Urban Scarification
an architectural strategy of healing

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Abstract

The Motor City takes pride in its rich history. As a former leader in industry and advancement, Detroit continues to thrive on international automotive renown, business enterprise and riverfront development. Beautifully restored historic districts, such as Indian Village, Sherwood Forest and Corktown enclose pockets of communities scattered throughout the city, where neighborhood associations come together as one in each area. Over the decades however, the city has become victim to racially-charged riots, government leadership scandals and economic deficiencies. Parts of the city have become dangerous and volatile due to an increase of illegal drug handling, gang violence and criminal behavior. Slowly, but steadily, people of the city have moved out and found refuge in neighboring suburbs. The only things left in these forgotten areas are the memories of life, the histories of people that contributed to a once thriving metropolis. Time and character are carefully preserved and restored in the historic districts, which allow for architectural aesthetics and community enhancement to positively penetrate throughout the lives of its residents. In contrast, abandoned houses are not preserved and do not provide enhancement to the community and negatively affect its residents. However, like a preserved home, the history of an abandoned building still remains. The body of a building experiences architectonic wounds, healing and scarring. Wounds include structurally unstable elements, such as broken windows and collapsed roofs. Healing incorporates the temporary protection of broken elements from further damage. And scarring occurs after the building is healed and when it is restored, but not to its original state. Through this working analogy, a new understanding can begin to unfold a different perspective on how a neighborhood can be re-identified. This thesis seeks to explore urban scarification as a means of re-establishing the identity of an area that has lost its density through a specific and direct intervention. It examines the healing potential of the landscape as a method to promote new life and identity for a broken community.
Introduction

foundation and research
To know where you are going, you must know where you have been. A person’s history plays an important role when it comes to knowing who that person really is. Everyday experiences and ordinary encounters with others help shape a person’s character. People learn from their mistakes and encounter situations that enrich their knowledge of the world around them. Among these situations and life lessons, are scars that accumulate over the years. Scars from physical injury and accidents have healed over time, and remain on the surface of a person’s skin. Over the years, a scar might become less noticeable and smooth away, and its color might fade to the normal skin tone. Nevertheless, a scar contains the experiential quality which enhances the life of its bearer and serves as a reminder of the past.

In a similar way, buildings accumulate their own souvenirs of the past. A building can be wounded, through structural damage and failure, due to arson, vandalism, and natural weathering. After these wounds occur, the building can undergo healing stages of restoration, renovation or preservation. New materials and structurally stable elements reinforce and reconnect the damaged material of the building. After the healing is completed, the building will contain layers of its past (old materials) in conjunction with its new layers of skin (materials added to make new). These inter-connective layers of materials can be considered the architectonic scars of a building. Much like biological scars, these architectonic scars enrich the character of the building and add to its own history.
Memories

We all have many stories and several memories of times when we, as children, scraped our knee playing street ball, cut our finger on the rusty fence or crashed our bike in the neighbor’s bushes. Or perhaps, we can remember the time when we burnt our hand touching a hot stove, or laying in bed, sick with the chicken pox. Given the experiences and the memories, what physically remains is the scar that formed from the cut on the finger, or the blister on the hand. These experiences are the ones that occur during our childhood at home or perhaps in the old neighborhood where we grew up.

Gaston Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Space*, remind us of the importance of childhood memories and how they influence a person’s experience through space. He writes, “Through dreams, the various dwelling places in our lives co-penetrate and retain the treasures of former days. And after we are in the new house, when memories of other places we have lived in come back to us, we travel to the land of Motionless Childhood, motionless the way all Immemorial things are” (p. 5).

In this way, the memories that we keep stored in our minds, the special ones that bring our child-self to the present, are the psychological experiences we subconsciously return to in our experience of the built environment as home. He continues further that “memories are motionless and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are” (P. 9). So in our experiences of our own childhood home, we can usually find a sense of stability and mental clarity in the present day of living in the built environment. However, that sense of stability and clarity can be tainted in the case of an abandoned house or community. Because of the physical instability of an abandoned house, we perhaps cannot fully benefit from the experiential quality of our childhood memories.
Our childhood memories become part of our own history. They enhance our personal characteristics with unique experiences and distinct qualities. We find a sense of belonging or foundation in knowing the past, in knowing where we came from. And it is in our childhood development that we learn the fundamentals of life and the world around us.

In thinking about the built environment, the life of a building begins at the planning and construction phases. A building, more specifically a house, usually has a distinctive architectural style that gives it certain characteristics which become part of its history. While some residential architectural styles are more prominent than other vernacular styles, the house may go through renovations or repairs.

The preservationist architect, James Marston Fitch wrote in *The Philosophy of Restoration* that the “preservation of the historic built world is critical to man’s psychic and emotional well-being.” To preserve the history of our built world is to keep the connection open between the past and the present day. While there is the connection with the past, there is the sense of returning back to the starting point of its existence. The house that is historically preserved, returned back to its original architectural state, comes full circle from its current conditions to its beginning. And the person who looks at the preserved facade of the house, can feel a sense of reverence for this instance of living history of the built environment.

However, in the case of deterioration and neglect due to abandonment, the image of a broken and dirty house with overgrown vegetation appeals to the emotions of sadness and hopelessness. It can be mentally draining to see a house that is completely exposed to the elements, with a collapsed roof, and broken windows, a victim of vandalism. We tend to feel this sadness because we can experientially relate to the family that once lived in the abandoned house. We think of our own home, the one we grew up in, the one that was witness to our lives.
Just as we can visualize the abandoned house as the shell of a living organism, providing shelter to its inhabitants and obtaining the status of ‘home’, we can easily imagine a vacant lot with remnants of existence. The vacant lot in an urban setting, with overgrown vegetation was once occupied with a house and garage. There was a front yard with a tree that had a tire swing for the neighborhood children and in the back yard, a flower garden attracted the bees and butterflies in the summertime. But now, the vacant land has returned back to nature, with wild flowers and weeds. The landscape has been flattened.

In his article, *Terrain Vague*, Ignacio de Sola-Morales Rubio gives an explanation of the potential of the vacant landscape. He writes that terrain vague, is “an empty abandoned space in which a series of occurrences have taken place” (119). Whether or not proof of its past is physically present or not, the landscape still has a past. And furthermore, the current conditions of the vacant lot can influence new opportunity to occur. Sola-Morales Rubio explicitly states that the terrain vague is “void, absence, yet also promise, the space of the possible, of expectation” (120). So, rather than seeing the empty lot as negative space, unusable and neglected, it can be seen as a new canvas for opportunity to grow.
Abandonment

At one point, the vacant landscape was not vacant. It had a definite purpose, to provide space for a house, or a commercial building. During this time, the landscape was cared for, the grass mowed, garbage taken out, building maintained. Eventually, there was no one to care for the building or the landscape. It became abandoned.

There are many reasons why a place becomes abandoned. Warfare and mass murder cause the physical destruction of entire cities, wiping out all human beings. A small town in England was used for military training during World War I, forcing the citizens to abandon their homes for a certain period of time. A sign still remains on the door of the local church saying, “Please treat the church and houses with care; we have given up our homes where many of us lived for generations to help win the war to keep men free. We shall return one day and thank you for treating the village kindly.” Along similar lines, plague and threatening pollution has forced people to flee from their homes. Other types of safety threats include crime and vandalism, earthquake and volcanic action, and toxicity disease. A city in Arizona that was a gold mining town, but once the natural resource ran out, people moved on and abandoned the town. Another common reason for abandoning a place is loss of interest during economic depression or post-industrial recession.

As a result, the places that have been abandoned reflect some contradictions that exist side-by-side. In the case of the village that was evacuated due to military training, the buildings and their contents remain a preserved historical ghost town, traces of people who have long passed away. For large industrial warehouses that have been abandoned, there is a real sense of decaying beauty because of the growing vegetation within the deteriorating concrete block and rusting steel. Remnants of homes that were left in ruins after families were murdered, stand as a living memorial. Within these places of neglect, there still lingers the soul of the building that calls out to the people who once inhabited it. In visiting an abandoned site, one can appreciate its ancient aura and aged physicality.
Brush Park Drawing 1.2  10/02/09
Edmund Place
“From Old to New”
Detroit
restored and decayed
The Body of Detroit

In its hey-day, the city of Detroit was a thriving metropolis, full of excitement and potential. The booming automotive industry and the beginnings of the “Big Three” car companies (Ford, General Motors and Chrysler) contributed to Detroit’s familiar nickname of “The Motor City.” Immigrants seeking work brought their families to Detroit in the early 1900s and worked for five dollars a day under Henry Ford’s economic stimulation program. The city rapidly grew in size. During the day, factory workers and business executives alike crowded into the Downtown district to earn their living. At nighttime, this same Downtown transformed itself into an entertainment district, attracting theatre-goers, restaurant connoisseurs, and people looking to catch a jazz concert or have a drink at one of the many local bars. As the city flourished, architects and developers worked at constructing commercial buildings, public institutions and residential communities.

The City of Detroit is home to several historic sites, including the site of Ol’ Tiger Stadium, the Central
Michigan Train Station, Corktown and Indian Village. These sites are what can be considered the foundation, the heart and soul of a city. They are like the wrinkles of an old man’s face, weathered and conditioned with the character that he has acquired from a lifetime of hardship and good times.

However, Detroit is also home to ghosts of homes - to the empty shells of houses. Scattered throughout are the houses that no longer house any person or family. They are the eye sores that one drives by everyday - burnt out, broken glass, deterioration, abandonment - festering the flesh of the city, eating away at its soul. The body of Detroit was once a healthy vibrant organism (good economy, positive attitude, place of interest, safety and security). But as the body grew older, Detroit unfortunately became handicapped with burnt buildings, forgotten pieces of land and a rotting community. Maintenance over time decreased and all that remains are the bones of unique personality and forgotten handicaps.
Brush Park Drawing 1.3 09/27/09
205 Alfred St
“Ransom-ed”
Brush Park
a forgotten district
Brush Park was originally the family farm of Elijah and Adelaide Brush. Their son Edmund began residential development on their property in the late 1800’s. Eventually Brush Park evolved into a neighborhood for the elite citizens of Detroit, including David C. Whitney, John Harvey and J.L. Hudson. At the time, Brush Park came to be known as “Little Paris” because of the beautifully detailed Second Empire mansard roofs and Queen Anne turrets that lined the neighborhood. Mary Chase Perry founded her pewabic pottery business in one of the carriage houses on Alfred St. On the corner of Mack Ave and John R, Albert Kahn built his residence, which is now the home of the Urban League of Detroit.

In the early 1900’s, most of the mansions were turned into rooming houses for factory workers and immigrants. Three-story additions were added to the back of the houses with community kitchens and bathrooms. Brush Park also became a refuge for Jewish families who were limited to live elsewhere within the City. After the 1960’s Riots and the white
flight movement, Brush Park turned into a dangerous neighborhood with prostitution, gangs and drug trafficking. According to a local resident, a driver going south on John R towards Downtown had to wait 30 minutes because of drug dealing in a car in front.

During the 70s and 80s, while some houses were victims of arson and vandalism, other houses were listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. In an attempt to clean up Detroit for the Super Bowl in 2006, city officials demolished several abandoned houses and left vacant plots of land scattered throughout the landscape. And in recent years, new condominiums and lofts have been developed. In the summer of 2009, the group “SEED Detroit” made an effort in freshening up the area. This group planted wildlflowers in the vacant landscape to help promote new life and beauty within the neighborhood.

Brush Park is located within a relatively vibrant area of Detroit, called Midtown. While Midtown stretches over a few miles, Brush Park’s boundaries are Woodward Ave to the east, Mack Ave to the north, Beaubien St on the westside
Midtown, Detroit
Looking north from the Renaissance Center
Brush Park is highlighted in color
and Interstate 75 to the south.

It is less than a mile away from Downtown, with the athletic stadiums that house the Lions football and the Tigers baseball teams directly to the south. This close proximity makes the area a convenient place for sports fans to park without paying a fee. On game days, the streets of Brush Park become filled like a temporary parking lot.

The campuses of Wayne State University and the Detroit Medical Center are located directly north of Mack Ave. Along Woodward Ave, the annual Thanksgiving Day parade brings crowds of thousands to the area to watch the floats and bands march by. The Brewster housing projects stand isolated on the east border, shut down due to financial and social difficulties. Eastern Market, a well-established food and goods commercial area is located farther east across the I-75 freeway that loops down adjacent to Brush Park.
Broken

Brush Park Drawing 1.4  09/27.09
Edmund Place
“Broken”
Wound + Heal = Scar

a phenomenological analysis
Biological vs. Architectonic

On the human body, a wound occurs when the surface of the skin is torn apart, or broken. Over time, the wound begins to heal and the cells of the body’s skin form a protective shield (a scab) over the wound in order for tissue to be mended and reconnected. After the scab falls off the skin, a scar appears in its place. From a medical perspective, a scar is considered damaged connective tissue, where the skin is not fully healed after an incision or an injury. As a result, a scar will remain visible on the skin. It might become smoother and less noticeable over time, but will continue to be a reminder of a past injury, a souvenir of the past.

In a similar way, buildings accumulate their own souvenirs of the past. A building can be wounded, through structural damage and failure, due to arson, vandalism, and natural weathering. After these wounds occur, the building can undergo healing stages of restoration, renovation or preservation. New materials and structurally stable elements reinforce and reconnect the damaged material of the building. After the healing is completed, the building will contain layers of its past (old materials) in conjunction with its new layers of skin (materials added to make new). These inter-connective layers of materials can be considered the architectonic scars of a building.

On a larger scale, the neighborhood of Brush Park has accumulated its own set of wounds (vacant lots, and collapsed roofs) and continues to heal slowly through forms of community development, historic preservation and physical renovations (mending of structural damage and weathering). And eventually, these scars of preservation and renovation will begin to re-identify the neighborhood in a new context. However, while some of these scars transform into positive conditions, the remaining wounds of abandoned buildings continue to degrade the potential beauty that can exist within its current state, thus never fully healing. Because of the architectonic wounds that are constant elements within the body of a neighborhood like Brush Park, the body will never fully reach its full potential as a medium through which a community can exist.
The Facts of Scars

This phenomenological analysis of scars will seek to explore the essential nature of how a scar appears to the conscience and through this exploration, it will attempt to support the concept of how architectonic scars can re-identify a neighborhood.

What is a scar? Any person who experiences a painful injury or a medical incision usually ends up with a scar embedded in the surface of the skin. A scar, whether located on the foot, forearm or face, heals uniquely according to the conditions of the skin during the injury impact. Each scar that remains, is specific to the texture, color and curvilinear nature of a person’s skin. However, in order for a scar to form, there must always be an initial occurrence or event that takes place causing pain to the person and a breakage in the surface of the skin. This initial event could be a car accident, a knife cut while cooking, or intentional scarring.

In western society, scars are usually viewed with disdain. Women who undergo cosmetic or enhancement surgery often do not want any trace of incision to be noticed (Fig. 1). Sometimes
people who experience other surgical procedures are embarrassed by the scars that remain visible to the outside world, and want to conceal the unsightly marks on their skin. In the case of a soldier who was wounded in battle, he or she may have violent memories associated with the injury, but nevertheless that soldier will wear the scar as a badge of honor in serving his or her country.

On the other hand, tribal cultures of Africa use the act of scarification as a means of social, political and personal identification (Fig. 2). Scarification, or intentional scarring of the skin, is common among these cultures for rites of passage and initiation into adulthood. For a woman, the more intricate a pattern is on her body, the higher level of beauty she will possess in society (Coleman). Also, scarification is used to identify those in mourning or those who celebrate happiness.

In other cases, scars can be viewed as a means of personal identification. Scars that a person acquires throughout his or her life eventually become part of that person’s physical character. Some actors are especially known for their unique scarring on their face or body. A scar can become a person’s trademark in life, their exclusive personal trait that no one else has. Even in the case of intentional scarring, a person essentially brands his or herself in the quest for self-imaging, which is much like the women of the tribal cultures who scarify their skin as a marking of beauty. Another example of identification includes a mother who can distinguish the body of her son among other male bodies, by recognizing the j-shaped scar that was located on his left hand.

Within all cultures, scars are associated with both negative and positive connotations, or emotions that
A scar experientially enhances the history of a person, through layers of meaningful interruptions and accidents that accumulate during childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Meaningful interruptions and accidents include those events in which mental clarity can be acquired through painful situations that inflict injury and cause physical scars to form. For example, a young man who was driving under the influence of alcohol, got into a car accident and broke his leg (Fig 3). The event caused a transformation in the young man’s state of mind and physical health. His state of mind was altered in a way for the scar that formed on his leg to be a daily reminder of his lack of judgement in safe driving.

Moreover, scars remain on the surface of the skin as traces of past experiences in a person’s life.

A scar experientially enhances the history of a person, through layers of meaningful interruptions and accidents that accumulate during childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Meaningful interruptions and accidents include those events in which mental clarity can be acquired through painful situations that inflict injury and cause physical scars to form. For example, a young man who was driving under the influence of alcohol, got into a car accident and broke his leg (Fig 3). The event caused a transformation in the young man’s state of mind and physical health. His state of mind was altered in a way for the scar that formed on his leg to be a daily reminder of his lack of judgement in safe driving.

Moreover, scars remain on the surface of the skin as traces of past experiences in a person’s life.
In these descriptive scenarios, the phenomena of scars and scarification can be understood from a general perspective of how scars are experienced by people in everyday situations. In analyzing these scenarios that frame this specific phenomena, the facts and meanings behind scars and scarification will be deconstructed in order to discover its essence. In revealing its essence, a description of scars and scarification as it appears to the purified consciousness can be revealed.

In the midst of trying to understand what a scar is and where a scar comes from, we need to think about these questions without the baggage of variables and contexts of situations. By putting aside the emotional aspects of medical treatment, what happens to the surgical incision? The body’s cells begin the process of healing by cleaning out the wound and forming a protective barrier (a scab) under which connective tissue will mend over time. However, the length of time it will take to heal and how noticeable the scar is, will depend on the intensity and depth of the wound. The scar ends up more noticeable than healthy skin because it is the damaged connective tissue that was unable to be fully restored. This analysis of the formation of a scar reveals a basic understanding that the scar is a permanent result of the breakage of the skin.

Now, the element of pain and personal experience of a scar obtained from an injury or traumatic event has a richer underlying meaning. In the case of the young man who broke his leg in a car accident, there was a transformation of mental status in addition to the physical injury. Through this traumatic event and experiencing a near-death episode, the young man recovered and learned a vital lesson about safe driving practices. And even setting aside the fact that his car was badly damaged and the time spent in the hospital in rehabilitation, the scar will remain on his leg. The essential quality to note in this example would be the fact that there was a transformation of the person’s perspective on life due to the meaningful interruption of the life-threatening car accident. From this catalytic event came a mental status change and a physical mark of the
accident.

In the same way, a woman of one of the tribal cultures in Africa transforms her body to show her marital potential through the act of scarification. Prior to this painful self-inflicting action, the woman would not be considered viable for marriage and would be viewed as unappealing to prospective male partners (Coleman). In the intentional act of scarification, the woman performs this painful action and alters her identification within her community.

Furthermore, by examining a scar as a souvenir, an essential characteristic of scars and scarification can be understood. Let us look at the souvenir and set aside the tourist-driven commercial context. It is in the nature of a person to collect for himself or herself mementos of people or places that are memorable in one’s life. Like a scar, a souvenir can be a piece of evidence or proof of an experience. You can claim you have been to a certain amount of beaches by showing all the seashells you have collected from each trip. And more so, you might be able to recall what seashell was found on a specific beach due to its unique shape and color. A scar does relatively the same thing, in terms of being a trace of a past injury or event. For example, a five-year-old can be proud of the scar on her forehead because she learned how to ride her bike with no hands (but crashed at the end of her driveway and lived to tell the story to her friends).

So, what is a scar? And what does it mean to scarify? Through this phenomenological analysis, a scar can be understood in its simplest form as it appears to the purified consciousness as a permanent marking which alters perspective and provides evidence as a reminder of a past.
Scarification

the scars of Brush Park
Brush Park Drawing 1.5  
10/15/09
Erskine St.
“Collapsed”
On a larger scale, Brush Park is a perfect living example of how a neighborhood can survive with ‘open wounds,’ undergo ‘healing’ transformations and how select areas of the neighborhood have been re-identified through its ‘scars.’ From a distance, a neighborhood is a collective group of residences and buildings where people share living spaces. A neighborhood provides an environment for a community of people and families to interact and grow.

Children play together in the park and race their bikes down the street. A communal garden springs up in a vacant lot next door. In the summertime, barbecue grilling aromas bring neighbors together in celebration and fellowship. The couple who lives in the black and white colonial down the street sets up the biggest summer bonfire in their back yard. The old woman who lives in the corner bungalow always gives the best treats at Halloween. And when the winter snow fills the air, the kids with their sleds come out and homeowners put up holiday decorations. The family who lives in the large Second Empire home in the middle of the block always hangs up the most beautiful multi-color light display at Christmastime. When a new family moves into the neighborhood, all the residents make sure they are welcomed to the area. A neighborhood can be defined by its residents and known for its homes of distinct architectural styles. The people are the heart and soul of a neighborhood, while the houses and residential buildings are the bodies in which life can exist.

However, in the case of Brush Park in Detroit, over the decades, people have passed away or moved out, and abandoned houses and empty lots are all that remain as their trace of existence. Some buildings have been renovated into lofts, apartments or condominiums. Other remaining houses are occupied and re-used as bed-and-breakfasts. Brush Park, once an area covering all residential buildings, now includes public institutions, private organizations, forgotten churches and storefronts, and multi-family mass developments. Most original infrastructure (homes that were once abandoned) have been demolished due to neglect, arson and vandalism,
leaving only vacant plots of land where weeds and wildflowers have reclaimed the land. Among these fields are abandoned and boarded-up buildings scattered throughout the landscape. A few select houses have benefited from reinvestment. Internal and exterior refurbishing have successfully restored these historical houses back to their image of “Little Paris,” regaining some of their original character. With the Detroit skyline in the background, the stadiums of the major athletic fields butt up against the freeway boundary, and hover oppressively over the empty Brush Park neighborhood.

The wounds of Brush Park are what I refer to as the abandoned and empty buildings, vacant lots, forgotten storefronts and those structures that are victims of neglect, arson and vandalism. These wounds are the eyesores that fester throughout the neighborhood, attracting street dwellers, drug dealers
and the homeless population. These structures do not provide any foundation of community for a neighborhood, as previously described. Young couples and families do not have any desire to move into a neighborhood like Brush Park. Most of the people who come to the area do so only to park their cars while attending a sporting event. Much like the wounds that occur on a person’s skin, these architectonic wounds of Brush Park have caused a breakage

**Edmund Place**

These five houses show a composite of decay and preservation that exist within the body of Brush Park.
within the infrastructure of the body of a neighborhood. Even after an initial event, such as a house fire, a break-in robbery or eventual abandonment, the wounds still exist.

However, other wounded structures of Brush Park seemed to have healed over time, through such interventions as historic preservation, interior renovation, and adaptive reuse projects. In doing these interventions, the buildings underwent a significant transformation that contributed to a fresh image and perspective towards the outside world. What remains of the building that was once the residence of J.L. Hudson, owner of the large department store company, is the new image of a beautifully restored law office building (Fig. 8). The actions that were taken in mending the old and the new context of the building, is what can be considered scarification as a means of re-identification. The actual occupancy and usage of the residential building was reconstituted as a law office over time through the act of scarification.

In this case of scarification of the law offices, the phenomenological description of a scar as a permanent marking which alters perspective and provides evidence as a reminder of a past can be applied. A permanent marking of the building includes in itself the action that was taken by an architect and construction manager to renew the former residence of J.L. Hudson. The scarification altered the perspective of how the residence could be transformed into an office for law practice to take place, which was only possible through the initial intervention (meaningful interruption) of restoration. In studying the actual materiality of the building, there are the inter-connective layers of old and new conditions that exist side-by-side within the current context of the building. These inter-connective layers, much like the scar tissue of a person’s skin, provide evidence as a reminder of a past.
These sketches (Figs. 4-6) begin to explore ways in which buildings within Brush Park can be transformed and restored into new programs. Whether it could be a playful children’s center (Fig. 4) or an unfolding of pavilion-like spaces for a farmer’s market (Fig. 5), these new programs could become catalysts for new life and energy throughout the neighborhood. The existing buildings could be the spaces which can be modified and re-used in different ways other than single-family residential property.
Brush Park Drawing 1.6  10/20/09
2639 Erskine St.
“Burnt, Broken and Buried”
Analysis

site analysis and current conditions
Evolution

Brush Park was historically designated in 1980, while other individual homes were designated earlier in the 1970's. Since its early development in the late 1800’s, Brush Park has lost over 50 buildings, making the ratio of vacant land to occupied buildings significantly higher. Homes and buildings have been demolished, leaving the landscape vacant and barren. In the figures below, the red areas indicate vacant plots of land, while the black areas show existing buildings. Figure 7 is a map of the Brush Park area in 1897 and figure 8 is a map of area in 2010.

Boston-Edison is residential district located north of Brush Park. It received historical designation from the Federal, State and City governments in 1974. The homes are dated back to the early 1900's. Some of Brush Park’s residents moved to the Boston-Edison area in an attempt to move farther away from the city center.

Figures 9 and 10 show minor change in occupancy within the district over the years. Again, the red areas indicating vacant plots of land and the black areas indicating inhabited house, the ratio of vacant land to occupied
buildings has not changed that much from the 1950s to present day. The infrastructure and residents have remained constant throughout the decades.

The last two maps (Figs. 11 and 12) are an analysis of the building usage of Brush Park. The black indicates single family residential, the purple indicates new development in multi-family residential, and the green indicates public and institutional facilities.

At its initial development, Brush Park was exclusively a residential area, with single family housing. Over the years the single family houses transformed into rooming houses and apartments. Scattered throughout were small cornerstores and commercial buildings.

Today, Brush Park still contains some original single family houses, but condominiums and lofts have taken up residence. The campus of the American Red Cross of Southeastern Michigan is located at the intersection of Woodward Ave and Mack Ave. Other public institutions exist within the boundaries, such as the Hospice of Michigan, a youth development organization and
a walk-in clinic, a part of the Detroit Medical Center. A Detroit Police Station has taken up residence in a former elementary school building along Brush Street. And Paradise Valley Senior Living Center was built only a few years ago, replacing abandoned rowhouses.
A body wound occurs when the skin is cut or broken. An architectonic wound occurs when structural parts are broken and exposed to the elements. Body healing is when the wound becomes healthy again. Architectonic healing is when a structure is temporarily protected from further damage. A body scar is the mark where a wound has not healed completely and has formed connective tissue. An architectonic scar is where the structure is restored, but not to its original state.

These diagrams divide the site into six quadrants. Each quadrant (q) shows a representation of all the buildings of Brush Park that are categorized in one of the following states. The green indicate “healthy” buildings, those that are actively used and occupied. The red indicate “wounded” buildings, those that are structurally unstable and exposed to the elements. The blue show what buildings are in the stage of “healing”, including being boarded up or mothballed. And the yellow indicate the buildings that have been “scarred”, or restored as new development, those that have been historically preserved.
Quadrant 1

11 **Healthy**: American Red Cross, Detroit Urban League, Youth Center, Bonstelle Theatre, Residential

2 **Wounded**: Apartments

2 **Healing**: Tuffy Auto Shop and Residential

4 **Scarred**: Lofts, Worship Church and Residential
Quadrant 2

14 Healthy: Hospice of Michigan, Detroit Medical Center Walk-In Clinic, Career Center, church, and residential

3 Wounded: residential

3 Healing: residential and commercial

3 Scarred: residential
Quadrant 3

2 Healthy: apartments and institutional
8 Wounded: commercial and residential
6 Healing: institutional and residential
10+ Scarred: Detroit Seminary, law offices, residential, lofts and apartments
Quadrant 4

2 Healthy: Paradise Valley Senior Living Center and residential
3 Wounded: Party Store and auto repair
4 Healing: Temple Starlight of Truth and residential
5 Scarred: condominiums and residential
Quadrant 5

8 Healthy: Temple of God, apartments and residential
2 Wounded: residential
1 Healing: residential
15+ Scarred: lofts and condominiums
Quadrant 6

0 Healthy
1 Wounded: apartments
3 Healing: commercial warehouse
3 Scarred: police station and bed-and-breakfast, and art gallery
In looking at these original figure-ground maps of the four states of buildings, there is room for vagueness and confusion between some of the stages. Overall, the healthy state is what is most desired in any type of situation.

A “healthy” building is that which is used on a daily basis, occupied and maintained. The people that are in these “healthy” buildings are brought together as a small group of people (Red Cross, Hospice, single-family unit, church, etc).

The buildings that are in the “wounded” state are those that are not cared for or maintained, they are not occupied and not structurally sound. These buildings were once “healthy”, but now have become empty ruins that are decaying; not in a desirable state that enhances community formation. They are passed the state of complete restoration, and are probably better off being demolished (which will eventually be vacant land).
Buildings that are in the “healing” stage are the ones who might appear to be “wounded” (broken, abandoned) but are boarded up and sealed (mothballed) to protect it from further damage. They are not occupied at the moment, but are waiting to be restored to usage and full-occupancy. They have the most potential to be healthy again and to provide enhancement to a growing community. They are minimally maintained to the extent of protecting the interior from outside forces (weather, looters, etc).

The “scarred” buildings are the ones that have been restored to a healthy state, with a new purpose. These can include the new condominium developments that have been built from the vacant land, its purpose has been re-established. Or it can include an original home that has been preserved to its original physical characteristics but is used as a bed-and-breakfast (not a single-family housing unit).

To clarify, the buildings that have been “scarred” (renovated,
restored, preserved to a new purpose and physical condition), whether built from new or using an existing structure can be also considered “healthy”. These “scarred” buildings have gone through the transitions between the stages: assuming it was abandoned was wounded, and went through restoration and reconstruction to bring it to the “healthy” state. So, therefore, the “wounded” building became “healthy” through “scarring”.

In addition to and because it is prominent within the site, the landscape will be considered in the “healing” stage because it has the most potential to become healthy. Besides being used as a pathway, the vacant land is like an empty canvas that has the promise for healing to occur through scarification. In the process of scarification, the land could be considered “healthy” again (again meaning, prior to it not being healthy, the landscape was full of buildings that had occupants and purposes). How could the landscape become more than just a path for walking?

The vacant land is not yet “scarred” because there hasn't been an intentional intervention of its current conditions. So therefore, it is currently only healing, not wounded or healthy, but just waiting to be scarred.

In the same way, the vacant land that was occupied with homes that have been torn down, the land can become “healthy” through “scarification”.

This thesis will seek to explore this urban strategy of scarification as re-establishing the purpose, meaning or identity of an object through a specific and direct intervention.
Program Development

strengthening the urban fabric
An Urban Quilt

Brush Park has deteriorated over the years, with homes abandoned or demolished, and new residents moving into the lofts and condos, public institutions established, current residents leaving. It has become a very diverse urban fabric quilt. The vacant landscape has become an empty canvas, waiting to be re-established. Through being re-established as a common space, it can be a catalyst for creating a new identity for the community. The landscape can be considered the interconnecting fibers that create a new layer of urban fabric within the existing fabric collage. It can connect nodes of active programs that spur energy through the neighborhood.

In developing program (fig. 13), the current conditions of the area were examined. The current conditions include residents (current, temporary, and future), the social isolation of the community, the historical significance of the area and the proximity to Downtown. Four nodes of activity that this thesis proposes to implement in collaboration with urban scarification are “community”, “artifact”, “fellowship” and “outreach”. Each node would be a layer of fabric that addresses these physical and social conditions.

The “community center” would provide headquarters for a neighborhood association and a public safety department, along with an activities center for the residents. The “artifact museum” would be the place for visitors to learn about the history of Brush Park, and maybe even take a neighborhood tour.

The “outreach center” would be a place for volunteers and local organizations to run a daily lunch box program for the homeless (temporary residents); the Red Cross could have blood drives or the Salvation Army could collect donations from the community. The “fellowship cafe” would be a node of gathering for current residents in the coffee lounge and for the Detroit sports fans (which are temporary residents) in the sports club. The urban landscape would be the connecting fibers between the program nodes.
The healing potential of an urban area that is suffering from a lack of density can be a starting point for which to locate a more specific site. The mapping diagrams (figs. 14-15) illustrate where the four programs can be inserted within the urban fabric of Brush Park. The light blue dots indicate a building that is in the “healing” stage and the lavender areas indicate vacant land. The pink dotted lines connect the buildings across vacant land. This connection between the “healing” buildings and the vacant land is important because it gives the opportunity for the landscape to become part of the inserted programs.

Connecting the Nodes

Fig. 13
Figure 16 is a map indicating the locations of each program within the site. The community center will be located north at 229 Edmund Pl. The artifact museum and outreach center will be centrally located on 205 and 295 Alfred St. Lastly, the fellowship cafe will be located at 225 Adelaide St and it is the program that was selected to develop further into the next step of analysis and implementation. The following collages (figs. 17-20) represent how the programs of these four buildings can begin to unfold into the landscape and use it as a means of creating new space and identity for the area.
229 Edmund Place: Community Center

Fig. 17
205 Alfred: Artifact Museum
295 Alfred: Outreach Center
225 Adelaide: Fellowship Cafe

Fig. 20
Urban Scarification

celebrating the scars of Brush Park
After the preliminary development of the four main programs that can be implemented into the urban fabric of Brush Park, the “fellowship” node was chosen for further investigation. The house located at 225 Adelaide St is the only existing building on its entire city block. The block is vacant landscape that has overgrown with weeds and wildflowers. There are a few trees that remain standing and an abandoned playground area is overgrown with vegetation and littered with garbage.

This program node was chosen to be located at this former residence because it is in close proximity to the athletic stadiums Downtown, Comerica Park and Ford Field. This thesis proposes this existing historic building to be transformed into a café and restaurant for the current residents of Brush Park and for the “temporary residents” who park their cars in the neighborhood during a game. As seen in the collage (fig. 20) the building can be fully restored but also embrace a new style that can literally unfold into the landscape (fig. 34)
**Ghosting + Layering**

In this second set of analyses, significant attention was paid to the development of the city block, with the “fellowship” node as inspiration for the insertion of the other secondary programs. These secondary programs were developed in response to the concept of fellowship and community. While the cafe and restaurant can bring together people of the neighborhood to find fellowship as a small community, these other programs, car pavilions, a sitting hill and an amphitheatre, can provide new opportunity for existing conditions to occur.

A rigorous study of the historical layers of the block was conducted through the use of the Fire Insurance Sanborn Maps from the years 1897, 1921, 1950, 1977, and 1997. The layered diagram (fig. 21) represents the unfortunate reality of the loss of density over the century for this particular area. This compilation of layers and history inspired the concept of “ghosting” as a method for implementing the secondary programs through urban scarification. For example, the footprints of buildings

![Fig. 22](image)

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**Fig. 22**
that have been demolished can be “ghosted” at various intensities.

In the preliminary development of this design at an urban scale, ideas were sketched out over layers of the Sanborn maps that allowed the footprints to become part of the visual dynamic of space-making (figs 24, 25 and 27). Keeping in mind the hierarchy of each layer, the decision was made to keep the earliest Sanborn map (1897) a constant variable, as well as the most recent map (1997) as important factors in the overall design development. As a result, the placement of the car pavilions, the sitting hill and the amphitheatre are specifically located at the footprints of the buildings that are found on the most recent 1997 map. Because the 1897 layer is important as an original layer of history, the idea of concretizing those footprints are suggestively implemented.
The car pavilions (fig. 28) are located on the north side of the block on Alfred Street. They can potentially become places for sports fans to tailgate on game days and for families and friends to gather for a picnic outing. Physically, these pavilions will suggestively reflect the actual footprint of the structure that was once standing. This is one intensity of ghosting, where the physical structure of the intervention is constructed in an abstract way.

The sitting hill (fig 29) located at the northeast corner of the block (Alfred St and Brush St) suggests the lifting of the landscape vertically in conjunction with 4 sets of footprints. The perimeter of these footprints will be extruded up to become bearing walls and to “ghost” the facades of the homes that were demolished. This is a higher intensity of ghosting, with the actual structure of the building developed as an actual representation.

The amphitheatre (fig. 30) will be located south of the sitting hill at
the corner of Adelaide St and Brush St with a slope cutting down into the landscape. The theatre screen will be in the representative shape of the particular extruded footprint. During the day, the screen can be used to show the local game playing to those people who could not go to the stadium (fig. 35). And in the evenings, a movie can be projected for a film festival or theatre production company (fig. 36).

While the car pavilions, the sitting hill and the ampitheatre are actual representations of the selected footprints, there will be concrete footprints (fig. 31) throughout the landscape that indicate the locations of the homes from the earliest layer of history (1897). These concrete footprints are a subtle but literal method of ghosting.
Precedents
examples of architectural scarification
Creativity + Innovation

While this thesis poses a new perspective on urban strategies for a shrinking city like Detroit, it also presents a new way of simultaneously thinking about the past, present and future of a place. This project looks towards some architectural precedents, as well as installation artists and earthwork studies.

Some precedent studies include the Heidelberg Project in Detroit, the Urban Outfitters Headquarters in Philadelphia and the Landscape Park in Germany. Other noteworthy case studies include “Double Negative” by Michael Heizer, “Ghost” by Rachel Whiteread and Robert Irwin’s “Untitled”.

![Image of Heidelberg Project](image1.jpg)
In the Heidelberg Project, Tyree Guyton took abandoned houses and the debris he found in his neighborhood and “used the power of creativity to transform lives”. And the Heidelberg Project in Detroit uses colorful art installations “to promote thought, promote discussion, inspire action and heal communities.”

Architects at Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle transformed abandoned naval ship yard warehouses into the headquarters for the Urban Outfitters company. Instead of covering up all the
history of the buildings, they were able to appreciate the wounds and let them influence their design.

In Germany, Peter Latz did not envision the abandoned industrial landscape as waste. He was able to insert a new context into the existing conditions, while still respecting the history of the landscape. Latz takes an abandoned industrial factory, it is “reinterpreted with a new syntax, existing fragments interlaced into a new landscape.”
Power House by Gina Reichert and Mitch Cope of Design 99 in Hamtramck is attempting to apply sustainable design in an artistic and economic way to an abandoned house as “a symbol for creativity and social interaction.”
The earthwork project by Michael Heizer, “Double Negative” is located just outside of Las Vegas, Nevada. Heizer removed a piece of earth from the ground, forming larger-than-life trenches in the landscape. This project deals with the concept of positive and negative space. By removing a large piece of earth as the negative space, it has now become the positive space between the canyon that was created.

At a smaller scale, Rachel Whiteread focused on the house as an object of space. In her installation, “Ghost,” she represents the space of a room by making it a solid form. The walls...
and structural elements were removed, and the voided space is what remained.

In a similar way, the artist, Robert Irwin designed a permanent installation within the corridor of an art gallery. In this project, he projected from a wall, the negative void space of the windows located within the opposite wall. This installation is noted for the subtely that is created. At first glance, an observer might not recognize the connection between the positive and negative spaces of the windows and the projections.

Just like Whiteread’s “Ghost”, this wall installation is designed from existing conditions and abstracted through the voids that are created.
Conclusion
A look towards the future...
Change Over Time

How can the current conditions of Brush Park be celebrated? What are the roles of the scarred buildings and how do they contribute to the overall character of the neighborhood? This phenomenological analysis and application can be a potential stepping stone for a new understanding of scars and how their essential characteristics can inform our perspectives of the built environment.

Biological wounds can heal over long periods of time, from weeks to months and even years, depending on the severity of the initial impact. Through this healing period, a person learns to accept the scar as a result of the wound. This acceptance eventually blends in mentally and physically with the overall image and character of the person, enriching his or her life experiences with memories and past events. Much like biological wounding and scarring, architectonic wounding and scarring brings a new dimension to the understanding of the history and meaning of a building or neighborhood. The length of time it takes for a neighborhood to be fully restored can take several years and even longer than a few decades. Even though the scale of time is much longer, an architectonic scar that has formed over time, essentially becomes a means of re-identification and a trace of the past.

While the neighborhood of Brush Park continues to be restored over the years, with new interventions and sparks of life stimulating new development, there still seems to be an overall absence of image and identification. The overarching negative image of Brush Park could easily be labeled forgotten and hopeless. However, could there be a different kind of intervention that takes place? The current conditions of architectonic wounds and scars existing side-by-side within the neighborhood call for an act of architectural scarification. Perhaps this could suggest celebrating the current conditions of a neighborhood (wounds, healing, and scars) through a meaningful interruption, in order for a new context to take place within the historical context. It could mean exploring urban scarification as a means of re-establishing the identity of an area that has lost its density through a specific and direct intervention.
How can the healing potential of the landscape be a method to promote new life and identity for a broken community.

After fully analyzing the implications of scarring as a method of re-identification for a building and a neighborhood, we can begin to see new perspective on a shrinking city like Detroit. What are the scars of Detroit? How do meaningful interruptions of Detroit be transformed into scars? From a thriving metropolis to an atrophied body of segregated communities, economic depression and abandoned history, the city of Detroit could have the potential for scarring to form. Let us hope through this phenomenological exercise, we can begin to see the world differently and look towards healing what has been broken. An understanding of the re-identification of a neighborhood can begin with our personal understanding of our own scars we wear everyday.
Drawing Series 1.9

11.01.09
97 Winder St
“Still Standing”


Black II, Austin, Mr. Personal interview. 21 Nov. 2009.


Guyton, Tyree, Mr. Personal interview. 21 Oct. 2009.


Janiczek, Kathy, Mrs. Personal interview. 28 Oct. 2009.


Brush Park Drawing 1.10 10/01/09
John R St
“Overlooking Downtown”
Thank You

Daniel and Margaret Skora, parents
Nicholas Skora, brother

University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture
Stephen Vogel, Dean; Donnie Jones, Asst. Dean;
Mark Farlow, adjunct professor; Will Wittig, professor;
John Mueller, professor; Karen Swanson, adjunct professor;
Dan Pitera, DCDC; and Jake Lyon, student

UDM University Ministry
Fr. Gary Wright, S.J.; Sr. Beth Ann Finster, S.S.J.;
Sr. Katherine Hill, RSM; Drew Peters; and Andrew Carrell

Brian Hurttienne, Hamilton-Anderson
J. Michael Kirk, Neumann/Smith Architecture
James Meredith, Meredith Strategy and Design
Martin Schwartz, Lawrence Technological University

Burton Historical Collection,
Friends of the Detroit Public Library
Austin Black II, Max Brook Realty in Brush Park
Tyree Guyton, The Heidelberg Project, Detroit
Kathy Janizcek + Family, 82 Alfred St

Masters Studio Section III
Tony Giacco, Seth Harte, Brian Hinz, Adrian Latona,
David Lenz, Olivia Olmos and Cody Rapai