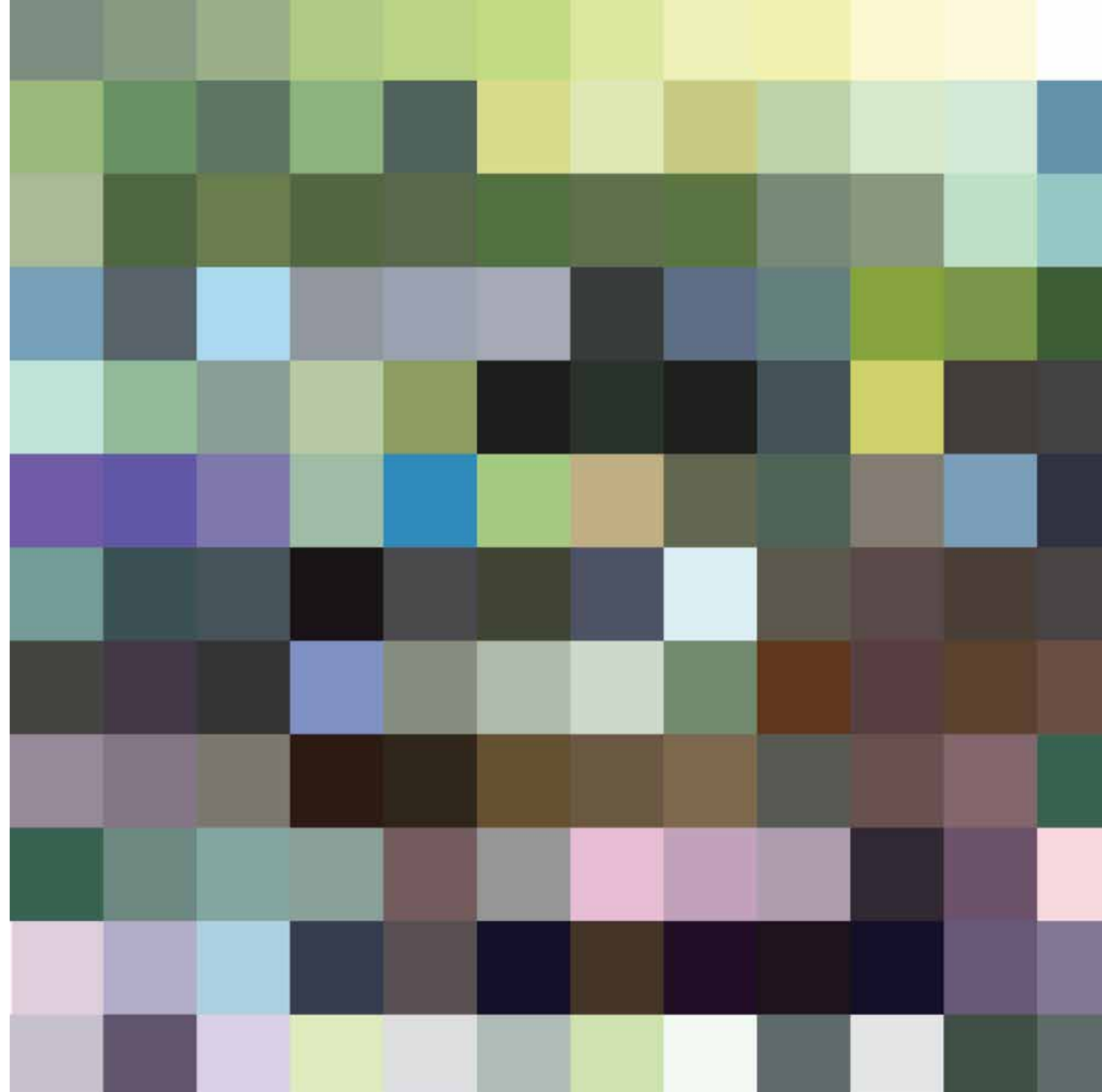


Photograph and Image

A Discovery of Site

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This thesis book is a representation of my graduate studies in the Masters Program at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture, as well as a conclusion to a five year journey of an architectural education. This journey started in my undergraduate studies when I began to form my own questions for architectural thinking. Looking to my own past work for answers, I realized that so much of what I had designed in school was created through processes connected to rigid systems of function or centralized concepts. Although these processes served me well in the context of architecture school, I was uncomfortable in accepting these kinds of processes as ideal in my own life and way of thinking and understanding. If we live in a society that constantly asks architecture to be adaptive to new programs, new activities, and new people, what part of the design process can we grasp to find meaning for the buildings and spaces we create? I came to understand that sites contain the quality and information necessary to design meaningful architectural places and that it is through the experience of sites that we can discover architectural solutions that might enhance and comment on our own lived experiences of places. Sites also change and adapt, and through time, sites become ingrained with histories of events and people. I am interested in what we can find in our own experiences of sites and places, what we can learn from a close and more personal process of site analysis, and how a new process of site discovery might be the generator of architectural interventions. This book attempts to unveil this process of thinking and designing through a new means of site discovery.

Kaithlynn Young

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A Way of Looking

Multiplicities

My own mind was the first site of my investigations. My interests in non-centralized processes lead me first to *A Thousand Plateaus* by Deleuze and Guittari, a books which functions as a rizomatic multiplicity itself, becoming a collection of ideas and topics that assemble and fold in an infinite number of ways. Rhizomes are like maps or stories that are non-hierarchical systems. This way of thinking and understanding is tied more closely to the Eastern perspective. In the West, the tree provides the ultimate symbol of stability and structure, a 2:1 system of trunk to branches to leaves. In the East, the ocean or the desert are the never-ending yet intense landscapes that oscillate and move as a-centered systems, symbols for continuity rather than structure. Rhizomes can also rupture and create new paths caused by the destruction of organization within a given system. A rhizome might be like traffic and a rupture might be the sudden accident that destroys the flows of planned movement.

“Multiplicities are rhizomatic, and expose absorbent pseudomultiplicities for what they are... A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature (the law of combination therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows).”¹ In other words, multiplicities are maps, weaves, networks, structures, and compounding fields of data which have the ability to leave traces, and also rupture. They connect to the world in different ways and through different and simultaneous systems. Our experiences are best described as multiplicities. Memory itself, an intensity of networks, ruptures, and flows.



In *A Thousand Plateaus*, certain methods are described in order to set up a playing field for a user to begin to participate in the ideas established on the many plateaus within the book. One essential part of the text is to understand that any idea presented is not a totality, or a form, or structure. In a way, the book and text within is a Body without Organs (BwO). This concept is described as a plane of consistency in which intensities pass through. There are tricks to creating a BwO, and one particular goal for the reader is to potentially become one. The key element seems to be the desire to allow unpredictable events to occur. Desire is not a result, but a kind of flow, which may end at particular intersections if you allow an intensity to conclude, territorialize, or become total. However, if the door is always left open, then desire for exploration, flexibility, and experimentation is continuously achievable.

If I am able to become a body without organs, at least for a time, how might my understanding of site or design be affected? It seems that architecture can sometimes be about making decisions within a process of reasoning. Decisions are made which effect the next generation of decisions and actions. The key is to remain exposed to the ever changing condition of intensities which cross over the plane of consistency. And considering one's own body and mind as a BwO is only the micro scale.

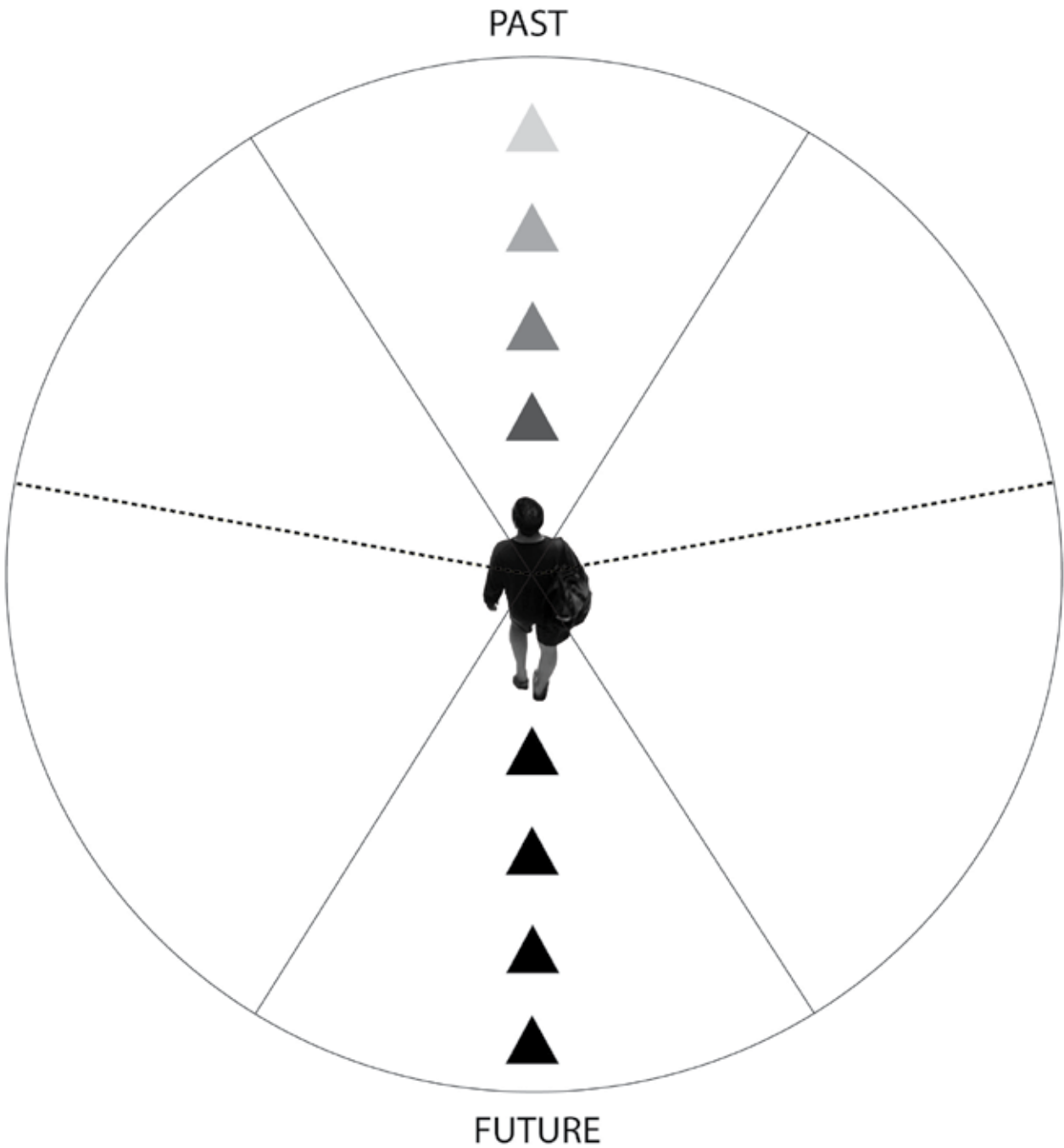
BwO's can be nearly anything, including a site, cities, and places. One thing that seems to potentially pose an issue for design, is that architectural form must become territorialized within its own process in order to become real and tangible material and space. However, forms and spaces create potentials for new BwO's, in which a different set of

intensities are possible. The consideration of these occurrences must then be a part of architectural design. Identifying the strata within the context of a place might be a start. The strata may be the occurring territories of the site, for example, the organized paths, programs, materiality, density, topography, structure, and even the predictability of the change in season, night and day, or any system evident. The intensities that may occur on or within the strata create assemblages of activity. Potentially random events, people, plants, daily occurrences, movable extremities. Relationships between the intensities and the strata will occur. To realize and potentially experiment with these relationships on a site, the plane of consistency must be understood, so that any relationship that occurs can become a variable, which is only dependent on one's own willingness to be radically free from preconceived perceptions of the place.

How might this be achieved? Having an answer to the question negates the idea in itself. As people, as designers, and as a society, we crave order and structure, but our environment works in the opposite direction, de-stratifying our grids, destroying our structures. Deleuze describes the world in which we live in as short term memory, emphasizing our own temporality. One's mind is the ultimate site, which constantly is changing. Experimentation with existing and undiscovered relationships on sites and within the city will become the most useful means of discovery in this thesis.

Experience

So, the question of experience becomes the next site of discovery, and particularly, my own experience on sites. In *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* Robert Pirsig describes a life long journey of



trying to understand experience and our resulting value judgments of the world. He describes his understanding that the past is what creates sense for us. “You look at where you are going and where you are and it never makes sense, but then you look back at where you’ve been and a pattern seems to emerge.”² How can we project forward from those patterns in time? In his research, he discovered that the Greeks had a radically different sense of time. “They saw the future as something that came upon them from behind their backs with the past receding away before their eyes. When you think about it, that’s more accurate a metaphor than our present one. Who really can face the future?”³ Experience and memory become the subjective link to understanding how we move through space and time.

When trying to understand the patterns of our past or of our experiences in the world and on sites, the problem of imitation clouds creativity. In one of the most memorable excerpts from Pirsig’s novel, one of his own English student’s struggles to write an essay on the topic of her choice. First, she attempts to write about the United States, and struggles to write anything. Pirsig urges her to simply write about the small town of the University. She complains again that she can’t think of anything to write at all. He suggests that she just write about the town hall, and again, she complains of the same writer’s block. Eventually he realizes that her inability to write anything creative comes from her own inability to think of anything to write that has not just been told to her. Anything she wrote would be an imitation of someone else’s thoughts and ideas. So, he told her to start her essay with the first brick in the upper right corner of the town hall and to work her way across and to write about each

brick. The result was an authentic paper that came from her. No one had ever told her about those bricks.

The problems of authenticity, creativity, and quality arise through our subjective experiences, but it is those problems which make experiential analysis the most challenging and the most exciting. To simply acknowledge one’s own unique experience in the world is to open up a never ending extension of possibilities and freedom. How can we dissolve our own reasoning towards objectivity and facts? This thesis will attempt to begin site analysis at the pre-intellectual reality of experience, at that moment of vision. To bring preconceptions or preintentions to ones experience is to bring the weight of limitation and predetermined structure. “Geometry is not true, it is advantageous!”⁴

Seeing is Looking

The artist Robert Irwin began his young career in painting, first adopting expressionism. His mode of moving through life, however, was the basis for his later work. He explored his own questions about life and experience through art. While wandering through Paris as a young artist, he said he was never really looking for anything. “I maybe saw all the churches in Paris, but I never went to see any of the churches in Paris. In my wanderings there would be this building and I’d walk into it just like I walked into every building, but didn’t care whether it was built in the Whatever or who did it. I mean, even to this day, I couldn’t care less. On the other hand, I retained a very real sense of the differing textures of each of those places....”⁵ He was most interested in things as they already were. And his art work was eventually transformed into installations which were primarily concerned with enhancing or drawing



out the presence of already existing places and spaces. Tuning into his own ability to experience and perceive the world allowed him to tap into a realm of art creation that was more about realization and discovery than an act of creating aesthetic or beautiful compositions. Irwin was interested in a suspension of his own aesthetic values, allowing a real investigation of place and experience to occur.

The unknown can be the root of anxiety. To acknowledge the unknown and allow it to lead a process of discovery might mean that the process never ends. Irwin has spent his life focused on a process rather than a product. The physicality of his work is merely the result of a process of understanding the meaning of the essences that live all around us. His process and work continues today, because how could it end? A simple conclusion to his body of work might be that there are no pre-prescriptions to sites or places.

Cuts

In my initial site investigations, I was looking to simply realize my experiences in different ways. In one of my first site studies I captured the Dequinder Cut, a pedestrian green way connecting the river walk to Eastern Market, while riding my bike with my friends. The site presented a rigid frame and structure, a path with bike traffic lines, overpasses and overpass remains positioned periodically. By recognizing the site and its conditions as experiential parameters, I used these conditions to set up a mode of capturing the experience of riding along the path while in motion. I tried to take a picture from the same distance of each pier. I had to keep up with my friends and the plan for the day. I used the path to try to stay on the white line that divides the sidewalk for bikers and pedestrians. The

point was to use the landmarks of the site to orient myself to the place. The result then might be a sort of explanation or representation of my experience there.

Each photograph on its own appears as a frozen moment in time. One photograph on its own lacks the concept of time and duration that is inherent in experience and memory. So, when the photographs become connected and overlaid, the photographic representation of the place begins to describe a more perceptual, experiential place. This captured site begins to reveal relationships, textures, similarities, differences, and intensities. The site looks more like a memory than a place, the mind's unfolding of an experience. Would this site study have been conceived if I, as a designer, was looking for something specific in the site, or if I knew that I intended to design a particular type of architecture there? Bernard Tschumi asks, "Does the explicit classification of the various meanings, modes, and uses of space destroy the experience of space?"⁶



Abstract

This thesis focuses on the study of sites through modes of experiential site analysis. With the acknowledgement that all sites present unique conditions in the world, how might one's experience of a site through observation and capturing of the site inform design? Photography, being one of the most common tools of site analysis, is redefined within this process. In this thesis, the camera becomes the eye, moving along with the body, unconcerned with composition or beauty. The camera is the objective lens of my subjective eye, creating tracings of experiences that can be reentered and redefined. Memory of a place becomes visual and experiential again through this process. And by taking up photography, I first attempt to understand its history in the way it has changed our vision and the way we look at things.

Notes

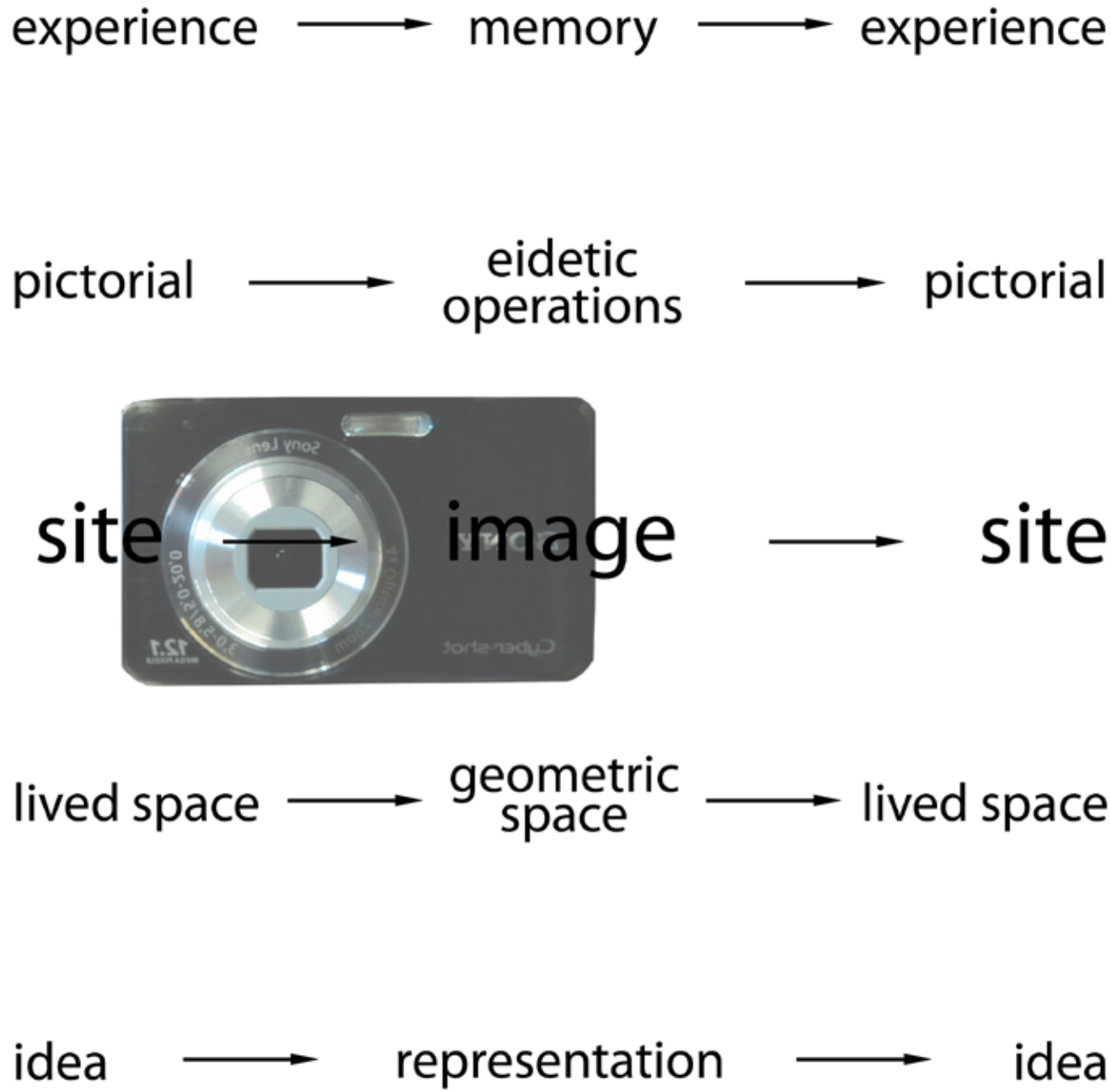
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Photograph and Image

Photography

Photography has frozen our memories in time. The stacks of photos piled in our closets are spilled out every once in a while, reminding us of past experiences. What is the difference between a photograph of our own experience, and a photograph of another's? When we are the photographer, the picture that we see is not just a scene to behold, but a physical memory of an experience once captured. Our own photographs, or maybe even the pictures taken of us, become representations of the memories of our lives. A place or event is reduced down to a single shot of still information that has the ability to tell many stories. Is a photograph an object or a portal? Is it an inventory of our experience, or does it have layers of other qualities that are waiting to be discovered? When looking at a photograph, it is apparent that the content captured is not the content itself. So what is it? If our own photographs are tied to our own experiences and memories, then the actual photographer provides the experience to be captured. The link between the photographer and the photograph must be explored in order to understand how photography might represent lived experience.

If photography is only visually perceptive, does it qualify as a form of representation of experienced space? Does photography passively observe experience or actively engage the subject in experience? These questions are very relevant to today's processes of design. The site of a future project is recorded through photography when the architect makes the first site visit. These photographs become the link that creates a virtual spatial reality where ideas can be represented. However, this pictorial reality is constrained by the



multitude of other kinds of perpetual experiences that emerge from a site. How might a photograph be infused with other layers of memory and information that begin to create a richer experiential image of a site?

In architecture school, photographic representation is consistently used to capture sites. Students must go on site visits at the beginning of a project, camera in hand, snapping desirable shots of the particular place or location of their future project. Students do not immediately observe important elements of the place while on site. Therefore, back in the studio, students look towards their photographs to attempt to re-experience the site and remember certain qualities or characteristics that might be important to the development of their building. What is the problem with this method of discovery? In this situation, the photographs have become objective representations of the site. The student acknowledges what he sees in the picture without critically examining the contents and qualities of the experience that took place through the capturing of the picture itself. The camera is treated as a tool that objectifies a place rather than a tool that engages the photographer in their experience. If photographs are to become images of experience, then the photographs must be viewed as a part of the lived experience of a place.

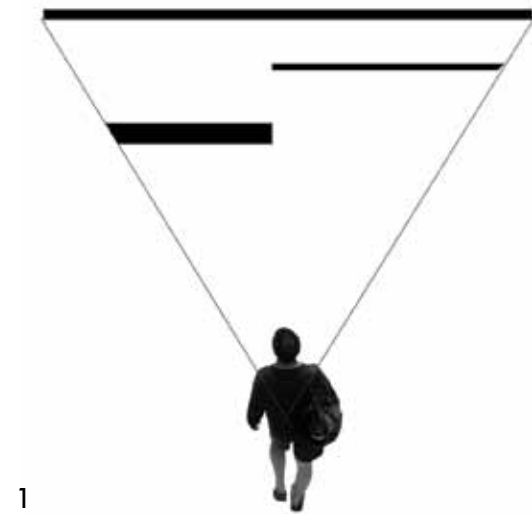
In this site analysis process, the point of translation where a real place becomes a represented place or image must be radically redefined. Our own lived experiences must translate into physical objects, images, geometric drawings, representations or physical memories. If our own initial experiences influence the way we represent a site visually, then what we create in that represented space or image

will inherit the lived and experiential aspects of the image. The photographs taken of sites must transform from purely pictorial objects to eidetic images.

Eidetic Image

James Corner, a landscape architect and theorist, calls for the making of eidetic images in the design process. He sees sites and landscapes as having multiple layers of perceptive qualities within our experiences, and he believes that designers lack diverse methods to bring forth these qualities. Artists seem to possess an infinite number of ways to represent ideas. Architects must reexamine their methods of representation by reshaping traditional techniques of site analysis.¹ Photography is one of these techniques.

In Corner’s article “Eidetic Operations and New Landscapes,” the term eidetic refers to “a mental conception that may be picturable but may equally be acoustic, tactile, cognitive, or intuitive.”² Picturable here means that an eidetic representation can still be visual or pictorial through the use of photographs or other visual techniques, but must also engage other aspects of our perceptions. Corner goes on to state that eidetic images are active and “participating in emergent realities.”³ In other words, our own haptic experiences of reality must be explored in the image making process. These kinds of eidetic images could be contrasted to representations of sites such as the aerial view. Satellite views are described by Corner as “instruments of power” that remove the subject from the physical experience of a site.⁴ He describes these techniques of representation as alienating and objectifying, exposing the designer’s withdrawal from their own experience in the world.⁵



1



2



3



4

Through eidetic imaging, a site is not an object to be observed, but rather a place to be experienced, a place with history that is ingrained within its own physical being. Photographs themselves are often used by students to inventory their experience, creating collages of colors or textures from a site. This technique brings intentionality to a site and a prejudgment of what one’s experience should be, a hunt for texture or color. The subject must be willing to actively observe their own experience and at the same time, allow the camera to be an extension of the body and of one’s perception, capturing moments within time and movement around a site. It is through the subject that image making begins, and one’s own experience becomes the most powerful tool in creating representations.

When an eidetic image of a site is made, mental processes manifest themselves in physical forms. When an architect translates ideas into sketches, he is manifesting an idea that does not physically exist, but rather exists as a representation. However, not all design processes are eidetic. The designer’s role in eidetic image making is to “stage the conditions necessary to precipitate a maximum range of opportunities.”⁶ This means that the designer should first be attempting to create an intense and active representation of a place for the future implementations of design before a particular design idea is even construed. By taking intentionality away from the designer and leaving them with site alone, the designers own experience of the site must be rigorously analyzed. A representation that manifests this analysis may be called an eidetic representation. These images “do not represent the reality of an idea, but rather inaugurate its possibility. By contrast, images in conventional design practice tend more toward the wholly technological, the

strictly denotative, the explicit, and the immediately intelligible.”⁷

Photographic Precedents

In *The Photographer’s Eye*, John Szarkowski writes, “Like an organism, photography was born whole. It is in our progressive discovery of it that its history lies.”⁸ Szarkowski describes photography as having infinite variation with the ability to record anything. And it is photography’s unique abilities that pose problems and questions for our perceptions. Szarkowski writes, “The public believed that the photograph could not lie, and it was easier for the photographer if he believed it too, or pretended to. Thus he was likely to claim that what our eyes saw was an illusion, and what the camera saw was the truth.”⁹ What does this mean for our perceptions through the use of photography?

In studying different kinds of methods photographers have used to capture people, places, objects, and events, I have attempted to understand how photography has influenced how we see and understand our world. If photography is to be redefined within the design process and image making process, what can be learned from photographs of the past? If we can treat the photograph as an experience rather than an objectified scene, what other stories can a photograph tell? How is the photographers own experience manifested in his or work if it is at all? Is the content of the photo more important, or the method in which it was captured?

The diagrams shown here represent an analysis of a series of photographs and how they were taken. Although the diagrams describe particular methods of how the photographs were made, the content of



Concrete Island Peter Ainsworth

each photo tells a story as well. This analysis of the pictorial aspects of photograph will help to draw out the challenges, techniques, and methods which influence this mode of representation. Diagram 1, 2 and 3 show different kinds of compositional settings that many photographers use. Diagram 4 begins to describe the photographer themselves as an actively engaged participant in the capturing of places and sites.

Beauty and Composition

In Concrete Island, Peter Ainsworth transforms a dirty, residual, left over space between intersecting overpasses into visual art. Photography as an art attempts to capture beautiful scenes and compositions. In this setting, Ainsworth discovered vantage points and compositional elements. His eye found reflections, shadows, light, and color coming together in a scene. One object becomes the focus of the foreground, and the water carries our eye to the reflective shadows of the background. Small details carry us around the setting. The theme of this composition asks the question, Can anything be beautiful? Does the photograph itself make this place a scenic and interesting place, or is this setting actually beautiful? If I were to visit this place and experience this condition, would I feel the same feelings this photograph reflects?

Through this example, I have understood that beautiful photography merely creates interesting visual conditions for our viewing pleasure. The color, mode, and atmosphere of the photograph gives us visual cues that link with other perceptions. We might perceive the atmosphere to be cold yet sunny, the water as stinky and polluted, the space as secluded yet loud with echoes from the hard surfaces of the concrete walls. These resulting



Stock Exchangers John Szarkowski

perceptions where set up by the photographer in his hunt for an interesting vantage point. What kind of images would have been taken in this place by a child who was not looking for interesting views? Can this photograph help us understand how our bodies would move or experience this place? In this analysis, does a beautiful picture really mean anything in understanding our experiences of places?

Blur

In Stock Exchangers, a different kind of method is revealed. An architectural background provides a stable and solidified setting for the scene. The subjects of the photograph, the two stock exchangers, become the objects of the foreground. The expressions on their faces become less important than the position of their bodies in relation to the edge of the photograph, off centered from the composition as a whole and the symmetrical arch of the background.

But what about the blur of the cars in the in-between space of the photograph? Many photographers view the blur as the acknowledgment of the imperfection of the camera itself. Because a photograph captures a small duration of time rather than a perfectly instantaneous shot, the blur represents speed, movement, and duration. Here, time is present as a real a perceptual element of experience. The idea of speed and time seems appropriate for the city atmosphere and the stock exchangers still doing business out of the street, maybe as they wait for their cars. In this photograph, Szarkowski allows the element of time to creep into his image in order to tell a story. He writes, “Photography alludes to the past and the future only in so far as they exist in the present,



Migrant Mother Dortehea Lange

the past through its surviving relics, the future through prophecy visible in the present.”¹⁰ The moment of the present is frozen in time, creating a visual memory that might trigger other memories or ideas. The photographs in which we take might be considered visual links that allow us to occupy a memory once experienced. We can then begin to engage that visual memory with our ideas about the content of the place captured. The blur is that reminder of experience that lies within the image made.

Staging
Dorthea Lange, while working during the Great Depression, captured one of the most influential photographs that became the symbol of the era. Here, Florence Owens Thompson and her children gather in a tent in a migrant camp in Nipomo, California. Lange took about six photographs of the family, the most famous becoming Migrant Mother. However, the photograph is rumored to be staged. Some critics suspect that Lange spent time positioning Thompson’s hand in a compositional position as well as the children so that they would face away from the shot. Whether or not this actually occurred, the mere ability of a photographer to stage a scene seems to degrade the quality and content of the photograph itself. The idea that a photograph can lie about an event brings back our own trust in photographic perceptions. To believe that the photograph itself is truth is to allow the photograph to become its own unique experience, outside of the experience in which it was taken.

In this way, a photograph itself might become a site for investigation. For a designer however, one’s photographs are tied to one’s own experience of a place. How might an experience begin to inform



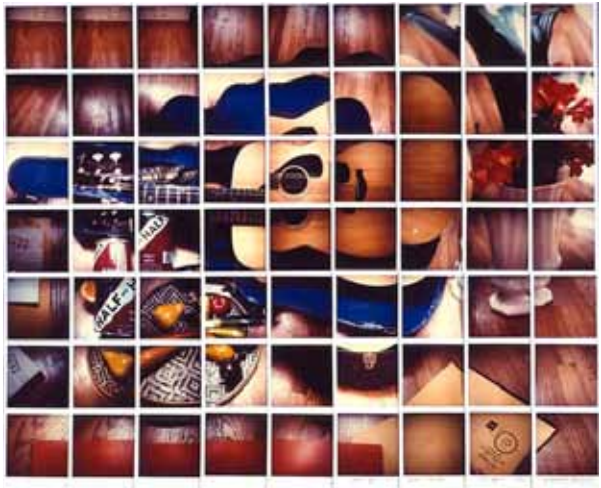
Time / Brooklyn Bridge John Clang

the resulting content of a photograph rather than the content informing how the photograph should be taken or made?

Time
John Clang begins to experiment with this concept of time and method. In this approach, Clang first developed a method for taking photographs and allowed that method to drive the process of capturing. He chose many sites around New York and captured a series of photographs that represented the passage of time. “By working on this series, I explore how time moves in this seemingly static urban space. The people become the moving energy flowing through this space, marking the changes, forming the time.”¹¹

In this example however, a method is predetermined and then prescribed to different places. The results are interesting and expressive of time, movement and relationships, but what would have happened if each site called for different kinds of photographic experiments. In all of his series, Clang stands still while the city moves around him. His stationary position allows for the fluid piecing together of the ripped photographs. What if Clang had been moving, allowing his body to create an experience with the city, rather than allowing time to pass by him?

The method of photo collage sometime allows designers to prescribe a certain type of method for assembling site information. The method of collage has many predefined techniques that we can pull out to use for inspiration. But by acknowledging that each site we visit is different and unique, we can understand that each site deserves a different kind of analysis.



Blue Guitar David Hockney

Movement

David Hockney begins to take a radically different approach to capturing scenes and environments. In his work, he creates photo collages of not just objects, but experiences of objects. In a way, each collage becomes a map to his experience. The cubist notion of forth dimensional space is present, that is, the space of duration and time rather than 3- dimensional object space. His work brings this photographic analysis back into the realm of intensity and multiplicity. The collage here helps us to realize that our eyes do not fix on single gazes or vantage points. Movement, position, and time influence how photography can be captured in order to create a different kind of representation of space, one that is more in tune with experience.

In the article “Cinematics: Architectural Drawing Today,” McGarth and Gardner call for a shift in representational techniques of architects and designers. Rather than focusing on the quantitative aspects of our environments and the limitations that these conditions present, McGarth and Gardner ask us to shift our attentions from objects to relationships, from measuring to mapping, from contents to patterns, and from isolated parts to context.¹² The role of eidetic imaging urges photography to be an experimentation in site discovery and analysis, bring us closer to our own experiences, allowing the subject, ourselves, to drive the creations of resulting representations. Hockney expects to be surprised by his creations. Although he too has created more of a prescription to capturing experience, the result of each collage brings out new problems, new relationships, and new ideas about the physical interaction between photography and experience.

This photographic precedent study presents challenges to the use of photograph as a tool within the design process. However, rather than attempting to design new techniques or knew methods for representation, I challenge a method that must be redefined and reevaluated. By limiting this site analysis process to photographic representation and experimentation, an even broader range of discoveries might be made.

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Photographs

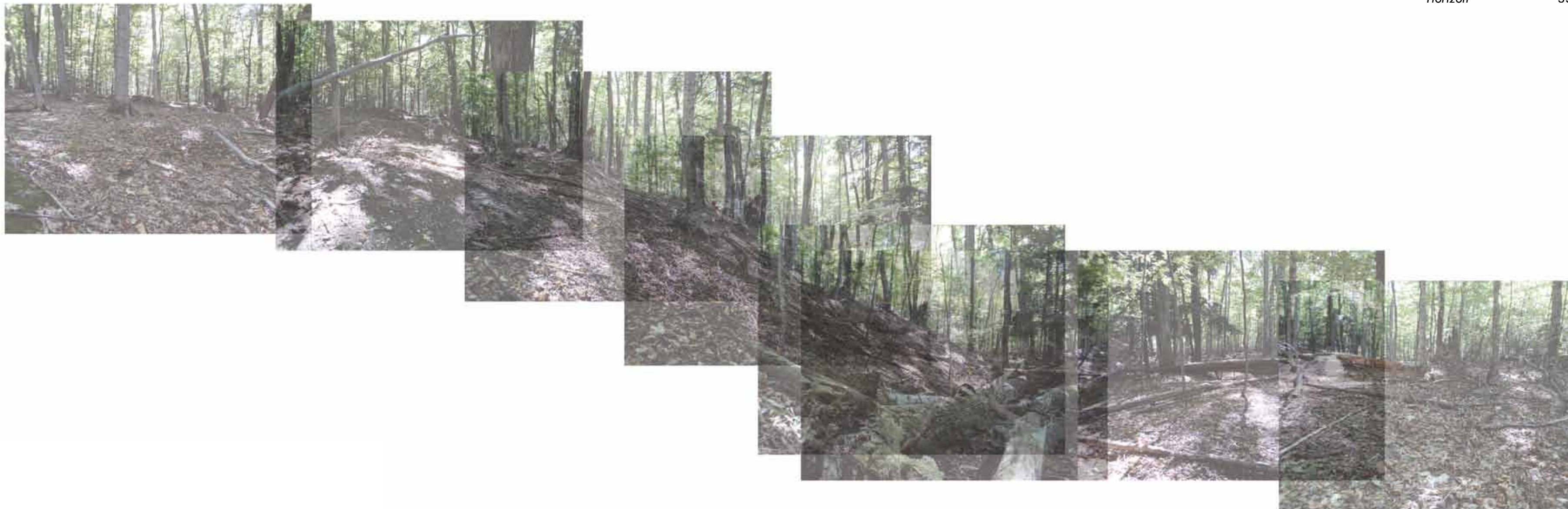
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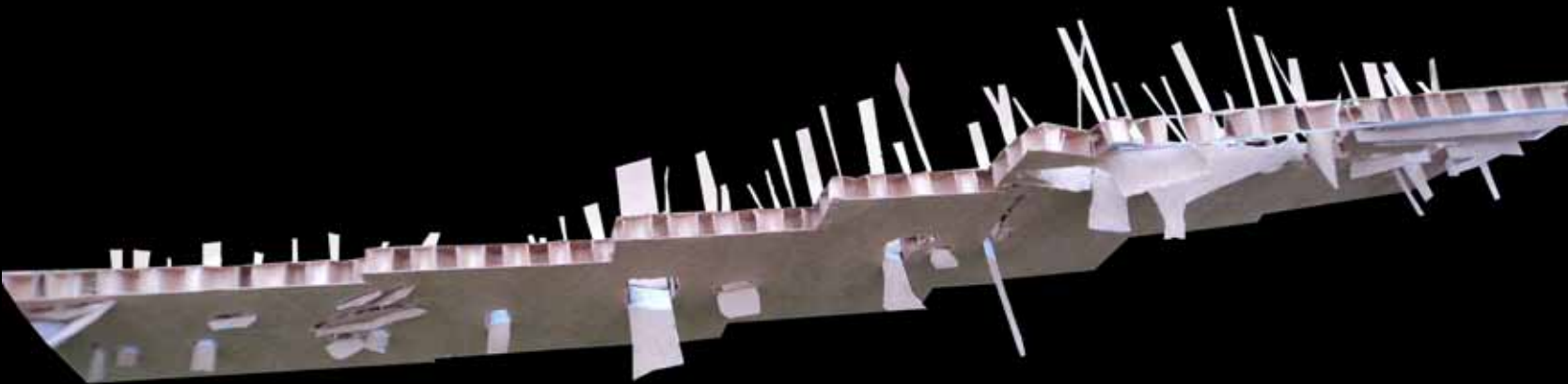
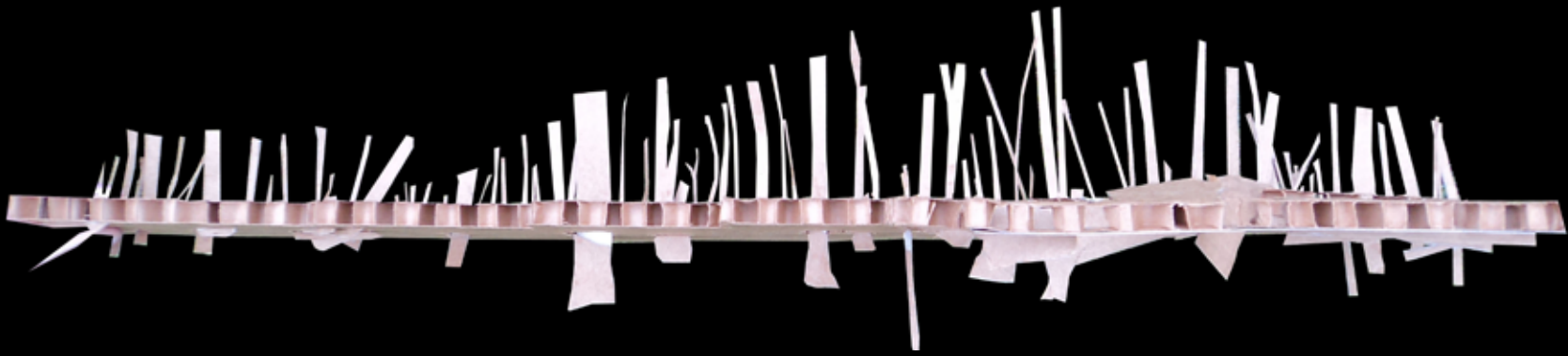
Horizon

Torch Lake

In one of my first formal studies, I have attempted to study photography and its ability to translate experience through the eidetic image making process. While visiting Torch Lake, Michigan on a trip with friends and I wanted to use the opportunity to try new methods of capturing a site through photography. I was hiking down a rather steep hill and I began to attempt to capture the experience of the site through my camera. As I made my way down the hill, I took a picture about every twenty to thirty feet. Because my body was moving through the experience, so was the camera, creating a series of photographs that represented not just the place and what it looked like visually, but also a capturing of the duration of time that the experience took place. When I began to attempt to bring these photographs together, I found that elements such as stumps and trees had been repeatedly captured from varying perspectives. The main organizing element within the photographs was the horizon, which therefore became the line that could string the photographs together. When combined in a series of photographs, an image was made that described the experience and the place beyond a purely pictorial representation.

By taking another look at my experience through the image itself, I could begin to draw out the essential characteristics of the site. One essential was my own orientation to the horizon line, and the horizon's ability to re-organize the experience. Another essential was the contrast between sky and ground which created a clearly divided foreground and background. These simple relationships were further explored in the model shown. All the trees above the horizon line in the photograph were folded upward in the model, while all the trees and





stumps below the horizon where folded down. In the resulting image, the horizon line becomes dynamic when turning the model, and the model itself can be experienced. When looking down on the model, the original imprint of the photographs can be seen. When turning the model to see it from the side, the horizon line turns with the model to show the trees divided yet still compressed into a visual plane. When turning the model again the underside of the model becomes the foreground, showing the trees and stumps which contrast against the ground rather than the sky. The horizon line is not a singular perceptual concept, but the entire ground plane that creates different relationship as the model is experienced based on one's point of view. In this study, the camera was a tool which created representational photographs of particular views in the landscape, but when each particular view was fused together, the camera became a tool which actively engaged me in my own experience. Through this image making process a representation of a place was made that could potentially act as the site for the implementation of designed space.

In "Putting Geometry in its Place," Kimberly Dovey describes the architect's inherited problem of translating experience into geometric form. Dovey distinguishes two types of spaces. Lived space is experienced space, loaded with complexity, imagination, and wonder. Lived space is infused with the subject.¹ It is the space that the designer experiences on those initial site visits, camera in hand. However when lived space is translated into

architectural designs, the space that is represented on the drawing or on the computer screen becomes "geometric space," measurable, quantifiable, and solid.² These two kinds of spaces are in conflict with one another. Dovey's concern with geometric space comes from the lack of translation that occurs between experience and design. Geometric spaces are abstracted from lived experiences and infused with techniques of construction, cost of materials, political ordinances, and many other regulations and codes all a part of the scope of the built environment.³ Within this process, built, geometric space eventually becomes lived space when it is inhabited by the experiences of the users. However, the user's interactions within geometric spaces do not always allow for the value of meanings that are associated with lived space to begin with. The subject becomes lost in translation between the lived and the geometric. Dovey's fundamental question asks how we can design lived spaces through the design of geometric spaces where the value of lived experience remains intact. In other words, how can we translate our experience into physical representations so that designed space is still connected to lived space. In this study of Torch Lake, Corner's eidetic operations become the translation link. Through eidetic imaging, experience is already ingrained in the images made of a place. The architect's geometric ideas can be inserted within the image itself. Architecture therefore can become the physical representation of lived experience in the world.

Notes

- 1-3. Dovey, Kimberly. "Putting Geometry in its place: Towards a phenomenology of the design process." *Dwelling, seeing, and designing: toward a phenomenological ecology*. Ed. David Seamon. Albany: State University of New York, 1993, 249, 250, 250.

Framed

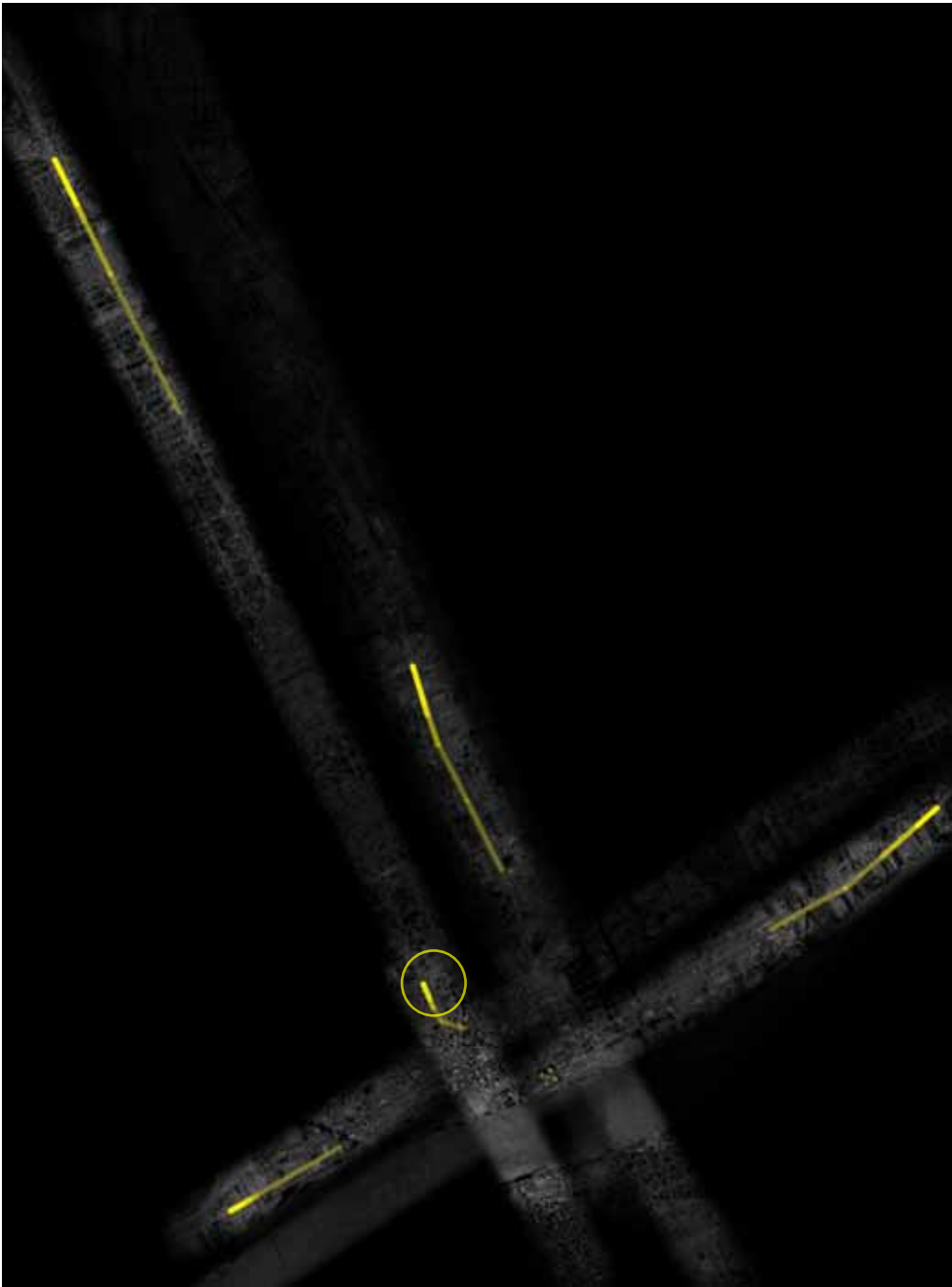
Experiencing the City through the Lens

Taking on the theme of experiential site analysis, I have asked myself to be open to potentially any site for investigation, however, the camera ensures that the sites I capture can only be investigated through experience. To begin to focus on site selection, I created a small experiment that asked, where are the experiential entrances to the city of Detroit? Being familiar with the actual city limits such as 8 Mile Road, I challenged myself to ignore land jurisdiction or any other technical boundaries. When traveling through and into the city, I searched for those feelings of entrance, both physical and emotional, visual yet undefined. I then documented some of these sites on a satellite map of the city, revealing only the views toward the downtown district from each entrance point (Entrances and Edges).

When discovering sites, many times designers start with the aerial view, that authoritative distanced view of the satellite lingering in outer space. The sites of this study were discovered through experience. One of the most interesting entrances occurred on Cass Road (circled), an edge that lied very close to the downtown district. Just two streets west of Woodward Avenue, this corridor intersects a major highway which slices the downtown, creating both a borderline and a gateway. The first time I visited the site, I was shocked by the overwhelming change in urban landscape that occurred on either side of the highway. In subsequent trips back to the site, I found that the entire area of the Lower Cass Corridor was locked into a frame created by streets that now acted as border lines. An island in the city, the streets like the frame of a painting, holding the site and its void together.

It is through the aerial view that this frame can be

Entrances and Edges



Lower Cass



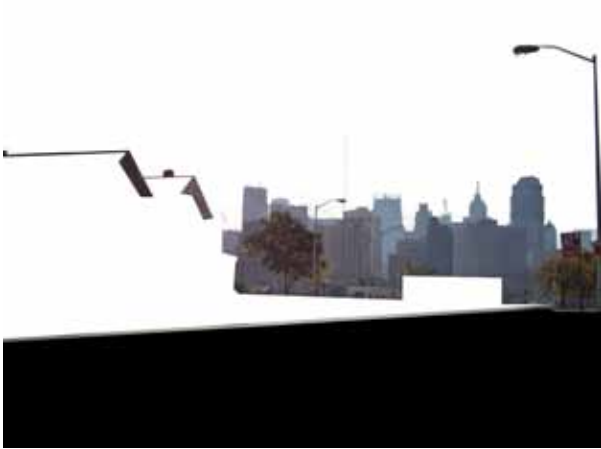
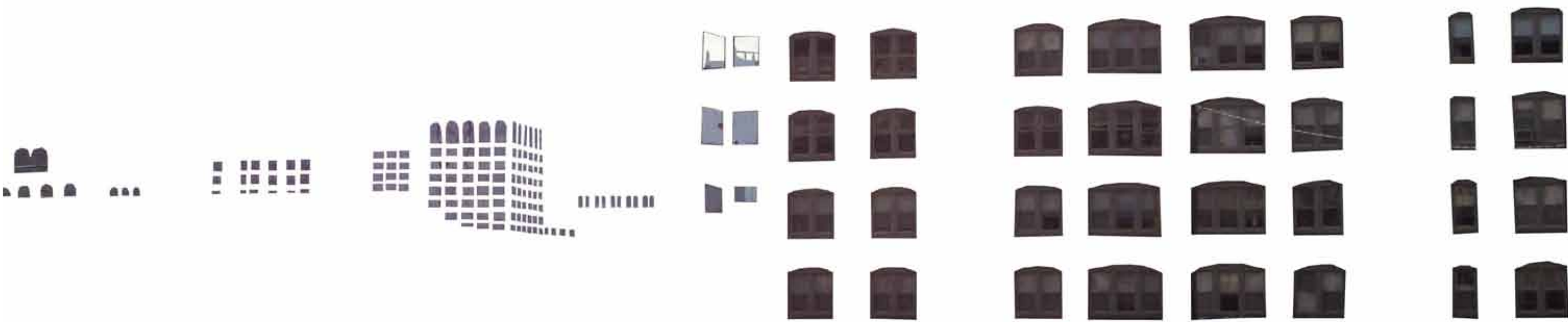
Aerial Authority

visualized, and this bird’s eye view is another kind of entrance to the city. On the internet, everyday, we look up directions and find places through the aerial view. This view may be authoritative, but it is also a different kind of experience of a site. With an aim to begin to treat these kinds of picturable views as eidetic images, I attempted to use this photo for what it was, an instrument of power with the ability to create an identity for a place before the place is even visited or experienced.

These huge letters centered in the voided frame could be anything. If we, as designers, are to utilize the aerial view as a design tool, then we should treat this type of view as an experiential image of a place. To me, the dilemma for wide scale urban planning is the lack of inclusion of the experiential scale of design. Rather than designing through site plans and aerials, can we design through on the ground photographs and experiences? By using photography as the tool to begin an image making process in design, I can rely on hands on experiences rather than views and images that distance myself from what is real and tangible in our environment.

CASS: Image Making

When first landing on this site, I took many photographs of different settings, buildings and events, using my intuition to guide my first experiences. I then challenged myself to re-look and re-investigate the photographs that I had taken. What was included in the photograph? What was left out? How could my memories of my experience at Cass influence how I would transform the simple shots I had taken into images that would describe an experience beyond the pictorial? How could I infuse my feelings and ideas about the site with what I had captured and seen? These initial studies





explored these questions. I began to infuse the idea of void, only leaving elements that dominated the image. In image 1, the edge, or bounding frame of the photograph fades, while the remaining windows hang on the page. In image 2 and 3, only the edges of the foreground and background hold the forms together. In images 4 and 5, three photographs taken of a boulevard slicing Cass change perspectives to show two different views of the same place.

In another visit to the site, I began to explore a more systematic method for capturing the setting. Three buildings had stuck out in my mind, and I wanted to create a method that would utilize both the camera and its function, as well as the unique nature of the position of the buildings around the site. Each building helped to form a perimeter around a widely vacant area of the site. Because of this large in-between space that distanced the builds from each other, it was as if each building was looking at each other. So, from the base of each of these three buildings, I captured photographs of each of the other buildings facing it. I also used the zoom function of the camera to take four photographs in each direction, creating six sets of four photographs, as if each building could take a picture of the other.

Looking back at my previous investigation of the aerial map, I began to create my own map of the site, but using the photographs that I had taken there. Each set of photographs was arranged, not where the building itself was located, but arising out of the view from which it was taken. This created a map, shown here, which was made to be held and turned in varying directions to experience the views of the buildings from different perspectives. The map became an experiential image of the site.

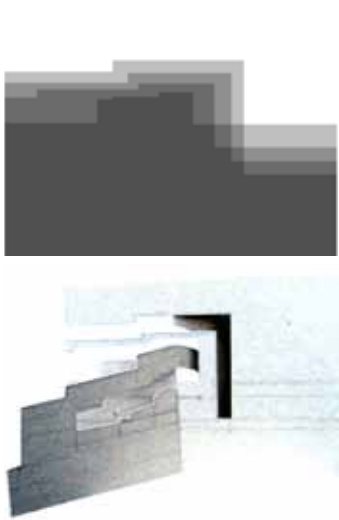
Rather than having a concern for the direct location or position of objects or buildings around the site, I attempted to fuse my memories of the buildings with the photographs that I had taken to create the map.

Next, I began to consider how these flat, 2-dimensional studies could become spatial. By taking all four photographs from a series and compressing them together, movement and distance flatten onto one field in *Compressions*. Each model was composed of two diagrams, or views, of the same building which also composed the aerial map. These two views were juxtaposed together to form one model. So three models resulted from the process, representing each building as a composition of flat perspectives rather than an actual physical form. These representations of the buildings combine the visual flatness created by the far distance of each building from the other with the idea that no view stands alone in our experiences.

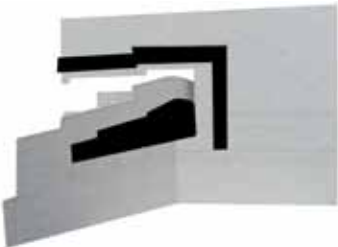
In this study, the buildings do not just create spatial boundaries on or within the site, but also visual and perceptual boundaries. The void between the views becomes engaged as a part of the landscape that frames the view of each structure within the field of vision. Each model was carved out slightly differently. Model 1 treats its compounding views as a picture to be framed. Model 2 emphasizes the space made between two overlapping views. Model 3 carves the foreground of the building out with it. Each model investigates not only the architectural space of the view, but the surrounding conditions and context. How is the space around the structure read and compounded? The models become like the memories of distant views folding in on each other, speaking to each other, creating each other.



Compressions



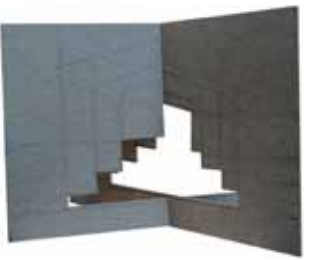
Model 1

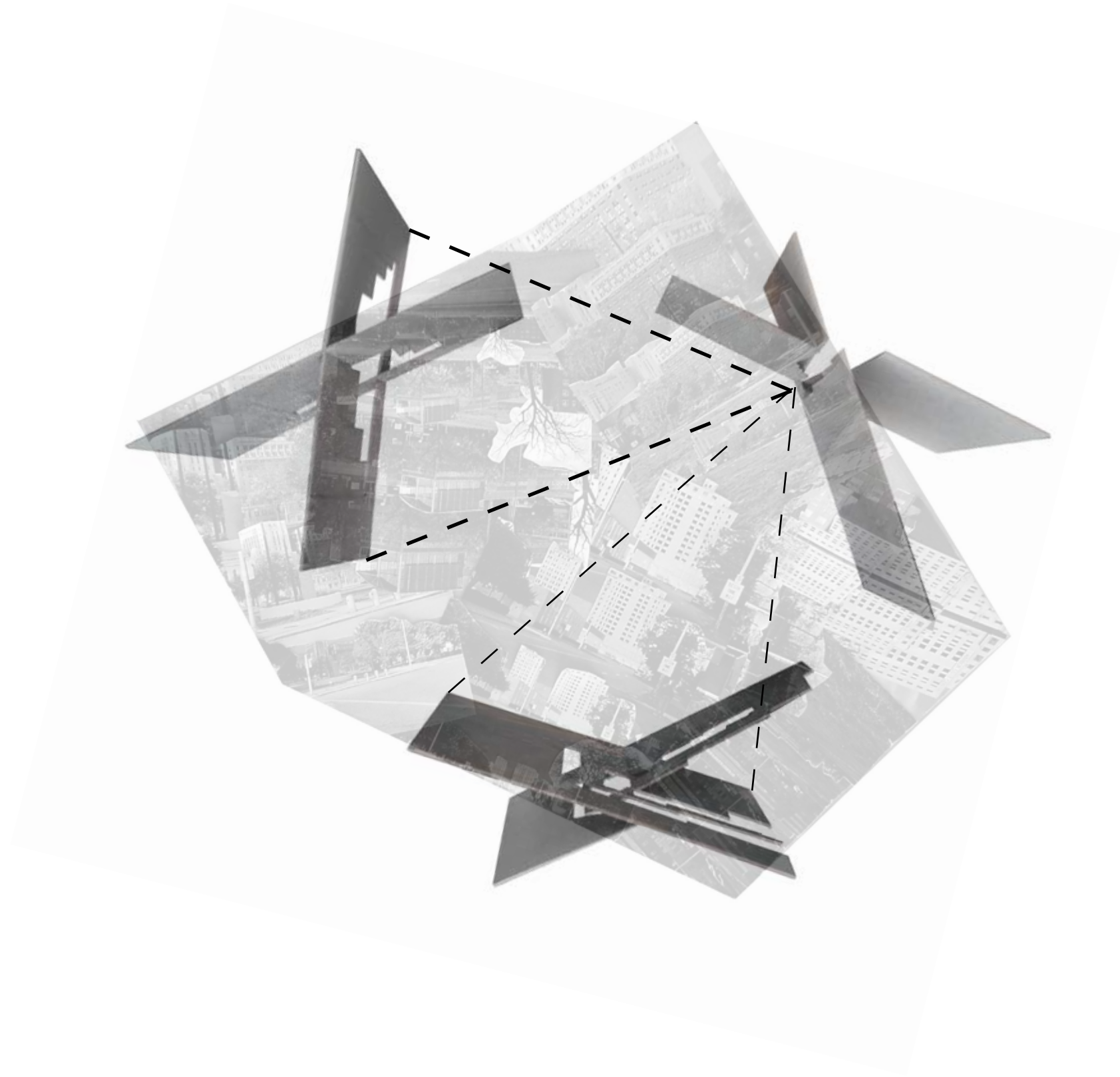


Model 2



Model 3





When thinking back to what these buildings really look like, I see a combination of many experiences and vantage points, forming an idea of the place, not the place itself. Even when experiencing an entire site, what is happening now is only understood through a series of experiences flowing through our memories. What do those memories look like?

Edge

Alter Road

While searching for other kinds of experiential entrances to the city, I came across a site that presented many unique conditions. There is a point on East Jefferson Road, which runs parallel to the Detroit River, where the wide avenue become divided by a boulevard and the landscape changes drastically. Large suburban mansions line the streets and flowers and trees line the neatly paved sidewalks. It is the point at which Detroit fades. So, I began to explore this distinct edge to the city. Just as every photograph must have an edge, I explored the edge condition of this site to find what had been left out, and what had been closed in. What did the edge look like?

This edge site is spatial. There is not a line drawn down the road, or a wall built up to keep something in, or out. The edge is a space, an in-between space where Alter Road, a berm, a fence, and a canal divide two very different neighborhoods. In first exploring this site, I turned down Alter Road and felt a strange tension in this in-between space. It was like slipping into a crack between two tectonic plates that were slowly moving away from each other, allowing a canal to form and fill in from the river's water. And yet, this road that was leading me toward the river was like a procession. The houses passed quickly by, front door after front door, and when I came near the river's edge, Alter turned east, toward Detroit, and dead ended into some seemingly abandoned parks, leaving a confused, and unsatisfied feeling in my mind.

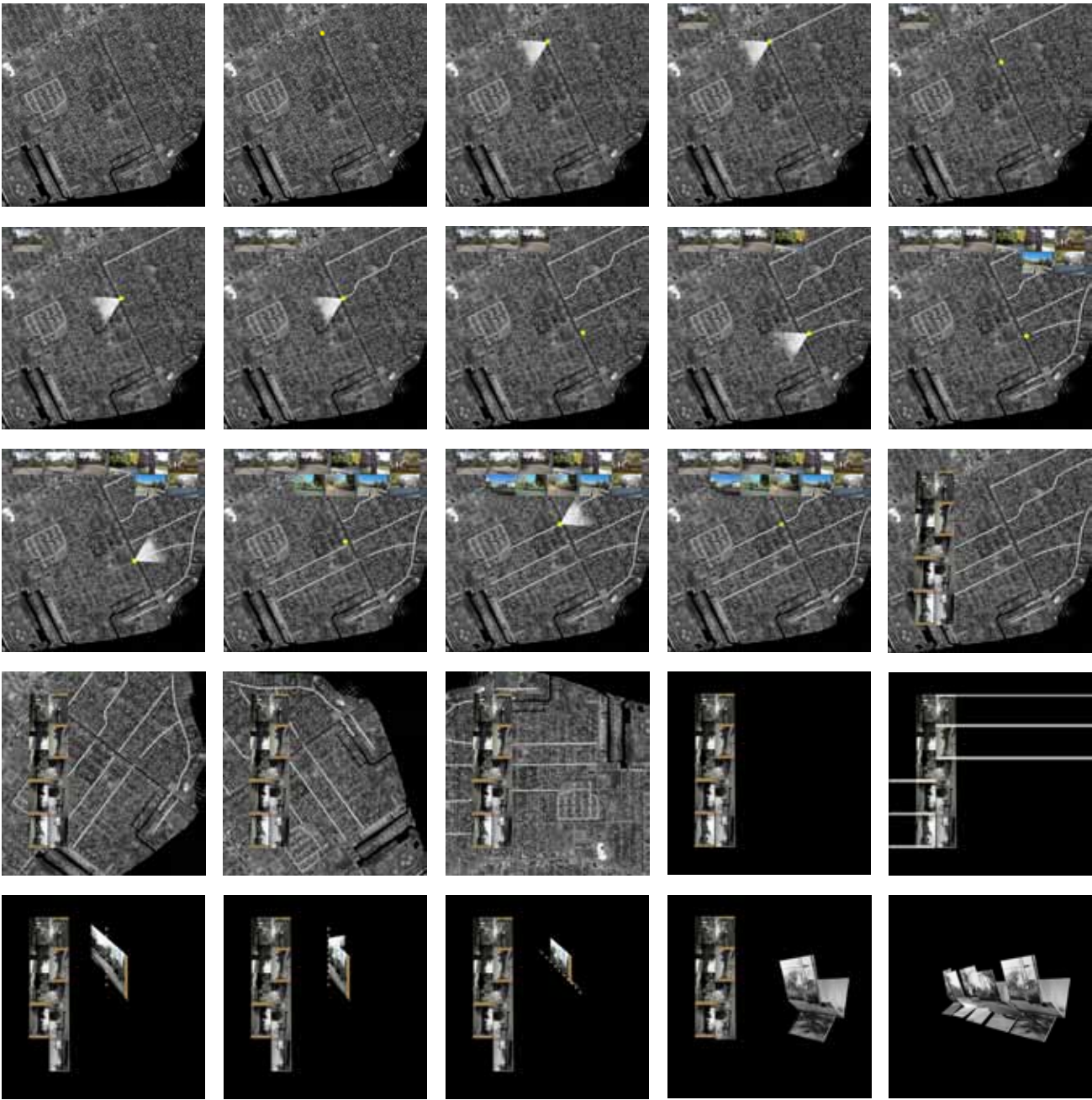
In the photographs shown, a section cut was made to show this condition. Nicer homes line Alter to the East and a grassy berm with a fence to the west. The fence is like a wall. Is it shutting out



Section Cut: East → West



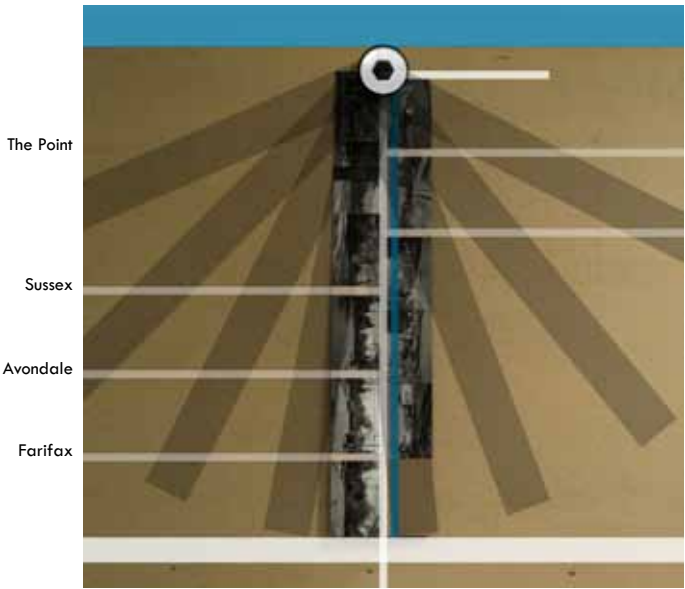
Photographs take from first visit to the site: Left image showing the road-canal condition, Right image showing the canal intersecting with the Detroit river and the condition of the park at the river's edge.



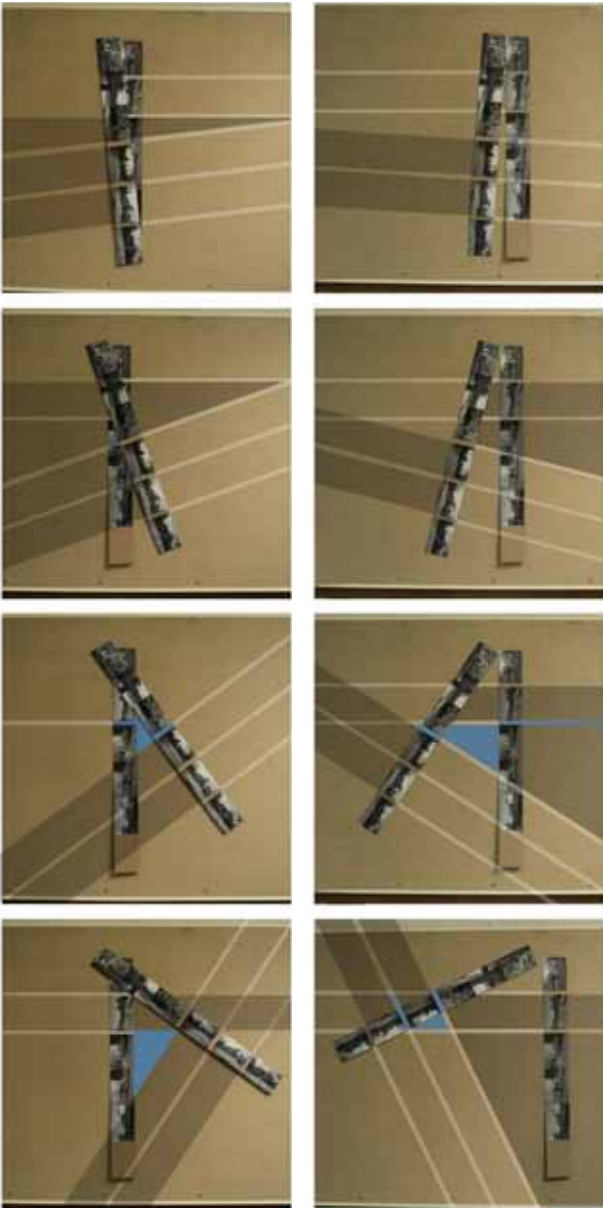
Clips from Process Video: Showing how the photographs of the site were captured and how the Bending Model was created



Road Map



Pivot Diagram



The Grosse Pointe neighborhood swinging towards Detroit

The Grosse Pointe neighborhood swinging away from Detroit

one side from the other? If so, it also keeps both sides contained, metaphorically and literally. And the canal seems to make the biggest statement, as one side of the street has been closed off from the water, but intentionally. This edge condition is charged with racial, economic, and political tension, but whether or not one knows that Alter Road is a main edge to two cities, the experience of the site itself can tell its own story. What can be learned and captured from this site that speaks about the history of the place and the possibilities that its current condition presents for design?

Capturing

On a returning visit to the site, I investigated the particular streets that intersected Alter Road from both sides of the road and canal. A photograph was taken of each street looking toward the edge condition. Through this capturing process I found that each street that once connected each side together had been split. You could not travel directly across from one side to the other. Not only did the fence and canal create a great divide, but each neighborhood had physically cut off the views into each others territory. I created a video to shows this capturing process and the image that was created from these photographs.

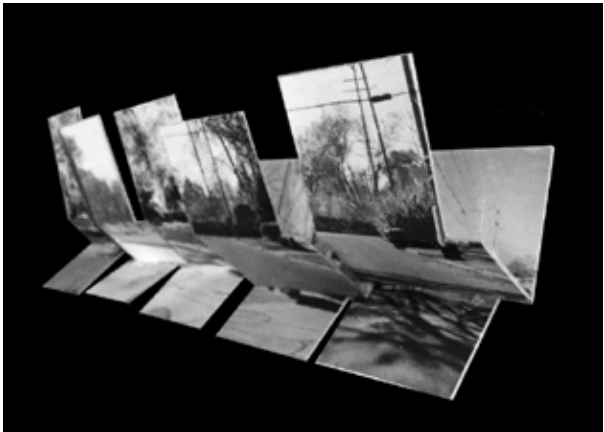
This image is composed of two strips of photographs, each representing one opposing side of the edge condition. The photographs separate from each other where each road intersects Alter. From the Road Map shown, these roads can be seen in white. To begin to experiment with this edge relationship, I began to use this image to push and pull the edge condition, swinging one side of the image towards and away from the other, carrying the streets with it. These experiments lead to interesting

relationships. As soon as the edge became dynamic and moldable, the intersecting streets which once alienated each side from the other, begin to create resulting spaces that connected the two sides together. These spaces, shown in blue, result from left over residual space in the in-between. If a relationship between these two sites were to be designed from this study, its location would always fall in that in-between spatial edge. This space may not physically bring activity or landscape from one side to the other, but rather enhance that edge condition as a space rather than a line. With Alter already acting as a processional space that literally leads to nowhere, how might the crack or the edge become the designed experience, rather than the conclusion of the procession?

Bending Model

Next, I began to investigate how this 2-dimensional image of Alter Road and its edge condition could become 3-dimensional and spatial. In the second portion of the Process Video, the creation of the Bending Model is shown. This image was made by first bending each photograph at its horizon line. Then, each photograph was joined intersecting the horizon line of the photograph across from it. The series of intersecting photographs was joined together (Bending 1), leaving gaps between each connection where perpendicular streets are located (Bending 2). However, these streets do not physically connect, but connect only through the view looking though each gap in the model toward the other side. The space that physically connects the model is the in-between space (Bending 3).

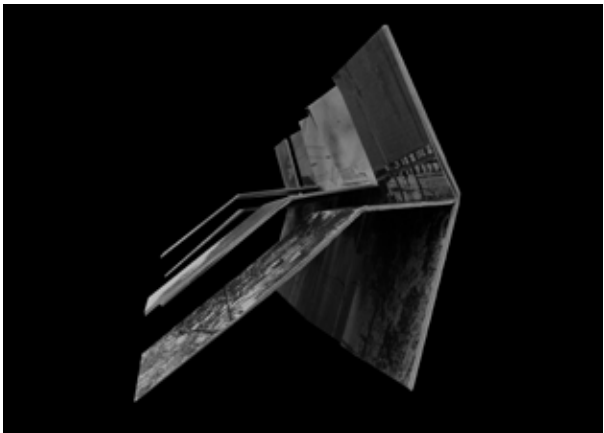
This model was then photographed in different ways as I began to understand the sectional dynamics of the model. The Bending Model represents



Bending
Model 1



Image 1



Bending
Model 2



Image 2



Bending
Model 3

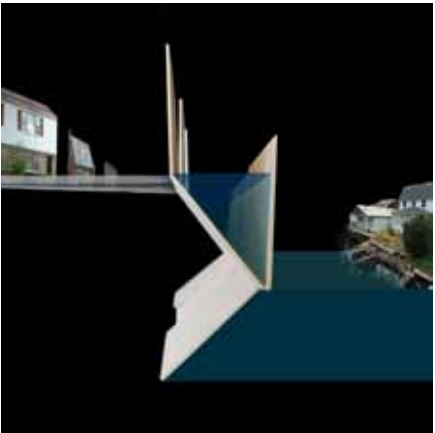


Image 3

the physical condition of the site as a place that is connected and disconnected, joined yet divided. I began to explore through this model how this in-between space might be transformed based on this image of the site. In some cases, the form of the model itself created bridges between the two sides, (Image 1) but the bridges are uncrossable. In this way, visual bridges are formed rather than physical connecting bridges (Image 1-3). People might gather in this in-between space, but the form also leaves the tension of the site, a place that both excludes and gathers the two neighborhoods.

The images below shows another investigation where the model is used as the context for design ideas and then removed. The model acts as both context and idea, informing how the landscape might be changed. Paths and landscape shifts begin to emerge to engage the road and canal in different ways. These installations would occur at the points in the landscape where the disjunction between the two neighborhoods was most evident, at three street intersection of Alter Road that were not already spanning the canal by bridge, as well as the point at which the canal meets the river.

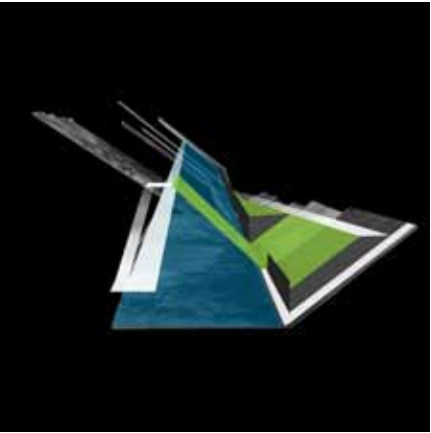


Image 4a



Image 4b

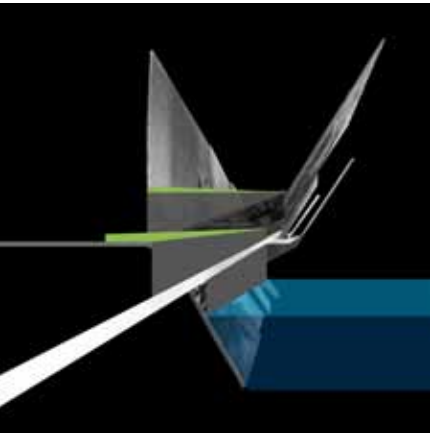


Image 5a

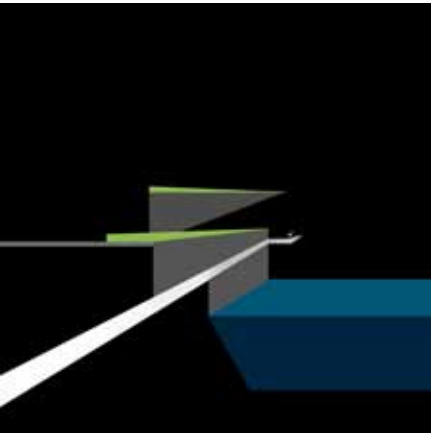
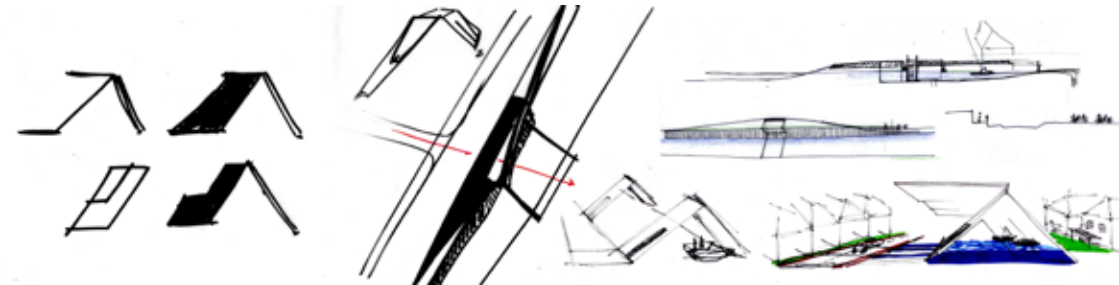
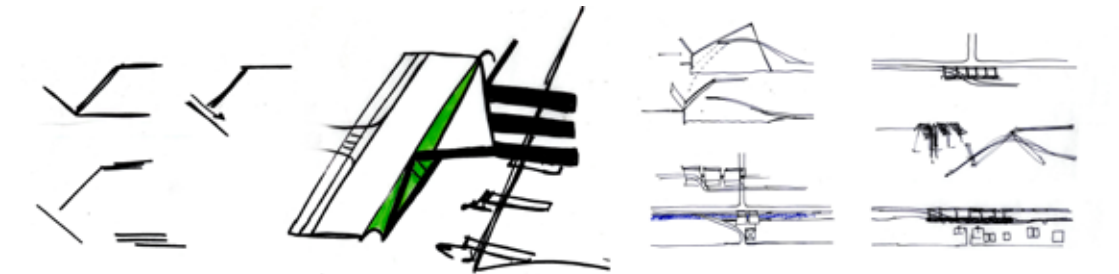


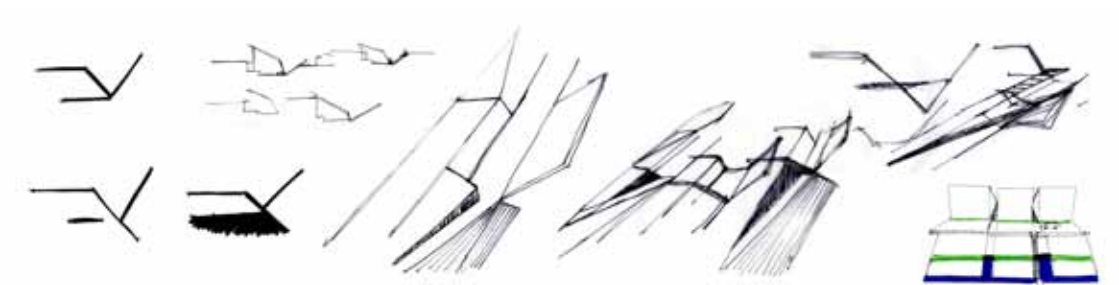
Image 5b



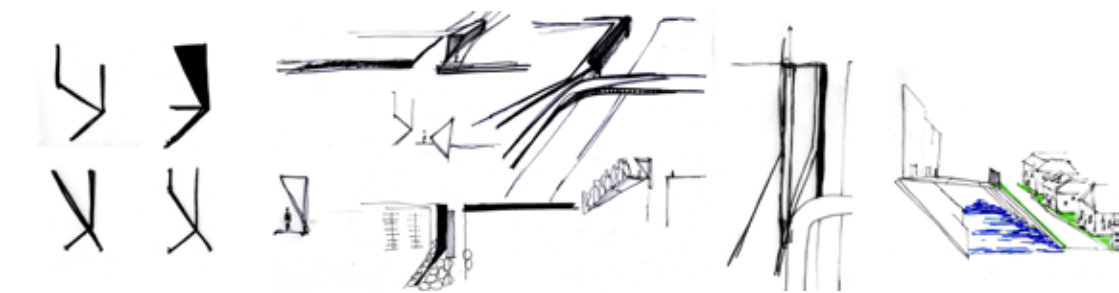
Farifax



Avondale



Sussex

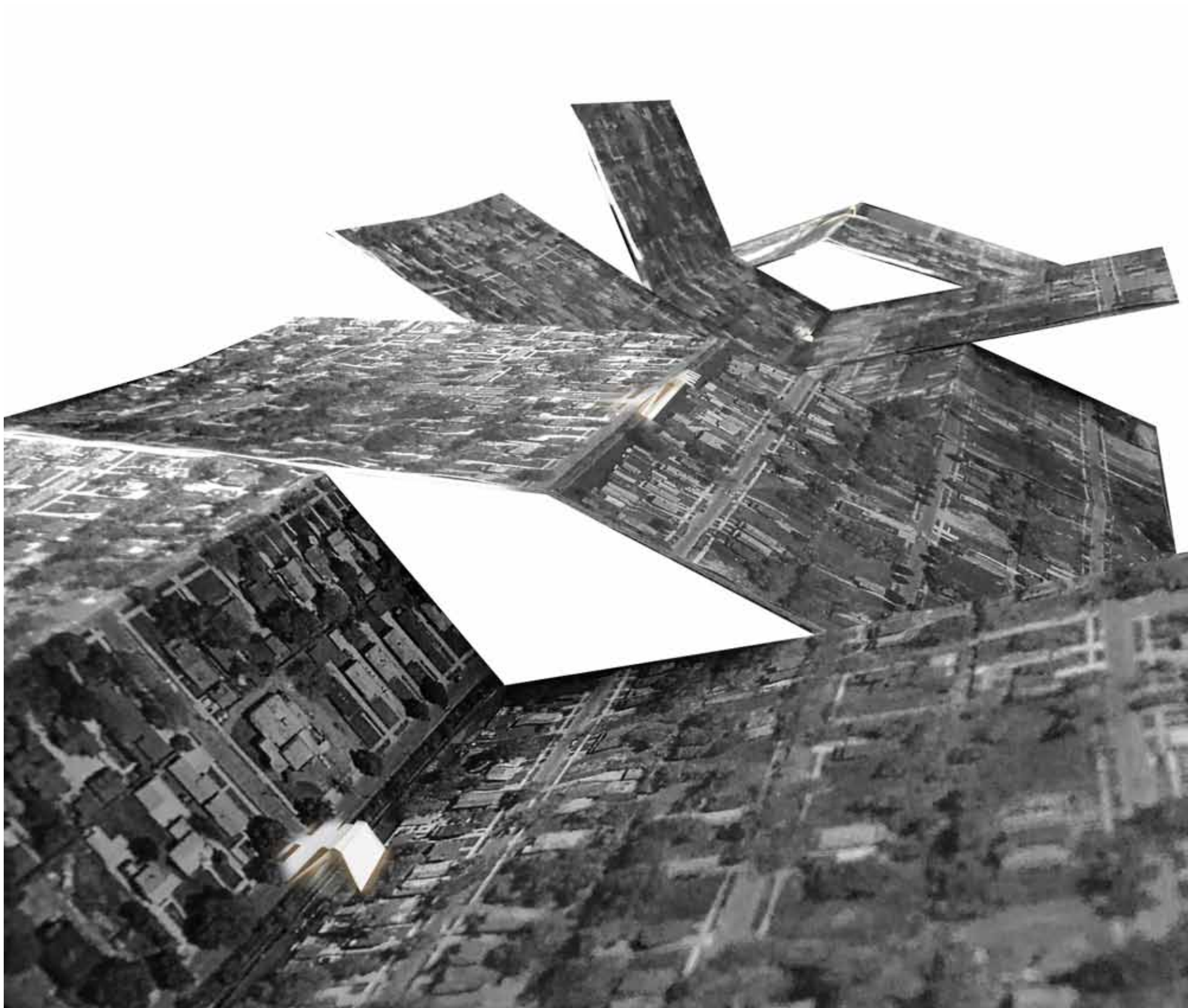
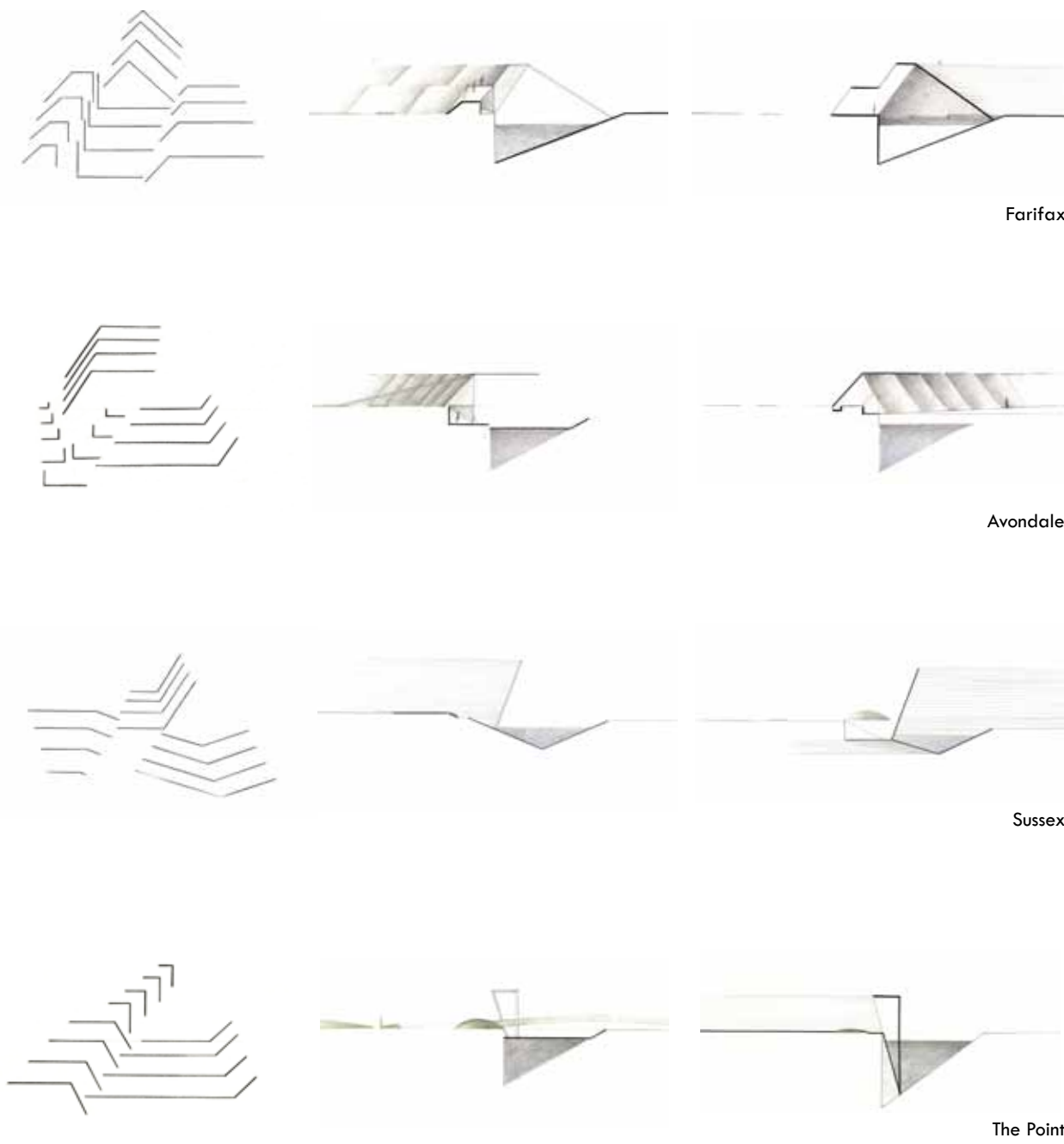


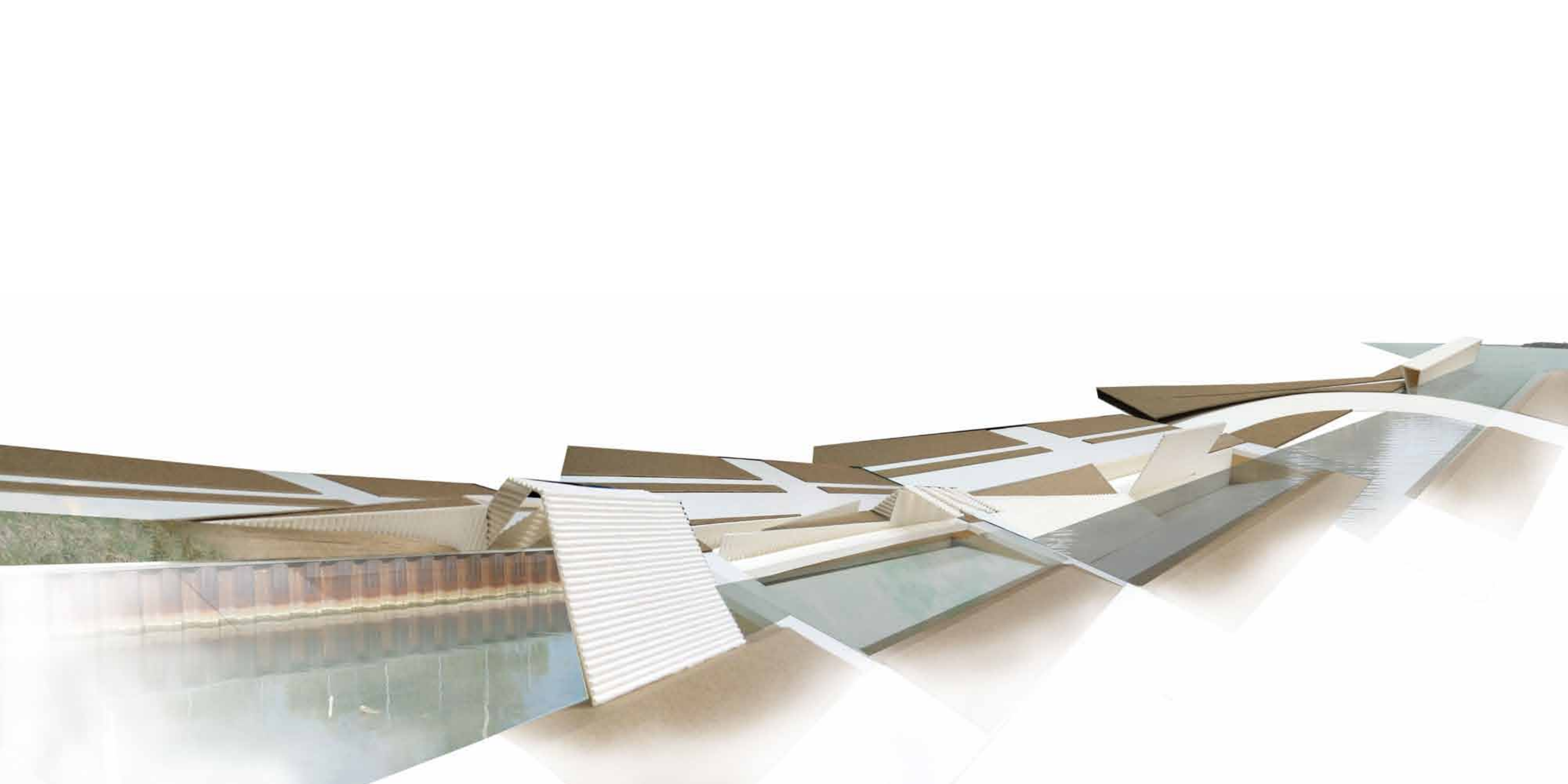
The Point

Abstractions

Through the section of the bending model, four different configurations were abstracted in the sketches shown. Each section was integrated into the landscape of the specific site of each intersection. The berm, or the space between the road and canal, was utilized as the main space which the installation would fit into. With the other side of the canal bank being residential, only one installation would physically touch the other bank. The final section in each instance was then extruded to create paths and points at which pedestrians might enter.

Each of these models represents different kinds of intersecting points where exclusion and difference meet at a common ground. These installations are not meant to be a part of master plan for a site, but rather represent small scale impacts within a large scale environment. These installations enhance the procession down Alter Road toward the river front. They act as viewfinders, creating frames and in some cases cutting off views down the intersecting streets. They are meant to be experienced so that one can change their elevation in the landscape and see up and over the trees and houses. In the model The point at the river's edge, the path is hidden in the trees and one must find it. This path leads to the river, blocking off ones view of the downtown until the last moment where the path dead ends and the city can be seen. The installations do not connect. It is the experience of one's body moving through space that connects each point to the next. Experience and movement tie the landscape together. Each installation as a landmark brings the experience together in our memory.





Blur

Alter Road Park

On my first visit down Alter Road, I discovered an unexpected site where the edge condition transforms into both an open and closed spatial condition. Just before the canal spills into the Detroit River, Alter turns and dead-ends into what seemed to be an abandoned park. Weather this space *belonged* to Detroit or Gross Pointe was unclear. After my initial studies of the Alter Road Edge, I decided to take a second look at this park. It's characteristics seemed difficult to define, and in my mind the space was a large void on the riverfront. It contained a large parking lot, a scattered fence, large trees, open grass areas, as well as a paved ledge and railing on the river edge. Despite these few landmarks, I continued to envision the site as a larger void that was literally framed by a canal that captured the land in what I remember as an almost perfect square.

In the essay “Terrain Vague,” Ignasi de Solà-Morales writes that photography “makes us aware of the built and human reality,”¹ and that all physical things and visual images are also mental and imagined. Our gaze or experience of a city is built up by the image of the city of our imaginations. These memories of the park had not yet been captured through photography. How could these memories influence the way in which the site could be captured? This physical and mental process of learning though images is described by Solà-Morales as an index. The signifier and the signified create an image game of signals where the photographs of cities and places are not the places themselves but signifiers. Then, in our minds, we construct the signified as a real place where value judgments can be made. How might this process be able to teach me about the nature of images? If the



Void Capturing: First 16 photographs taken of the Alter Road Park



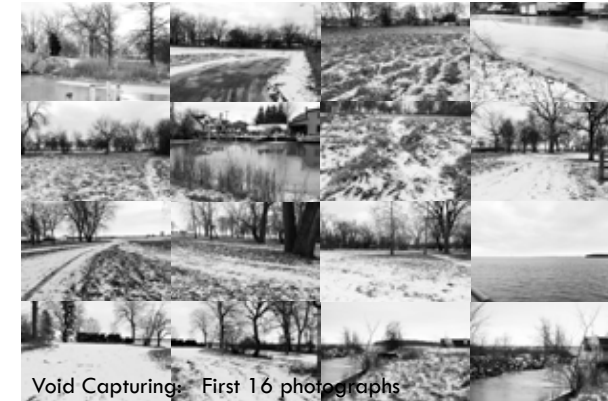
photographs of sites only present signals or clues, maybe architecture or landscape itself can act as an image or a signal instead of an actual place. If photographs can spatially occupy our memories, then maybe a landscape could be designed which is only an image that clues into mental constructs and becomes an imagined space rather than an inhabited space. Perhaps inhabitation is partial or both inclusive and exclusive, and other instances occur that must be imagined with the aid of visual signals. A building, after all, cannot be seen all at once. Experience and memory piece together to form more haptic images in our minds.

The term *Vague*, described as oscillation, movement, instability, fluctuation, vacant, vacuum, unoccupied, and unengaged, is also referenced as free, possibility, promise, and expectation. Alter Road, as well as Alter Road Park, represent the anxiety of terrain vague, a space that is a physical manifestation of a mental fear on the margins of the city. Solà-Morales also talks about art’s reaction to preserve these strange vague spaces, to allow the voids of the interior of the city to remain void and the margins to maintain anxiety. Rather than “changing estrangement into citizenship” we might allow the “magic of the obsolete” to influence the ways in which these vague spaces are used or experienced.²

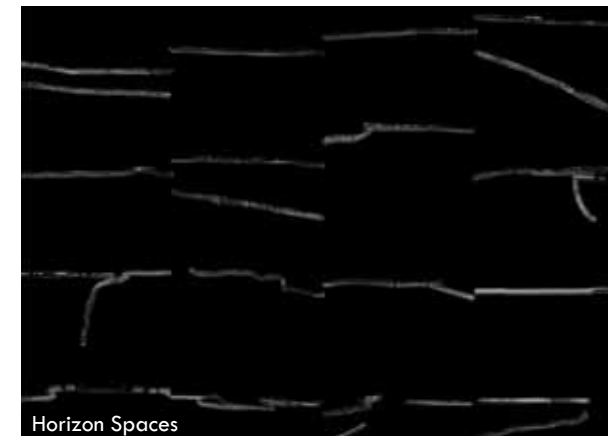
So, this sense of void, this imagined and real void, was the basis for a return to the site to attempt to capture voids through the lens of the camera. But how does one capture a void through a camera when the function of the camera is to focus on the none-void, the object, and the landmark? Perhaps the camera could capture both object and void, and our understanding becomes a matter of how the images are seen.



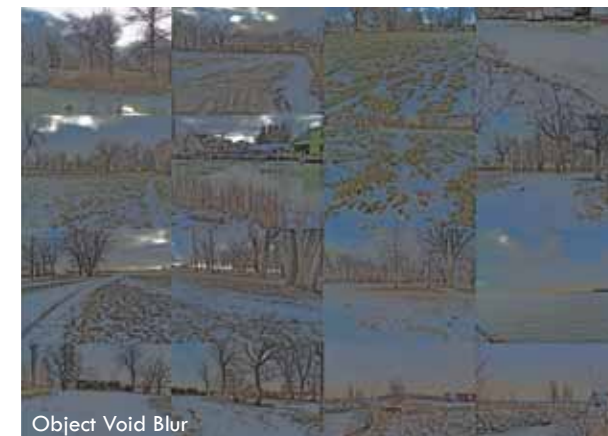
Site Composition



Void Capturing: First 16 photographs



Horizon Spaces



Object Void Blur

Blur

The first 16 photographs taken of the site represent this study of capturing voids. I found, through this experience, that landmarks and objects always found their way back into the frame of the lens, which later provided the best reference point to piece the images back together. The most successful void shots emphasized a play of foreground and background, a change in the horizon line point of view, and a blur of void and object. The openness of the views from the site created blurred horizon lines and a distancing between viewer and image. The horizon line represented its own spatial landmark as a reference point within each frame.

The first study of this condition attempts to emphasize the changing relationship to the horizon line-space in the distance. *Horizon Space* literally traces the blurred space of the horizon to better understand one's own changing relationship to the blur. *Object Void Blur* attempts to create less distinction between landmarks and voids on the site through a blurring of the context itself. The final blur study, *Site Composition*, was an attempt to bring these observations together in a piece that explored the fluctuating relationship between the objects and voids on site. The object springs from its rooted connection to the horizon line and blurs between changing horizons within each image captured. The white space of the piece could be considered the void, formed by the blur of the horizons. The piece as a whole is a kind of terrain vague, in-between context and possibility.

Notes

1-2. Solà-Morales Rubio, Ignasi. "Terrain Vague." Anyplace. Cynthia C. Davidson. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995. 118, 122-123.

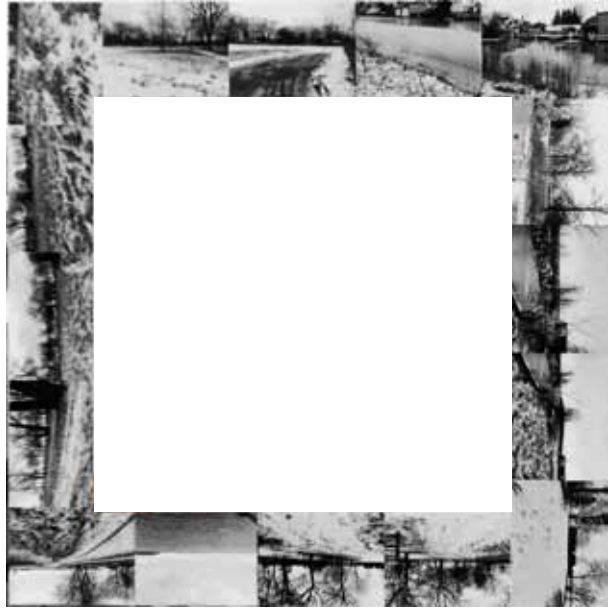
Frame-Making

The Uncanny

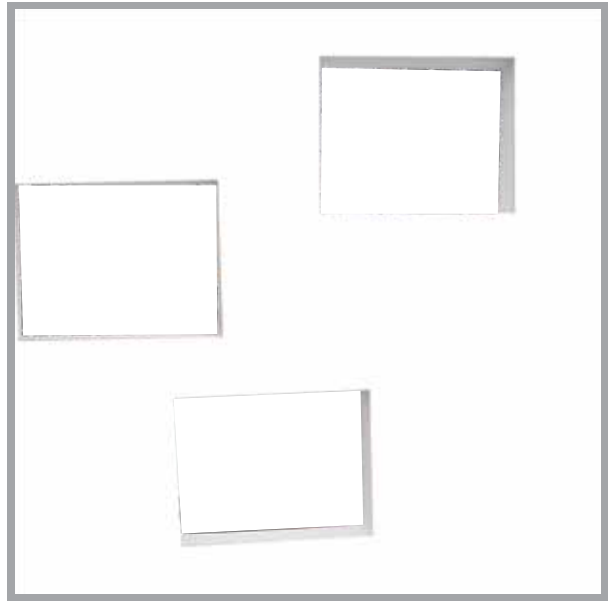
“Uncanny is in reality nothing new or foreign but something familiar and old, established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression.”¹ Alter Road Park brings this kind of disoriented feeling upon the observer. It looks like a park, it is a park, and yet, where does that deep sense of unfamiliarity come from? There is a similarity in the appearance of the place to other voids in the city, but it is also an odd configuration that is literally an island park formed by man made canals that cut the land. A strange place that excludes itself from the neighborhoods around it, attached by a single bridge.

After my first studies of the voids and landmarks on the site, I began a new series of images that focused on the presence of the frame. On a revisit to the site, I brought my own frames with me. One was composed of the initial 16 photographs of the voids and landmarks on the site. The frame, being made of the photographic context of the site, represented both the context as well as new image making possibilities. The second frame was composed of three voids that were the same proportion as the cameras capturing lens. These frames were taken to the site to discovery how the effect of the frame would impact how the site itself could be seen and understood.

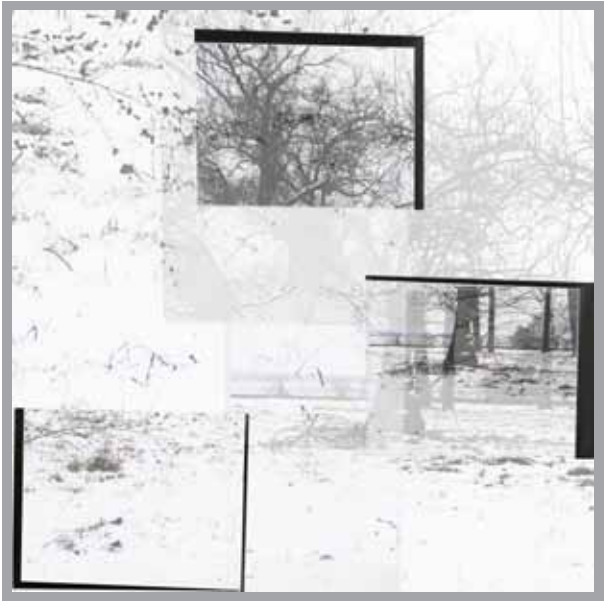
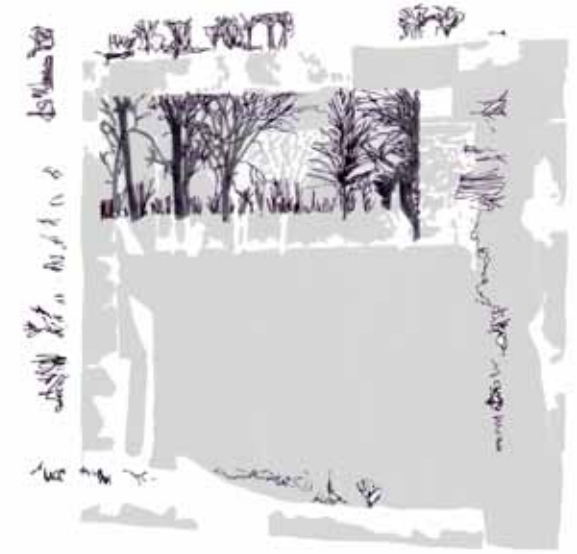
Back in the studio, the images captured where further explored in order to expose the relationship between the frame and its captured content. In the first study, Context Frame, figure ground and sky tracings revealed multiple framing effects occurring simultaneously between the frame and the captured view. The objects and voids on the site were traced with differing techniques, again revealing a framing



Context Frame



Void Frame

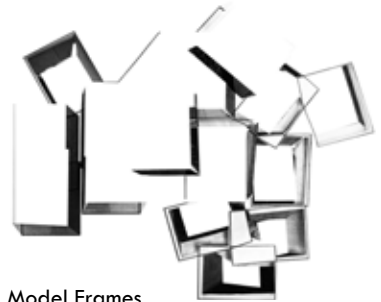




Site Views



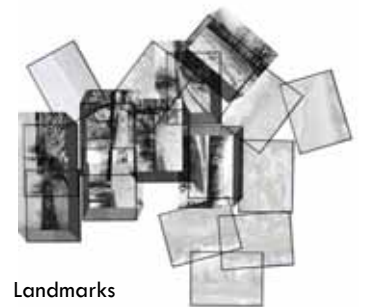
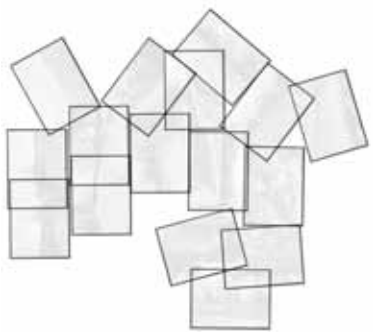
Landmark Void Model



Model Frames



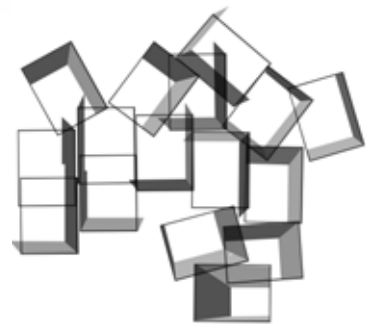
New Image Framing



Landmarks



Voids



Passe-Partout

effect that could be extruded and layered within the image to frame the void within the objects.

The second frame brought to the site, Void Frame, captured a very surprising and exciting relationship between the photographs captured in the voids. The frame itself, which traditionally is referred to as that which holds the work together, became a tool to dislocate and disorient the observer. A single photograph of this frame on the site captured one image with three views, with the relationship between each view destroyed by the exclusion of the orienting horizon line. Each part of the image is excluded from the other. These themes of inclusion and exclusion of the frame and the work connect to the uncanniness of the site, as a place that is both included and excluded from the surrounding context of Alter Road. Can there be an architecture of the uncanny?

Site Frames

In these frame-making studies, the frame itself is both the work and the frame. This blurring between the site and the frame raises questions about the meaning of the edge condition. What does this edge/frame mean within the context of Alter Road and Alter Road Park? In my early studies of Alter Road between Detroit and Gross Pointe, the edge was explored as a spatial edge. This space had it's own dynamic in the sense that it could be both the point of exclusion and the point of inclusion of two juxtaposed neighborhoods. While considering this dynamic, the next studies of Alter Road Park began to explore the ability of the frame and the edge to both organize and eidetically formalize the context captured within the initial 16 photographs of the site. The frame becomes vital to exploring the possibility of the edge condition.

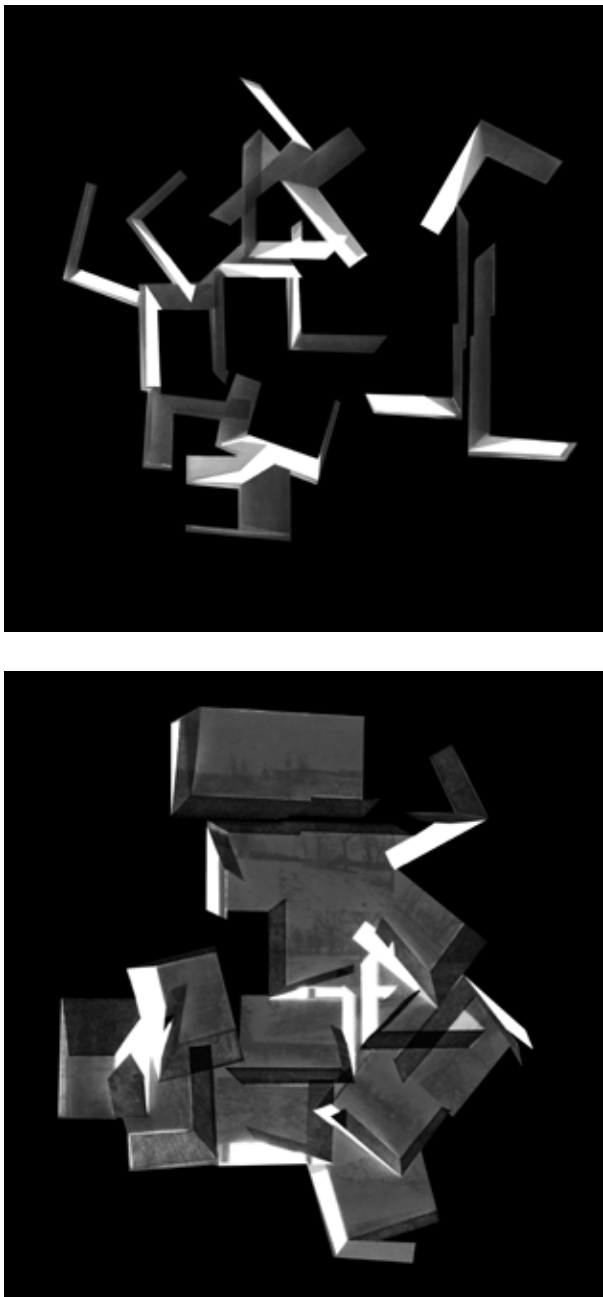
The initial 16 photographs were first organized based on the location of the site in which they were captured. Each photograph was then translated into a combination of frames that composed the experience of the capturing of the site. A model was created which represented relationships of the site through the pulling up of photographed landmarks and the pushing down of photographs which emphasized the void. The model was again translated as a composition of frames, which then had the ability to frame a new image of the site. The extrusion of the frames to create the pushing and pulling of the landmarks and voids created the notion of the spatial frame, a frame that was not simple an edge condition, but a place or object that could be viewed within space. The spatial frame is the blur between the edge and the work itself, an occurrence that Derrida refers to as the passe-partout in 'Truth in Painting.

Passe-Partout

What would it mean to behold a painting without an edge? I believe this is the question Derrida begins to pose, a question itself that seems without context and without definitive boundaries or limits. When a painter begins, the edge or limits of a work are usually predetermined, even without a conception of what the work will become. The edge, or the frame, however, is the point at which some ideas, images, and thoughts are excluded and some are included in the work. Would a painting without an edge mean ultimate inclusion, an infinite extension of never-ending strokes and ideas flowing? I don't think this is quite the point either, as Derrida keeps us focused on the idea of context. What does the canvas, with its edge and frame really mean for painting, or art.... Or even for architecture and it's relationship to the edge.



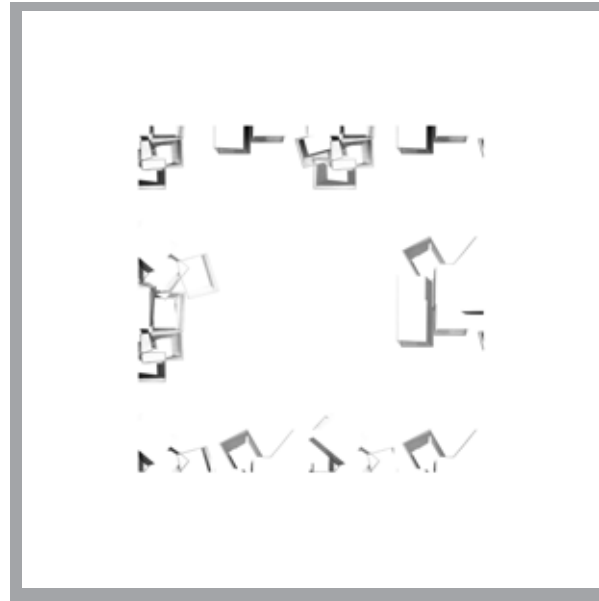
Photography of Image Models



Models from Below: light and shadow

I think back to Heidegger. Everything must have a context. Nothing exists outside of our own being-in-the-world, and everything seems to occur somewhere, within some limit, even if this edge is blurred. So when a painter beholds a canvas and thinks some deep thought (or shallow thought), something must appear. And I imagine that a base is laid down first, a beginning context within the context of the white canvas and its dimensions. Then, layers of context begin to emerge, defining different elements of our world: light, color, depth, shadow, and maybe horizon. And then the objects or figures begin to define themselves apart from the context of the painting, becoming the subjects of attention, “the thing,” but the edge predetermines everything. The edge makes the possibility and the impossibility of things to happen within the context of the painting. I also imagine that each painting is a metaphor for its own context within other works that predate it or revolve around its era. Each painting reminds us of other places and other paintings. Each painter is urging the viewer to think, do, act, observe, but in no predetermined way. The act of viewing a work seems to be as much a part of the context of the work as the edge of the frame of the work itself, that experience of becoming involved in a work through one’s own experience with it. And so, the edge is not only a material intersection of the frame and the work, but a physical and phenomenological intersection of the work with other subjects.

What would it mean to design layers of context, rather than “the thing”? How might I design through a contextual landscape that first accepts the edge as both a physical and non-physical idea and forms a series of moves that layers over the parameters of a site? Photographs of sites,



Passe-Partout



Passe-Partout Frames



Man on Edge

with their edge parameters and layers of visual depth, present both inclusion and exclusion of a place. Derrida speaks of the passe-partout as an intersection of frame and painting, a spatial edge that is, potentially, both frame and work at the same time. Without an object to behold, the passe-partout might become the designed object that captures all that the beholder wants to see and all that the beholder might become or capture within their own experience of a place. The thing itself becomes useless without the engagement of seeing and moving. “That which opens, with a trace, without initiating anything.”² The edge itself becomes an event of realization, activity, and participation, a spatial place that is a composition of thresholds that open up onto each other as we move through a place, a work, a space, or a painting.

The passe-partout literally translates as the mat, or

the space between the work and the frame. In this study, I attempted to create a passe-partout using the frames from the images of the site and allowing them to form an in-between space between the work and the frame. The models of this passe-partout attempt to be an edge that cannot be physically inhabited, but rather, inhabited through one's own vision of the frame and the site beyond. The passe-partout therefore becomes an installation that simultaneously is an edge, or line that excludes the observer from physical inhabitation, as well as a spatial edge, which folds the landscape into the views of the frames. The edge becomes spatial through our own image in our mind. In this sense, the installation is like a camera, dependent on the observer's movement and vision of the site. The passe-partout both separates the observer from the site, and captures the observer's views of the site. This work positions the observer as the





“other,” the outsider that is integrated through the installation. The voids of the frames are never void, but act as thresholds to the other side, and once the edge is crossed, we are once again looking through to the other place, the other side. We are always the outsider. Seeing and being become both exclusion and inclusion. We are on the site, we see and experience, and yet, we are always trying to get somewhere other than where we are. The Alter Road Park is a place that these themes manifest themselves with great anxiety. The framed canal site evolved as a place to discover one’s own relationship to seeing and capturing, and one’s relationship to the idea of the edge.

The Park is also a place of transition, and as the semester passed, and warmer air fogged over the river, the site transformed into yet an “other” place.

Notes

- 1. Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*. New York: Penguin Books, 2003. 13.
- 2. Derrida, Jacques. *The Truth in Painting*. Chicago: Chicago Press, 1987. 11.



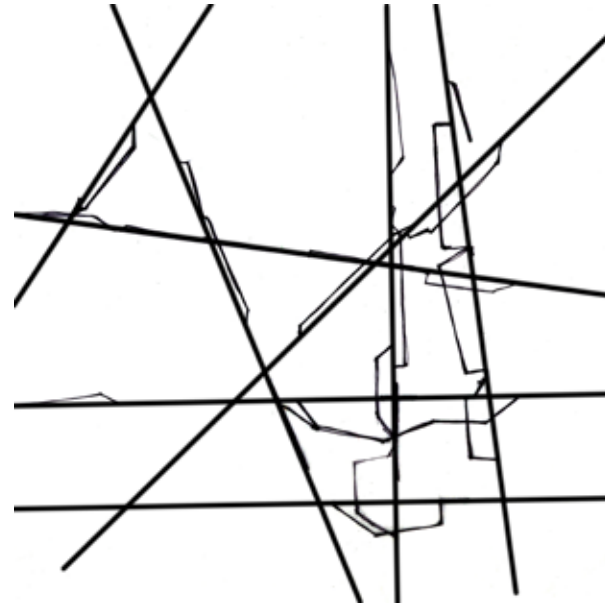
Passe-Partout

The Other

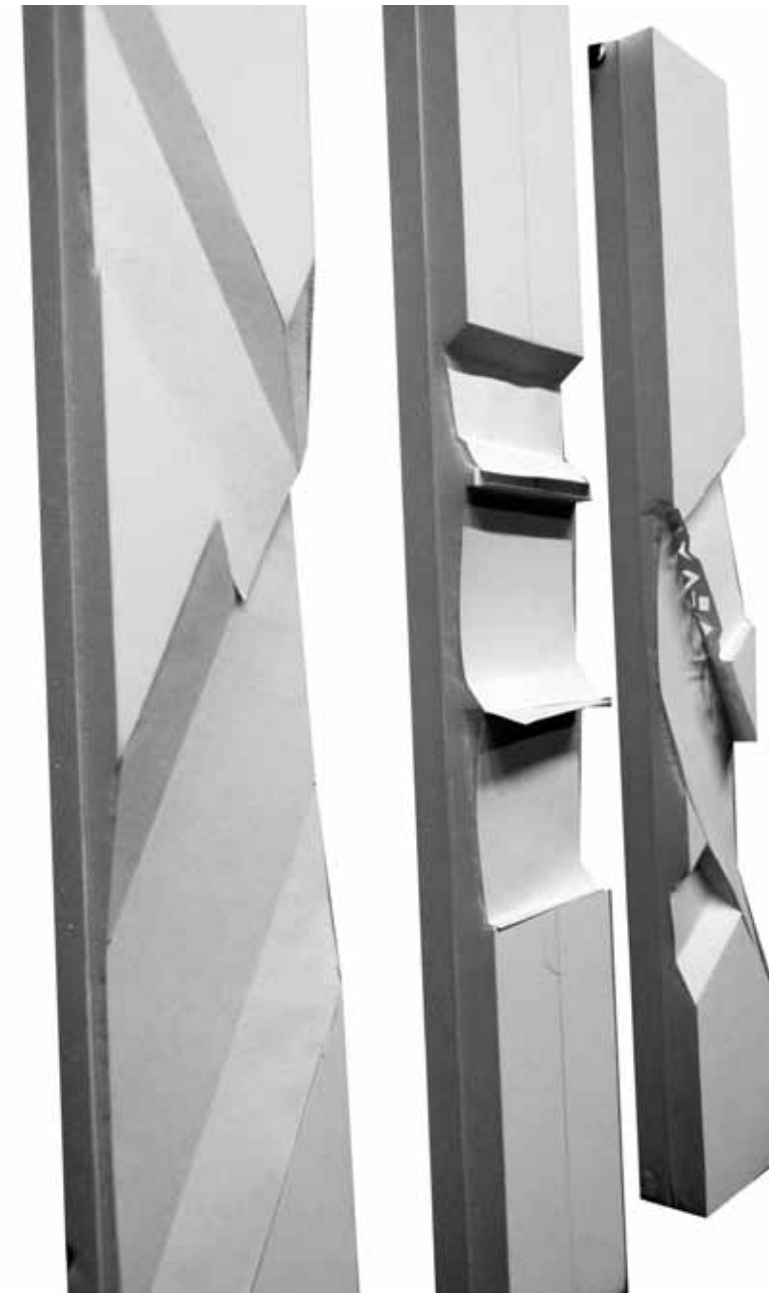
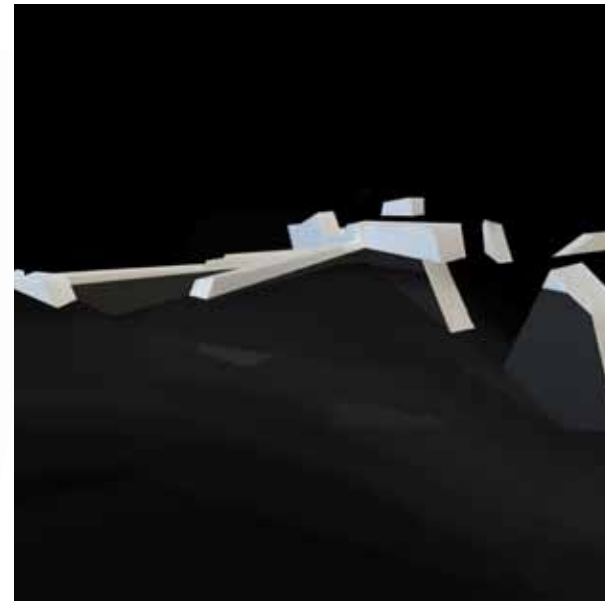
Like those “moments between waking and sleeping,” a blurring image in memory is formed through the transparency of each layer of mental images that develops over time.¹ I visited the site over and over again, a familiar location, but this site’s face was always changing. Perhaps it was not so much the site that changed but my own strangeness on the site. As I visited this place over and over again, sometimes it became more foreign than familiar. Each time I visited, I was a stranger, but each time I left, I felt like the insider, the one with the answers. As the seasons changed, the layering of memory images became more complex. People, cars, and dogs created motion in once static memories. Photographs of the site six months before were like time capsules to a place that didn’t exist anymore.

In Strangers to Ourselves, Julia Kristeva speaks of strangeness as a universal human character, a strangeness that lives both inside us and on the faces of others in the world. Those places that make us realize our strangeness, are not strange themselves, but strange through our own judgment and intuition. What an uncanny feeling when one sees the appearance of their own strangeness in the world around them. What goes on in these places? How do “others” feel? As the seasons changed, uprisings sprung out of this strange place. I felt that others felt a sense of freedom, exiles from sameness and redundancy. And I felt liberated by the changes I saw occurring. Could this framed space be experienced through images of strangeness, pieced together through memory and reality combined?

These questions remained in my mind as I began to formulate ideas for the implementation of a designed edge on the site. As I explored these



Section Line Studies



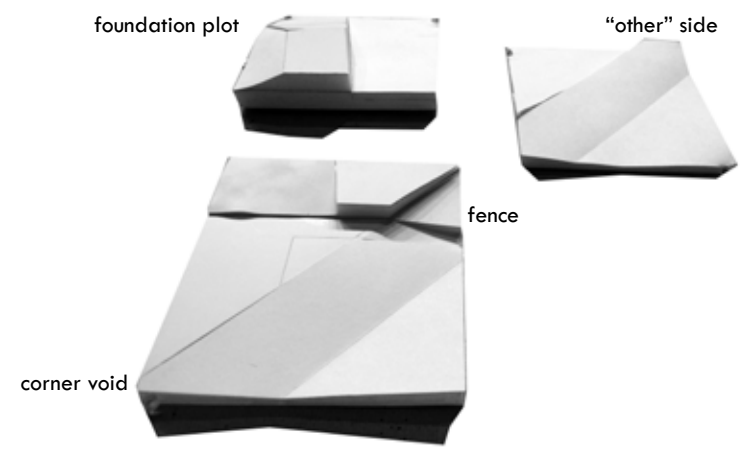
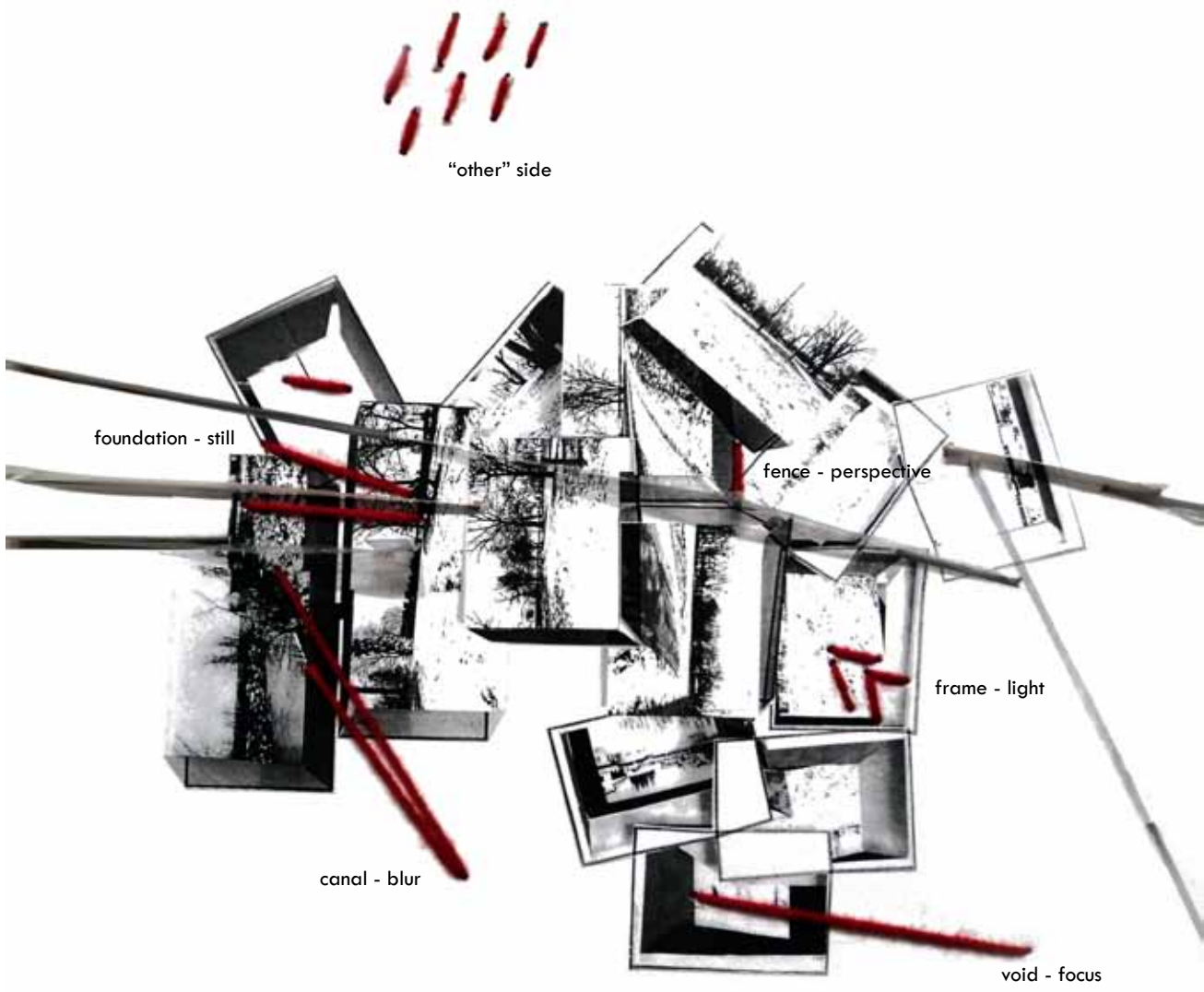
Landscape Edges

themes in the studio, I found that my memory of the site and my experiences going back to the site revolved around a series of contradictions that made both my experiences and my memories a series of strange and imagined mental images. How could these moments be played out on the site?

Installations

The initial studies of the passe-partout were very much conceptualized in the studio. Moving forward, I decided that an approach needed to be taken that integrated both studio conceptualization as well as real conceptual making of images on the site itself. In this way, contradictions within design intention could be played out on site in a series of installations that would be literal “site models.” I began this process through a dissection of my initial site composition models, beginning to understand the passe-partout as a more abstract concept, like a section line cutting through the landscape, rather than an object sitting alone. Through these *Section Line Studies*, I was able to understand the possibility of the site informing areas of landscape shifts. These shifts in the land would attempt to blur the frame that constituted the site as a ridged square posed again the canals and river.

In studio, landscape intersection models of these relationships were designed, first outside of the context of the site in *Landscape Edges*. Then these shifts were designed more formally, taking cues from specific landmarks within the site in *Three Squares*. Here, specific locations on site were chosen as the focus of possible installation sites. In the end, the installations would not physically connect, but rather through one’s own experience of viewing the relationships from one piece to the next as they are experienced simultaneously.

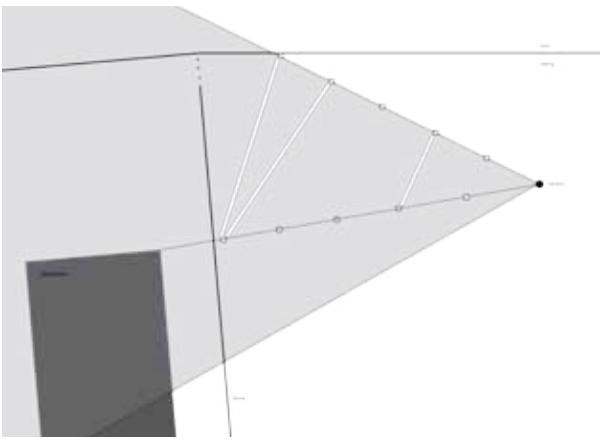
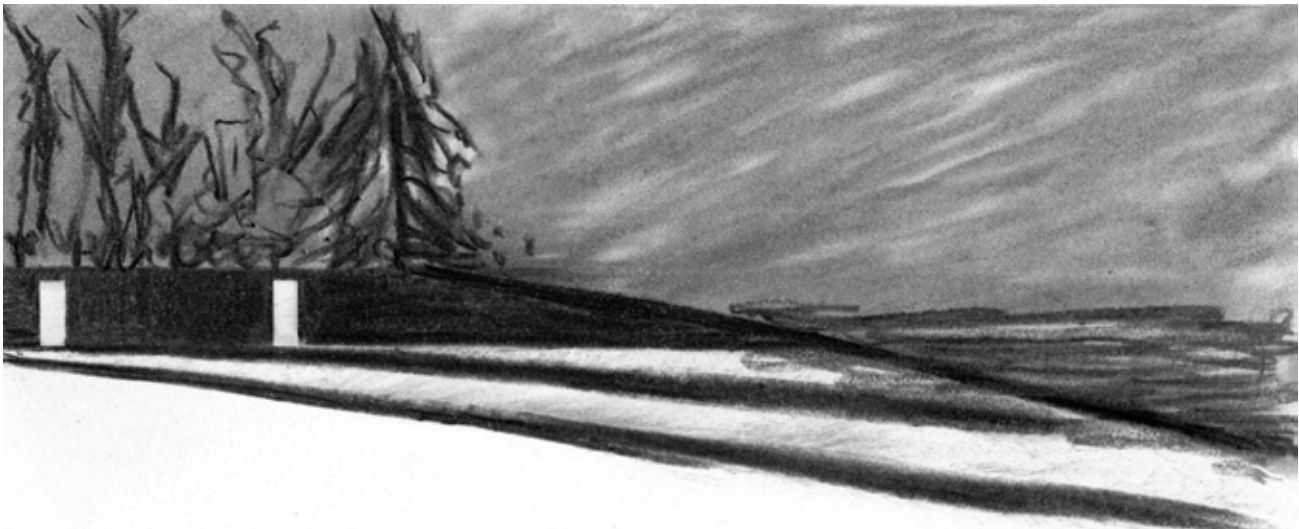
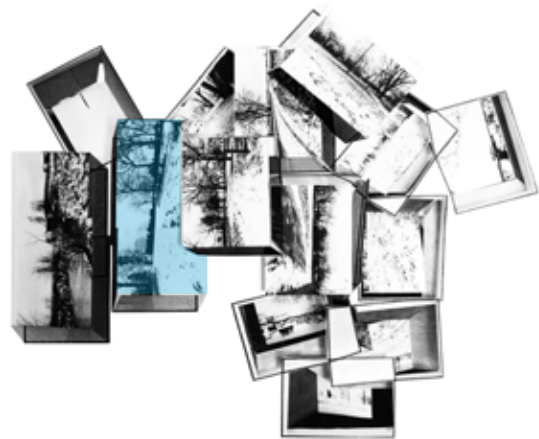


Three Squares

Each installation was first inspired from one of the photographs of the site composition model. The selection of installation sites were carefully chosen so that each installation would build up from the previous, informing the continuation of landscape shifts that connected throughout the site. Each design was planned in the studio to the degree of conceptual understanding. Materials were determined based on my own memories of the site and my own urge to experiment with the effects of transparency, light, and shadow through the lens of the camera.

Each of the seven installations intended to be quickly implemented and captured. The position of the camera was vital to the design of each installment. The cameras ability to capture perspectives and stills in flattened views was utilized throughout the process. This positioning of the camera allowed for the layering of materiality within the view to give the illusion of depth and varying scales. In some installations the time of day influenced the design. In other installations, a sudden discovery on site drastically changed the original design intention, allowing the constant experience of the site to inform the process of image making on site.

As each installation was captured throughout the second portion of the semester, the positions of the installations were documented back onto the site composition model. This model shows the relationship between each installation. The red lines indicate the actual placement of the installation materials on the site. The 3-dimension layers within the model represent the image captured from each installation and the physical connection that these images represent in the landscape.



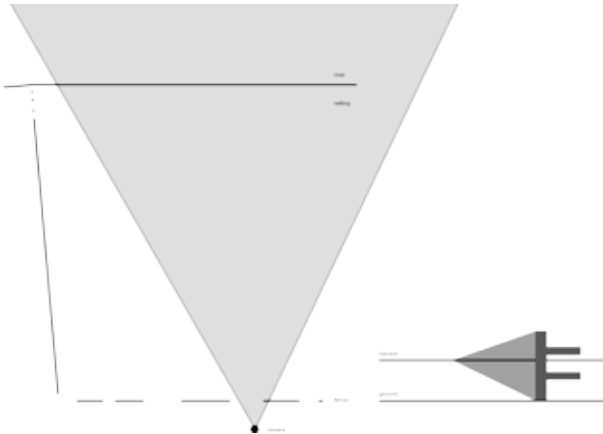
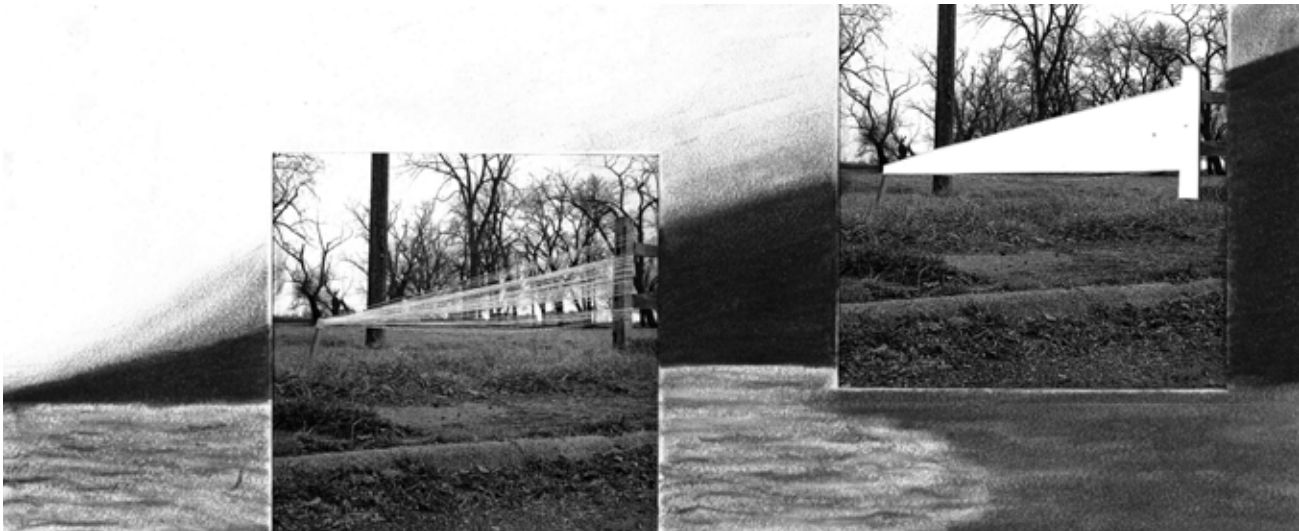
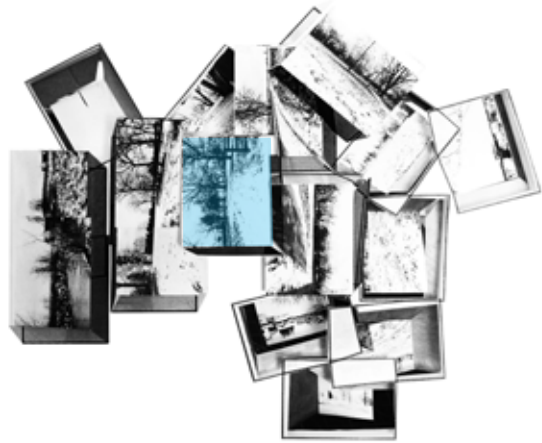
Foundation - Still

In the first site installation, I focused on an area that I began to call the foundation plot. Near the rivers edge, a plot of land contained traces of a foundation of a building that had been torn down. This landmark stuck out in my mind as one of the only areas of changing elevation within the site, providing the first cue to implement a more emphasized slope toward the river. This sloping landscape could be represented through the specific placing of the camera and a layering of edges staked out in the ground. Each layer was like a passe-partout within the landscape, but when framed by the camera, in the diagram shown, each edge could be seen as a composition forming a unified slop toward the water.



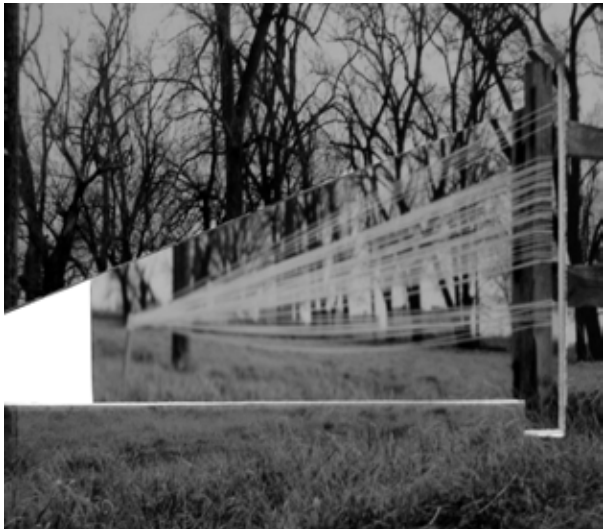
Two slopes intersect in this view. One steep slope starts at the top of the foundation plot, which lies behind the wire fence in this view, and slopes to the river. Another gradual slope would erase the strict frame boundary of the railing and paved walkway at the river's edge. These intersecting sloped planes would form a new edge within the landscape, shown in the installation as a white ribbon.



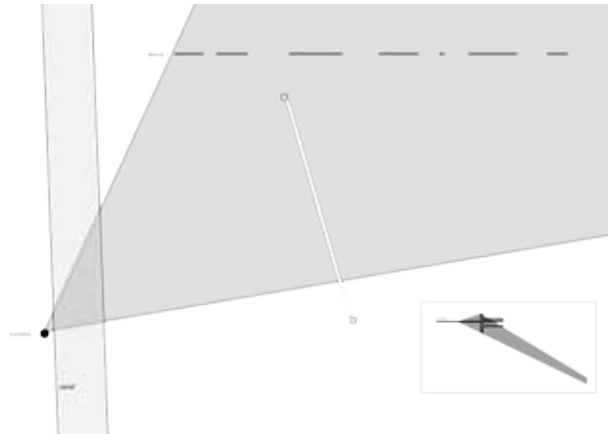
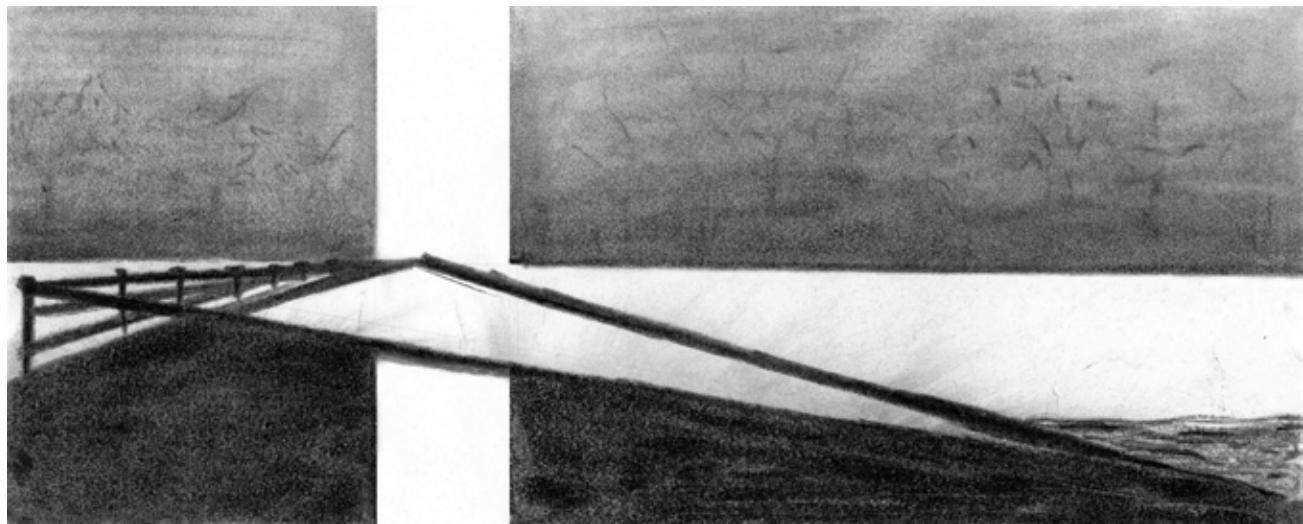
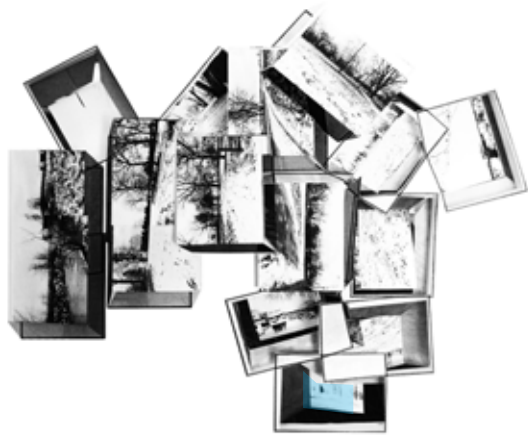


Fence - Perspective
The scattered fences on the site remained in my mind as edges that already existed within the landscape. The ability to see the fence and see through the fence simultaneously was an existing example of a frame on the site. These fences also create boundaries around the site between the paved drive, the parking lot, and the open fields.

The installation itself utilized the ability of the camera to capture a landscape representation within a flattened viewed. The installation created a perspective view of the gradual sloping landscape that would start at the edge of the fence and move across the wide landscape toward the water. This on-site model was made with string so that it's compositional transparency would allow a view that would represent both the new sloping landscape and the context of the site seen through the model. As the layers of the model developed, the vanishing point was shifted to the horizon line in the distance so that the perspective could be formed.





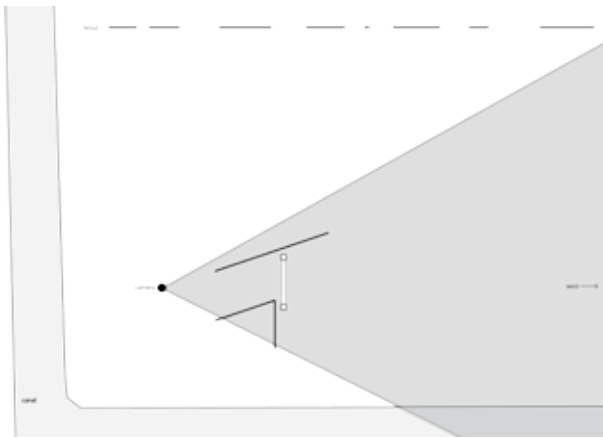
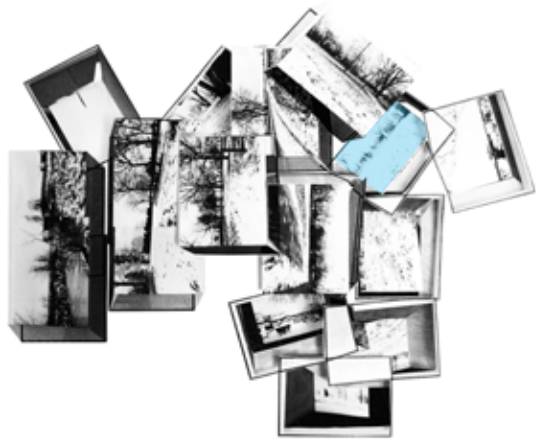


Void - Focus
In the third installation represented on site, the focused site location was a void that had been captured in the initial studies of the site. This photograph was the first taken of the site and was taken off site from docks which lined the other side of the canal near the bridge. The initial image captured was determined as a void because the canal, trees, and bridge seemed to frame ones view of the void of the site behind. This experience was one of the first views I had of the site, which I realized later on had a huge impact on my overall mental image of the site as a large void.



This particular installation attempted to capture a line passing through the void that represented the connection of the landscape from this corner of the site to the paved drive and fence. What was captured in this installation came to better realization later on in the studio when the largest tree in the view symmetrically divided one particular photograph. The photograph was split in half and pulled apart in the study model shown here to play with the blurring effect of distance and vision. When one side of the image is in one's focus, the other side is always a blur. Each installation in this series, in a way, is pulled apart from the other, creating a blurred of how each piece connects to the next.



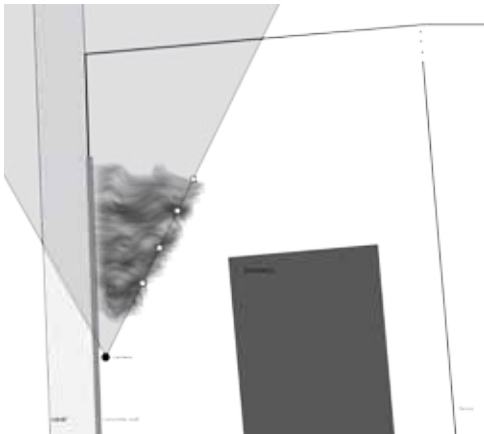


Frame - Light
In this site model installation, scale, proportion, and trace played key roles in forming the landscape and the positioning of the piece. The goal of the frame was to capture the setting sun, and on this particular day at the site, the air was warm and the river had fogged over, creating an incredible dense blur in the background of each image captured.

The installation was positioned by utilizing my own shadow to determine the initial direction of the frame. The scale of the site model was intentionally small in order to see the effect of the camera's view on the understanding of the scale of the landscape. First, the thick brush and grass was used to form a sloping landscape that would help create a blurred ground plane within the model. The frame was then placed in the frame crated by the landscaped grass so that photographs could be captured of the sun passing through the openings on the frame. In the drawings shown, the scale of the model is a human scale that relates to an uncertain ground plane. However, this blurring of the ground plane is contradicted by the certainty of the position of the horizon as the sun disappears behind it.







Canal - Blur
At the edge of the canal on the other side of the foundation plot, I had captured a barge in January as it propelled through ice on the Detroit River. The canal, at that time, had a thin layer of ice, and as the barge passed, the water in the canal was suctioned out to the river as loud cracking sounds indicated breaking ice between the canal and the rocky shoreline. This memory of the canal influenced the design of an installation that would allow the canal water to fluctuate more freely along the shore.

In studio, I had imaged the canal in this location inaccurately, assuming that the grass turned to rocks which bordered the waters edge. When I arrived back at the site in the location I desired to install the landscape, I found a new edge between the water and the land in the form of a large concrete barrier. This surprise reminded me of the contradiction between reality and memory. Can memory become our reality? This contradiction was embraced as a newly discovery edge within the site, and represented as a boundary between desire and reality within the installation.





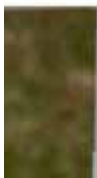
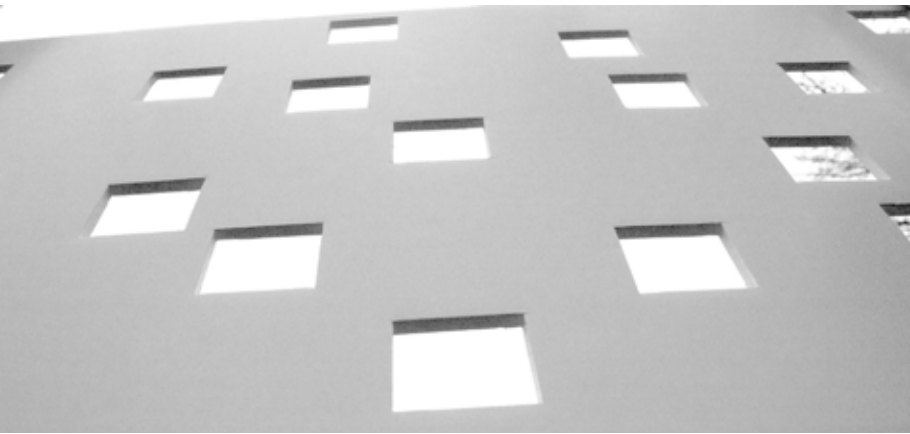


“Other” Side

In looking back at the initial photographs I had captured of the site, I realized that one side, the farthest side from the entrance of the site, had only been explored through the frame studies that occurred after my initial site compositions. These images were fragmented through the framing studies. Because I had worked with these fragmented images of this “other” side of the site, even my memories of this side seemed fragmented and unclear.

The installation designed and implemented on the “other” side was captured through a new and more complex frame taken to the site and installed at eye level. In this installation, the movement of my own body in front of and behind the frame captured a more dynamic representation of the initial framing studies. In some images captured, I held a white square so that the extension of the view would connect to an “other” surface in the distance. My own position, in relationship to the frame as I captured the views of the landscape, greatly influenced the kinds of images that would represent this place. The “other” side will always remain fragmented and disjointed within the images made and within my mind.







A Return to Alter Road

As the installations of the Alter Road Park came to a close, I decided to take one last visit to Alter Road in order to reconnect with the original spatial frame I had discovered at the margin of the city. In this installation, this edge was exposed as a spatial place where activity and movement could occur. As I hung each ribbon, cars drove by and noticed this place, noticed the space, and maybe recognized it as a place of its own.

Notes

1. Kristeva, Julia. *Strangers to Ourselves*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991. 10.

Exhibit

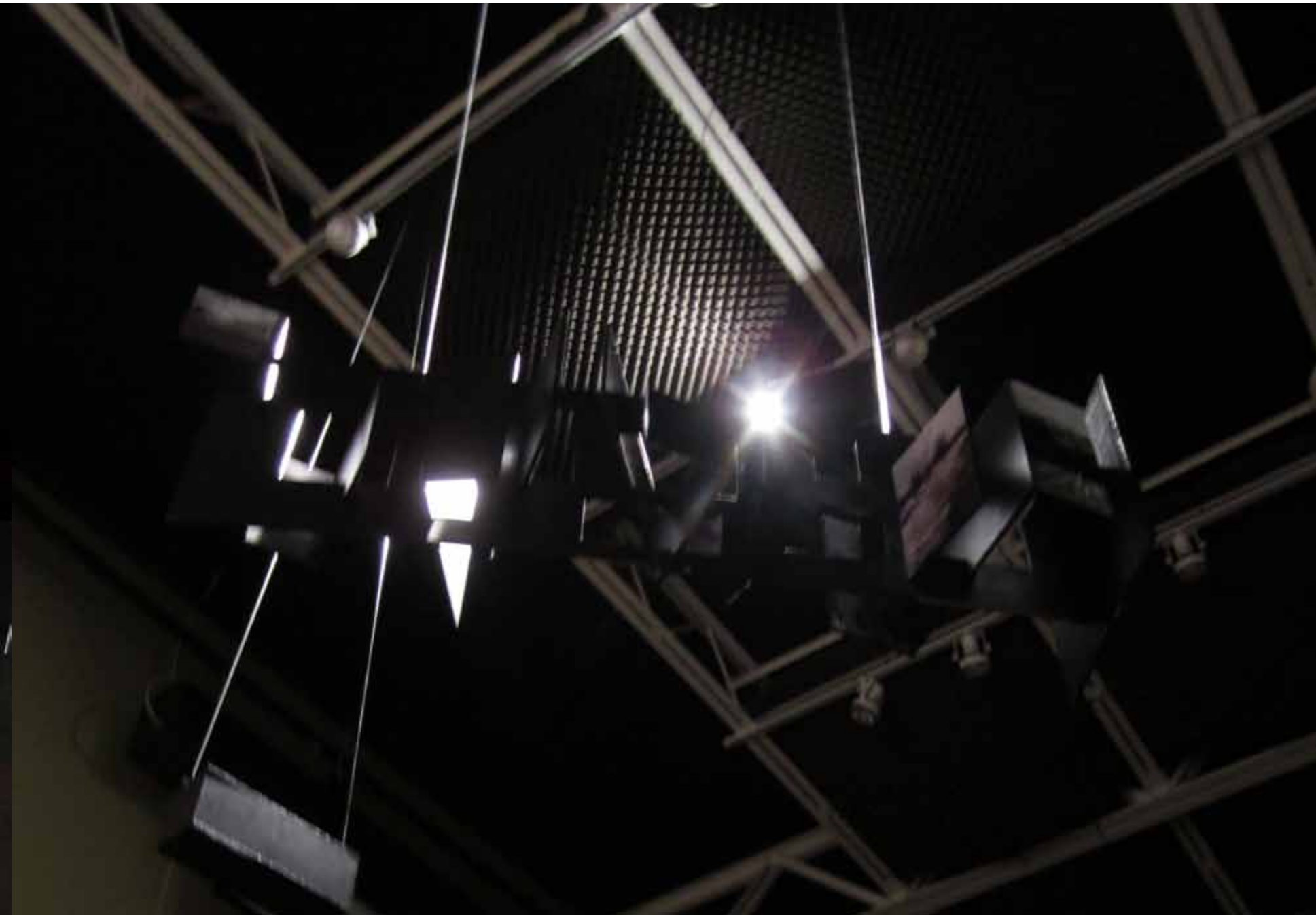
Experience

In the re-representation of the final installations, the decision was made to create a final photo exhibition. Through this final piece, the experience of the photography, as well as the mental connection between each installation, could be designed. The exhibit would take form as a series of frames, connecting the photographic representation to the experience of the edge to the experience of the final exhibit.

The first five installations within the main experience of the park took form in one piece of the exhibit. This piece, *Park*, displayed the photographs in such a way that only two to three images were visible from any given position. This approach allowed for the movement of the observer and one's own vision to formulate each piece through memory. The form of *Park* was inspired through my own original understanding of the passe-partout. A single plane divides the experience of the frame, which was then punctured to allow each photograph to move through the edge.

The second frame conceived within the exhibit represented the installation "*Other*" *Side*. The form of this frame was produced by the same kind of frame used at the installation on site. Each photograph dissected a hanging edge within the model. From the front view of the frame, fragmented photographs could be seen through square cutouts. From the back, only the white planes of each photograph were visible.

The final frame represented *A Return to Alter Road*. From one side of this model, a black and white image displayed the road and installation. A slit on the other side represented the split between





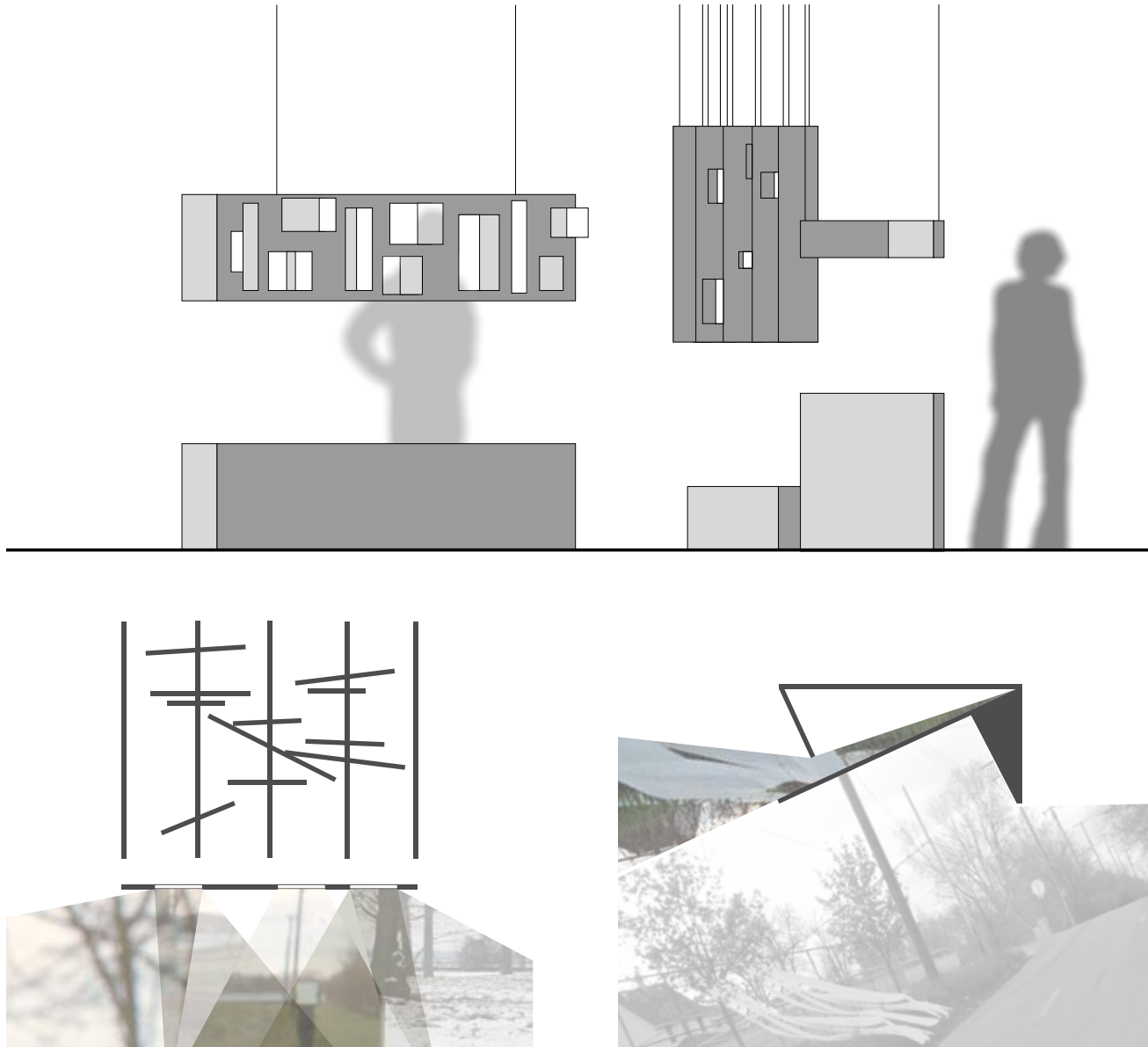
Park: displayed the photographs in such a way that only two to three images were visible from any given position. This approach allowed for the movement of the observer and one's own vision to formulate each piece through memory.

neighborhoods and the blurred view down the long and narrow passage. This frame helped to bring closure to the edge.

Each frame was hung from the ceiling for the final presentation. A black box under each frame grounded the piece, connecting the frame to our lived experience walking around the exhibit. The frames, as a unit, created both image and experience. The photography of the installations became less important than the mode through which the image was seen. It became about a way of looking, a way of seeing, and way of experiencing the world and the things we make. The camera was like the architecture, allowing the body to move and experience places in a new way, opening up views, exploring edges, and framing images within my mind.



Exhibit Layout



“Other” side model: This model represented vision through the same kind of frame used at the installation on site. From the front, fragmented photographs could be seen through square cut outs. From the back, only the white planes of each photograph was visible.

A Return to Alter Road: From one side of this model, a black and white image displayed the road and installation. A slit of the back of this model represented the split between neighborhoods and the blurred view down the long and narrow passage.







Acknowledgments

Thank you to my family for supporting me throughout my life and education. My goals have been accomplished because of you, so thank you to Steve, Valerie, and Rachel Young.

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Thank you to all of my fellow archies and friends. A special thank you to Alena Bower, Lauren Myrand, Rocco Castiglione and Nate Jenkins. You all have made this year so much fun.

And a very special thank you to Blake Hill, whose support and helping hands allowed me to accomplish my visions and dreams for this work.