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THRESHOLD AS THIRD SPACE
USING THE COLONNADE TO RECONNECT WORK AND THE CITY

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the agency of the colonnade as a public space of transition to create third space, balancing the relationship between contemporary work and the urban public environment. Typical strategies to deliver such collaborative and social space rely on either the hyper-flexibility of a free plan or the specificity of program. In contrast, this thesis projects a third position using formal specificity within the colonnade to exploit the spatial ambiguity of a threshold. By placing public, third space functions in a colonnade threshold around the office, contemporary work shifts to an urban-oriented model of public collaboration. This strategy opens production to the city and allows for unpredictable interactions that can benefit both the producers and consumers of modern work.
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CONTEMPORARY WORK & THE CITY

This thesis explores the potential to enhance the interaction between contemporary work production and the city by relating third space and specific architectural form. Third space is social space; the idea comes from Ray Oldenburg’s concept that work and home are the first and second spaces. In his words, the social areas of interaction are understood as third space. It is the space of discussion, collaboration.\(^1\) Third space provides a spatial counterpoint to home and work life and is all the more necessary today due to dramatic shifts in the way we work that have muddled the distinction between home and work. Neither home nor work, neither fully public or private, third space is ambiguous, occupying the threshold. However, the way we work today has actually eroded the use and potential of third space.

Contemporary technology has caused a fundamental shift in the way we work that blurs the distinction between work and home life. The digital revolution essentially untethered the worker from their desk as the office changed from a location to access physical files to that of the networked office with technology for remote access. Andrew Laing discusses this shift in his 2013 essay ‘Work and Workplaces in the Digital City’, arguing that as desktop computers brought the advent of the cubicle and tethered workers to their desks, contemporary tools have cut this tie, prioritizing networked knowledge and collaboration as the preferred methods of work.\(^2\) Similarly, Frank Duffy’s calls for the ‘Networked Office’ include the argument that ‘...unprecedentedly free relationships between the physical and the virtual realms... [means] ...boundaries between what is work and what is not are shifting fast. Work is spilling into ever wider and more complex spatial and temporal landscapes.’\(^3\)

These shifts point to the growing ‘public’ nature of work: as opportunities for diverse collaboration have superseded the need for a static, consistent workspace, work has grown beyond the traditional boundaries of the workplace and become more urban-oriented. That growth and blurring of boundaries demands a new approach to the spatial boundaries of work that facilitate the shifting collaborative relationships required. The new form of the workplace must challenge the role of the boundary to define the limits of work and rather use the

\(^1\) Ray Oldenburg, ‘The Great Good Place’ (New York, Marlowe & Company, 1999)
\(^2\) Andrew Laing, ‘Work and Workplaces in the Digital City’, (CURE, Columbia University, 2013)
\(^3\) Frank Duffy, ‘Lumbering to Extinction in the Digital Field’, (Harvard Design Magazine, Fall/Winter 2008.09, Number 29)
1. The introduction of the colonnade, a third space threshold, allows the public to once again interact with the contemporary office.

2. The contemporary office has absorbed the functions that may be delivered by public space.
boundary as a threshold to facilitate collaboration between programs and the surrounding environment. The new workplace will be defined by third space thresholds.

The advent of new technologies has seen a shift in office buildings from a focus on accessing knowledge at a computer station to promoting flexibility, collaboration, and in some cases, relaxation. Interestingly, the result has been spaces traditionally understood as third space and belonging to the urban environment have been absorbed and placed within the confines of the office. Spaces like the cafe, informal meeting spaces, or rec rooms are now a common theme in the headquarters of contemporary offices, but their inherent private nature has removed the possibilities for public interaction.

As offices have begun to domesticate their interior, it’s often considered an attempt to promote creativity and encourage the happiness of their employees. Sam Jacob has termed these efforts the office ‘fun palace’. While encouraging on the surface, there is a partially concealed side effect of encouraging workers to spend longer hours at the office. Placing the third space functions within the core of the office removes these functions from the city, avoiding ‘undesirable’ encounters and, I would argue, opportunities for collaboration. This thesis projects an alternative by using the colonnade to host third space at the threshold between the contemporary spaces of work production and the urban environment. The use of the colonnade allows me to give a specific architectural condition to third space, pulling social functions back to the access of the public. This allows interaction and feedback to take place between the public or the consumers and the producers working at the office.

This thesis’ use of the colonnade comes from the reading of Anthony Vidler’s ‘The Scenes of the Street’ where he describes the portico and arcade as social condensers which operated ‘to maintain the community implied by

1. Google Office London - BIG & Heatherwick; the advent of the collaborative office has driven the inclusion of unique meeting and relaxation spaces
2. Keselkramer - FAT Architecture; exemplifies Sam Jacob’s theory of the ‘Fun Palace’
city with the individuality allowed in the country without the shelter of the physical artifact, city.’ The portico operates as ‘a space of transition where the individual could regain his social being and the crowd gradually break(s) down into its individual parts.’ This liminal space between fully public and private delineated by the portico operates as a filter. Simply by compressing the space vertically and delivering spatial identity through the use of columns, the relationship between the individual and the collective is altered. This has dramatic implications when one considers third space as a space mitigating public and private, the multiple and individual. Therefore, as a spatial threshold the colonnade holds tremendous potential to produce third space, shifting form to adjust its spatial identity and change the resulting third space to translate between opposing publics or identities. The colonnade offers the chance to reconsider the threshold of workspaces for collaborative third-space opportunities.

When the colonnade is used to host third space functions such as the cafe, lobby marketing space, or flexible meeting areas, the public is automatically invited to participate in the collaborative effort. Simply placing these functions outside the envelope of the office is not sufficient, they must be protected and operate as a threshold. By putting third space functions in the colonnade threshold around the office, contemporary work shifts from the closed off, inward-oriented model of the fun palace to an urban-oriented model of public collaboration that mimics a vibrant outdoor market. In the same way that vendors at outdoor markets may prepare and develop their product immediately adjacent to the public, the third space colonnade allows interaction - and collaboration - to take place again between the producers and consumers. Instead of selling pineapples or spices, office workers may be working on music production or fashion design. While the products may change, the collaboration made possible in the threshold remains the same. This opens production to the city and allows for unpredictable interactions that could benefit both parties.

In the same way that the open air market allows the consumer to interact directly with the producer, the colonnade returns that potential for the contemporary office.
If the colonnade is to be used to modulate between various programs, its formal potential must be identified. Vidler’s conception of the portico as a social condenser provides a base typology that aligns with the current need for threshold third space. He also identified the ability for the threshold to become autonomous through the use of a plinth; however, his description fails to consider the subtle changes in quality of public, efficacy as a filter, and greater opportunity as the colonnade is modified. In ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere’, Nancy Fraser identifies one of the challenges to public space is the tendency for the majority opinion to dominate a neutral territory. Rather than being a zero-culture zone, neutral territory adopts the identity of the majority. While the colonnade may act as a basic filter between the individual and collective, greater specificity is required to deliver space for what Fraser terms ‘multiple publics’ and ‘weak publics’. This project challenges the ability of the colonnade to relate to these publics by variation in form.

Hertzberger’s discussion of space in ‘Space and the Architect’ includes a portion on ‘the Grammar of Social Space’. In it, Hertzberger begins to discuss how form can alter the ability of a space to relate between occupants. Hertzberger discusses the emotions one experiences when height and spatiality occurs within a project. He states ‘Space can announce the presence of people even though those people are not present physically. You can also influence the bustle or peace and quiet in a building by having many people seem fewer, or by making fewer people more manifest’. This is directly applicable to the colonnade, as height, depth, and compression are the primary formal features. By changing these formal relationships, the colonnade changes relationships between adjacent and contained program.

By changing ceiling heights, moving the ground plane, or otherwise adjusting proportions and form, one shifts the experience of the colonnade. Increasing compression can be seen to generate a more private space, while a overly vertical colonnade nearly loses its identity as a threshold as it becomes more public and on display. Similarly in plan, the form and orientation of the columns can further identify the space. Multiplying the rows of columns increases the perception of the colonnade’s privacy by further defining and restricting space.

To investigate these and other spatial conditions of the colonnade this thesis considers 9 case studies. These projects have been selected for their varied spatial characteristics that each deliver different potential, but are presented in no particular order. Each modulation of the colonnade presents specific versions of public/private relationships, driven by the formal shifts experienced in the colonnade. To analyze these shifts, each project has been drawn and documented the same. Looking at each project at the same scale and through consistent, minimal drawings highlights the differences in form between each colonnade, allowing extraction of its features for synthesis.

1. Vidler, 1975, p. 43
2. Nancy Fraser, ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere’, Social Text No. 25/26 (1990), pp. 56-80
1. The primary feature of the portico at Villa Capra is the plinth. The artificial plane is approached by monumental staircases which serve to place those entering on display. The columns at the portico are the clear threshold between public and private, the point where the visitor begins to escape the public eye and enter a more protected realm. The height of the plinth in relationship to the ground makes the portico a sort of balcony, where occupants might survey the surrounding property from a place of ‘safety’ that is still in the public eye - it allows one to see and be seen, to be a member of both public and private worlds, shielded by the columns. Finally, the slightly vaulted ceiling of the portico reinforces its identity as a space separate from the interior and exterior, while its relatively short depth discourages prolonged lingering. Thus the portico is a truly transitional zone.

Villa Capra
Andrea Palladio, Vicenza, Italy - 1571

2. Another massive project, Stade de Bordeaux operates as a filter. As with any stadium, fans experience a shift in identity as they enter, moving from individuals to a collective by virtue of the compression of personal space. In the case of Stade de Bordeaux, the colonnade reinforces this shift in identity. The rising ground plane of the stairs coupled with the sloped ceiling open the edge of the stadium to the public and place entering fans on display. This simultaneously creates a sense of compression for those entering. The forest of columns works to increase the sense of tightness in plan, further compressing relationships. The presence of the columns is also necessary to identify the edge of the stadium as a threshold that orients the fans towards their common goal and identity. Without the columns the border of the stadium would simply become a stage, in competition to the arena contained inside.

Stade de Bordeaux
Herzog & De Meuron, Bordeaux, France - 2015

3. With two separate colonnades in the same project, Logroño city hall provides side-by-side examples of public-oriented and private-oriented colonnades. The height and corresponding shallow depth of the primary colonnade creates a public face for an otherwise fairly closed facade. The thin, round columns emphasize this public presence by minimizing view obstruction. The three story height creates a more dramatic presence that draws attention to passer-by below. In contrast, the secondary facade on the left is composed of short, chunky, square columns. With a much larger depth to height ratio, the colonnade creates a much more private experience. The vertical compression of space lends a feeling of safety to the colonnade, while the spacing and size of the columns begins to restrict views at oblique angles.

Logrono Town Hall
Rafael Moneo, Logrono, Spain - 1974
4. Hangar 16’s colonnade is an excellent example of introducing mobility that increases the flexibility of the colonnade to relate between multiple spaces. As a series of doors, Hangar 16’s primary feature is the mobility and form of the column itself that provides a flexible use of space. The doors are mounted in series to allow modulation of the interior for various types of art presentations or events. The doors can be closed entirely, effectively sealing the room, or they may be opened to form a colonnade of flat planes and permit free flow throughout the space. Because the doors move independently, they may also be manipulated to respond to vision from a single point, much like St. Peter’s courtyard. Hangar 16 is a prime example of a colonnade that changes the public or private identity of adjacent spaces by modulating visibility.

5. While all colonnades operate as transitional architecture, that transition can operate as primarily lateral or cross circulation. At the Museum of Modern Literature, the colonnade wraps the building, identifying a protective barrier of lateral circulation that moves occupants around the perimeter of the building. While still a threshold space, the colonnade at the museum is a hallway threshold, a sort of patio that one occupies on their way to the next space. This identity is driven by the low wall that often accompanies the columns, the relative narrow depth of the colonnade, and the opening of the colonnade at the corners. Rather than the traditional point of entry, the colonnade at the museum operates as a protective barrier with primary entries at the ends. One enters the lateral circulation space, tracing it around the building before moving horizontally into the more private functions.

6. Gallarate is somewhat the vertical version of Chipperfield’s Museum of Modern Literature. Rather than moving horizontally through the colonnade into the private functions, one passes vertically into the apartments above. This removal of the private functions from the same plane as the colonnade allows it to operate both as a transitional space as well as a social, public space of refuge. Similar to Pope John Paul II Hall, the columns at Gallarate are fins, but they operate to a different end. The narrow space between the fins and the depth of the space beyond indicates the fins are not intended to be occupied, but rather are in place to create a more private facade. In contrast, the shorter fins on the opposite face and their corresponding height present a more public face, creating an oriented colonnade and social space.
7. The Stoa of Attalos was traditionally a space to exchange goods and ideas. These functions necessarily require a gradient of more public or private exposure. To accomplish this feat, the Stoa has a greater depth to height ratio and contains two rows of columns. The first row meets the top step of the portico, signalling a specific shift from the banal public to a refined semi-public space. The second set of columns serves to mitigate the depth of the stoa, lending a more private sense as one moves deeper. The absence of the second row would place all of the Stoa’s occupants on display to each other as the vertical compression would force outward, extending vision. Instead, the inner row creates two interior spaces with a sense of order and grouping. Finally, the upper story mimics the gradient from below, but with an overall greater sense of privacy as it is elevated beyond the public eye.

8. St. Peter’s Square operates on a massive scale. As the largest of the case studies presented, the colonnade stands at nearly 50 feet tall. This presence dwarfs anyone standing next to or occupying the colonnade, but its real feat is to establish the square as distinct from the surrounding area. This distinction is accomplished by first enveloping the space through the form of the colonnade’s curved wings and secondly by the multiple rows of columns, arrayed about the wing’s central point. The columns’ distribution restricts views to the outside unless one is standing at the central point. In the case of St. Peter’s Square, multiple rows of columns, their arrangement, the form of the colonnade, and the scale all serve to create a barrier. Rather than a colonnade of translation, St. Peter’s is a colonnade of permeable differentiation.

9. The Pope John Paul II Hall uses deep fins rather than more traditional columns, spaced at differing intervals. The space between columns is used for confessionals during events that occur in the main square. As a result the colonnade works as a gradient sequence of ritual, moving from a nearly secular square, to an admission of guilt before a priest, and finally into the holy space. This program gradient is made possible by the deepened colonnade, low ceiling, reduced lighting, and resulting privacy. A similarly private colonnade could be formed using multiple rows of round columns however it would be ineffective. The fins work precisely because their scale and spacing allow only a handful of occupants per bay, without cross-visibility. The visitor must recognize his individual standing before God before engaging in collective worship. The ritual process is made possible by the form of the colonnade.
To bring these concepts forward, this thesis employs a campus typology for a collaborative start-up work center located in East Austin on 6th Street. A rapidly growing city, the City of Austin has a strong IT, start up and design culture. According to Forbes, tech startups are increasingly considering Austin over Silicon Valley due to inexpensive rents and a well designed, integrated downtown. As evidence, tech industry employment in Austin jumped more than 40% between 2001 and 2013.\(^1\) In addition to the tech culture, Austin boasts a breadth of art and design, attracting artists, musicians, and designers world-over to produce the counter culture typified by the Austin slogan ‘Keep Austin Weird’. This is especially evident in the East 6th street area which is identified by its up and coming ‘cafe’ culture. Locating the thesis in this area takes advantage of the existing culture, encouraging nearby start-up professionals to work and participate in the project.

The thesis employs programs that are focused on creative work and production that might be found in the existing local fabric of companies, startups, and designers. Apart from some open office spaces that could be rented by different companies or individuals these include programs such as music production, culinary arts, flexible ‘hot desk’ office space, art studios, fashion design, and fabrication labs. Drawing from the existing culture emphasizes my project’s collaborative intent and potential for interaction.

Each program of the thesis is paired with third space that offers opportunities for interaction with the production that takes place inside. For example, music production may be paired with performance space or music listening, while artist studios may be next to a gallery. These third space functions are hosted by the colonnade - Tall thin columns for the public music performance, and low, denser columns for music listening. Fins support the artwork gallery function.

Culinary arts may be paired with tasting areas and cafe space, while the fabrication lab can host demonstration and classroom areas in the third space. A double row of columns in each case increases the intimacy of the spaces involved. Finally the open office may be paired with flexible meeting space or lobby marketing functions. A fashion design studio could include a runway in the third space, where the public might participate in shows. In each of these instances the colonnade is formally adjusted to activate the third space and encourage public interaction.
The project is organized as a small campus with individual pavilions connected through the colonnade. Three interior courtyards provide public space in the interior of the project, opportunities for the public to engage with the third space colonnades. Each pavilion and its associated third space is located to increase potential for cross-interaction with other programs.
Opportunities for interaction between third space and the public, and synergies between pavilions exist across the site. For example, where the fashion design and fabrication lab share a courtyard with the office space the third space functions in the colonnade are a demonstration space for the fabrication lab, a fashion runway, and cafe space. One can imagine the fabrication lab might produce objects for use around the runway and in the fashion design studio. The cafe encourages public interaction and observation.

Around each of the pavilions the colonnade is designed to facilitate the type of third space required. At the cafe the columns are tall and thin but hold a denser pattern - emphasizing its public nature yet capable of hosting cafe tables. Below the office space column fins deliver concise bays for displaying marketing materials such as architectural models or graphic design displays.

Not every colonnade is host to third space, a balance is made across the project to deliver both programmable space and circulation within the colonnade, as is the case above the classroom/library pavilion.
Similarly, the art studios share a courtyard with the music production space, the theater production company, and audio/visual production. It’s easy to imagine people working at all four of those programs consulting with each other and putting together collaboration efforts. Musicians might play for the art gallery or artists can support and influence the theater performance set pieces.

The galleries around the artist studios are generated by a set of fin columns to the East, encouraging the display of smaller sculture and canvas-based art, while the gallery to the north is much more open with deeper bays and fewer columns - allowing the presentation of larger items or greater interaction between a set on display.

Music listening space is delivered by a much denser colonnade with conical directional speakers hung within the colonnade. To the East, fins deliver space for micro-theaters.
The other end of the music production space faces out to the street, its tall colonnade supports a music performance stage. The cafe space and pre-function third spaces support the use of the music performance. The colonnades to either side of the music performance space are denser to emphasize their solitary role as circulation, directing attention to the stage in front.
Finally, the culinary arts pavilion hosts cafe/kiosk eating at test kitchens and a farmers market that faces the street. The cafe areas face the theater performance space across the large courtyard and are located next to three of the more traditional office type functions where one might imagine the workers gather there for lunch.

The test kitchens of the culinary arts pavilion are paired with outdoor seating hosted by fin columns, facing out to the courtyard. Across the courtyard the theater expansion allows the theater to expand beyond its pavilion bounds and into the colonnade by the use of tall columns with wider bay spacing.

To the east, a row of fin columns creates an impromptu meeting space between the two office typologies, with more open meeting space found further to the south. The software development company hosts a public software testing space generated by the use of very small and dense column bays.
CONCLUSION

The entire project comes together to operate as a collaborative work space. By using the form of the colonnade to host third space, this thesis increases the opportunity for interaction between the producers of modern work and the consumer and recalibrates how we understand the relationship between contemporary work and the city. The symbiotic relationship between work and the city is restored through third space, allowing the valuable, unexpected encounters to take place between the public and production. Modulating the form of the colonnade emphasizes the role and intensity of these interactions, and invites the city to participate in the collaborative work project.
Model Photos above and to left