cultural power of their rivals. Barna believes that, as developers begin to overrun the design profession and manipulate it for personal gain, architects face the threat of cultural marginalization. Those architects that have been involved in large urban interventions have done so at the behest of the developer, who employs them to create a "signature look" for the building that reflects the power and prestige of the company that inhabits it. Architecture, synonymous with "old money," is co-opted by the developer. By employing the symbols and language of wealth, the urban power struggle is exacerbated. Barna believes that developers have purchased "token" architecture in order to "bask in the glory reflected from a higher social class."44

How can architects successfully argue for both diversity and sensitivity when developers can use the

power of money to successfully advocate segregation and separation? Perhaps architects must seek out alternative roles within the urban development process, inventing them if necessary. This thesis parallels the argument set forth by Kaus. It attempts to encourage class-mixing by limiting the influence of the developer's "architecture" in the urban environment. It proposes to do so by creating a new role for the architect, one that allows him to exercise his heightened sensitivity toward the social needs of the city's many, varied inhabitants.
CONCLUSIONS

THE ARCHITECT AS AGENT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The sociological bent of this thesis may cause one to question the right of the architect to advance a particular sociological agenda. However, I argue that architects have always advanced social agendas, although often unintentionally. If an architect can design a corporate highrise that exerts control over the people below, he can design one that embraces them. An argument can be made that the marriage between sociology and architecture more or less failed in the late-1960's and early-1970's. Why would it succeed now? It is natural to draw comparisons between the position assumed by this thesis and the recent nostalgic return to 1960's values by the twenty-something generation. However, characteristic of the 1990's resurgence of social obligation is a critical skepticism and wariness that was missing from the doomed utopian projects of the 60's. Young architects today cannot hope to change the world, but merely seek to improve it.

The question is whether or not a place for architecture exists below the poverty line; I believe it does. Architects carry with them an arsenal of social and cultural concerns, making them generally better qualified to contribute to the greater built environment.
Of course, only those who believe that the influence of culture has a greater value than that of economics (i.e. architects) would agree with this value judgment. Nonetheless, the potential for improvement through architecture exists in its ability to enable. Joel Barna explains:

In our society we have many means for achieving this mediation... and both television and popular songs, to cite just two obvious examples, touch more people more intimately than does architecture... But songs and television shows are transitory things, made boring or forgettable in hours or minutes, while works of architecture tend to last because they represent such huge investments of time, energy, materials, and money. Hanging around from year to year, a building channels visions and expectations from the moment of its creation into its future, wrapping a section of the past around the ephemeral concerns of the present.45

Diane Ghirardo agrees with Barna's assessment of architecture's possibilities. "Permanence, high cost, and presence in the landscape place buildings in the world with an insistence far beyond that of novels, poems, or paintings."46 Music could also be added to that list. However, this notion of architecture's ability to symbolically reflect cultural values, and through them derive meaning, has often

45 Ibid., p.35.
been called into question. "In Notre-Dame de Paris, Victor Hugo traced the decline of architecture's communicative power in the wake of the widespread availability of books. Bereft of a symbolic function, architecture has lost its meaning; Hugo branded all post-medieval architecture hopelessly vacuous."\textsuperscript{47}

An inclusive architecture would make a powerful political statement. It could legitimize the presence of the marginalized and facilitate participation in society, not as the system dictates but on their own terms. A unique and specific approach to expression could surface in the built environment.

It seems to me that architecture's purpose need not be reduced to the essentially passive activities of reflecting cultural values or of becoming an empty tool for political manipulation. While this is not the place to formulate a new paradigm for architecture, symbolism might be acknowledged as a legitimate enterprise, but only one—and not necessarily the most important one—among several other purposes. Primacy in a new paradigm might be accorded to a strategy of resistance: resistance to the imperatives of a consumerist mentality, to elitist manipulation, to the destruction of communities, and, perhaps most important of all, resistance to the claims of relentless development.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 90.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., p. 90.
Perhaps it is time for the architectural profession to rethink its responsibility to society, particularly in its dealings with the urban environment. Architects must acknowledge their ability to shape the built environment and direct social interaction and they must take responsibility for their actions. Architecture can be used as a means of empowering the disenfranchised, by forcing the existing national and local power structure to recognize the importance of all people, not just the few who can afford it. This can be achieved through appropriation. When building a new office tower, a business seeks out a design that not only projects a unique image to the city but takes attention and value away from the buildings around it. The same appropriating tactics can be used on the behalf of the marginalized.

Architecture must respond to the wants and needs of those who use it. One must recognize that the wants and needs of the marginalized are not the same as those of the mainstream or the elite. These wants and needs then must be identified; some are universally applicable, while some are specific to the particular region or neighborhood. Through analysis and exploration, the architect must establish an alternate set of design criteria and determine how it could be used to inform a new architectural approach.
Urban rhythms and patterns are a valid and appropriate device through which to examine architecture's role in the contemporary city. One rhythm worthy of exploration is hip hop culture, a musical and fashion phenomenon that has become a forum for those on the periphery of society. Rap music, in particular, has emerged as a potent expression of the feelings of fear, rage, and resignation that accompany social marginalization. Rap's widespread popularity has created a window through which middle America can experience life in the inner-city. Through the use of first-person, narrative lyrics, rappers offer a critique of the greater society, one that views them as "second-class citizens." By doing so, they have struck a nerve, successfully turning their fear back onto a power structure that continues to isolate itself in fortified towers that destroy the urban fabric.

Rap's musical foundation is in a constant state of flux. It combines a heterogeneous mix of sound bites drawn from rock, jazz, R&B, and classical music, as well as television commercials and politically-relevant speeches. Through the use of formal devices such as sampling and scratching, the disc jockey and the rapper work together to fuse the media with the message, re-interpreting and re-structuring the context.
to fit their own agenda. The resulting collaboration acts as a window through which one can observe the fluctuations in contemporary culture, in hopes of catching a glimpse into the heart and soul of mankind. Through this frame, architects may identify deficiencies in the urban environment as well as their responsibilities to those who reside there.

Architects tend to see contemporary society as being culturally bankrupt, offering little in terms of direction or inspiration. However, what is frequently dismissed as trivial pop culture is quite often not. The hip-hop culture embodies the richness and complexity found in the reality of urban life rather than embracing a fictitious, utopian ideal. An effort on behalf of the architect to make sense of these forms of "low art," as a valid counterpoint to the "high art" to which they are accustomed, could reveal vital clues to the understanding and future development of the contemporary city.

The design exploration will use architecture as a means of bridging the cultural gap between those at the center of post-modern American society and those at the periphery. It will attempt to come to terms with the inevitability of a heterogeneous, multi-cultural society that middle America has been trying to reject over the last century. Ultimately, the objective is to
enable architecture to do what rap is doing musically —
to create fusion in a society bent on fission.
INTRODUCTION

DESIGN POSITIONS

1. I believe that the recognized presence of downtown plays a crucial role in how an individual identifies with a city. Downtown, through its heterogenous mix of businesses and people, can serve to strengthen a sense of community among the residents of the city-at-large.

2. I believe in the importance of an understanding of physical space. A generation is learning to focus on the event and ignore the path taken to arrive at that point. This perception of space as a series of events is encouraged by the use of the automobile, which distorts the perception of distance, and by fast-frame editing techniques found throughout electronic media. A fundamental understanding of physical space can best be achieved by traveling the distance on foot.

3. I believe that architects must invent new roles for themselves in a world that is already overbuilt and under-used. Society has pushed the architect out of the picture; he no longer possesses the clout needed to shape the built environment. New respect must be earned in new, non-traditional venues, a task that will demand creativity and flexibility on the part of the architect.

4. I believe that an architect possesses the skills and the right to advance a particular social agenda. Based on the critique outlined in INVESTIGATIONS
ONE through FIVE, I see the potential for greater understanding between economic classes through increased exposure and interaction.

FOUNDATION

The design focuses on my belief in the necessity of the downtown environment and advantages of its heterogeneity. Currently, downtown is perceived as a collection of independent objects, separated from one another by vast expanses of asphalt. Connections between blocks are few; as the city is currently used, a need for connections does not exist. However, this design proposes a new understanding of the city, one formed through the introduction of a series of INSTITUTIONS. These institutions will form connections between the isolated blocks and restore the perception of unity to downtown and the entire city. Each understanding of the city is unique to the individual or target group. However, they coexist, occupying and overlapping on the same city grid to the point that distinctions between them are blurred in places and the potential for interaction increases.
Most present-day schools may be lavishing vast and increasing amounts of energy preparing students for a world that no longer exists.

Marshall McLuhan⁴⁹

The specific project chosen to exemplify the establishment of a system is an urban high school. America is experiencing a period of re-evaluation of the current educational system in an attempt to identify ways to increase the performance and ensure safety of its students. On the secondary level, attention is shifting away from a general curriculum and towards skill specification. Credence is given to programs that explore ways to prepare students for a changing job market, one that is more competitive and more reliant upon technology and globalization. Also of concern among the school hallways is the increase of classroom violence, mirroring the increase of bloodshed on the streets. How can schools cope with the envy, bigotry and insecurity that is found at the heart of these violent acts?

⁴⁹ New Schools for New Towns (Houston: Rice University, 1970), p. 34.
Downtown Houston was selected as the location for the school as it is the most economically diverse section of the city. Few people actually live within the region bounded by two highways and a bayou. However, downtown is surrounded by the lower-income, predominantly black and hispanic neighborhoods that make up the Second, Fourth, and Fifth Wards. The daily influx of these residents into the downtown area is quite high; they dominate the streetscape and service the office towers. White collar workers commute to downtown from nearby upper-income enclaves and the distant suburbs. They experience the city from the car, the parking garage, the highrise office window. The stratification of the classes is obvious, yet the potential for direct interaction between them for the most part lies untapped.

The population of the school is drawn from a wide economic cross-section, including students from each of these neighboring environments. Participation by children from lower-income families will be encouraged both by proximity and by the academic and social reputation of the school. Participation by the children of Houston's corporate leaders will rely heavily upon the reputation of the school and the
career-oriented opportunities that the curriculum provides as well as convenience.

FUNDING CONCERNS

School funding was an issue of particular interest to residents of the state of Texas in 1993. During the spring general election, voters rejected a proposed "Robin Hood" bill that would have redistributed tax money collected from wealthier school districts to poorer ones in order to balance the resources available to public schools state-wide. At last word, the Texas State Legislature was exploring ways to annex poorer school districts into wealthier ones in order to spread the wealth.

The proposed downtown high school will operate separately from the Houston Independent School District. The funding for the school will be accumulated through corporate donations and grants given by the government. Unlike other privately-funded schools, it will be open to all students and will not charge a tuition fee. While the school enjoys the advantages of academic exchange and athletic competition with public school system, it benefits from the financial stability of a private institution as well.
When proposing an urban school, one must deal with a number of potential problems inherent to the downtown area -- the cost of land, traffic, the type of buildings surrounding the land, and the population found within those buildings. However, this project views these "problems" as assets and uses them to shape the school's form and curriculum. It is important to note that this is not an attempt to re-invent school curricula; to do that without input from the educational community would be absurd. Rather, this proposal re-interprets an accepted, pre-existing curriculum through the use of architecture, planning and design.

Houston's downtown school will be organized like a campus in order to take advantage of the diversity in facilities that the city has to offer. Traditionally an organizational concept implemented on the college level, the campus could be beneficial on the high school level, if not on the elementary level. Psychologists agree that children thrive in complex learning environments, becoming more curious, observant and aware of the world around them. Rather than trying to create a microcosm of the world within four walls, educators can use the real world as a learning tool and teaching environment, all the while providing the students with a rare form of spatial appreciation.
Students have always been sent out into the community, the broader city and beyond, to enrich their experience and broaden their education. But rarely has this been done on a day-in day-out basis; rather, it has been done without a sense of continuity and the learning in these areas has been rather limited and superficial.\textsuperscript{50}

In this project, the urban community becomes an integral part of the curriculum; the school is the city and the city becomes the school. The intent is to make better-adjust children to the stresses and complications of the modern world. "The students become more aware, more sensitive to real problems, and certainly better equipped to cope with them, perhaps discover solutions for them."\textsuperscript{51}

In an interpretation of the school vernacular, the entire downtown area becomes the campus, the individual buildings act as separate classrooms, and the city streets act as "hallways" where between-class social interaction occurs. However, this interaction is no longer limited to the student body; the rest of the city's work force are also participants. The crossing of pedestrian and vehicular traffic patterns within the "campus" are intended to advance the social agenda outlined in the earlier INVESTIGATIONS.

\textsuperscript{50} Places and Things for Experimental Schools (New York: Educational Facilities Laboratories, 1972), p. 91.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
The idea of an urban campus is not unique. In 1972, Places and Things for Experimental Schools proposed the Everywhere School concept, which would combine home base, non-school and resource center programs into a single environment for education. "It houses students in several small schoolhouses or found spaces and sends students into the community to use the facilities for educational purposes." However, this project goes one step further by more thoroughly integrating the curriculum, the classroom spaces and the students into the urban community.

Building upon the concept of found space, the school leases individual class spaces from existing buildings. Lease space can be enormously beneficial to a school system due to a reduction in community capital construction expenditures and the speed of implementation. Aside from filling the city's unwanted space, the school can lease on a "pay-as-you-go" basis, using funds from the operating budget rather than from capital expenditures. Furthermore, whereas current schools take two to three years for design and construction before they can be used, a school formed with lease space can be occupied immediately, alleviating overcrowding within the school system immediately. An added benefit to lease space is the ability for the size of the school to fluctuate in order to

52 Ibid., p. 88.
fulfill classroom needs for any given year. For example, if an extraordinarily large class passes through the school, more class space can be acquired to accommodate it. Likewise, lower enrollment during a particular year could lead to the relinquishing of unneeded classrooms.

The school hopes to benefit from its fellow tenants. When assigning classes to buildings, an attempt is made to keep classes of a specific subject together in the same building in order to facilitate interaction between them. Furthermore, particular buildings are selected on the basis of available space as well as their existing corporate make-up. Similarities between class subject and neighboring business will encourage corporate involvement in the curriculum and interaction with interested students. The final criteria for class placement is proximity to other classes, as it must be feasible to travel from class to class in the allotted 15 minutes.

Like the conceptual Everywhere School, the campus for downtown Houston taps into existing facilities within the city to supplement classroom learning. For example, the Central Branch of the Houston Public Library supplies the students with research materials and study careels. The Downtown YMCA provides athletic facilities and equipment as well as locker space to the school. Houston's prestigious Theater District and the many stages found
within are home to the school's music and drama programs. The city's urban parks, plazas, and green spaces act as playing fields for the school's athletic teams and marching band. All of the resources necessary to provide a student with a well-rounded education can already be found in downtown Houston.

One may ask why a corporation or public facility would tolerate the disruptions anticipated from a steady influx of high school students within its building. However, it is believed that any disruption would be outweighed by the positive public-relations from which the corporation can hope to benefit through association with the school. Corporate sponsorship would be advantageous particularly to companies experiencing negative public perception, such as those in the petro-chemical industry.

Class types are broken down into four classifications: CORE, ELECTIVE, PRIMETIME, and OUTREACH. CORE classes include languages, mathematics, sciences, and history. They are a part of every student's education. ELECTIVE classes allow students to choose particular areas of interest. They include music, drama, journalism, art, and athletics. PRIMETIME is a name given to periods where the entire school gathers in one place for an activity. PRIMETIME occurs once a week and its location changes with the type of event. Events may include all-school
lectures, open-forum debates, performances from within or outside the school, gallery openings, athletic pep rallies, and large-scale community service projects. OUTREACH periods place an individual student or group of students in a workplace off-campus in an "apprenticeship" capacity. The students are entrusted with positions of importance that are meant to test leadership and problem-solving skills.
DEGREES OF PROXIMITY AND INTERACTION
STUDENTS IN DOWNTOWN HOUSTON
The real architecture of the school lies within an elaborate mapping exercise which identifies and isolates individual traffic patterns within the school concept. The "architecture" is the link between spaces rather than the spaces themselves. Each student, faculty member, and school service personnel understands the school, and therefore the city, through his or her own unique daily path. TIME operates as the ordering device common to all maps, uniting and structuring the school through established class periods and between-class transitions.

On each map, colors key the building to the appropriate use classification. Dark blue indicates a HOME BASE for the students. Red locates an element of the CORE curriculum. Yellow buildings house ELECTIVE classes. Green blocks are part of the OUTREACH program. Light blue gathers students for PRIMETIME. The quickest path between classes is also represented.

MAP 1 is a fold-out that acts as a master plan of the campus. To the right of the page, a photograph of each building is accompanied by its street address and the courses taught within it. The buildings are keyed to the map on the left through an assigned letter-number coordinate.

MAP 2 is a layout of the campus that locates all existing, physical connections between buildings, such as above-ground skywalks and below-ground tunnels.

MAP 3 is an example of a student's daily schedule. It locates each of the student's classrooms as well as the most direct paths between them, both above and below ground. Off-campus movement is represented in green. The graph at the bottom of the page represents the same schedule in a linear progression based on time. The colored blocks denote the class type and location; the dark blue bars represent changes between classes, where the potential for social interaction is heightened. The map page is followed by a text-based schedule print-out.
MAP 4 is a typical map of a faculty member. One will notice that the circle of travel is much smaller for the instructor, as he or she tends to remain in the same classroom all day. All-school assemblies are included in the faculty map.

MAP 5 locates the city-wide grid of street-corner lockers.

MAP 6 is a traffic map for the school security force, known as "hall monitors." These paths follow the existing street grid, creating a continuous, circuitous route between street lockers and student parking facilities. The hall monitor protects the students and their belongings from each other and those not affiliated with the school.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRACY MORROW</th>
<th>ID#: 1533</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 0800-0945</td>
<td>TEXAS HISTORY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 0900-0945</td>
<td>PHYSICAL EDUCATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 1000-1045</td>
<td>CALCULUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 1100-1145</td>
<td>OUTREACH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 1200-1345</td>
<td>DRAMA ALLEY THEATRE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 1400-1645</td>
<td>ORATORY COURT OF APPEALS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 1900-1945</td>
<td>PRIME TIME</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PRIME TIME SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MON</th>
<th>SCHOOL-WIDE MEETING</th>
<th>ALLEY THEATRE</th>
<th>E-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TUES</td>
<td>COMMUNITY LECTURE</td>
<td>BANCOUE BUILDING</td>
<td>G-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WED</td>
<td>ELECTIVE SHOW/OPENING</td>
<td>LOCATION TBA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THURS</td>
<td>COMMUNITY SERVICE</td>
<td>STUDENT BLOCK</td>
<td>H-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRI</td>
<td>PEP RALLY</td>
<td>CONVENTION CENTER</td>
<td>GREEN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LOCKERS WITHIN THE CITY
It is in the urban furniture and classroom installations that the more traditional form of architectural design comes into play. These pieces facilitate the educational process by providing communal space, storage, and multi-media equipment.

The most elaborate construction is the student union. This permanent structure asserts the school's long-term place in the city and acts as a collector of students before and after school. Occupying a vacant city block (of which there are many), the union is broken up into three levels; the two sub-levels provide commuter parking while the surface level offers blacktop sports facilities as well as permanently-assigned student "homebase lockers" around the block's perimeter. The arcade of lockers provides students with shelter from the weather as they exchange books between classes. The arcade splits the sidewalk in two along the hedgerow, creating a more private, covered "hallway" for the students and extending a canopy over the parallel public walk. Mounted throughout the arcade are video display monitors which offer information to both the student population and the general public. Located at the corners are city transit stops, where students are provided the opportunity to interact with those waiting for a bus.

As discussed in the MAPPING EXERCISE, temporary, "sattelite" locker banks are located on a grid throughout the city. They occupy the street corners along with the newspaper vending machines and provide students with temporary book storage when their class schedule takes them out of reach of the student union. The lockers operate like those in a bus terminal, with a removable key that is returned once the books are reclaimed. The street lockers are patrolled by the "hall monitors."

In order to limit the loss of time and money spent on space renovation and classroom finish-out, a multi-media classroom "wall installation" will be utilized. This portable wall is
composed of video monitors, computer hook-ups, storage compartments, and a traditional blackboard, any of which may be detached for use around the classroom. The wall is easily transported to another lease space should the current classroom fail to meet the needs of the class.

More pieces could be designed, such as bike racks and mobile kitchen stations. Each element serves to enhance the greater whole of the school. These elements may be designed by one or many architects. The designs presented here are merely speculations.
MEMBERS

Robert Mangurian
Steve Isenour
Richard Ingersoll
Elizabeth Yates Burns McKee
Young Ho Chang
Mark Wamble

COMMENTS

RM: "I think it is a great proposal for a school. I wish you had designed more things..."

SI: "I appreciate the space of the structure, but it's a little delicate in a nitty gritty urban environment."

"The locker could have become much more interesting as an object."

YHC: "We don't spend enough time thinking about powerbooks..."

"When a generation is built on shifting, analysis is a subtle critique of locker design."

RM: "Did you consider a designing a uniform? It could be rejected, but it would give the students and the school an identity."

YHC: "The locker design is trapped in the middle between generic and designed. Which one should it be?"

EMcK: "I'm interested in your take of architect as sociologist, especially since it is seen as a failed project of the 60's. A number of these projects address it. Do you think it signals a paradigm shift?"

SI: "Sociology is telling you what not to do."

RM: "Exaggerate the impact of the school on the city. Do you want them to be completely anonymous, hidden? You need a graphic of the name of the school on the side of the building. It's too anonymous."

"Its best form is as a fragment."
BIBLIOGRAPHY


TRANSCRIPT OF ERIC B. AND RAKIM'S "PAID IN FULL"