“When we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise”

–Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
TED conference, 2009
Exploring Brooklyn: A Study of Architecture & Time

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30 April 2010
Part I: Time & Space

The next step of the process as
values appropriate to the
process, is to look more explicitly at
the geometric space as at it

Part II: Method Studies/Process

Maps: __________

Red Hook

Part III: Towards an Architectural Solution

Scheme:
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As a response to these layers, with each layer either physically or metaphorically built upon previous ones, ultimately affecting the subsequent environment, must evolve.

It's inevitable. As the needs of people change, so must the buildings change, and adapt to new functions and technological advances. Sensitive design can reflect these layers of the past. It is important to realize that these alterations in themselves exist on this timeline, and should remain flexible for the future. So in that order to gracefully adapt, it would also be impossible to predict the future, so flexibility in this sense must be thought of as anticipating the future without certainty. But in this architectural question I am really investigating is how can architecture celebrate its own place within this reading of temporality?

Even a new space when given meaning becomes place.

Even if that meaning is a representation because it is being revealed to traces, telling a story, tied together of bits, Brooklyn through assembling fragments of recorded history.

Act of memory as meaning-giving.
Time is an inescapable theme that permeates every aspect of our lives. We understand it inertly through its passage, experiencing it as aging as we grow older. From early on we recognize that the world in which we live is a world of temporality. But temporality does not explain where we live, as it is merely a condition of the environment that we live in. We live in architecture. We may think about architecture as the built environment; the landscape of human intervention. If we go back to the origins of architecture, we can understand it as a means of human adaptation, providing people with shelter and protection. Architecture emerged out of the necessity of people, inevitably changing as the needs of people change. Out of these greater cultural evolutions, the built environment emerged as a by-product.

We may begin to think about the built environment as a palimpsest; a page of antiquated text that has been scraped off and used over again. This comparison can be clearly translated architecturally, if we think of every architectural alteration, a building or otherwise, as a new layer on this page, each one either physically or metaphysically built upon the previous ones. Often times, the previous layers of the palimpsest are not completely erased, leaving behind traces of the original texts. In architectural terms, a building may be constructed over the foundations of a previous structure, leaving behind traces of its existence. Every architectural alteration then, is responding to a condition shaped by events of the past. This is an important realization for this study; at the same time, any present alteration in itself is subject to change, in turn making it another layer of the built environment. The intention of this study is to challenge the temporal nature of architecture and explore the built environment as a product of cultural evolution.
We may begin with the question, what is the appropriate site for this type of architectural investigation? The primary focus of this exploration revolves around the larger cultural shifts and their relationship to the human landscape through time. With that in mind, early on it was apparent that the location of the project would be of utmost importance. The site would have to be responsive to the idea of layering. Every built environment, in some way or another, is a palimpsest; the physical traces are evident. The location of this project, however, had to transcend the mere physicality of this type of layering. The place of this exploration would have to in itself be a cultural palimpsest, with a long and rich history. Following that sequence of logic, Brooklyn New York was chosen as the location for the investigation.

* * *

It’s a particularly daunting task to begin describing Brooklyn. Brooklyn is simultaneously familiar and exotic. Like many American cities, Brooklyn falls under the same post-industrial umbrella that we have become all too acquainted with. The residential streets are aligned with the same typical Brownstone buildings that have become a staple of the New Yorker neighborhood. We may say that we find familiarity in the landscape of Brooklyn, but it’s the rich tapestry of people that makes it exotic. There are two and a half million residents in Brooklyn today; a point that could use more attention. Brooklyn is the highest populated borough of the largest city in the United States. If Brooklyn were a city in itself, it would be the fourth largest in the country. If we put the scale of Brooklyn into context, the borough is approximately the same size as the two neighboring east-coast cities of Boston and Baltimore. For this reason we may call Brooklyn an invisible city. To be invisible is to remain unseen; hidden, unperceived by the eye. Lost within the identity of New York high society, Brooklyn’s unique traditions and cultures have been all but brushed over in contemporary history, unconsciously grouped with the other four boroughs that make up the American
metropolis. We may understand the sheer volume of people that live in the invisible city, but it's a figure that does not detail the immense diversity of people. Every town in Brooklyn has its own local identity. Every neighborhood within these towns in turn has its own distinct cultural identity. Brooklyn is a palimpsest, and the layers are the communities of people. It would be impossible to describe the current condition of Brooklyn without first putting it into historical context.

Before diving into the history of Brooklyn, it might prove to be beneficial to first look at it prehistorically. The land encompassing what's known today as New York City was once a heavily forested region covered by wetlands. The condition of the land governed much of the way that the contemporary city of Brooklyn formed, with the lack of bedrock inhibiting the construction of the same high rise buildings traditionally associated with New York. Before settlers discovered the area and began to colonize it, the native Lenape Indians eked out a living planting crops and fishing the local rivers.

The first European to explore the
New York Bay was Giovanni da Verrazano succeeded by Henry Hudson nearly a century later. In 1609, Hudson, under the patronage of the Dutch East India Company, landed on Coney Island. The Dutch trading companies were instrumental in the chartering of many of Brooklyn’s first towns, including Breuckelen, where the city finds its modest origins. The new countryside was very appealing to the first settlers; the Dutch, having a familiarity with the marshy type of landscape, were able to use the fertile land to their advantage growing native plants as well as imported ones like potatoes. The early economy of Brooklyn was largely based on around cultivating their new farm land as well as being invested in trade. The area fell under the Duke of York’s control in 1664 becoming the administrative hand of Brittan in New York, with no real commotion ensuing until the Revolutionary War in 1776. The land today known as Prospect Park was the location of the first major revolutionary war conflict known as the “Battle of Brooklyn”. Although the continental soldiers ultimately lost this battle, they were able to hold the British at bay long enough for General Washington’s troops to retreat to a more strategically sound position.

After the smoke from the Revolutionary
Exploring Brooklyn

War began to clear, a conscious industrial movement changed the area of Kings County from a few small dispersed settlements into the contemporary city of Brooklyn. In the year 1801, the Navy Yard opened which was the first spark of the shipbuilding business. This industry in itself was no great departure from its economic origins; Brooklyn’s location along the shore made it as ideal for the shipping industry as it was for early trade company trafficking. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the busiest ports in America were located here. Great waves of immigration driven by job availability moved into Brooklyn. The population had swelled from a humble 5,000 up to nearly 2,750,000, nearly all a result of these floods of people. Before the city of Brooklyn merged with New York City in 1898, it was the third largest city in America. While the massive amounts of people moving into the city were good for the economy, the formation of cultural enclaves began to develop as a result of each ethnicity settling a different portion of land.

“The force that created rapid transit in Brooklyn was the American model of free enterprise.” Towards the end of the nineteenth century, advances in transit, as well as the advent of electricity and technical innovation began to
connect outlying parts of Brooklyn together with the rest of New York that had previously remained unsettled. Coney Island for instance, which to this point in time had remained relatively untouched, became an unusual world of new and exciting phenomena never before seen; “blazing at its turn-of-the-century zenith [...] the little finger of land at the foot of Brooklyn [is] where the twentieth century took early shape in mirth and violence and torrents of electricity”. With readily available transportation connecting the borough together, the economy of was able to flourish. It was around this time when the final traces of an agricultural past were gone; the transition of Brooklyn into the industrial Mecca was complete.

What goes up must come down. While World War II slowed the effects of the Great Depression providing shipbuilding work, by the mid-twentieth century, the decline of the industrial revolution echoed throughout the whole country, with Brooklyn being no exception. The surges of immigration coming to Brooklyn during the nineteenth century that had led to the formation of cultural enclaves in each of the Brooklyn neighborhoods set the stage for an outbreak. Racial tension caused by the ethnic rivalries between neighborhoods ultimately turned into gangland violence and rioting. With little to no help coming
from the government to resolve these problems, citizens came to view authority figures as oppressors. This in combination with the sudden lack of jobs resulted in an upsurge of drug-based criminal activity that plagued the city, peaking just before the twenty-first century. Brooklyn became known for its hostility with its fist in the black market. However, as artists and new cultural communities started to gentrify the area, things slowly began to spring back to life. Avant-Garde crowds added new flavor back into the old neighborhoods, bringing with them a momentum carrying Brooklyn away from its industrial past.

* * *

The story sounds seemingly familiar; the industrial rise and fall, the subsequent poverty and crime. The factories that sit vacant along the shoreline serve as nostalgic reminders of America's industrial revolution and its cyclical nature. It is not the single story that makes Brooklyn unique, but rather, the condition of its formation, which resulted in the rich culture that we find there today. It is evident that Brooklyn provides layers beyond a merely physical evolution. By looking at Brooklyn's past, we are able to begin putting it into context for the rest of the investigation.
In order to begin questioning time as it relates to architecture, it would benefit us to first reveal a deeper understanding of time itself, and its ethereal nature. Using Edmund Husserl as the foundation and Maurice Merleau-Ponty for further support we will procure a working understanding of time, using a phenomenological approach, on which to lean our discussion against.

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It will be perhaps useful, before diving into the appearance of time, to discern between the modes in which phenomena appear. For Edmund Husserl, time is a phenomenon which “constitutes temporal objects”, and it’s on these grounds that he begins to distinguish the “appearance” of time from that of other phenomena. The word temporal itself is already intimately tied together with time. When we talk of temporal objects, we speak of course about an object with an imposed “time limit”, and we need look no further than a graveyard for an example of this. Husserl makes the distinction between temporal objects and what he calls “immanent objects;” objects in themselves. Immanent objects “appear” as what Husserl calls “Ablaufsphänomene” or “running-off phenomena”. From here we will turn from Husserl’s more diagrammatic approach to the more accessible Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who will give flesh and blood to Husserl’s Ablaufsphänomene.

“Through the ideal nature of time, it ceases to be imprisoned in the present”. With every moment, what’s present becomes the past. Each successive moment, the past is pushed further and further away, while the future continuously terminates into the present. Although we might be quick to assign a metaphor to help illustrate this phenomenon, we must be careful when doing so, since any comparison would in turn relate to an alternative mode of appearance. We will proceed cautiously using an analogy of a river, as it has been used erroneously for many years as a comparison to the passage of time.
Imagine standing on the bank of the river watching the water flow by. Through our presuppositions, we might interpret the current as progressive; that is to say moving towards the future, leaving the past behind. However, Merleau-Ponty reminds us that “it is not the past that pushes the present, nor the present that pushes the future into being”. Rather, the current pushes the past further and further away, as the future flows towards you. Although we understand the passage of time more accurately, the metaphor still has flaws that may be remedied through further illustration. Imagine now, that the observer is on a boat being carried downstream by the current; in this case “we may say that he is moving downstream towards his future, his future being the “new landscapes that await him”.

As we see here, time is no longer being measured by the flow of the river, but instead by the passing of the landscape. This more complete analogy demonstrates a relationship with you, the observer, and things. “Within things themselves, the future and the past are in a kind of eternal state of pre-existence and survival”. While the water upstream being carried towards you is your future, it also is present in the world. This shows not just “presence of the present, but also a presence of past and future”. This dynamic is a necessity in order to constitute time. We can see now that time is not a succession or a line, but Husserl’s running-off phenomena, “a continuity of continuous transformations which form an inseparable unit”. With this general understanding of time we can proceed into the architectural investigation.
At this point we must turn to the central idea behind this thesis; that every architectural alteration is a response to pre-existing conditions. With this in mind, it would seem then, that a deeper understanding of the past would prove fruitful in this investigation. If we are considering the way that the past appears in the built environment, then it will be helpful to first understand the types of space in which the past will appear. In “Putting Geometry in its Place,” Kimberly Dovey makes two spatial distinctions; “the abstract, measured space of geometry,” what he calls “geometric-space” to the “concretely experienced space of everyday life,” what Dovey calls “lived-space”.25 “Lived-space” refers more to the context of space as we experience it. “Geometric space, by contrast, is purged of social and cultural meaning; it is reduced to the coordinates of a map or lines on a technical drawing.”26 This becomes an important architectural distinction. The way in which we have come to understand space has clearly been geometricized, while the way in which we experience space, “lived-space,” is much more meaningful. “It is the nature of human existence that we cannot inhabit geometric space and we cannot avoid lived-space”.27 With that dichotomy in mind, we can now proceed into a more thorough analysis of the past.

* * *

When we begin to think about the past, no doubt our minds carry certain baggage from our own pasts. Our memories allow us to recall events and occurrences from our lives as fragments of our past. Similarly, we are able to draw on the pasts of others by understanding history. If we take history to mean a narrative of previous events, we can see that in much the same way that memories are a personal database of our lives, history is a database for the collective information of the past. With memories we have the capacity to recollect, look within ourselves to understand our pasts as a narrative of how we came to now, the present. With history, we may draw similar information about how things came to be with reference to their own pasts. Going back to
Brooklyn, we can see how historical understanding of the past can shed light on a present condition.

We will turn our attention to the Brooklyn Bridge, for this New York icon will serve well to illustrate how these two types of space are at work. Stripped of historical meaning and context, we may reduce the bridge to its pure geometric form. The Brooklyn Bridge is a steel-wire suspension bridge. The span is nearly six-thousand feet long with the ends anchored by stone Neo-Gothic towers. These are the types of details we would be able to gather by looking at a set of blue prints or the plans of the Brooklyn Bridge. Although with this sort of descriptive analysis we might be able to picture the bridge, and with the type of schematic work the plans call for we could build the bridge, in no way does it help illustrate why there is such reverie for the bridge, why artists look to the structure as a muse for their own creativity. With an understanding of geometric space, we are able to grasp factually how the bridge is, but through our experiences we may understand the essence; what we call lived-space. It is for this reason that, architecturally, lived-space is as important to understand as geometric space. While buildings are designed as geometric space, the experiences associated with these designs are lived. From this point of departure, we will dive beneath the mundane for a second look at the Brooklyn Bridge.

When the Brooklyn Bridge was completed in 1883, not only was it the longest suspension bridge in the world, it was the first suspension bridge to use steel-wire construction. The bridge was a way of bringing together two of America’s largest cities, the towers built as sentinels to watch over them. “The bridge is now so familiar and successful, so accepted as a vital transportation link and a symbol of the city, that it almost seems natural—as if it had always been there.” We can begin to imagine why such reverie emerged out of the modern innovation. It provided the citizens of New York and Brooklyn with a source of pride, inspiration for artists because the great bridge itself is a work of art. In Joseph Stella’s Art Deco painting “Brooklyn Bridge,” the bridge resembles a Cathedral, with the skyline appearing as stained glass. It’s no accident that the Brooklyn Bridge was represented in this way. It has been heralded as both religious edifice and modern masterpiece since its completion. “The stone plays against the steel: the heavy granite in compression, the spidery steel in tension. In this structure, the architecture of the past, massive and protective, meets the architecture of the future, light, aerial, open to sunlight, an architecture of voids rather than of solids.” Our approach lands us closer to understanding the Brooklyn Bridge in a more “lived” sense, but in some way these are still just prosaic facts. By looking more explicitly at the past, we can flesh out a more expressive image of the structure.

Looking at a map of Brooklyn in 1766, it’s obvious that a few things have changed since then. It is a time when Brooklyn was still an undeveloped region with a few small settlements scattered across the landscape. The most notable differences are an
absence of connecting bridges between the two bodies of land. The Brooklyn Bridge at this point is still over one-hundred years away from being built, but what we find where the icon is not yet built is a Ferry Service that’s already been established. Physically before the Brooklyn Bridge became a symbol, joining the two cities together, there was already a connection that existed between these two places. When the bridge was finally built, it was an expression of this passage between Manhattan and Brooklyn that had already existed for over a century. We can see what architectural critic Lewis Mumford meant when he called the Brooklyn Bridge “both a fulfillment and a prophecy.” Prophetic in that it seemed almost as though the connection had always been there, fulfillment in that its construction seemed pre-destined, as though building it were merely a formality. We can see now why the structure seemed cathedral-like, in its own way metaphysically significant.

Before we draw any conclusions about the way in which the past appears within “lived-space,” our investigation might prove richer if we set that concept aside for now and look back at how the past appears within the geometry of the built environment. Although we have been using the Brooklyn Bridge up until this point to differentiate between spatial modes, it will
prove beneficial to defer to a more appropriate example of the past and its appearance within geometric space.

It’s easy to look at an old factory building from Brooklyn and see how it has evolved over time. As buildings adapt to meet the needs of people, the spaces that are altered leave behind traces of its past as architectural clues. Using the Brooklyn Dye Plant, we can see a clear example of this phenomenon. The Brooklyn Dye Plant, built in 1918, has been subjected to alteration and change over the course of its life. The Plant originally just produced dyes, but after World War I the plant began to make new products, forcing the building to expand to meet new production requirements. Again in the 1950’s, the plant began to develop new products, and once again the building adapted to accommodate. The factory, a perfect example of an architectural palimpsest, through geometric space alone begins to tell a story of how the building has changed over time. Gaps where windows used to be have been filled with brick and mortar. Steel beams serve as reminders of floors that no longer exist, while eclectic masonry walls suggest they have been decades in the making. One can’t help but view the manner in which
Past is Present

the past seems to appear in geometric space, as a sort of sedimentation of time. The literal layering of materials and their differences in age is very supportive of this idea. However, this sedimentation of time within the built environment seems antithetical to the phenomena of time discussed earlier in the investigation; a point that could use clarifying.

If we take what Maurice Merleau-Ponty says to heart, we can understand that these clues somehow inform us of the past, but are not themselves the past. In the case of the Brooklyn Bridge, we derive our sense of the past through nostalgia and reverie. Our recollection of memories draw moments from our past, no more experience than merely an “occasion for thinking of the past”. This will be the point of departure in understanding the past as present. Again, an example from Merleau-Ponty will prove helpful in this understanding. Similar to the way that the past was expressed with the dye plant, Merleau-Ponty will use a table to explain how traces of the past appear. “This table bears traces of my past life, for I have carved my initials on it and spilt ink on it. But these traces in themselves do not refer to the past; they are present”. Here with this example, we can see that the traces serve as triggers for his memory,
from which he is deriving his sense of the past. In the case of the Brooklyn Dye Plant, we may create historical associations between the different layers of the wall or understand the adaptations of the plant as related to the year or circumstance in which they occurred, but these are derivative of our minds as is the case with memories. In both cases, the traces of the past are present.

* * *

With a working understanding of how the past appears within these two modes of space, we may now bring some of these concepts together. If geometric space is the stage, then lived-space may be thought of as the play. “Lived-space” gives geometric space its context. Through creating the historical associations of the past to the built environment, we are able to constitute meaning within these spaces. This is significant because we may understand the importance of the past within the investigation. It’s our ability to imagine and recall historical traces that somehow makes the past, present. We may conclude that the built environment exists within a condition of an ever present now. “Within things themselves, the future is not yet, the past is no longer, while the present, strictly speaking, is infinitesimal, so that time collapses.” 37 We can see that within the built environment, the past informs the present, because the past is physically present.
“Let us no longer say that time is a ‘datum of consciousness’: let us be more precise and say that consciousness unfolds or constitutes time”. The built environment in itself cannot escape the present. If we return to the study of time and look back at our example of the river, we see that although the fluid nature of time permits a presence of the past and a presence of the future, they are all present in-the-world. That’s why we understand the relationship of time to the built environment as a presence, albeit from a continuously shifting perspective. Through our own consciousness of these spaces, and our engagement with them, we may begin to change our perception of time with regard to architecture. And from this point we are able to raise a question that is central to the thesis exploration; can design be responsive to this same concept? By utilizing our understanding of the past as present, we begin to approach a design method through a site study of Brooklyn.

Before jumping into the site study, it’s important to reflect on the process we have already started. When we used the map of Brooklyn, circa 1766, the map was a geometric representation, lines and coordinates illustrating the geometric space of that time. But, through our ability to recollect history, associations were created between events of the time period and the map. In a sense, this process itself began to put back into the map the meanings and values that had been extracted. Through our knowledge of the period, the Brooklyn Bridge, which had not yet appeared, began to have more meaning. We may draw similar associations from other maps at different time periods. Looking at a map of Brooklyn from 1868, we can see that the area has greatly developed since 1766. The floods of immigration that were coming to Brooklyn during this century allow us to draw an easy conclusion as to why this has happened. While the south of Brooklyn remains relatively untouched at this point in time, the northern areas around the vital ports are flourishing. Unlike cosmopolitan Manhattan where the streets all align because of a conscious effort to create a functional urban plan, the neighborhoods of Brooklyn each operate on their own grid superimposed...
Exploring Brooklyn

Compiled maps of Brooklyn
next to one another. This odd network was the direct result of the early town settler’s unwillingness to work with one another, demonstrating how a cultural condition can directly result in an urban condition. In this case, ethnic tension resulted in each neighborhood having a distinct border separating the cultural enclaves. Using this method, a study of Brooklyn was done as a more thorough form of site analysis.

After collecting maps over the course of Brooklyn’s history, the next step was to literally layer the maps over one another. Using abstract painting as a means of representation, each map was painted chronologically over one another, obviously starting with the earliest maps from the 1700’s up until the present condition we find there today. The painting of Brooklyn itself became a palimpsest. The layers range from the clearly visible, the conditions of today, to the invisible, the layers that have been covered up; existing only as ghosts or traces of what once was there. The study itself was created as a way of understanding how the present came to be, as a product of the past, and was an attempt to create a map of “lived-space.” In a sense, the past constitutes meaning within the built environment.
It seems that in order to address the more important aspects of this exploration, the connection between culture and architecture, that it would be appropriate to narrow the scope of research from the entire borough of Brooklyn to one of its particular neighborhoods. By focusing the range of research into a particular neighborhood, we can look more explicitly at a specific cultural thread through our theme of time. As we have already observed in Brooklyn, whose location made it ideal for seafaring industry, a distinct Brooklynite culture developed because of its geographical location. With this in mind, the neighborhood of Red Hook itself offers a unique geographical condition that will afford us the chance to look at these aspects of the project with greater clarity. As with our research of Brooklyn, we will begin with the historical context of Red Hook before drawing any cultural conclusions.

Red Hook was established in the year 1636 by Dutch settlers. Named after its red clay soil and hook shape projecting into the East River, Red Hook was one of the first settlements of Brooklyn. In many respects, the story of Red Hook is that of the archetypal Brooklyn town. As a peninsula on the river, the shipping industry was able to flourish, with Red Hook becoming one of the busiest ports in the nation by the time the Atlantic Basin opened in 1850’s. Between the mid-1800s to the mid-1900’s swarms of dockworkers moved into the thriving industrial neighborhood. With thousands of longshoremen calling Red Hook home, the neighborhood earned a notoriously tough reputation in Brooklyn. Among the most infamous residents of Red Hook to take rise was Al Capone, who began his career as a gangster along the streets and docks of the neighborhood.
In 1938 the Red Hook Houses were built for the growing number of dockworkers and their families. “This was one of the first and largest federal housing projects in the country.” Built as a work initiative under Franklin Delano Roosevelt, to this day it remains one of the nation’s largest housing projects. By the 1950’s, twin disasters of economic tragedy and geographic isolation changed the fate of Red Hook.

The population had reached its zenith in the 1950’s reaching 21,000 people. At the time when the population was at its largest, a small change in shipping logistics caused a ripple throughout the whole of Brooklyn. Nowhere was it worse than in Red Hook. “Shipping lines began moving goods in long metal containers, rather than the traditional break-bulk shipping of barrels and bales [...] Containerized shipping required greater upland space and fewer hands to load and unload.” This was a dramatic change for the industry, resulting in a hemorrhage of employment, causing even non-shipping industries to flee from Red Hook. The economic destruction coincided with a tragedy of a completely different sort. The construction of the 1946 Gowanus Expressway, followed by the opening of Battery Tunnel in 1950 literally left Red Hook physically severed from the rest of
The neighborhood was isolated, and with no public transportation to speak of, it was abandoned. The Red Hook Houses, built to service the large number of growing workers in the area became a ghetto for the denizens left poor and jobless after the bottom fell out. In much of the same way that the Brooklyn Bridge became a symbol for New York City, the housing projects became a symbol for the town; an homage to the “ill-conceived plans of state and city government.”

“Red Hook was suffering from very serious problems: the deterioration of its physical fabric, abandoned buildings, illegal dumping of trash, poverty, skyrocketing drug use and violence.” The Red Hooks history that followed transformed the isolated peninsula from one of the busiest ports to one of the busiest drug trafficking centers in North America. When this problem reached its peak in the 1990’s, a third of the population was under the age of 18 with the average income per household well below the poverty line. The Spike Lee film “Clockers,” shot in this neighborhood, portrays the instability of the time period. The film depicts this poor young community as though they were left with no option other than to start pushing drugs; a
product of their banishment. Although change was slow to come into Red Hook, it did. The citizens of Red Hook allowed the violence to serve as a catalyst for change.

With the help of certain outreach programs and a new community of people gentrifying the neighborhood, the crime rate began to decrease. When the local grocery stores could no longer afford to stay open, the citizens were left without nearby food, and ultimately left with only two options: walk several miles across the barrier, or take the costly taxi. Left with unacceptable options, the citizens took matters into their own hands, and started a community farm. Big players like IKEA, who just built their new warehouse in Red Hook are providing jobs and a much needed injection into the economy, along with artists and small businesses owners looking for low rental costs are moving back into the neighborhoods. Even the waterfront is beginning to see signs of life, as cruise ships are beginning to use Red Hook as a docking point. At the same time that this conscious shift away from their industrial past is taking place, continued controversy over the subject of what the neighborhood is to become is keeping Red Hook’s future unknown. “[C]ity officials, who want to preserve factories and the jobs they provide, have declared a swath of Red Hook that includes the plant site an industrial business zone”. Because the neighborhood is zoned for industry, factories continue to open amidst desires of the citizens to fuel their economy in other ways. And so the battle rages on. “Red Hook’s future may be an uncertain one, but its shifting fabric and continuing controversies are as old as the neighborhood itself”.

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In many respects it’s hard to differentiate the culture of Red Hook and that of Brooklyn itself. From the early settlements to its industrial history, Red Hook is a Brooklyn neighborhood through and through. But Red Hook is also a culture turned against itself. The Red Hooker culture emerged out of it geographical conditions, and through a change in this geography, emerged a counter-culture in opposition to the first. Geographically destitute, it is as though a piece of Brooklyn was cast away in exile and was reborn in isolation. Through the historical context we can see that culture is intimately linked together with a geographic condition. And it’s through this reading that we may avoid prescribing Red Hook to a single story.
As present moments become the past, our futures close in on us, becoming a moment of the present. Our memories fade as they become older and more time goes by. Likewise, as the future comes closer to its manifestation in the present, it becomes clearer. Time may be thought of in ranges, from our most recent past, something that has just occurred, to our distant past, often times forgotten. We can see the same thing with the future. We may, for instance, differentiate between what understand as the foreseeable future, that which is about to happen, and the distant future, a time beyond our realm of speculation. This notion of speculation is very important to understanding the future, and will serve as a central idea for this part of the exploration.

Unlike the past that has already played out, the future is uncertain. There is a sense that the past, something that “has happened” would put something that “will happen” on the other end of the spectrum; a problematic notion. This outlook of the future suggests a definitive view of a future reality; inevitability, or for the spiritually inclined, fate. Although there is certain romanticism about a single idealized future, we know that the future is indeterminate and unpredictable. So for a discipline that is conventionally practiced in a determinate future such as Architecture, how can this dilemma be resolved? If we return to our original model of time, it wasn’t the future being pushed into being; instead the future was dragged into place, so we can intuitively imagine the momentum of the past giving our future a direction. If we return to our example of the river for a moment, we can shed some more light on this matter.

The man in the boat has been traveling down the river for some time and has become accustomed to the landscape around him. He may logically speculate that his future holds similar landscapes to be observed. He is able to make this assumption safely, based on his past experience. As the river bends, however, something unexpected occurs, and another boater passes by traveling
the opposite direction upstream. This rather simple example is suggestive of several things. The most prevalent idea here is the unpredictability of what the future holds, but a second and less obvious idea concerns the manifestation of multiple futures. To put another way, this is the idea of simultaneous futures terminating into a single present moment. This perplexing thought may receive more clarity when reapplied to our analogy.

For the man on the boat, the series of events unfolded in an unpredictable way, while at the same time the anticipated future, the consistency of the landscape before him also came into fruition. Although this could be dismissed as a singular unfolding, we may choose to interpret this unfolding with the potential to unfold any number of ways. If earlier in the day the man on the boat saw a storm on the horizon, he may reasonably expect a storm in his future. Whether this storm moves in to meet him or not, the potential future reality is no less valid. Here we see more explicitly several future realities, where each future has the potential to come into existence, or to perhaps even co-exist.

This in itself raises some provocative questions when applied to the central subject of this thesis, Architecture. Typically, architecture is conceptualized with a single future reality in mind. This idealized condition in a sense is a single frozen view. However, if we think about architecture not as a single solution, as is normally prescribed by the profession, but instead consider a future with multiple outcomes, you explore the potentiality of architecture to respond organically to human necessity. With those thoughts in mind, we move into the architectural investigation.
This is a question of a new design process, one aimed at not creating typical architectural solutions, but to explore the potentiality of site as a means of cultivation, a new way to further the growth of culture. But in some ways, this project is more interested in how the actual process might challenge the temporal nature of architecture and the way we conceptualize the future during our own process of speculation.

Site:
The site proper for this project is The Brooklyn Dye Plant in Red Hook (appendix v). A great effort was made to contextualize the plant as a place, and through the recollection and reassembly of these historical fragments, the ultimate goal was to create a dialogue between the site and building, a present moment celebrating the past.
**Program:**
It did not seem appropriate or in the spirit of this thesis to have one program that would force the project into having one static view of the future. Instead, the speculative aspect was brought to the forefront, and program was considered a way of reinterpreting history. So instead of a single program, simultaneous schemes were explored. The idea here was not that these schemes unfolded sequentially, but rather that each future reality explored could potentially exist or even co-exist. The following are several schemes that were used as vehicles to explore the ideas of this thesis. Large portions of the development remained unspecified, with the potential to react to any indeterminate future. It is important to note, that while some schemes receive a greater emphasis than others, none were considered sacred.

**Rainwater Laundromat:** The idea was that rainwater would be harvested from the roofs of existing buildings, and used to wash the clothes. After being used, the water would be routed to a constructed wetland, where the water could then be recycled for future use or returned to the bay. What’s important here is not the Laundromat itself, but rather the threads connecting historical fragments. In this case, the wetland is a way of creating a condition reminiscent of pre-historic...
Brooklyn, which was once completely covered in wetlands, and the more contemporary history of the Dye Plant, which is celebrated by the laundry process itself.

*Hydroponic Greenhouse:* This is thought of as primarily a way to respond to the existing community garden, allowing it to extend the growing season, as well as retaining ties to the farming layer in Brooklyn’s history.

*Pizza Kitchen:* This in itself has an obvious connection with New York style pizza, but it was also an opportunity to bring back historical elements of the site and use them in new ways. In this case the factory smokestack, which had been removed in recent years, was returned as a way to celebrate the kitchen and the idea of hearth.

*Red Hook Film Festival:* Over the last several years an annual film festival has been held in the neighborhood. While the festival usually contests local Brooklyn filmmakers, outside intrigue and has begun to percolate in. The idea of festival itself is something inherently temporal. Here there is the opportunity once a year for the festival to bleed throughout the rest of the site, activating the spaces in new ways.

**Section A-** Right, pg. 39-42
**Section B-** Following, pg. 43-45
The Brooklyn Ghost Plant
Exploring Brooklyn
The Brooklyn Ghost Plant
Attitude:
Because of the nature of the project, it seems only appropriate to include some thoughts on how the building itself was approached. There is something to be said about the inherent beauty of the factory ruin. It was for this reason that an adaptive reuse approach sought to repurpose the existing building and use its structure as the driving organizational principal. But because of the condition of the building itself, parts too far dilapidated were removed; the structures that remained were treated as artifacts.

Method:
For the process of this architectural investigation, the same method of abstract painting used to explore Brooklyn was used as the means for design development of the site. By layering the design iterations over one another, every new stage of development became informed by all the stages before it (appendix ii). Although designed elements disappeared from one scheme to the next, in some way they were all present. For the purposes of this project, it became equally important to create a way of representing architecture as it exists not set in time, but through time.
I found myself recently asking, what is the meaning of all this? My thesis, what are I really trying to explore?

If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants.” — Isaac Newton

I think that the answer to this is to find out what makes architecture meaningful. How do we experience dream space?

Manifestation of one’s desires, fears, memories, and experiences as place, when we have an out-of-body experience that affects us? You are not experiencing what that dream figure is experiencing you are passively watching with an entirely different experience.

DREAMS ARE CREATED FROM THE SUB-CONSCIOUS
This thesis began with the exploration of the built environment. To explore is to search with the hope of purposeful discovery. The discovery here is perhaps a different way to conceptualize the temporality of architecture.

It is the nature of the built environment to evolve and change, and because of that we reasonably view its presence as temporal. And while it may be true that some buildings disappear altogether, by the hands of man or force of nature, the traces of history and its existence do not. Even after the bodies have decayed and gone, there are still ghosts in the graveyard. It is not architecture that is temporal but rather the people who inhabit these spaces. It is through consciousness of our own temporality that we are quick to assign this trait to the built environment, and gauge the life of a building. Time is the relationship of man to the world around him, the built environment, and everything in it. As we move through time our history is recorded on the walls of our world, of architecture and the built environment; the combined efforts of lifetimes of work. And with that I leave on a final consideration about the future...

Consider for a moment that just by bringing into your consciousness a fleeting thought of the future, by speculating, that somehow the future is, at moment, present?

...an occasion for daydreaming.
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Collapse of Time
John Hejduk

John Hejduk’s clock tower was created as a way to challenge the nature of time. The tower on the caisson itself is mobile, constructed with two large wheels that allow it to literally move through space and through time. The clock tower shifts through different modes of time allowing an observer sitting in a chair at the top of the tower to experience the passage between these different modes as the tower is lowered towards the ground. The idea was that a participant would literally move through time, as the tower allows the ambiguous juxtapositions of spatial modes to collapse time, ultimately creating an experience of timelessness.
The Verona fortification Castelvecchio was primarily constructed in the 12th century. The castle has a long and rich history, storied with numerous engagements and events that add to its colorful past. Scarpa preserves the layers of the buildings past by articulating the buildings inherent story, in some places methodically peeling back portions of the structure to expose the historical elements. For Scarpa, it was not about the tension between new and old, but rather a suspension of time, recontextualizing the castle as a historical place. The cutting and peeling that Scarpa does perform never feels forced or heavy handed; historical elements are harmonized together with contemporary ones so that the building never feels nostalgic, but instead creates a certain reverie for the past.
Site Plan - Laundromat & Greenhouse
Site Plan- Pizza Kitchen & Public Square
Site Plan - Film Festival
Each painting in this series has been overlayed on the previous one.
Exploring Brooklyn
Conceptual Illustrations
Brooklyn Dye Plant Site Analysis-
These were the first layers done on the same canvas as the paintings for the Site Plan Scenarios.
Exploring Brooklyn
**Coney Island Collage #1-**

This study shows Coney Island in its hayday, just after the turn of the 20th Century
Coney Island Collage #2-
This study shows Coney Island present day; a ghost town.
Domino Sugar Factory Collage-
An examination of the ghosts of industry in Greenpoint


With this book, Stewart Brand explores life of buildings as they change over time. His concept of how buildings evolve is very suggestive to the idea of time exists in the built environment as a series of layers. It’s really with this idea that the analogy of the built environment to the palimpsest may be made more explicit.


The story itself challenges its own nature. Danielewski intertwines several stories within stories, only providing fragments of each one. Using the theory of traces, you use what’s provided to understand what is absent. This method of storytelling was used as a research strategy for my site.


Lure of the Local is a retrospective study of how place changes you. It was really under Lippard’s influence that the selection of site for this project was made. Finding a place with a unique local culture and identity became the driving force behind early investigations.