RICE UNIVERSITY

Locating Houston's Museum for Missing Places

by

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LOCATING HOUSTON’S MUSEUM FOR MISSING PLACES

BY ERIC J. LESHINSKY

In Houston, Texas, a vibrant museum culture dedicated to the preservation of precious artworks and antiquities is oddly juxtaposed against a turbulent economy and an ethos propelled by short-term vision, rapid and unregulated change, and the uncertainty of enduring architectural landmarks.

The Museum for Missing Places is a new museum and cultural archive in Houston, Texas, attempting to exist as part of this unstable environment rather than in spite of it, and aspiring to be what this city’s other renowned museums are not: an institution that can activate the public life of the city but also study it, and in turn propose a new set of curatorial practices that might allow a museum to better integrate itself with its surrounding environment.

Sharing the mission of existing museums in gathering, ordering, and exhibiting cultural information that is of broad public interest, the Museum for Missing Places distinguishes itself by turning outward to the city; by initiating dialogues with a public-at-large in places where they’ve never existed before; and by employing a variety of experimental curatorial tactics to allow the boundaries between a museum and its audience to disappear.
This list aims to acknowledge not only those individuals and institutions who had an intimate and direct role in guiding this thesis project, but also those who through casual conversation, timely words of support and enthusiasm, pointed criticism, unconditional love, generosity or intellectual odyssey helped keep the project going and shaped the project in ways I could never predict.

4921 Crawford:
Especially Ray, Mike, Amy
Blaine An
Carroll Parrott Blue
David Brauer
Seth Capron
Chris Chafer
David Crossley
David Feil
Stephen Fox
Katie Goodman
Google
Nova Grenader
Maria Gurman
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Joe Kellner
Danny Kirchen
Ben Krugh
Sky Lanigan
Nana Last
Lars Lerup
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Sam & Esther Lechinsky
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Benji Mason
Chris McNeal
Scipious Ments
Jesse Milne
Zach Moser
Bradley Neighbors
Robert Olsen
Michael Peranteau
Eric Ratkowksi
Regal Plastics
Rice Media Center / Rice Cinema
Rice School of Architecture
Paul Schuette
Jon Schwartz
Anton Sinkewich
Nathan Smith
Greg Stoll
Andy Stone
Tigh Stringer
The Good People of Houston, Texas
Tony Valadez
Shuo Wang
Jeff Williams
Kaye Young
HOU	TON
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TERRA INCognita

"In the city the perpetual myth and desire for origins, for a secure site of explanation, is constantly deferred by their being retold and rewritten."

-Lain Chambers
("Architecture, Amnesia, and the Emergent Archaic", The Unknown City, 2001)

"Houston's stability is literally attacked by time and motion; it is a city formed in a series of conjunctive episodes that hold their relationships for relatively brief periods... Displacements of traditional patterns of stability and urban rituals have become the norm. Time has become a prime variable in determining the genius loci."

-Bruce Webb (cite magazine 46)
Houston, Texas, has a fleet of internationally-renowned museums that exist as fortified reliquaries, largely immune from the turbulence that dictates the rest of Houston's built landscape. What Houston does not have is a museum that, in its methods of gathering, ordering and exhibiting information, actually mirrors the culture of rapid change that defines Houston as a city. Should a museum of this nature exist in Houston? Could it exist? Where would it exist? What information about the city would be exhibited? This is the premise of the Museum for Missing Places.
A SCENE FROM HOUSTON, TEXAS
A City Museum in Search of a City

In a city already teeming with museums— a city where museums are perhaps the most viable form of public space— the Museum for Missing Places (MMP) was founded to be a new sort of public space: one that might not only contain the public life of the city but also study it, and where the critical role of the museum, as an arbiter of public values, might be effectively reasserted.

The Museum for Missing Places (MMP) is a museum of city life in a city that never has enough. In this city, the places, the institutions, the locations that might harbor public life lead short lives—perpetually caught within an economy and a culture that values the private deal over the public exchange. The places that might support this city's public life—places where informal conversations might happen, where coincidences might occur, where the unprescribed life of a city might be staged—these places demand to be identified and acknowledged as the potential foundation for an evolving urban identity that this city is now constructing.

Situated in Houston, Texas, the Museum is—before all else—a response to a city whose historical continuity has long been defined strangely by the impermanence of its architecture rather than its fixity. Propelled by a culture of rapid change that privileges short-term gain over long-term vision, Houston is literally formed from a never-ending series of geographic disruptions— the buildings of the city are quickly altered, roadwork and redirected streets are the norm and volatile weather continually pummels the city, to cite just a few examples. These disruptions create a city of revolving contradictions and perpetual disjunction, and the job of making sense of this city is left to a scattered population.

Yet an urban life does persist behind the fragmented edifice of the city and the Museum for Missing Places believes that an appropriate way of understanding Houston is through the accumulated perceptions of the city's residents and a catalog of the places they inhabit. Through exhibits which rely on public participation, the museum hopes to suggest ways of mapping the city that leverage the diverse observations, descriptions and insights of city residents. The exhibits of the Museum for Missing Places are designed to support this mission by surveying Houston residents and visitors about the ways they relate to their local surroundings. In a city that changes as continuously as Houston, where what's new today may be gone tomorrow, the Museum for Missing Places seeks to chart the shifting terrain of the city by privileging the countless perspectives of lived experience.
The MMP situates itself in dialogue with Houston’s existing museums to the extent that it shares the mission of gathering, ordering, and exhibiting cultural information that is of broad public interest. Yet, how it fulfills this mission is of particular significance in not trying to emulate the physical stability of Houston’s existing museums, the Museum for Missing Places tries to complement them with a range of operations, services and processes that currently exist outside of their normalized ways of working.

Web-based exhibits, site-specific public surveys, temporary gallery installations within other institutions—these are the principal devices used by the Museum for Missing Places to present itself to the public at large. These museum practices are designed to act as both provocations to Houston’s existing museum culture, but equally significant, as attempts to mirror the urban ephemera that the Museum seeks to exhibit. Indeed, the Museum for Missing Places’ principal challenge is to document and activate Houston’s less acknowledged public places, to make these forgotten, excluded, marginalized places into worthwhile museum content, to frame them from a new perspective that allows them to be freshly appreciated as places that are more than what they seem.

The Museum targets these places with communicative public artworks presented as public surveys—tactical media interventions positioned to solicit responses about these places, in writing or speech, from passers-by. These public interventions act as interactive, dialogue-based exhibits for the Museum by initiating conversations in places where they’ve never existed before. The individuals who respond to the public surveys create a body of knowledge about the place of the exhibit, which in turn forms the primary content of the Museum. The responses—that is, if anybody responds to these surveys—are gathered by the Museum and included in a more thorough online exhibit about the place in question on the Museum’s website. As the Museum evolves, a cycle is created, in which visitors encounter the Museum’s public surveys in the physical space of the city, are directed to the Museum’s website for more information, and from there directed to other public interventions staged by the Museum in other parts of the city. In a sense, the Museum and its audience become indistinguishable from one another.

By existing in a space that is neither here nor there and never truly grounded, the Museum for Missing Places certainly risks never becoming a part of the city that it struggles to understand. However, the flexibility and diffuseness of its practice allows the Museum to do what other museums currently cannot: attempt to mediate a city’s increasingly complex public life—what happens in physical space as well as online—and create a means of chronicling a city of rapid and unregulated urban change—not through its architecture—but through the eyes and actions of its inhabitants.
VACANT LOT
SUPERMARKET
Esplanade
MUSEUM
MISSING
FOR
PLACES

Eric Leshinsky
Curator

www.missing-places.org
contact: info@missing-places.org
LOCATION UNCERTAIN

"WARDS MAP"
City of Houston, 1912

"SUPER NEIGHBORHOODS"
City of Houston, 2005

Note: Maps not to scale. Bottom map courtesy of City of Houston.
To promote the first exhibit of the museum for missing places, business cards and flyers are produced to create interest around Houston. This publicity as well as word-of-mouth would generate the main substance of the exhibit, reproduced on the following pages. The need to promote this exhibit through printed materials quickly becomes symptomatic of the larger dilemma of creating a museum with only an online presence. By consequence, subsequent exhibits would aggressively employ interventions in physical public space as links to the ongoing development of the museum website.
HELP!
I'm a new resident in Houston and I'm having trouble locating myself in this city. If I told you that I lived at 4921 Crawford Street between Rosedale and Wichita Streets in Houston (the building on the far left above), where would you say I lived? Is there a name for this place? What should I know about this area? Any advice would be greatly appreciated!

Using the map linked to this exhibit, locate where you are in this city and mark that spot with a note about that place. Or, if you have information, leave a note about where I live in this city.

To access the exhibit, click on title above.
PLEASE NOTE: To guarantee the proper functioning of this map, you must use Internet Explorer as your browser.

To participate in this exhibit, use the map below to find your location in the city and then using the instructions below, leave a note about that place, or the place where I live, 4921 Crawford Street between Rosedale and Wichita Streets. You can also return to add another note later.

If you would like to be notified of future exhibits and events at the Museum, send an e-mail to info@missing-places.org

Instructions

- Click on any of the existing markers to see the notes other people have left.
- ZOOM IN (The default map is zoomed out to let people see a larger view of the city.)
- To create a new marker with information, first navigate the map to find the location you wish to mark (you can move the map by dragging it and you can zoom in and out with the tools at the upper left). Put the information about that area into the "Text to add" textbox, then click on "Add marker", and click on the map where you want the marker to go.
- To add information to an existing marker, first navigate the map to find the marker you wish to add information to (you can move the map by dragging it, you can zoom in and out, etc.). Put the information you wish to add into the "Text to add" textbox, then click on "Append text to existing marker", and click on the marker you wish to add information to.

Add marker

Text to add (see the questions on the previous page as a guide):

The are the latest 50 markers added to the map, which may be useful if you are checking in frequently for the latest information. The purple markers are markers that people have added information to after the initial marker was created. They are in essence "updated" markers, useful for people who are seeking more information in locations they've already checked.

As a central feature of Exhibit 1, visitors to the Museum are introduced to an interactive map that allows users to input notes about locations in Houston, something like a geo-referenced bulletin board. This basic metaphor notwithstanding, the map only exists through a unique open source software agreement provided to the public by Google in 2003. The functionality of the map is adapted from an existing online mapping resource developed by Greg Stoll and Scipionus Mentus to aid refugees of the catastrophic Katrina and Rita hurricanes that hit the Gulf region in 2003.
1648 Hawthorne There are four units in the front building, two in the backhouse. The two units downstairs house entirely too many cats. One guy never leaves his house, binges on video games for several days, and then sleeps for a day face down on his couch, immobile, and it worries me that perhaps he has died. The apartment across the hall from me has been empty for two months, window wide open. There is a dearth of parking on my street, owing to the nightlife of Westheimer. I used to hate Brasil coffee shop but since I'm too lazy to walk a block farther, I go there far too often. I think the owner has grandiose visions of taking over Montrose. Late at night/early in the morning it is entertaining to watch drunken people stumbling back to their cars. No one seems to carpool.
Added: 11/29 00:18

616 Memorial Heights: One of the numerous new apartment complexes which, combined with viral townhomes, are covering up every last inch of real estate to the west of downtown. I love the location, though.
Added: 11/14 09:53

Ours may be the only house left with a mailing address on Rural Street. The word "Rural" is easy to spell, and difficult to pronounce. If you don't want your tongue to get bogged down in it, you can pronounce it "Rue Royale" for laughs. A consequence of living on a tiny little connector street is that every new pizzaiolo guy ends up calling for directions. So, we get one cold pizza per new guy. Our street is now longer than this map shows; it's been extended due south to meet Memorial Street, with the expansion of Travis Elementary. But there's still no one else with a Rural Street address.
Added: 11/30 22:00
I refer to this location as "the vortex" cuz I feel like I can be almost anywhere in Houston in 3 minutes (ok, anyplace worth going!) note accessibility to freeways, downtown, and the fabulous Montrose Heights/Memorial Park neighborhoods.
Added: 10/17 17:18

3912 Bute #31 live between the Montrose, Museum and Third Ward districts. There are a lot of people who walk their dogs, a lot of people who have little parties and a lot of people who sell crack.
Added: 10/24 11:07

5318 Crawford resident since 1968. Original resident Mrs. Perry 1932 Crawford (built 1919) said it at one time was called the old south end in a 70's conversation. 1923 map shows city streets ending in the 5500 block. In the 90s the Halo was chosen as name of a group of owners during the zoning map designation. The boundaries were Palm, Burr, 288 and San Jacinto. HALO stood for Herman Area Land Owners.

Halo in the Museum District is the name I use for the area. The city designated the official museum district northern boundary as Burr, originally. I believe the official museum district boundaries should go to Highway 59, Highway 288 Hermann Drive and to the west no opinion. Within the official designation should be places like the HALO.
Added: 10/31 12:44
1516 Oakdale I've been here since I was 13. In 1968 this area was very diverse. Where the Health, Children's Museums and Park Plaza Hospital are, I remember empty lots with HUGE pine trees and long St. Augustine grass was. The only structure there was 5600 Jackson and the Park Lane condos. Now we are in transition with new development everywhere. I just wish I had had the foresight to take pictures of all the old homes here and collect some more history. Folks that were here before 1968, think of the 'Third Ward' when they think of this area, but I never have. I've always said I live near or 4 blocks north of Hermann Park. I wish the old family home caractature of the neighborhood never stops shining.

Added: 11/05 10:54

I once worked down the street from that place and the owner of the shop called it "the Halos" and the kids and old school residents called it "3rd Ward" and the yuppies moving in called it "Museum District." I liked the older houses because they look built to last, the newer houses and condos look made out of popsicle sticks. I don't have my own name for it though...

Added: 10/18 20:04

I just tell people I live on the Other side of Main Street, and that usually says it all. I still feel like Main Street represents a dividing line in this city.

Added: 10/20 14:29
i wanted to comment about 4921 Crawford. i lived there for 4 years, in apt. 26. it is a strange little world in there. something about the scale and the central courtyard make for friendly interaction between neighbors. the maple tree in the center seems to be the life force. it is a great location for walking to museums, or riding a bike to rice (cutting through herman park), the fiesta on wheeler is the closest grocery store, and always an adventure. the flower shops are nearby, and you can even catch the train these days. i have heard that little neighborhood referred to as the museum district, midtown, and the bends (because it is where the grid bends, and lines up with the downtown grid).

Added: 10/15 20:43

i now live here and don't know much about the area yet... except that multiple people refer to it as "the triangle". i like that.

Added: 10/15 01:00

this place is called Andover. i just moved here. lots of people i know live here too, and there seem to be a lot of graduate students from Rice and U of H here. the apartments were built in the 1960's and have been "thoughtfully renovated." they are well managed and the courtyards are filled with mature trees such as live oak, magnolia, crepe myrtle, date palm, and best of all--banana! the blossoms are unbelievably sexy.

Added: 10/15 20:33
2110 Kane St. This is the "Historic Old Sixth Ward". One of Houston's few historic neighborhoods, where historic means older than 1960. OK, some of the houses are from the late 19th century, and many of them are fabulously renovated, expanded or restored. The neighborhood is very small (400 homes) and is in a rapidly gentrifying section of Houston (townhomes and megapartments to the west are lumbering quickly towards us in an effort to fill in previously industrial landscape). The neighborhood has quick access to the Buffalo Bayou and to the Glenwood cemetery and I walk to downtown often. Recently, the neighborhood has been fighting over whether to give the TIRZ board zoning authority---something extremely unusual in Houston, but probably necessary if the neighborhood wants to preserve its old bayside wood-victorians. It's quite a little drama actually...

Added: 10/19 16:47

Bill Hicks Resurrection Laboratory is located at 2915 Delafield...the name of our nook is uncertain, but just north of us across the bayou is called Pine Valley. Just West of us across Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. is called 3rd Ward and more north of us across Interstate 45 is called 2nd Ward, with many conflicting names in each nook and cranny.

Added: 10/18 19:33

blah

Added: 10/23 16:33
1416 Nicholson. Houston Heights. The street used to be named Railroad Street, because active train tracks were on one side of the street. In our block there are only houses on one side of the street. So we face the track easement and the back of other people's yards. Some of the old garages look like barns. There is a power line easement behind us, too. So sometimes I feel like we live on the country, except that we have marvelous Houston, Texas, at our doorstep! I think that our "serenity in the city" is going to change soon when the track easement becomes a bike trail.

I have mixed feelings about the bike trail now.

Added: 10/21 13:12

This is Willowbrook. I commute out here two days a week, usually on METRO's 40-Acres Home Bus, which drops me off near the end of the line on the east side of SH 249. From there, I walk, sans sidewalk, across nine lanes of frontage road and 20 acres of parking lot to my place of employment, which is wedged between a "Golf Galaxy" and a "Petsmart", behind a drive-thru "Starbucks" and around the corner from "Hooters". Willowbrook is an anonymous terrain of chain stores and franchise restaurants, and it also exemplifies Houston pretty well. It is a place that makes me want to retch.

Added: 10/24 15:14

I live in a void. Riverside was torn to pieces by the freeway. I live on the last vestigial remnant of the old N MacGregor, the end of the cul de sac, in the amnity of the feeder road.

Added: 11/09 15:40
The Gulfton community was originally developed in the 70's, as Houston boomed from big oil during the energy crisis. It's young / hip and predominantly white population eventually moved to the suburbs, leaving one its mostly high density housing vacant. In the last decade it has become home to many of Houston's immigrant population, especially Mexican immigrants. This culture of new Americans has changed the environment of the Gulfton neighborhood. It is one of the few places in Houston with a strong pedestrian environment. Biking there on a weekend feels like a completely different city than Houston. There is also a subculture market going on, where small business literally grows out of family homes. There are a couple of flea markets in the area that are the next best thing to a Mexican marketplace.

Added: 10/16 20:59

1972 W. Lamar St. (the lamar house) The upper unit of this duplex was a staple in the Houston music scene for at least 7 years. A list of musicians / scene supporters who have claimed "the lamar house" as a home could be read as an h-town indie music history timeline. All participants in this subculture seem to nostalgically recall the participation in multiple lamar house parties, shows and random social gatherings, allowing us all to claim contributing to its slow yet brutal death in early 2005. Rumors claim the apartment as uninhabitable at this point due to years of landlord neglect and heavy rock and roll traffic. Unfortunately the track record of Houston landlords leads me to assume that the space is currently being leased at an insane price to some sucker who fell in love with the location but failed to notice the perpetual sinking of one side of the building upon signing the lease. Hopefully the astro turf still remains on the kitchen floor.

Added: 11/10 11:52
Central League City is old and quaint. The rose garden in the middle of town is one of the best small parks I've seen in the Houston area. Esteban's and Salsa's feel warm and comfortable. It's a nice change from the suburban blandness along I-45.
Added: 01/20 23:04

1100 W 31st This is a little known area of town, sandwiched between 610 and a power line easement. Houses are mainly 50s ranch style homes.
Added: 01/21 22:40

11827 Westheimer Rd Former site of the Westheimer Community Church and Cemetery. Now a parking lot for HEB.
Added: 01/22 15:43
Alden Place, Fourth Ward. Relative to most parts of houston, this little neighborhood between Freedman's Town and Montrose is mostly intact. Most of it was built in the early 1930s. A lot of the people who grew up in the neighborhood refer to it as "Fourth Ward." A lot of the graffiti around here says "IV-D" and "Fourth Ward For Life." Some people speak of the neighborhood as simply being a part of "Montrose" while some of the yuppies that wandered into home ownership here have ignorantly expanded the new term "Midtown" to include this area. Arson has been a regular problem in this neighborhood and much of the new construction is nearly identical to the three-per-lot townhomes that are going up everywhere in central Houston right now. Most of them look cheap and don't resemble the existing dark-colored brick structures at all. Each one is like a big middle finger to everyone else who lives here. There are raccoons and possums bigger than dogs and sometimes I can hear them fighting in the crawlspace under my house. It's unusually quiet here. The walls in my building are really thin and I can hear my neighbors sneezing and laughing and sobbing. There's a little grocery called "K Food Store" behind a house on Stanford and Clay that is almost like the hub of the neighborhood. A lot of my neighbors spend a lot of time outside just hanging out which is something I missed in other places I've lived.

Added: 01/20 23:43

705 Main St was previously known as the H.S Kress building before being renamed to St. Germain in either 1999 or 2000.

Added: 01/22 15:57
RE-DISTRICTING

missing-places.org/info/inbox: updates (8 of 18)

You replied to this message on 11/09/2005 10:34:56 PM.

Date: Wed, 09 Nov 2005 15:03:11 -0600 (CDT)
From: ian.rees@bcm.tmc.edu
To: info@missing-places.org
Reply-To: ian.rees@bcm.tmc.edu
Subject: updates

Hi,

I'd like to subscribe to your mailing list. I saw your sign while riding the train today.

I've have felt the exact same unease surrounding the issues of classification in the 5 years I have lived in the area. My house has gone from being considered Third Ward, to TMG area, to Museum District. The question of naming is a symptom of the larger uncertainty about the changing of the urban fabric in central Houston. Perhaps it may be instructive to study the development of neighborhood contexts in other cities, contemporary and historical. What is the point where a neighborhood becomes defined? Do neighborhoods become internally defined amongst residents before the image becomes public, or, as appears to be happening in Houston, are neighborhoods sold as what they might become, before they actually are? There are striking parallels between the development of master planned communities and the rebadging and remarking of Montrose, Third Ward, Fourth Ward, the TMG area, etc. Both real estate developers and the new residents alike feel the need to transform a neighborhood into something it might not want to be, to find a way to actually live the image they've sold.

Again, I'd just like to say that I think you have an excellent project that is extremely timely, and I believe, necessary.

Thanks,
Ian Rees

 Shortly after the museum's second exhibit was installed, this message arrived through the e-mail link on the website in a few paragraphs, the unexpected message artfully distills the motivations for the following exhibit.
Exhibit 2 initiated the concept of a designed "survey object": a sign or other means of communicative public art that could be used as the centerpiece of an exhibit. A "survey object" would be installed in a physical public place, posing questions through its design to passers-by about that site, and provide some means of response. In all cases, there would be specific mention of the responses being part of an exhibit at the Museum for Missing Places, and participants would be directed to the museum's website at www.missing-places.org. For the "survey objects" used in Exhibit 1, a deliberate attempt was made to emulate the cheap signs that clutter the Houston Museum District area, advertising anything and everything related to a gentrifying neighborhood: homes for sale, homes for rent, landscaping services, demolition services, etc... The stenciled signs were made on the same 18" x 24" coroplast board used by virtually all of the other signs in the area.
A SIGNAGE CAMPAIGN
TO UNOFFICIALLY
MARK THE LIMITS OF
HOUSTON'S MUSEUM DISTRICT.

LOOK FOR THE SIGNS IN THE MUSEUM DISTRICT
AREA STARTING ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2005

[Map of sign locations]
[Photos of sign locations]
[Photos of signs with responses]

Since the early-1990's when the semblance of a "museum district" became visible in Houston, the geographic limits of this place have never been truly certain. In recent years, through extensive property turnover and rapid redevelopment, the area known as the Museum District has grown extensively to include a variety of new residential communities whose relationship to the museums may not yet be clear.

This exhibit aims to acknowledge the urban impact of a place identity: what is the Museum District- or what is not- holds severe consequences for the architecture and population of this part of the city, deciding what should be there and what should not.

THE MAIN WEBSITE INTERFACE FOR EXHIBIT.
"re-Districting"

To participate in this exhibit, use the map below and the instructions provided to locate the re-Districting signs in the Museum District area. If you have an answer to the question, "Where does the Museum District begin and where does it end?", visit one of the sign locations and mark your response on the board itself (pens are provided, but may disappear). Signs will be mounted on existing street-sign poles at all locations. You can also return to add another response later.

If you would like to be notified of future exhibits and events at the Museum, send an e-mail to info@missing-places.org

Instructions

- **Click on the Markers** to see the addresses of the signs.
- **Zoom in** using the tools at the upper left of map.
- **Move the map** by dragging the map itself.

As a carryover from the Museum's first exhibit, Exhibit 2 employs a customized Google map to advertise the current exhibit to the growing number of visitors to the website. Visitors can click on the map's markers to learn the exact location of the signs placed around the Museum District area.
SIGN AT BLODGETT AND DOWLING STREETS, AT AN INTERSECTION WITH AUTO REPAIR SHOPS ON 3 DIFFERENT CORNERS.
Where does the Museum District begin and where does it end?
(please respond)

1. _______________________
2. _______________________
3. _______________________
4. _______________________
5. _______________________

www.missing-places.org
Sign at Rosewood and Almeda Streets, immediately outside a popular coffee shop.
Where does the Museum District begin and where does it end?
(please respond)

1. ____________________________

2. ____________________________

3. ____________________________

4. ____________________________

5. ____________________________

www.missing-places.org
Sign at Montrose Boulevard and Bissonnet Street, at a bus stop in front of the Contemporary Art Museum. This sign disappeared 2 days after its installation.
Sign at Oakdale and Crawford Streets, across from a popular bicycle shop, and on a street well-trafficked by dog-walkers.
Where does the Museum District begin and where does it end?

(please respond)

1. Hermann Dr to Southmore

2. What Dr finding is that it is organic. Enchancing due to marketing plays, selling schemes. Same as midtown/4th, unmca.

3. It's here and end there which is no where makes you think hahaha

Begin at Hermann Drive. Goes to Buccaneer and from Montmore to Almeda

4. Binz to 1/2 man Dr.

Anywhere a developer wants to "tag" a property with this name and add 50k. Lived here 20 years. 3rd Ward. Binz, Midtown, Museum District - what ever!

www.missing-places.org
Sign at Montrose Boulevard and Branard Street, outside a popular coffee shop, and on a corner already full of other media and graffiti.
Where does the Museum District begin and where does it end?

(please respond)

1. ________________________

2. ________________________

3. "Alabama" Medical Center

4. _____

5. www.missing-places.org

(bissonnet → w.al)
Sign at Hermann Park Drive and Jackson Street, at a popular trail head into Hermann Park, well-trafficked by dog-walkers, joggers, golfers, walkers, and family outings.
Where does the Museum District begin and where does it end?

(please respond)

1. South of Alabama

2. East of Almeda

3. I LOVE ABBIE

4. ALMEDA - WOODHEAD

5. North-South, Wheeler to McCom Fountain

www.missing-places.org
Sign at Ewing and Caroline Streets, on a corner in the middle of the Park Plaza Hospital complex, adjacent to a popular outdoor lunch spot for hospital staff.
Where does the Museum District begin and where does it end? *(please respond)*

1. 44 acres 
   Home of Montrose 59 & Haden 
   Garden City 
   Spring 

2. Highway 59
   Hermann Park 
   Southmore → Austin

3. A geographically distinct area from Mission Park to Cytex
   to Buffalo Soldier Museum to Hermann Park (Children MNS)

4. **Don't Nobody know 3rd Ward**

5. www.missing-places.org
Sign at Main and Biscoupet streets, on a corner in between the two buildings of the Museum of Fine Arts.
Where does the Museum District begin and where does it end? (please respond)

1. MAIN & MONTROSE (I think)
2. DALZAH & ALABAMA?
3. DOW + MONTROSE
4. In your imagination
5. From Park to 59

www.missing-places.org
Sign at Labranch and Alabama Streets, at bus stop immediately outside the Station Gallery, a nonprofit alternative art space
Where does the Museum District begin and where does it end?

(please respond)

1. __________________________

2. __________________________

3. __________________________

4. __________________________

5. __________________________

www.missing-places.org
Sign at Southmore Boulevard and Almeda Street, near a bustling intersection, at a bus stop outside a Walgreens drug store.
Where does the Museum District begin and where does it end?
(please respond)

1. _____________________________
2. _____________________________

IT STARTS AT YOUR FEET AND ENDS NEXT TO THE

3. _____________________________
4. _____________________________

at the diameter of a communities thinking of what/where it should

5. Point A to Point B &

www.missing-places.org
Sign at Labranche Street in between Rosedale and Wentworth Streets, immediately in front of MacGregor Elementary School where students are dropped off and picked up by parents. This sign disappeared 4 days after its installation.
Sign at Calumet and Live Oak Streets, outside Mama's Food Store, next to a popular pay phone, across the street from low-income housing.
Where does the Museum District begin and where does it end?
( please respond )

1. It starts at the museum and goes after the museum.
2. 4th Avenue
3. 5th Avenue
4. Hollywood
5. www.missing-places.org
In a city like Houston, with a scattered and exceedingly private population, city life is often observed in unexpected ways. Indeed, the Museum for Missing Places was founded, for among reasons, as a means of locating the disparate forms of public life in the city, often taking cues from existing signs of life such as the flyers above—desperate appeals for a public that may or may not exist.
Stenciled signs— for their affordability and ease of reproduction, their sheer efficiency— were employed again, this time for third exhibit. 3. With a new theme and a new set of sites, the signs made for this exhibit needed to be bigger, and more visible from a distance— ideally, readable by motorists as well as pedestrians. Rather than asking passers-by to respond in writing directly on the sign as in the previous exhibit, they were provided a phone number where a voice message could be left. Audio files of these messages became a significant feature of the exhibit on the museum’s website and transcripts of these messages are reproduced on the following pages. In the end, at 2'x4', the scale of the signs was grossly undercalculated, especially when situated next to the more prominent political campaign signs all over town.
Valuing Vacancy

WHAT WAS HERE?
WHAT SHOULD BE HERE?
WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

CALL 713-481-2330
WWW.MISSING-PLACES.ORG

A SIGNAGE CAMPAIGN
TO INTERROGATE THE VACANT LOTS
OF MIDTOWN HOUSTON

LOOK FOR THE SIGNS IN MIDTOWN
STARTING ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2005

[vacant lot 1] [vacant lot 2] [vacant lot 3] [vacant lot 4] [vacant lot 5] [vacant lot 6]

"absence is either the trace of a previous presence,
it contains memory; or the trace of a possible presence,
it contains immanence" -Peter Eisenman

Vacant lots are created in Houston everyday, at an astounding rate, and often for reasons that most residents of the city will never know. When their lives are short, they are barely noticed, but when these vacancies linger they illustrate the present condition of the city, perpetually caught somewhere between a devaluing of the past and a valuing of the future. Can these lots be seen as something more than absence? They rarely provide us with traces of their past lives, but can we interrogate them to find clues of the future?
"The building I've noticed is in Houston at Holman Street and Main Street... Tilden Peet Building... umm... it's right off the rail stop so my suggestion would be something like Starbucks. At that corner location, you really need an anchor on that property. I would also recommend maintaining the property... umm I think that prospective tenants will look at the property... umm in a better light if it looks maintained, that means no graffiti, that means uniform paint... umm just basic things. I really think that would be my suggestion of a Starbucks or any other business that has a high amount of pedestrian traffic, err good pedestrian traffic-- not like a job placement service or a day labor site-- would be great for that location. I've heard things about parking garages going across the street and if that's the case you're going to have people parking their car... umm getting a coffee and hitting the rail right there... and that's part of the Houston and surrounding district's master plan for the high-traffic corridor. Thank you."

"Hi, I was at the corner of Main and Holman, and I think-- I don't know what was there-- but I think what should be there is a Starbucks, a Chipotle... and a bookstore! Thanks."
"Hello, my name is Samuel Timpking. I was born on that missing places lot on Elgin in 1908. At the time, it was a thimble factory and my mom worked the thimble press. She worked for 2 cents an hour back in those days. She was... uh... an evacuee from Venezuela at the time during the Great Guadalajara Depression. I had very fond memories growing up in the thimble factory... I remember the boss of the thimble factory let me pull the thimble press from time to time. It was a sad day when the thimble factory closed in around 1918. I was the... a... oh... This prank call ain't goin' too well. We were off to a good start though, weren't we? Have a lovely day and God bless you."
ELGIN AT LOUISIANNA
NO CALLS RECEIVED.
MILAM AT FRANCIS
"Hi, this is Margaret Robinson. I'm calling you concerning the property on the corner of Labranch and Alabama. It used to be a service station right there on that corner where the man worked on cars... he was a car-repair person. He repaired the cars for low-income people that didn't have a lot of money, and he did a very wonderful job of doing so. The property's right here on the corner across from the parking lot of the school and the place was called Station 1952. I don't remember the man's name but he did repair cars there for many many many many years. I just wanted to leave a message. Thank you."
ALABAMA AT LABRANCH
NO CALLS RECEIVED.
ALABAMA AT MILAM
"Hello, my name is Clare Nowak Boyd. I saw one of your signs... umm actually on the internet. My boyfriend Michael Allen sent me your website. We do a website out of St. Louis called 'Ecology of Absence,' it's at eco-absence.org. And I just want to say thanks for putting up those signs, that's really cool, umm... I don't know... it's been a long day, our boiler still isn't on, it's gonna freeze tonight, our internet connection has been sporadic, one of our cats is apparently sick, so I saw that and I said 'ok, something good is going on in the world.' Umm... yeah, I find it really interesting... St. Louis has incredible, beautiful very old architectural stock, but has had a series of demolition-happy administrations throughout the years. Our neighborhood, Old North St. Louis, is immediately north of downtown and as an inner-ring area in an older American city, it has of course had an incredible decline over the years and incredible amounts of bad, bad city planning going back to the 1930's, and I mean the level of demolition up here is such that it seriously looks like farmland. You know, there are areas of several blocks which have one or two buildings on them at most. There are blocks with no buildings on them. Our own block has more buildings than lack of buildings but still, I mean, we own our house and we own four vacant city lots to the corner where the city tore down a Romanesque row of apartment buildings that had been standing since the 1890's, an auto body shop and umm, possibly some more stuff, but we think that's it. And umm, we own them because the 1981 rehabber of this building got them because the church across the street wanted to make a parking lot out of the lots. But umm, she was really mad and she was really rich and she bought the lots up and fenced them and then the church folded a couple of years later... it's still vacant. Umm... I don't know what else to tell you... every vacant lot has a story, whether, I mean... I had a postcard sitting on my mantle of a St. Louis building I had never seen and my exterminator came over and told me the address and that it had been torn down and all this stuff and we went and saw the place-- or the place she told us to look-- and there was indeed an empty lot there and guess what? The city owned that one too. Umm... this is rambling, but my point is..."

(The caller was cut off by a time limit on the voicemail box)
MAIN AT McGOWEN
PASSING-THRU
The popular drive-thru recycling center, Recycleexpress, became the site for Exhibit 4 and initiated the concept of a collaboration between the Museum and another institution, in this case the City of West University Public Works Department which manages the facility. Though heavily used at seemingly all hours of day and every day of the week and often functioning as a de facto social hub for environmentally-conscious people from all over the city, Recycleexpress continues to be an enigma, a less acknowledged public space in Houston. Through this exhibit, the Museum endeavored to understand who is actually using the facility and why it has become so popular, and figured that the exhibit might be of practical value to the managers of the facility. To this end, a series of "Guest Books" were designed and produced by the Museum using genuine recycled paper bags from Recycleexpress. In a brief phone conversation with Bradley Neighbors of the City of West University, formal approval was granted to the Museum to conduct the exhibit on site in exchange for formal documentation of the exhibit. While the exhibit was installed seamlessly and generated tremendous attention from visitors to the facility, the deal which allowed it to happen was soon forgotten by both parties and no further communication was made.
EVENT: PASSING THRU
Saturday, November 5, 2005 @ Houston's RecycleXpress
Address: 5004 Dincans (just south of Westpark near Kirby)

The Museum for Missing Places will be spending the day
greeting visitors to the city's popular drive-thru
recycling center. In cooperation with the City of West
University Public Works Department, "recycled" guest books
will be provided for visitors to sign while passing
through the recycling center. The Museum will also be
doing a continuous filming of activities at the recycling
center for future exhibition.

Located in Houston, but owned and managed by the City of
West University, RecycleXpress is a public place that is
neither here nor there. Situated discretely off Kirby
Boulevard, the recycling center is virtually unnoticeable
until activated by a stream of cars passing through its
drop-off lanes. In recent years RecycleXpress has become a
bonafide public space, serving as a magnet for a broad
community of environmentally-conscious Houston residents.
At a time when City officials are going to great lengths
to prescribe highly traditional public spaces for the
city, what can we learn from the popularity of one of
Houston's most unheralded public places?

[GUESTBOOK 1] [GUESTBOOK 2] [GUESTBOOK 3] [GUESTBOOK 4] [GUESTBOOK 5]

THE MAIN WEBSITE INTERFACE FOR EXHIBIT. 4
For many people, this first gallery installation of the museum for Missing Places served as the first opportunity to grasp the project in a concrete way. Some visitors remarked that they felt as if they were walking around inside the museum's website. As a mid-semester review of the project, the exhibition design needed to be coherent, while also reinforcing the values of non-linearity and multivalent interpretation that were thus far the hallmarks of the project. Documenting the first 4 exhibits of the museum, the exhibition was installed in a bracketed space within the Rice School of Architecture's Farish Gallery and oriented toward the main traffic corridor of the building. This orientation was particularly significant given that the majority of presentations in Farish Gallery are oriented away from this hallway for more intimacy and privacy. The exhibition was designed to be as public and accessible as possible without being invasive or posing as an obstacle, in a similar vein to how the museum had already installed its exhibits in public places around Houston.
TRAIN TO SOMEWHERE

METRORAIL Rider Guide June 2005

Bus Routes Connecting at or Adjacent to the Rail Station

METRORail Service Approximate Frequency

Weekdays:
4:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m. 6 minutes
7:30 a.m. - 10:30 p.m. 12 minutes

Mondays - Thursdays:
10:30 p.m. - 11:49 a.m. 9 minutes
11:49 p.m. - 3:00 a.m. 15 minutes

Fridays:
11:49 p.m. - 3:00 a.m. 15 minutes

Weekends:
5:30 a.m. - 10 a.m. 15 minutes
10 a.m. - 10 p.m. 12 minutes
Saturday:
10 p.m. - 11:49 a.m. 10 minutes
Sunday:
10 p.m. - 1:49 a.m. 10 minutes

Travel Time
End to End 32 Minutes

Time to UH-Downtown
Station from: Average Travel Time

UH-Downtown 1 minute
Main Street Station 3 minutes
Pnc 4 minutes
Downtown Transit Center 5 minutes
Houston 9 minutes
Eisenhower 10 minutes
Shepley 10 minutes
Museum District 11 minutes
Hermann Park/Rice U 17 minutes
Memorial Hermann Hospital 17 minutes
Houston Zoo 13 minutes
Dryden/TMC 21 minutes
Reliant Park 22 minutes
Smith Land 22 minutes
Reese Park 25 minutes
Pinecroft 25 minutes

Remember, safety starts with YOU. When traveling along the rail line, always STOP, LOOK and LISTEN, then travel in both directions. Obey all traffic and pedestrian signals and signs. Cross the tracks only at designated crossings.

Train Schedule Courtesy of Houston METRORail
WITH ITS FOCUS ON HOUSTON'S RASCENT LIGHTRAIL SYSTEM, THE POTENTIAL EXISTS FOR EXHIBIT 3 TO INCLUDE A COLLABORATION WITH HOUSTON METRO, THE CITY AGENCY THAT MANAGES HOUSTON'S PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS POTENTIAL WAS SHORTLIVED WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT METRO'S LENGTHY APPROVAL PROCESS WOULD NOT BE COMPATIBLE TO THE TIGHT SCHEDULE OF THE EXHIBIT. IN FACT, AS METRO'S MARKETING DIRECTOR EXPLAINED, THERE WAS ACTUALLY NO PERSON ON STAFF AT METRO THAT COULD GIVE THE APPROVAL FOR A PROJECT LIKE THIS. WITH NO FORMAL APPROVAL FROM METRO AND THE AGENCY'S ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY TOWARD ADVERTISING ON LIGHTRAIL STATIONS, EXHIBIT 3 CLAIMED THE SHORTEST LIFE OF ANY OF THE MUSEUM'S EXHIBITS. ANTICIPATING THE WORST, THE MUSEUM HAD DESIGNED SURVEY POSTERS FOR THE EXHIBITS THAT WOULD HELP EXISTING WAY-FINDING GRAPHICS ON THE TRAIN PLATFORMS AND WOULD BE AFFIXED ELEGANTLY TO THE GLASS PARTITIONS WITH SPECIALIZED SUCTION CUPS. AFTER THE LOGISTICAL NIGHTMARE OF INSTALLING THE EXHIBIT'S POSTERS ON 26 TRAIN PLATFORMS, THE MUSEUM WAS ONLY ABLE TO COLLECT 3 OF THEM IN ADVANCE OF BEING CONFISCATED BY METRO POLICE SHORTLY AFTER THEIR INSTALLATION. HOWEVER, THE FEW POSTERS THAT WERE COLLECTED REPLACED THE EXHIBIT DREW AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE FROM RUSH-HOUR TRAINRIDERS, AN IMMEDIACY OF RESPONSE THAT BECAME UNPARALLELED AMONGST OTHER EXHIBITS AT THE MUSEUM FOR MISSING PLACES.
TRAIN TO SOMEWHERE

In 2004, passenger train platforms began to appear along a 7.5 mile stretch of Houston roadway, establishing themselves like way-stations from another planet. It had been over 60 years since Houston had seen anything remotely resembling a passenger train.

Each of these platforms, functioning as an open-air light rail station, presents itself as little more than a raised surface plied from the existing roadway, a minimal canopy structure and a row of seats. But these shiny waiting rooms do not share the desolation of Houston’s bus stops. These stations are prominent and precious, and project a sense of consequence on the city, a sense that each is the critical link to something, along an unknown trajectory. Of course, Houston’s light rail does have a very known trajectory on one level, it traces a route from the fabled Astrodome to a reinvented Downtown Houston. But on a more speculative level, the train is also a moving hub for a set of other overlapping trajectories defined by a new Houston species, the train rider.

Given the foreignness of train travel in Houston, shouldn’t we be asking where these riders are coming from, and where they’re going to?

[exhibit proposal]  [full exhibit] please allow a few moments for the exhibit to open
YOU ARE HERE

IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, HOUSTON SUDDENLY HAS TRAIN SERVICE TO 23 NEW TRAIN PLATFORMS. THE MUSEUM FOR MISSING PLACES IS CONDUCTING A SURVEY ABOUT WHERE HOUSTON'S LIGHTRAIL STATIONS ARE LOCATED WITHIN THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF HOUSTON RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.

IF A PLATFORM IS ON YOUR ROUTE TODAY, PLEASE FILL OUT THE SURVEY BELOW. YOUR RESPONSES WILL BE AVAILABLE AT WWW.MISSING-PLACES.ORG

WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO?

PRESTON STATION - SOUTHBOUND
**Main Street Square Station**

**Southbound**

---

### YOU ARE HERE

In the last two years, Houston suddenly has train service and its own light rail stations. The city is conducting a survey about where Houston's light rail stations are located within the everyday lives of Houston residents.

**Questions:**

- Where are you coming from?
- Where are you going to?

**Answers:**

- 1. [ ]
- 2. [ ]
- 3. [ ]
- 4. [ ]
- 5. [ ]
- 6. [ ]
- 7. [ ]
- 8. [ ]
- 9. [ ]
- 10. [ ]

---

*Please do not remove*

This survey will remain for 1 week only.

December 1 - December 8, 2005
*PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE*
THIS SURVEY WILL REMAIN FOR 1 WEEK ONLY
December 1 - DECEMBER 8, 2005

YOU ARE HERE

IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, HOUSTON SUDDENLY HAS TRAIN SERVICE AND 25 NEW TRAIN PLATFORMS. THE MUSEUM FOR MISSING PLACES IS CONDUCTING A SURVEY ABOUT WHERE HOUSTON'S LIGHTRAIL STATIONS ARE LOCATED WITHIN THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF HOUSTON RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.

WE NEED TRAIN RIDERSHIP ON YOUR ROUTES TODAY. PLEASE PARTICIPATE IN THE SURVEY BELOW. YOUR RESPONSES WILL BE PRESENTED AT AN EVENT AT MURphyPLACES.ORG

WHERE ARE YOU? WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

1. Museum Dist.  
   Museum Dist.

   Downtown

   Downtown

4. Bell  
   Bell

MUSEUM DISTRICT STATION - NORTHBOUND
"PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE"
THIS SURVEY WILL REMAIN FOR 1 WEEK ONLY
December 1 - DECEMBER 8, 2005.

YOU ARE HERE

WHEELER STATION - NORTHBOUND
YOU ARE HERE

Two years, Houston suddenly has train service
again platforms, the Museum for Missing Places is
an exhibit about where Houston’s lighttrail
is located within the everyday lives of Houston
residents.

Please fill in your route today, please
submit your routes, your responses will be
posted on www.missingplaces.org

WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO?

Bell Station - Southbound
YOU ARE HERE

IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, HOUSTON SUDDENLY HAS TRAIN SERVICE. AND NOW TRAIN PLANNING. THE MUSEUM FOR RISING PLACES IS CONDUCTING A SURVEY ABOUT WHERE HOUSTONS' LIGHTRAIL STATIONS ARE LOCATED WITHIN THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF HOUSTON RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.

PLEASE TELL US HOW YOU USE LIGHTRAIL. YOUR OPINION PLEASE.
WHERE DO YOU USE LIGHTRAIL? YOUR RESPONSES WILL BE ANONYMOUS.

DRYDEN / TEXAS MEDICAL CENTER STATION
NORTHBOUND
YOU ARE HERE

In the last two years, Houston suddenly has
in its new train platforms, the Museum
Conducting a survey about where
stations are located within the
Students and visitors.

If this train is for
particular

Dryden / Texas Medical Center Station
Southbound
Memorial Hermann Hospital I Houston Zoo Station
Northbound
MEMORIAL HERMANN HOSPITAL / HOUSTON ZOO STATION
SOUTHBOUND
ABOUT QUEENS COLLEGE (AT RIGHT):

"This building presents on its surface the most evident marks of the injuries of time and weather, in the abraded state of the stone."

(Fox Talbot, The Pencil of Nature, London, 1844)

ABOUT THE BEST SHOWROOM (AT RIGHT):

"Evoking images of an apocalyptic remnant of war, it still stands in its original configuration but is in want of a tenant. 'The building's preservation has depended on its function as a big-box store,' says Stephen Fox, adjunct lecturer in architecture at Rice University. 'The facade has not figured in at all. It will probably need maintenance soon, and they may just tear it down. There's not much sentiment here for preserving suburban landmarks.'"

(James McConn, Metropolis Magazine, November 1999)
MONUMENTS IN HIDING


The idea of locating new landmarks and potential monuments in Houston may seem at first a counterintuitive, even perverse, endeavour in a city where buildings of impressive historic creed are routinely demolished with little recourse. Indeed, with this exhibit the Museum tried to redefine landmarks and monuments not as architectural artifacts that withstand time, but rather as architectures of time that may exist today but perhaps not tomorrow. In other words, participants in this exhibit are encouraged to revise their understanding of architectural permanence in the context of Houston where permanence is most certainly untenable. In its place, visitors to the exhibit are asked to consider architectural landmarks for their perceived permanence as well as other novel criteria that might open up this staid architectural typology to new forms. Postcards, for their ability to reduce and repack some monumental places down to 4”x6”, were used as the medium for soliciting response to the questions posed by the exhibit. And the supermarket, widely valued as a temple of commerce and necessity, becomes perhaps the most obvious first example of the Museum’s new definition of monument. Indeed, a significant part of this exhibit involved the Museum distributing 300 pre-stamped postcard-coupons (“good for nominating one living monument”) randomly on car windshields in the parking lots of 4 distinct Houston supermarkets. As part of this effort, the Museum opened a P.O. Box at University Station in Houston. In the end, none of these postcards were returned to the Museum’s P.O. Box.
"The interval between the object and the moment of its 'preservation' has decreased from about two millenia in 1882 to mere decades today. Soon the interval will disappear."

-Ren Koolhaas

With virtually no binding laws for the preservation of historic or cultural landmarks*, Houston is a city ideally situated for a rethinking of what defines architecture worthy of preservation. Add to this the short life-span and apparent "built-in obsolescence" of so many Houston buildings, and it becomes clear that architectural notions of permanence and fixity in Houston sit on the same uncertain foundations as virtually everything else in the city.

* What happens if we tweak our understanding of architectural monuments to include a new set of places that already exist as personal landmarks, that may be unknown but demand to be acknowledged, that have a presence and a desire for permanence no matter how untenable this may be? The Museum for Missing Places wants to know where to find these living monuments.

[free mail-in coupon to nominate a living monument]
POSTCARD-COUPONS SIMILAR TO THIS (BUT INCLUDING POSTAGE)
WILL BE DISTRIBUTED AT SELECT HOUSTON AREA SUPERMARKETS, WEATHER PERMITTING,
ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2005

IF YOU MISS THEM, AND WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE, YOU CAN MAKE YOUR OWN POSTCARD
USING THE TEMPLATE BELOW. PLEASE SEND ANY QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS TO
INFO@MISSING-PLACES.ORG

(TOMORROW'S HISTORY)
ON SALE TODAY
FREE

THIS COUPON GOOD FOR NOMINATING
ONE LIVING MONUMENT

Use this postcard to nominate a living monument for Houston.
This monument should be for you a landmark around which your view of the city revolves.
Place where there is a sense of presence that demands to be acknowledged
but may be currently unknown.
Use the space below to describe your monument including its location. Responses will be presented as an exhibit at
www.missing-places.org

MUSEUM FOR
MISSING PLACES
P.O. BOX 94562
HOUSTON, TX
77266

DIRECTIONS:
1. Print this page on paper stock slightly thicker than normal printing paper.
2. Cut around the edge of the colored area.
3. Cut along marked cut-line near the top of the colored area.
4. Fold in half along marked line.
5. Slide flap through cut opening.
6. Describe your monument in the space provided.
7. Mail postcard with standard 23¢ postage stamp.

IN ADDITION TO THE POSTCARDS DISTRIBUTED RANDOMLY AT THE
SUPERMARKETS, THIS TEMPLATE WAS CREATED TO ALLOW VISITORS TO
THE MUSEUM'S WEBSITE TO ALSO PARTICIPATE IN THE EXHIBIT.
NO POSTCARDS RECEIVED.
Exhibit 4 would prove to be the final exhibit of the Museum for Missing Places, but ironically focused on a public site of more lasting significance to Houston than any of the previous exhibits. The Museum had in fact identified Houston's rambling esplanades early on, recognizing them as both gratuitous in their public space value, and also timeless— they seemed to be one of few urban elements of Houston that could actually transcend change. And yet, in spite of this—or perhaps because of this—the esplanades still seemed to be invisible with no real program or function but to decoratively divide street neighborhoods in half. The esplanades seemed to be pleading for an alternative use rather than simply re-brand them as new linear parks. The Museum opted to instrumentalize their position as middle grounds, or neutral zones, between private residential households. Using comment boxes mounted on ten different esplanades, and designed sparingly from salvaged plastic real estate signs, the Museum asked Houston residents a question that could only be asked from the middle of an esplanade: "When you go out in public, where do you go?"
THIS IS BETWEEN YOU AND ME

"In Houston an eerie silence surrounds all private space, the revenge of the holey plane. Here we are not talking about the voids left by leapfrogging or pockets of poverty, but the lack of a public domain. The silence is the sound of the dross that in the final analysis must be compensated for by something public, space or otherwise." — Lars Lerup

In a city as privatized as Houston, where even thru-streets and sidewalks can’t be taken for granted, the frequent appearance of the humble esplanade becomes a definite curiosity. Otherwise known as medians, these links of ambiguous green space populate a surprisingly vast terrain of residential Houston, up to 1,000 miles by the City of Houston’s estimate. And while virtually nothing in Houston is completely immune to change, these esplanades project a sense of stability, as if they alone have transcended time and witnessed the evolution of the city. They have the potential to be a critical infrastructure, middle grounds for an as yet inadequate public life. But too often they sit as mere reminders of missing public space, decorative islands stranded between vast oceans of privatized domain.

How does one confront the inherent public space potential of Houston? Before we can confront esplanades, as the City of Houston does, the Museum for Missing Places believes that in most cases, we must first be cognizant of their public space potential and then we must visit them, if for no other reason than to demonstrate that they are more than mere traffic islands.

out of service

THE MAIN WEBSITE INTERFACE FOR EXHIBIT 1
SUNSET
CAROLINE NORTH
CRAWFORD
SOUTHMORE
Facile a pace in Houston could be better—
I love better sidewalks to stroll on. Wouldn't it be nice?

HISTORIES:

My family mainly focuses on walks around downtown/food court
corner food of shopping.
There really are very limited

Small restaurants in Rice Village
and walks in the area.

People vs. Home. Muncie police patrolling vs. not standing
in the streets.

I walk through neighborhood, Number Field, Sculpture Garden.

It's the sheets in this area:
Fleming Park

I go out for a walk in
Montrose or South Hampton.
J.S.W.K.

To parks? But so few
I'd no where to park.

TEN COMMENT BOXES WERE INSTALLED BY THE MUSEUM ON TEN DIFFERENT ESPALANDADES AND AFTER ONE WEEK, SEVEN OF THESE BOXES REMAINED. INSIDE THESE BOXES, THE MUSEUM FOUND 24 COMMENTS, REPRINTED ON THESE TWO PAGES.
Lunch and walks and parks and
fruity grapes and in between forward

Restaurant, Shopping
or Parks

friend's house

To THE FORTRESS

RICE UMW, WALK IN
Memorial, Neighborhood

e 465

'TO HER HOUSE

The Garden @ Hagg Mansim
Great in the Spring!!

'At the end of the day
I go to a museum or cafe.
Gallery installation 2 could just as well be titled a mini-retrospective of the Museum, as it attempted to present all of the materials collected, organized and exhibited by the Museum over the previous 4 months. Given that this was a significant amount of material to curate, the exhibition was designed to last one week, as opposed to Gallery installation 1 which was designed to last one day. The site of this event was similar to the earlier installation—Farish Gallery of Rice School of Architecture was again bracketed with moving partitions and the show essentially commenced in the main hallway of the building—but this was much expanded in scale from the earlier event and an effort was made to ground the Museum in its own space, at least as much as possible while still being a temporary installation. Following this design agenda, the space of the Museum presented itself here in two major ways: the bulk of the exhibition occupied an awkward angled space in the rear of Farish Gallery that is normally nothing more than a storage area for junk and other architectural school detritus. The Museum essentially programmed this "non-site" (see Smithson) as an interactive archive of cultural materials. To create this archive, the Museum housed the bulk of its collection for public viewing in 3 salvaged and retrofitted flat-file cabinets mounted on wood bases. The opaque top panels of the cabinets were replaced with clear acrylic that opened up the contents of the top drawer to viewing and other drawers were kept or removed in relation to the amount of material to be presented. The flat-file exhibits were then complemented by other, less culled, exhibits mounted to the partitions of the exhibition space and the main hallway.

The curating of the flatfiles— the final exhibition used 9 cabinets rather than the 7 originally intended—involves a complicated reexamination of what the Museum had actually accomplished in its short tenure and how best to formalize material evidence and ephemera that were never meant to be formalized. The rough inventory, at right, became a much relied-upon component of this process.
View of installation in Farish Gallery, Rice School of Architecture

View of installation in Main Hallway, Rice School of Architecture
NIGHTTIME MUSEUM TOUR, JANUARY 30, 2006
NIGHTTIME MUSEUM TOUR, JANUARY 30, 2006
NIGHTTIME MUSEUM TOUR, JANUARY 20, 2006
From its inception, the Museum for Missing Places has occupied a territory that straddles both the physical space of a city and the virtual space of the internet. The following citations of the Museum were found online— in blogs, chat rooms, bulletin boards, newsletters, and news wires. During the 3 months that the Museum was in full operation, these citations not only reveal that at the dawn of the 21st century much of the conversation between people that constitutes the public life of a city is happening on the Internet— and circumventing the physical space of the city— but also attest to the effectiveness of the Museum for Missing Places in both initiating these conversations and mediating a city's public life from the physical to the virtual.
Web

News results for **missing places** - View today's top stories

Kwan **missing** as US skaters make their Olympic case - Daily Times - Jan 9, 2006

Museum for **Missing Places**

missing-places.org/ - 14k - Cached - Similar pages

Progressive Texan: **Missing Places Org**

**Missing-Places Org**. blogHouston points out an interesting website called the ...
The Museum for **Missing Places** (MMP) is a public information project that ...

Architect : Links : The Museum for **Missing Places**
The Museum for **Missing Places** (MMP) is a public information project that addresses 
contemporary issues of urban **place** identity through the eyes and actions ...
architect.com/links/detail.php?id=28534_0_26_0_M11 - 13k - Cached - Similar pages

**blogHOUSTON - Missing Places**

A Houston-centric blog focusing on media, politics, and culture.

www.bloghouston.net/item/2110 - 10k - Cached - Similar pages

Cafe Siena: **Missing Places**
vlog, videoblog, video blog, cafe siena and iTunes.
cafesiena.blogspot.com/2005/11/missing-places_25.html - 30k - Cached - Similar pages

Cafe Siena: **Missing Places** (iPod version/H.264)
vlog, videoblog, video blog, cafe siena and iTunes.
cafesiena.blogspot.com/2005/11/missing-places-ipod-versionh264.html - 23k - Cache

Contributor: Lookinglay
• **Missing People**

• **Investigate Anyone $39.95**
  websherlock.com  Dig up anything on anyone.

1. **ICS**
   ... Most used places. Favourite places. Missing Places. Improvements Wanted ... My places. Missing Places. Improvements Wanted ...
   www.nzcal.com/hp/ics - PC - Scheduler - Share from NZcal to Outlook 2000

2. **The 1587 Missing Cypriots**
   ... a few statistics about the 1587 Missing Cypriots. These include gender, age, marital origin, places of disappearance and places where missing persons were last ...
   www.missing-cy.org/archive/missing_statistics.html - 1587 Cypriots - taken from Thesmophoria Tholos

3. **Museum for Missing Places**
   Museum for Missing Places ...
   missing-places.org - PC - Screenshot - Geographic data, places, map

4. Games for learning English - Find the missing building
   games for learning English
   www.onestopenglish.com/Games/Games/Game16.htm - PC - Screenshot - Learn English

5. **http://www.rugpo.com/missingplaces.html**
   ... NOTE: Choosing OK checks for missing places, but does not restore them). ... Re missing places, or if you know the correct place name ...
   www.rugpo.com/missingplaces.html - PC - Screenshot - Learn English

6. **missing places on map - GameBanshee Forums**
Web Results
Page 1 of 3,739,059 results containing missing places (0.08 seconds)

Museum for Missing Places
www.missing-places.org

Progressive Texan: Missing-Places.Org
... of the White House | Main | 10 years later, and still no peace » Missing-P of Missing Places . This is how ...

... National Center for Missing and Exploited Children -- (800) THE-LOST \nForum Official Web site of Alabama Official Web ...

MISSING link - Your guide to Missing LINKs!
Places (Maps) Mapblast MapQuest MapsOnUs (Switchboard) Thomas Broth by pete at the missing link
www.missing.com/PlacesMaps.html

CHAIRS MISSING dot org : a collection of solitary chairs in st:
... this landmark is wasting away in the unsuspecting town of anniston, alabama downtown anniston, one should and would have to ...
www.chairsmissing.org/?chair=4

CHAIRS MISSING dot org : a collection of solitary chairs ii
... post-apocalyptic playground" on bishop street atlanta, georgia june, showcase area was later dubbed the "post ...
www.chairsmissing.org/?chair=1

Ben Hammerslev: The curse of the missing clause
Missing Places

Missing Places is an oddly compelling exercise in citizen journalism (or should that be citizen archaeology?) that tracks vanishing history, vacant lots, and "forgotten" places in Houston.

The site describes the project as follows:

The Museum for Missing Places (MMP) is a public information project that addresses contemporary issues of urban place identity through the eyes and actions of city residents. Using interactive exhibits, the Museum proposes alternative ways of mapping a city in the context of rapid and uncontrolled urban change and the uncertainty of enduring architectural landmarks.

Situated in Houston, Texas, the Museum is--before all else-- a response to a city whose urban development has long been distinguished paradoxically by the impermanence of its architecture rather than its fixity. Houston is literally defined by geographic disruption-- the buildings of the city are quickly altered, roadwork and redirected streets are the norm and volatile weather continuously pummels the city, to cite just a few examples. These disruptions create a city of revolving contradictions and perpetual discontinuity, and the job of making sense of this city is left to a scattered population.

Yet an urban life does persist behind the fragmented edifice of the city and the Museum for Missing Places believes that an appropriate way of understanding Houston is through the accumulated perceptions of the city's residents and a catalog of the places they inhabit. Through exhibits which rely on public participation, the Museum hopes to suggest ways of mapping the city that leverage the diverse observations, descriptions and insights of city residents. The exhibits of the Museum for Missing Places are designed to support this mission by surveying Houston residents about the ways they relate to their local surroundings. In a city that changes as continuously as Houston, where what's new today may be gone tomorrow, the MMP seeks to chart the shifting terrain of the city by privileging the countless perspectives of lived experience.

I found out about the project via a sign posted last week on a vacant lot near HCC in midtown. Laurence Simon writes that signs have also been popping up along the less-than-world-class urban blight along stretches of the light rail.

Kevin Whited 11/13/05 09:52 PM Houston Life Print Comments
Ticket to ride — but where?

In Houston, our sense of place is easy to lose — it's constantly under attack from urban sprawl, car culture, our tendency to live in anonymous suburbia and our love of tearing things down. That's why Houstonist digs the Museum for Missing Places, an online investigation of where we are, where we've come from and where we're going.

The MMMP is beginning a project today that we're interested in seeing the results of: It's posting signs at all MetroRail platforms asking riders to tell where they're coming from and where they're going. We've seen things like this before — usually large maps where you're asked to stick pins to show where you live and work — but the MMMP's project is especially interesting because it focuses on light rail, one of the most controversial and novel civic works in Houston in years.

We encourage MetroRailers to look for the signs and note their comings and goings (and remember, the signs will only be posted through Monday, Dec. 5). When the results are released, we'll let you know.

Posted by Jim Parsons in Houston Misc.

EMAIL THIS ENTRY
To: 
From: 
Message (optional): 

Done
Missing-Places.Org

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Since I'm a pretty big fan of the historical nature of the Downtown/Midtown/Montrose areas, this website is particularly interesting to me. Of course, the people over at BH can't help but take the opportunity to take one of their crack-shots at light rail in the process.

Posted by Bobby Warren on November 12, 2003 10:40 PM | Permalink
Houston, The Missing City

In keeping with this posting's history theme, we'd like to point out a local Web site brought to our attention by Kevin Whited at the rascally blog HOUSTON. It's called Missing Places, and, in Whited's words, it's oddly compelling (if just a wee artsy-conceptual and whatnot for us). Anyway, we loved Missing Place's description of Houston as

a city whose urban development has long been distinguished paradoxically by the impermanence of its architecture rather than its fixity. Houston is literally defined by geographic disruption—the buildings of the city are quickly altered, roadwork and redirected streets are the norm and volatile weather continuously pummels the city, to cite just a few examples. These disruptions create a city of revolving contradictions and perpetual discontinuity, and the job of making sense of this city is left to a scattered population.

Yep, that's pretty much our agenda: trying to make sense of this place, which can be so weird, wild and wonderful (when it's not so dark, depressing and scary).
Saturday November 12, 2005

A Missing History Museum

Missing Places is a site dedicated to the vanishing history and vacant lots of Houston.

I noticed the signs popping up at vacant lots along the Danger train track, which always struck me odd since the Danger Train was supposed to attract and revitalize businesses along Main instead of drive them out of business.

Sue, it's not much of a historical place, but every time I'm at Shepherd Square I cannot help but remember Cabo's where the Tuesday Morning store is now.

---

Posted by Laurence Simon at 11:15
Trackback URL: http://www.isfullofcrap.com/cgi-bin/mt/mt-tb.cgi/6963

Comments & Trackbacks:

Post a comment:
If you have a TypeKey identity, you can sign in to use it here.

Name:_________________

Email Address:_________________

Sending data from secure-us.inrworldwide.com...
An open dialogue on serious strategies for making Houston a better city, as well as a coalition-builder to make them happen. All comments, email, and support welcome.

Museum for Missing Places and Houston's mobility model for SF

I'd like to keep the weekend focus on yesterday's post, so just a couple tiny items today.

1. Katy Freeway Viral Exclusive Busway model to solve its mobility woes (which hopefully we will be expanding into a regional network soon). Very compelling logic, for both us and them.

2. Hot Pool at Reason tells San Francisco to look to the Houston Katy Freeway Virtual Exclusive Busway model to solve its mobility woes (which hopefully we will be expanding into a regional network soon). Very compelling logic, for both us and them.

City identity and attracting educated youth

Steve recently pointed me to a potentially disturbing report by CEOs for Cities titled "The Young and Restless in the Knowledge Economy." The report says that young, educated professionals are flocking to cities like New York, San Francisco, and Boston.

Name: Fred Matter
Location: Houston, Texas, United States
Social Systems Architect, consultant and entrepreneur with a genuine love of my hometown and its people. CONTACT EMAIL in no spam format please. (I do not want your spam)e-mail sent me. 

Background: born in Houston, grew up near New Orleans, returned in 1968. Reed High School, Rice University BSEE '91 and MBA '99, work in Consulting, live in Maryland with my wife Lynn and two wonderful step-daughters.

View my complete profile

Links
The Museum for Missing Places

> click to visit

How well do YOU know your city?

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Despite not having a physical location, the MMP is situated in dialogue with Houston’s Museum District and shares the mission of existing museums in gathering, ordering, and exhibiting cultural information that is of broad public interest. Where the Museum for Missing Places distinguishes itself is by providing alternative views of the city itself, through its attention to collecting information that is ephemeral and often not tangible and by actively including city residents in the workings and evolution of the museum.

Finally, if you have an idea for a future exhibit, please use the e-mail link below to share your idea.

—Erc Leshinsky, Curator
Radar

Radar is updated around-the-clock, seven days a week. It automatically collects information from various syndicating sources. The collected information has not been reviewed by PLANetizen staff so you may occasionally find irrelevant or duplicate content. If you find inappropriate material here, please let us know. If you maintain a website or a blog and would like to see it featured on PLANetizen Radar, please contact us.

Monday, Monday

My weekly page update: Simons Sauna in Sippo Molander, Finland by Heikki-Kemoreen Architects. The updated book feature is American Playgrounds: Revitalizing Community Space, by Susan Solomon. Some unrelated links for your enjoyment: Museum for Missing Places Situated in Houston, Texas, the Museum is...a public information project that addresses contemporary issues of urban place identity.

[Back to Radar]

[Note: The content on this page has been syndicated from various sources. PLANetizen is not responsible for the content on this page.]
"CONVOLUTE"

"A word about the translation of KONVOLUT. As used for the grouping of the thirty-six alphabetized sections of the Passagenen manuscript (the core of the Arcades Project), this term, it would seem, derives not from Walter Benjamin himself but from his friend Adorno. ... In Germany, the term konvolut has a common philological application: it refers to a larger or smaller assemblage — literally, a 'bundle' — of manuscripts or printed materials that belong together. The noun 'convolute' in English means 'something of a convoluted form. We have chosen it as the translation of the German term over a number of other possibilities, the most prominent being 'folder,' 'file,' and 'sheaf.' The problem with these more common English terms is that each carries inappropriate connotations, whether of office supplies, computers, agriculture, or archery. 'Convolute' is strange, at least on first acquaintance, but so is Benjamin's project and its principle of sectioning."

HOWARD EILAND AND KEVIN MCCLAUDEHAN
FROM THE TRANSLATORS' FORWARD TO
THE ARCADES PROJECT. WALTER BENJAMIN
CAMBRIDGE, MA: HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1999

ARENDT, HANNAH
THE HUMAN CONDITION.
CHICAGO: UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, 1998

"Of all the activities necessary and present in human communities, only two were deemed to be political and to constitute what Aristotle called the 'Bog Politikon' namely action (praxis) and speech (lexis), out of which rises the realm of human affairs... from which everything merely necessary or useful is strictly excluded."

"To be political, to live in a 'polis', meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion and not through force and violence.""In his two most famous definitions, Aristotle only formulated the
CURRENT OPINION OF THE 'POLIS' ABOUT MAN AND THE POLITICAL WAY OF
LIFE, AND ACCORDING TO THIS OPINION, EVERYBODY OUTSIDE THE 'POLIS'—
SLAVES AND BARBARIANS—WAS ANEU LOGOU, DEPRIVED, OF COURSE, NOT
OF THE FACULTY OF SPEECH, BUT OF A WAY OF LIFE IN WHICH SPEECH AND ONLY
SPEECH MADE SENSE AND WHERE CONCERN OF ALL CITIZENS WAS TO TALK
WITH EACH OTHER.

Baudrillard, Jean.
SIMULACRA AND SIMULATION.
trans. Sheila Faria Glaser
Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994

"Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the
mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a
referential being or substance. It is the generation by models of a
real without origin or reality: A hyperreal. The territory no longer
precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map
that precedes the territory - precession of simulacra - that en-
genders the territory."

Borges, Jorge Luis and Adolfo Bioy Casares.
ON EXACTITUDE IN SCIENCE.
trans. Andrew Hurley

"In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfec-
tion that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a
City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time,
these Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartogra-
phers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of
the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The follow-
ing Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography
as their Forebears had been, saw that vast Map was Useless, and
not without some Pitylessness was it, that they delivered it up to
the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West,
still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map inhabited by
Animals and Beggars; in all the Land there is no other Relic of
the Disciplines of Geography."
"History fixes the past in a uniform manner; drawing upon its difference from the present, it then reorganises and reassembles collective memories and popular imagery, freezing them in stereotypical forms. Utilising its distance from the past, history gets up a fictional space manipulating time and space, and representing facts and events.

Memory, Halbwachs argued, stands opposed to this narrative history, for memory always occurs behind our backs, where it can neither be appropriated nor controlled. Collective memory, moreover, is a current of continuous thought still moving in the present, still part of a group's active life, and these memories are multiple and dispersed, spectacular and ephemeral, not recollected and written down in a unified story.

"In the City of Collective Memory, the architect, city planner, and spectator must begin to move beyond the will to instrumentally formulate historical unities... What will become fascinatingly rich in the City of Collective Memory will be the play of oppositions, the existence of randomness, disturbances, dispersions, and accidents. New city forms and spaces will depend as well on the creation of innovative tactics and plays to deal with uncertainty and disorder in this City of Lost Narrative Forms and Decomposed Centers.

"The difference between the museum and collective memory, therefore, lies in the method by which the museum keeps an object's subterranean attractions within well-defined limits, which memory seeks inevitably to explode. Can material objects and verbal images give up their role as muffled actors and speak out, project, touch, surprise the spectators? Are these objects and images allowed to point self-critically to their own exhibitionary qualities?"

Chamberlain, Ian.
"Architecture, amnesia and the emergent archaic" in The Unknown City.
"We all write and speak from somewhere. We have an address, a location in space, a material niche in time. Our views and voices bear the imprint of different histories, they speak out of a particular place. So, whatever I have to say on the question of architecture undoubtedly lies in my response to the ambiguous, even enigmatic, context of where I work and live: the city of Naples."

Choy, François
THE INVENTION OF THE HISTORIC MONUMENT.
Trans. Lauren M. O’Connell
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001

"Historical monuments and heritage, in their turn, were granted a dual status, dispensers of knowledge and pleasure placed at the dispositions of all, but also cultural products - fabricated, packaged, and diffused with a view toward their consumption. The metamorphosis of their use-value into economic value is accomplished by the forces of "cultural engineering," a vast public and private enterprise in whose service toils a small world of coordinators, communications specialists, development agents, engineers, and cultural mediators. Their task consists in exploiting monuments by all available means in order to indefinitely expand their public."

"The key to the heritage enterprise is valorisation (mise en valeur), or enhancement. ... Return to valorisation, this reassuring word has, in reality, alarming ambiguity. It refers at once to the intellectual and spiritual values associated with patrimony, but also to an economic value; it implies increasing at once the accessibility, legibility and beauty of the patrimonial items on behalf of the visitors’ enjoyment, and also their attractiveness, which will mean an increase in profit for the culture industry."

"Thus it becomes more and more difficult for the visitor to avoid these interferences and to be able to engage in unmediated dialogue with monuments. Narrative commentary and anecdotal illustration, or more precisely, banal chatter about the works, cultivate the public’s passivity, discouraging it from looking or deciphering with its own eyes, allowing meaning to escape through a sieve of hollow words. These are demagogic, paternalist, and condescending forms of communication. And yet the transmission of historical knowledge, is tied, par excellence, to the valorization of the heritage."

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"The convulsive city lurches forward in time and material development as sites within the city are assembled and developed. Bits of its past are buried as if by volcanic eruption, in contrast to creating an ‘environment across time’ as the historian Vincent Scully romantically suggests."

"Anthony Giddens identifies three features that distinguish the discontinuities of modern social institutions from traditional social orders: pace of change, scope of change, and the nature of modern institutions. These same three features appear in urban convulsions: radical changes are quickly effected, large sites are transformed, and new kinds of community are proposed."

Debord, Guy.
Elisabeth Sussman, ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989

"The subject is invited to come alone to a specified place at a specified time. He is freed from the bothersome obligations of the ordinary rendezvous since there is no-one to wait for. But since this ‘possible rendezvous’ has brought him without warning to a place he may or may not know, he observes the surroundings. It may be that the same spot has been specified for a ‘possible rendezvous’ for someone else whose identity he has no way of knowing. Since he may never have seen the other person before, he will be incited to start up conversations with various passers-by. He may meet no-one, or he may by chance meet the person who has arranged the ‘possible rendezvous.’ In any case, particularly if the time and place have been well chosen, the subject’s use of time will take an unexpected turn. He may even telephone someone else who doesn’t know where the first ‘possible rendezvous’ has taken him, in order to ask for another one to be specified."

"Urban life increasingly permits the re-emergence of the element that the urbanistic project excluded. The language of power is itself "urbanising," but the city is left prey to contradictory movements that counterbalance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power. The city becomes the dominant theme in political legends, but it is no longer a field of programmed and regulated operations. Beneath the discourses that ideologize the city, the ruses and combinations of powers that have no readable identity proliferate; without points where one can take hold of them, without rational transparency, they are impossible to administer."


"For public art, the objective of altering the site required that the urban space occupied by a work be understood, just as art and art institutions had been, as socially constructed spaces."

"Against aesthetic movements that design the spaces of redevelopment, interventionist aesthetic practices might--as they do with other spaces of aesthetic display--redesign these sites."

"The works by Hans Haacke also confronted the broader social functions of the museum--its points of intersection with specific economic or political interests and its role in legitimating political realities in a society structured on relations of oppression and exploitation."

"Subdivisions of Manhattan's grid structure, the spatial organisation imposed on the city by the Commissioner's Plan of 1811, these units facilitate profit maximization and provide the infrastructure for real-estate speculation."

"In the past, ethnic and racial minorities have been directed to these ghettos [Harlem and the Lower East Side], which retain strong identities as communities containing vital networks of social institutions. In Haacke's maps, photographs, and data sheets, however, they appear not as communities but as spatial terrains defined..."
"A typical contemporary zoning code has several dozen land-use designations, not only is housing separated from industry but low-density housing is separated from medium-density housing, which is separated from high-density housing. Medical offices are separated from general offices, which are in turn separated from restaurants and shopping.

As a result, the new American city has been likened to an unmade omelet: eggs, cheese, vegetables, a pinch of salt, but each consumed in turn, raw."

"Heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy ‘syntax’ in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and strings (next to and also opposite one another) to hold together."

"And here we come to the third kind of city neighborhood that is useful for self-government: the district. This, I think, is where we are typically most weak and fail most disastrously. We have plenty of city districts in name we have few that function."

"Whatever city neighborhoods may be, or may not be, and whatever usefulness they may have, or may be coaxed into having, their qualities cannot work at cross-purposes to thoroughgoing city mobility."
AND FLUIDITY OF USE, WITHOUT ECONOMICALLY WEAKENING THE CITY OF WHICH THEY ARE A PART."

"NEIGHBORHOOD IS A WORD THAT HAS COME TO SOUND LIKE A VALENTINE AS A SENTIMENTAL CONCEPT, 'NEIGHBORHOOD' IS HARMFUL TO CITY PLANNING IT LEADS TO ATTEMPTS AT WARPING CITY LIFE INTO IMITATIONS OF TOWN OR SUBURBAN LIFE SENTIMENTALITY PLAYS WITH SWEET INTENTIONS IN PLACE OF GOOD SENSE."

"SUCCESSFUL STREET NEIGHBORHOODS IN SHORT, ARE NOT DISCRETE UNITS. THEY ARE PHYSICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTINUITIES--SMALL SCALE TO BE SURE, BUT SMALL SCALE IN THE SENSE THAT THE LENGTHS OF FIBERS MAKING UP A ROPE ARE SMALL SCALE."

**KELLER, SUZANNE**

THE URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD.
NEW YORK: RANDOM HOUSE, 1968

"THE TERM 'NEIGHBORHOOD', MOST INVESTIGATORS AGREE, IS NOT WITHOUT ITS AMBIGUITIES ... THE COMMON ELEMENTS OF MOST DEFINITIONS OF NEIGHBORHOOD ARE TERRITORY AND INHABITANTS."

**KESTER, GRANT.**

CONVERSATION PIECES: COMMUNITY + COMMUNICATION IN MODERN ART
BERKELEY: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, 2004

"THERE ARE... A NUMBER OF CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS AND ART COLLECTIVES THAT HAVE DEFINED THEIR PRACTICE AROUND THE FACILITATION OF DIALOGUE AMONG DIVERSE COMMUNITIES. PARTING FROM THE TRADITIONS OF OBJECT-MAKING, THESE ARTISTS HAVE ADOPTED A PERFORMATIV, PROCESS-BASED APPROACH. THEY ARE 'CONTEXT PROVIDERS' RATHER THAN 'CONTENT PROVIDERS'..."

**KLEIN, NORMAN.**

THE HISTORY OF FORGETTING:
LOS ANGELES AND THE ERASURE OF MEMORY.
NEW YORK: VERSO, 1994

"WHAT ELSE CAN A HISTORY OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY BE BUT A RIGOROUS DIARY ABOUT UNRELIABLE DOCUMENTS?"
The documents are a mix of history, fiction and urban anthropology, more a form of historified ethnography, always cooked, certainly never raw. Like the ethnographer, the historian of urban mass culture is the outsider who takes a reflexive journey into the vagaries of diary, of the destabilised text. The people who are interviewed sense the researcher studying from outside: They change their memory to be helpful, like an uncertainty principle, which becomes doubly uncertain once the historian writes their story down. The page in print becomes a contagion of fictions, a form of literature.

Koolhaas, Rem.
DELIRIOUS NEW YORK.
New York: Oxford University Press, 1978

"Since all Manhattan's blocks are identical and emphatically equivalent in the unstated philosophy of the grid, a mutation in a single one affects all others as a latent possibility: theoretically, each block can now be turned into a self-contained enclave of the irresistible synthetic.

That potential also implies an essential isolation: No longer does the city consist of a more or less homogeneous texture--a mosaic of complementary urban fragments--but each block is now alone like an island fundamentally on its own. Manhattan turns into a dry archipelago of blocks."

"The grid is the neutralising agent that structures these episodes. Within the network of its rectilinearity, movement becomes ideological navigation between the conflicting claims and promises of each block."

Kracauer, Siegfried.
'THE HOTEL LOBBY' IN THE MASS ORNAMENT.
Trang, Thomas Y. Levin
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979

"What is presented in the hotel lobby is the formal similarity of the figures, an equivalence that signifies not fulfillment but evaucation. Removed from the hustle and bustle, one does gain some distance from the distinctions of 'actual' life, but without being subjected to a new determination that would circumscribe from above the sphere of validity for these determinations. And it is in this way that a person can vanish into an undetermined void, helplessly reduced to a 'member of society as such' who stands superfluously..."
OFF TO THE SIDE AND, WHEN PLAYING, INTOXICATES HIMSELF. THIS INVALIDATION OF TOGETHERNESS, ITSELF ALREADY UNREAL, THUS DOES NOT LEAD UP TOWARD REALITY BUT IS MORE OF A SLIDING DOWN INTO THE DOUBLY UNREAL MIXTURE OF THE UNDIFFERENTIATED ATOMIC FROM WHICH THE WORLD OF APPEARANCE IS CONSTRUCTED. WHEREAS IN THE HOUSE OF GOD A CREATURE EMERGES WHICH SEES ITSELF AS A SUPPORTER OF THE COMMUNITY, IN THE HOTEL LOBBY WHAT EMERGES IS THE INESSENTIAL FOUNDATION AT THE BASIS OF RATIONAL SOCIALIZATION.

Know, Minou.
ONE PLACE AFTER ANOTHER.
CAMBRIDGE, MA: MIT PRESS, 2002

"DISPERSED ACROSS MUCH BROADER CULTURAL, SOCIAL, AND DISCOURSE FIELDS, AND ORGANIZED INTERTEXTUALLY THROUGH THE NOMADIC MOVEMENT OF THE ARTIST—OPERATING MORE LIKE AN ITINERARY THAN A MAP—THE SITE CAN NOW BE AS VARIOUS AS A BILLBOARD, AN ARTISTIC GENRE, A DIGNIFIRED COMMUNITY, AN INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK, A MAGAZINE PAGE, A SOCIAL CAUSE, OR A POLITICAL DEBATE. IT CAN BE LITERAL, LIKE A STREET CORNER, OR VIRTUAL, LIKE A THEORETICAL CONCEPT."

Lefebvre, Henri.
THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE.
CAMBRIDGE: BLACKWELL, 1991

"SPACE IS AT ONCE RESULT AND CAUSE, PRODUCT AND PRODUCER; IT IS ALSO A STAKE, THE LOCUS OF PROJECTS AND ACTIONS DEPLOYED AS PART OF SPECIFIC STRATEGIES, AND HENCE ALSO THE OBJECT OF WAGERS ON THE FUTURE—WAGERS WHICH ARE ARTICULATED, IF NEVER COMPLETELY."

"WE ALREADY KNOW SEVERAL THINGS ABOUT ABSTRACT SPACE AS A PRODUCER OF VIOLENCE AND WAR, IT IS POLITICAL, INSTITUTED BY A STATE, IT IS INSTITUTIONAL. ON FIRST INSPECTION, IT APPEARS HOMOGENEOUS; AND INDEED IT SERVES THOSE FORCES WHICH MAKE A TABULA RASA OF WHATEVER STANDS IN THEIR WAY."

Lerup, Lars.
AFTER THE CITY.
CAMBRIDGE, MA: MIT PRESS, 2000

"HE IREYNER BANHAM NEVER DEFINED WHAT HE MEANT BY AN ECOLOGY, BUT
IT IS EVIDENT THAT HE THOUGHT THE COMMON ARSENAL OF CONCEPTS, SUCH AS DISTRICT OR NEIGHBORHOOD, WAS INADEQUATE IN DESCRIBING THE COMPLEXITY AND SPECIFICITY OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DWELLERS AND THEIR SETTINGS IN THE CITY.

"But the terrain of the public realm in Houston and conurbations of a similar kind is no longer well symbolized by the colored squares of Mountrian’s Manhattan Boogie-woogie, but far more effectively by the colored drops in a Jackson Pollock drip painting. Public space happens wherever it can land. The underlying grammar of the suburban metropolis is atomization and fragmentation, and it is unproductive to resist this premise. The public realm must follow suit. But even this essentially physical reading is deceptive. "Public space" in the suburban metropolis is not the Plaza of the city, but a peculiar blend of soft and hardware, more vapor than pavement, more dynamic than stable, because bound to events rather than manifested by places."

LYNCH, KEVIN.
THE IMAGE OF THE CITY.
CAMBRIDGE, MA: MIT PRESS, 1960

"Edges are the linear elements not used or considered as paths by the observer. They are the boundaries between two phases, linear breaks in continuity: shores, railroad cuts, edges of development, walls. They are lateral references rather than coordinate axes."

"Districts are the medium-to-large sections of the city conceived of as having two-dimensional extent, which the observer mentally enters "inside of", and which are recognizable as having some common, identifying character. Always identifiable from the inside, they are also used for exterior reference if visible from the outside."

"Other landmarks are primarily local, being visible only in restricted localities and from certain approaches. These are the innumerable signs, storefronts, trees, doorknobs, and other urban detail, which fill in the image of most observers. They are frequently used clues of identity and even of structure, and seem to be increasingly relied upon as a journey becomes more and more familiar."

MUNBECK, JOHN B. AND KENNETH T. JACKSON.
THE NEIGHBORHOODS OF BROOKLYN.
NEW HAVEN: YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1998
"No one has ever before attempted to map all 400 plus of the city's neighborhoods, although... the caution is understandable. There are no official government boundaries, and not every boundary is agreed upon by every resident of a particular area. Yet neighborhoods are 'real' social entities. We thus identified our boundaries on the basis of hundreds of hours of research and consultation with local civic and neighborhood organizations."

Nancy Jean-Luc.  
THE INOPERATIVE COMMUNITY.  
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991

"How can we be receptive to the meaning of our multitude, dispersed, mortally fragmented existences, which nonetheless only make sense by existing in common?"

Oneng, Craig.  
BEYOND RECOGNITION.  
Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992

"Paradoxically, the concept of the center can only occur within language; at the same time, language, which proposes the potentially infinite substitution of elements at the center, destroys all possibility of securing any center whatsoever."

Parademtrion, Peter C.  
"LOOSE FIT: THE HOUSTON MUSEUM DISTRICT" IN  
EPHEMERAL CITY.  

"In the past five years, the area north of Hermann Park from Jackson Street to Montrose Boulevard has been the site of a succession of institutional initiatives that account for its designation as a 'district.' The coincidence of independent decisions has resulted in the relative proximity of a dozen or so similar institutions in a city devoid of zoning. This does not precisely constitute de facto zoning, but it certainly has resulted in a clearly identifiable zone."
Pope, Albert.
LADDERS
Houston: Rice Architecture School, 1996

"The importance of not 'addressing a people which is presupposed already there' is, at this moment fundamental to the 'invention of a people' we are at present unable to see.'

"If the city cannot be thought then, regardless of the quality of its interventions, it ceases to be an object of individual or collective concern. To discredit the idea of urban intelligibility--the idea of coherent urban form--is to promote an acquiescence to the forces which otherwise drive its development."

Potter, Jr., Parker B.
PUBLIC ARCHEOLOGY IN ANnapolis: A CRITICAL AP-PROACH TO HISTORY IN MARYLANDS ANCIENT CITY.
Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994

"A third mode of historical presentation in museums appeals to the intellectual imagination of the visitor. Hexter (in Lowenthal 1985: 236) suggests that 'the most illuminating works of history are those governed by the most imaginative and capacious regulative fictions.' According to Leone (1981: 13), 'the past, like foreign cultures for ethnography, is entered through the imagination--the agreed upon source of all hypotheses.' Imagination in this sense is not the free play of undisciplined fantasy, but rather the creative element inherent in constructing any version of the past, even the most academic. The goal of interpretive appeals to the intellectual imagination is to teach people what they did not know they did not know. This is in contrast to the kind of history education based on sense experience, which can add to knowledge but which does not challenge the categories of knowledge or the assumptions that structure it. This third kind of education encourages visitors to question things they normally take for granted."

Smithson, Robert.
ROBERT SMITHSON: THE COLLECTED WRITINGS
Jack Flam, ed.

"In the illusory babels of language, an artist might advance speci-fically to get lost, and to intoxicate himself in dirryng syntaxes,
Seeking odd intersections of meaning, strange corridors of history, unexpected echoes, unknown humors, or voids of knowledge. But this quest is risky, full of bottomless fictions and endless architectures and counter architectures. At the end, if there is an end, are perhaps only meaningless reverberations?

"...Language becomes an infinite museum, whose center is everywhere and whose limits are nowhere."

"It is not possible to conceive of a starker opposite to the artistic symbol, the plastic symbol, the image of organic totality, than this amorphous fragment which is seen in the form of an allegorical script."

Sorkin, Michael, Ed.  
**Variations on a Theme Park.**  
New York: Hill and Wang, 1972

"The privatized city of bits is a lie, simulating its connections, obliterating the power of its citizens either to act alone or to act together."

"In the 'public' spaces of the theme park or the shopping mall, speech itself is restricted: there are no demonstrations in Disneyland. The effort to reclaim the city is the struggle of democracy itself."

Sussman, Marvin, B. Ed.  
**Community Structure and Analysis.**  

"The basic unit of analysis used in the construction of social areas is the census tract. Census tracts are relatively small geographical areas into which certain cities and often their adjacent areas have been subdivided. They are larger than blocks and usually contain between 3,000 and 6,000 persons. The census tract program is a relatively recent development. At the request of Dr. Walter Laidlaw, New York City and seven other cities having populations over 500,000 were divided into census tracts in 1910, and census data were tabulated by tracts within these cities for the first time. The purpose was to obtain detailed population data for sufficiently small areas within the city so that neighborhood communities could be studied."
"Houston, alone among large cities, has allowed market forces to locate residential, commercial, and industrial establishments, not zoning codes."

"As Russell Kirk notes, 'Direct election of officials and local determination of politics was the American frame of politics from the seventeenth century onward [making] American democracy, essentially... territorial or local in character.'"

"Typically, local governments are multiplied, thus allowing citizens to protect and perpetuate their political values through comparatively small geographic units. The results are seen throughout the U.S. where counties, cities, school districts, and various special-purpose governments are spread across one another with overlapping jurisdictions, functions, and authorities. This atomized pattern of governments now typifies most urban places."

T. V. Depts., Housing Urban Development.

The Behavioral Foundations of Neighborhood Change

Washington, 1979

"One of our survey questions asked: "What do you think of as the boundary lines or borders of your neighborhood -- where does it begin and end? What are some of the ways to think about or define the size of your neighborhoods?" From the way our respondents answered, two things are clear: one, that there are three or four definite gradations in the way "neighborhood" is defined geographically, each level of which has a different social and symbolic meaning; and two, there are marked variations in geographic view between residents of single-family homes and apartment dwellers."

Webb, Bruce
'The Name Game', in Cite Magazine 46
Houston, TX

"'Houston's stability is literally attacked by time and motion; it is
A city formed in a series of conjunctive episodes that hold their relationships for relatively brief periods. Displacements of traditional patterns of stability and urban rituals have become the norm. Time has become a prime variable in determining the genius loci.

WILSON, MABEL Q.
‘IF WE WERE A PEOPLE MUCH GIVEN TO REVEALING SECRETS’ IN ROW: TRAJECTORIES THROUGH THE SHOTGUN HOUSE
Houston: Rice School of Architecture, 2004

"If we were a people much given to revealing secrets, Maya Angelou pens in I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, we might raise monuments and sacrifice memories of our poets, but slavery cured us of that weakness. It may be enough, however, to have it said that we survive in exact relationship to the dedication of our poets (include preachers, musicians and blues singers)!"

I have always been drawn to Angelou’s passage because in it she warns us of, as well as divines, the promise of black cultural life. She cautions us to be aware of erecting monuments to great individuals or hastily building museums to hoard artifacts and venerate divine beliefs of human progress. These sorts of institutions, she intuits, will distance blacks from the richness of everyday life that enriches our neighborhoods and fills our homes. Instead she reminds us to vivify life by remembering the past through the vitality of the present. And celebrate life through the creation of meaningful things—the lyrical words of the preacher and the hypnotic cadence of the blues.

WIRTH, LOUIS.
THE GHETTO.
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956

"The Jews drift into the ghetto, as has already been pointed out, for the same reasons that the Italians live in Little Sicily, the Negroes in the Black Belt, and the Chinese in Chinatown. The various areas that compose the urban community attract the type of population whose economic status and cultural tradition is more nearly adapted to the physical and social characteristics to be found in each. As each new increment is added to the population it does not at random locate itself just anywhere, but it brings about a re-sifting of the whole mass of human beings, resulting finally in the anchoring of each to a milieu that, if not most desirable, is at any rate least undesirable"