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Architecture as canvas

Monika Blazenovic

University of South Florida

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Architecture as Canvas

by

Monika Blazenovic

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture
School of Architecture and Community Design
College of The Arts
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Michael Halflants, M.Arch.
Vikas Mehta, Ph.D.
Josue Robles Caraballo, M.Arch.

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Dedication

To a city that was full of life even when death seemed too close.

Figure 1. [Lightning Embraces the City]. Source: CyberBulevar.com.
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Architecture as Canvas

Monika Blazenovic

ABSTRACT

Cities are increasingly becoming vessels of consumption, while various opportunities for production of space and public expression are taken away from the city’s inhabitants. New architectural interventions often disregard a site’s previously developed character and further aid in wiping away memories closely related to a city’s cultural past. Banja Luka, the second largest city of Bosnia and Herzegovina, has been an important cultural center, even through years of unrest. Within the city’s main plaza stands an unfinished concrete structure (Fig. 3), built with pre-war conceptions of a hotel. The structure’s location within the city of Banja Luka has provided for a close connection with the city’s inhabitants and has allowed them to relate to it directly on a daily basis. The city’s youth has left traces of artistic expression on this structure; its interface with the countercultures of graffiti artists and skateboarders has created a unique testament of time which desires continued narration.

With the post-war privatization of most properties within the city, and the increasing desire to live within the city center, construction cranes are appearing throughout the city’s core, providing new residential towers and a high increase in places for consumption. The opportunities for production of space, for places where memories are preserved and created, are decreasing and threaten to affect the thesis site.

Completion of the project as initially envisioned would disregard the existing interactive relationship established between the city’s inhabitants and the structure. The beauty of artistic expression cultivated upon the structure longs to be preserved and augmented in order to enable the structure’s autonomy. Recognition of the value of the existing built elements and the site’s overall character is essential and requires purposeful evaluation in the unification process of the new and existing elements.

The redefined space will become a monument to the activities which have echoed at the site through some of the toughest times the city’s youth had to endure. “...the notion of monument I have sought to put forward here is bound up with the lingering resonance of poetry after it has been heard, with the recollection of architecture after it has been seen.” The old and new will become individual halves of one self, united as they continue to play.

In 1990 Lebbeus Woods observed the fall of the Berlin Wall to be the cause for the city’s severe character change brought on by the German government. The center, the *Mitte*, of the event of the fall was seen as a symbol of immense importance. The previous location of the wall was strongly envisioned as the new center of Berlin, strictly pushing for an extreme makeover while diminishing some of the existing character’s importance—the life of the city.

“*Its symbolic importance is so great that every square meter of its buildings and streets is taken strict hold of by city and state authorities. The gaps are being closed, the cracks plastered over. Where will the artists, impoverished as ever, go? The renegades? Where will the empty, haunted, elegiac spaces be in the supercontrolled New Berlin? The nightclubs and afterhours bars, the underworlds and overworlds that make a city vital, creative, dangerous, exciting, and potential?*”

Woods experimented with ideas of inserting ‘freespace’ (Fig. 4) into existing buildings in the city’s center to house hidden cities within which the unwanted individuals, those who are both directly and indirectly being forced out of the city center, could continue to exist.

While designs depicted in Woods’ drawings are often described as parasites and may not necessarily have the intent of being prescriptive but rather informative in abstractly suggesting the ideas behind the concept, one can start to dissect the meaning behind them further.

However successful the suggestions may be, the design still encourages a type of separatist approach which yet again gives an encouragement to hide away the life of the city for the sake of keeping it within the center.

The question becomes ‘who has the right to the city?’ in which case the answer becomes that ‘death of the city has the right to the city over the life of the city’. To clarify, the thesis site currently has a pronounced right to use being offered to so-called countercultures such as graffiti artists and skateboarders who not only found vibrancy for their own lives, but offered a certain type of life and vibrancy back to the city itself. Completely getting rid of those countercultures, as they wanted to do to artists and others in Berlin, would in turn mean taking the life out of the city. Any forward step in architecture, in revitalization of the city, should only further encourage growing a lively culture of people such as those who bring entertainment and other gratifying qualities.

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Woods experimented with ideas concerning war and the role architecture can play in the aftermath. Wanting to further develop his concepts of 'freespace' initially studied through the fall of the Berlin wall, he began conceptualizing similar ideas in the city of Sarajevo whose spirit was touched on a different level of intensity, both physically and psychologically.

"...how should the reconstructed buildings and spaces for living incorporate the tremendous changes—social, psychological, cultural, political, economic—brought on by the siege and its aftermath?"

Woods’ images such as the _Scar Construction_ (Fig. 5) from the Series _War and Architecture_ portrays his arguments against restoration of war-damaged urban fabric as well as erasure of “the memories of tragedy and loss”._4_ He found the war’s remnants to be an influence for a new way of thinking and shaping space.

While barely any of Banja Luka’s structures were directly physically damaged by the war, the incomplete structure at the thesis site may be described as a remnant of the war since war was the main reason for the ‘incomplete’ state it is in today. Similar to Woods’ strategies, the idea arises that the remnants of war do not need to be completely erased and replaced. The character the site and incomplete structure have developed are strong cues of how architecture can in fact serve to develop new forms of living. The character also allows for further development of ideal programmatic aspects.

II. Who are They

The search devoted to an unearthing of memory and experience, both personal and public, begins with the study of a collection of events at the location of relevance: the Krajina Square at the pre-conceived Hotel Palace addition. The various scales of relationships the city’s inhabitants have had with the square and the unfinished structure as well as the overall cultural desires of the city are examined in order to establish a fitting architectural intervention which is to emerge.

While the outline of the city has changed as expected in the course of time, the incomplete structure could partially be reused to aid in a new revitalization of the square by giving the edifice a renewed program and exploring its full potential in aiding in the continuation of narration of the city’s testament of time.

The unexplored question still remains, what might be the reasons to partially reuse the existing structure in place? Today’s growing community of sustainable thinkers may suggest that this approach is simply the best answer as completely demolishing any stable structure without trying to reuse elements of it would plainly be a negative move in regards to the already notorious traces of negative environmental impact past generations have left worldwide. While concurring with various aspects of such statements, there is the need to recognize the extent of impact the structure has had on the city’s inhabitants and how its influence relates to a different type of sustainability- the social sustainability of the city. To aid in this analysis, the events which establish a character of the specific micro-community of this city are combined with further aspects of the culture of the city’s inhabitants through history.

The incomplete structure has lent itself as a canvas for public expression. It has become part of the city’s memory. Its modular nature, oriented for effective entertaining of the public square, allows for consideration of possible partial reuse of some of the structural layout as desired within a future program’s design.

The act of intervening is often described as "getting involved in a situation...in order to influence what is happening and, most often, to prevent undesirable consequences". These ‘undesirable consequences’, as addressed by this thesis, are related to several issues including a disregard for a pre-existing character developed over time due to the influence of the city’s inhabitants. This is mainly demonstrated by the fact that the latest plan includes a complete demolition of the incomplete structure to be replaced by another hotel design without the street/square presence proven desirable through past events. Who these inhabitants are and how they have affected this built environment on different scales is examined further to help draw parallels

between the architectural intervention approaches which can appropriately respond to developed character.

As described by Lebbeus Woods⁶, “...The making of architecture always imposes something on places and people already there. Some pattern of life, human or not, is impacted, displaced, or destroyed. Morally, speaking, this is justified by giving priority to some things over others.” The validity of the statement and its extent will be tested through the examination of the inhabitants’ influences, the cultural changes, and current approaches being considered for realization.

Events of varying dimensions have affected this site and allow for a study of the character the site has developed over time. The question ‘Who are they?’ is answered through a study of the various inhabitants of the city who have contributed to the character of the square and the incomplete structure.

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Graffiti and Skateboarding Artists

Ongoing events, highly momentous to intuitive aspects of the thesis basis, orchestrate an image of moments of direct interaction with the existing structure and square. These events involve the interface of the incomplete structure with the counterculture of graffiti artists and the interface of the square with the counterculture of skateboarders (Fig. 7, 8, & 9).

The events portray the city’s inhabitants’ manifested use of the built environment as a form of canvas for public expression. The graffiti artists carry out an intentional technique of artistic expression while skateboarders leave unconventional, inevitable traces of their own freedom of public expression.

Figure 9. Bearing Down. Note: Copyright Zulexxx.
Graduates & Co.

The square lends itself as celebratory gathering space. The graduating youth’s friends and family (Fig. 10 and 11) gather facing the stage suitably placed next to the hospitable walls of the incomplete structure.

The structure’s extroverted nature effectively portrays its artwork, both that of the graffiti artists as well as the graphic artists’ latest advertisement. Some notice it more, some less, yet every time this celebratory event takes place, the incomplete structure’s ‘canvas’ has a new offering - a new creation of graffiti art and the newest advertisement. It is never the same as the year before and brings new character to each new generation.

Figure 10. [Graduates]. Note: Copyright Ljilja Blazenovic.

Figure 11. [Graduation in Square]. Note: Copyright Ljilja Blazenovic.
Music Lovers & Protestors

Whether the square is infused with a concerned group of protestors (Fig. 12), music devotees, or the occasional passersby (Fig. 13 & 15), the square lends itself as a public platform while the incomplete structure’s appeal welcomes the various characters the city’s inhabitants take on from hour to hour.

Events such as a public concert (Fig. 14) gather crowds no local enclosed structure could house at one moment. Crowds spill into the adjacent four lane road and find further space in the park crossways. The existing incomplete structure lends itself as a setting for the public stage, radiating a source of entertainment while its canvas of advertisements and graffiti has an affect on those whose eyes wonder away from the main stage.
Figure 15. [Existing Structure]. Source: imageshack.us.
III. Why Keep the Existing Structure?

Banja Luka was first mentioned in a 1494 document but its history dates back to ancient times. The city was under rule by the Ottoman Empire since the 1500’s while becoming modernized in the 19th century during rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. With a population of over 200,000 within its metropolitan area, the city has been an important cultural center. A number of museums, theaters, libraries, galleries, concert halls, cinemas, a music pavilion, and an Art Academy, allow for the city’s inhabitants to have opportunities for cultural involvement and frequent unplanned exposure.

As an introduction to the city’s plan to completely demolish the existing structure and why alternatives should be considered, a relating quote from the dedication of Goethe’s Faust portrays feelings resulting from loss one has been forced to encounter:

"And I am seized by long forgotten yearning
For that kingdom of spirits, still and grave;
To flowing song I see my feelings turning;
As from aeolian harps, wave upon wave;
A shudder grips me, tear on tear falls burning,
Soft grows my heart, once so severe and brave;
What I possess, seems far away to me,
And what is gone becomes reality."  

As described by Bojan Fajfric’s installation dedicated to the Boska department store across from the current site, the incomplete structure’s demolition would also, like in some science fiction movie, transfer it from the possible future to the forgotten past without existing for a moment in the present, in its own ‘real time’.

With the previously exemplified reconstruction of events which describe the character of the micro-community of the Krajina Square, its users, and their relationship to the square and the incomplete structure it carries, an important question arises: Why keep, at least in part, elements of the existing incomplete structure? The incomplete structure’s involvement in cultural desires of the city’s inhabitants stands exhibited through the afore-mentioned

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connections with the city’s countercultures of graffiti artists, skateboarders, music lovers, graphic designers, and others.

The hotel currently planned as replacement of the incomplete structure after complete demolition (Fig. 16), needless of its immediate architectural traits, lacks a connection with the life of the city- the pedestrian. It may be perfectly appropriate for a location which has not been ‘marked’ by the city’s desires to see a structure in its place as one that can continue to offer entertainment and freedom for expression they’ve grown to posses over the years. Its vibe with untouchable attitude, its program of mere hotel and conference rooms, and its uninviting presence all portray a complete disregard of character the city has developed over the years.

While the use, or merely the approach in the design for the intended use, clearly portrays flaws on the part of those who may have envisioned, designed, and approved its becoming, the new structure will still become one to completely replace the old.

The cultural critic Wendell Berry once stated, “Nothing exists for its own sake, but for a harmony greater than itself which includes it. A work of art, which accepts this condition, and exists upon its terms, honors the Creation, and so becomes a part of it”.10

The incomplete structure is a testament of time, its essence, and survival. While it has allowed for various types of entertainment over the years, it is perhaps most valuable of celebrating as it portrays the long history of human involvement in culture during times when war threatened human existence and sanity. This incomplete structure has provided entertainment and allowed for tension release during times when the city’s inhabitants needed it most. Although the city’s structures were barely affected by the war, war’s presence was felt deeply not only through news coming by various types of media, but by the sounds of grenades coming from distances which seemed to come from a source too close to them at times. At a time when electricity was scarcely available to the city, and city-wide curfews were enacted for everyone’s safety, other forms of entertainment were indispensable.

IV. Case Studies

While the process of the case study selection necessitated an assessment of linkage involving various aspects of phenomenon within the real-life context of the thesis and the identified problem, the most important goal continues to be the ability to clarify the deeper causes behind the problem and its consequences. The case studies, varied in character and approach, can be classified as having diverse scales of strategic importance to the general problem of the thesis in the ways they produce a kind of insight to future decisions made in the design process. While some case studies are paradigmatic, other more deviant ones provide insights just as effectively while they inform of issues generally opposing the established views and engage in deeper understanding and justification of the recognized values.

An appropriate beginning for various studies related to the thesis topic starts at the root of the issue of a forced loss such as that of Banja Luka’s inhabitants who will be forced to face a drastic transformation of character within the thesis site, a formerly welcoming site which has become a part of them through various interactions previously described.

Part of an analysis of a culture of people who have been forced to lose an important aspect of their everyday lives begins in New York City. The Gr(o)und Workshop, a set of architectural intervention experiments, was performed by a team guided by Lebbeus Woods and Guy Lafranchi in the area of Manhattan affected by the 9/11 events.

The experimental workshop examines the culture of people who were directly influenced. While identifying the site as one that speaks of things loved, and things hated with equal passion, there is the observation that the search for the city’s gr(o)und seems to have begun after the sudden collapse of its heights.

After a culture of both the physical and metaphorical aspects of high rises has been forced to face a major loss, the process of rethinking the idea of gr(o)und is naturally initiated. The English form of the word ground is dissected for comparison to the German word Grund which serves to describe the foundation of ideas that gives a structure of reasons supporting urban life. The individual begins the process of rethinking the past and remembering the most vivid connections influencing their lives on a daily basis. A major emotional force leads to the realization about the fact that what is missed most is not the height of the city’s previous structures but rather the most powerful connections they experienced through the direct

relationships they had with the immediate, pedestrian-level surroundings within the areas affected by the fall of the high rise structures.

More so interested in exploring the idea of eccentric installations being introduced to the city’s inhabitants and examining the reactions received by a city forced to overcome a recent undesirable change of character, the workshop participants concluded that these unfamiliar installations were not welcomed by the city or it’s individual inhabitants. A set of 8 experimental installations were
introduced to various locations throughout the affected area while the inhabitants’ reactions as well as overall successes of individual installations were examined. General effects of unreceptive nature were observed from the city’s individuals as well as groups such as the higher powers of police departments controlling the city.

One installation included a tilting sidewalk on Dutch Street (Fig. 17 & 18). Other experiment elements included a structure holding a mirror to a security camera; a structure defining a moving personal space; a kiosk for selling the object called “Baby” on Nassau Street; and others. Lifespan of all of the 8 installations was recorded and workshop participants found that the longest survival period of all experimental installations was a mere 1.5 hours, after which the installation was destroyed.

The case study itself helps draw two major conclusions in regards to relatedness to the thesis objectives. The first allows for a comparison between the affected area of Manhattan and Banja Luka as both are places which have lost or will lose character of important areas. Banja Luka’s inhabitants, those who helped develop the character of the plaza and incomplete structure over a period of more than 20 years will face a type of forced destruction. This destruction, although not comparable to Manhattan’s misfortune in regards to the number of lost lives and built environments, portrays a similar precedent as related to overall effects of drastic changes imposed on the character of an established place. A culture which has been forced out of its daily routines of normality is generally not able to recover and accept a completely new, imposed, reality. The skateboarders, graffiti artists, graduates, performers, and others will lose a place they have willingly become a part of.

The second major conclusion, as most of the experimental installation elements would generally be considered ‘out of the ordinary’, would be that society may be able to accept an ambiguous, newly redefined, set of rules or expectations. While the installations were generally observed or interacted with through rather critical approaches while they did last, some were inevitably played with and generated a certain type of curiosity among strangers who unconsciously started being involved in the workshop. This allows one to conclude that society’s general opinions and stands can be challenged and may change depending on how new elements are presented and whether they can be seen as positive aspects by society as much as by those who are trying to implement them.

If programmatic elements in the thesis subject were to call for platforms which are to become encouraging to activities generally considered ‘out of the ordinary’, could society in general become more receptive to such proposals? Would the general ‘label’ of such elements have to be diminished while seemingly introducing these elements which become receptive to several functions yet somehow ‘accidently’ start being utilized for the, secretly, intended purpose as envisioned by the designer. Can a platform for skateboarding become a canvas for graffiti artists to draw on? Tampa’s Bro Bowl skate park (Fig. 19) is a living example of such a creation while being threatened with nearing destruction. Can the same platform entertain the music devotees who are accustomed to seeing their favorite performers occupying the incomplete structure’s adjacency? Would these installations have to be classified as art in order to allow for their becoming or could they generally be declared as truly dedicated for use by the countercultures?

"On the day of the installation, the elements and the efforts to place them contributed to [a] requisite amount of energy, and in inventive and playful ways not seen
before. How these affected people in the streets in lower Manhattan is impossible to say, but certainly it changed the perceptions of the participants themselves, proving to them how much it was possible to do with intensity, dedication, willingness to take risks, and imagination, regardless of limitations. The longer-term effects of this should not be underestimated.”

While the goals of the thesis include successfully reusing portions of the existing incomplete structure and allowing the redefined programmatic characteristics to encourage expression, the Stewart James Center for Mathematics is a great study from which ideas can be extracted and appropriately reprocessed when making design decisions in the future.

The Center for Mathematics involved the adaptive reuse of one of the oldest buildings of the McMaster University campus in Hamilton, Ontario. Originally a science department building, KPMB Architects helped revert it to a center for mathematics, its ‘original purpose’, as mathematics are known to be the ‘original science’.

Initial constraints included historic preservation laws which disallowed any alterations to the exterior façade of the existing structure. Due to the fact that the programmatic aspects of the interior were previously intended for a very different use, KPMB Architects’ design decision included completely gutting the interior while still reusing structural columns and some walls.

Since the existing building envelope disallowed qualitative natural lighting to reach important spaces in the middle sections of the structure, the architects did not let this hinder the arrival at a great design solution. A large glass volume insertion (Fig. 20 & 22) was introduced into the middle of the structure allowing a completely new elevation to be the latest source of qualitative natural lighting. This design decision allowed for various positive influences in the overall experience of the spaces while naturally-lit educational spaces became part of an ever-changing canvas as the experience of moving through the hallways is never the same and allows for animated
Study of light volume introduced into existing structure.

Figure 22. Study of light volume introduced into existing structure.
interconnectedness between areas within the same floor level as well as between different levels of the newly redefined structure (Fig. 23).

One of the most characteristic aspects within the design solution deals with the decision to make this center for mathematics a place which encourages expression.

“...public corridors are oversized and furnished with tables and benches to encourage group study and collaborative thinking. Slate blackboards, devoted to recording mathematical notations yet susceptible to less scientific graffiti, are woven through the office and corridor spaces.”

Another form of an ever-changing canvas, the slate blackboards (Fig. 21 & 24), allow for expression of thought through a more traditional means of directly applying a written/drawn form of expression onto a surface.

While some case studies give insights allowing for a deeper understanding behind the reasoning in defining problems of the thesis related to the losses a city’s inhabitants are forced to face and small-scale opportunities for expression within a micro-community such as that of the students of the Mathematics center, the Diesel Wall art competition gives insights about opportunities for a larger scale of influence artists and others can make in today’s world through promoting art in public spaces. The Diesel clothing company’s influential staff has recognized a problem in the way today’s advertising billboards send a rather worthless series of messages, they felt the need to organize an art competition (Fig. 25) while displaying the winning artwork on walls in major cities around the world so that enticing messages, rather than useless images seen on most billboards today, could involve the city’s inhabitants in a deeper presence of thought. The call for entries sums up the ideas and motives of the organizers:

"In any given moment of our daily lives we are bombarded by messages we didn’t ask to see. A never ending stream of mass produced cerebral pollution offering at absolute best nothing more than needless want. At worst, this relentless non intellectual property is responsible for creating the worst kind of conformity - Mindlessness. Image by image we are being destroyed, deflowered, diluted. Diesel Wall was born out of a need to salvage what precious public space is left. We will take your art, your powers of dissuasion; your ability to disrupt; incite; excite; inspire and intrigue; to make comment; to make beautiful; to make real; to make people think again. And we will give you walls in 4 major cities around the world: New York, Barcelona, Manchester, Zurich. Make your submission. Take over these spaces. These walls are yours."

While the competition itself has been running for over five years, previous submissions have been featured on walls in Beijing, Copenhagen, Milan (Fig. 26 & 27), Toronto, Berlin and other cities. Milan’s artworks are described as ones of great influence due to the history of culture in that location:

"...it’s like a living thing, it keeps changing its facade like people change facial expressions; it’s not just about art, it’s about life. Furthermore, it’s situated in a historical area called Colonne di San Lorenzo, a place where history, contemporary art, "street art", punks, and fashion victims mixed together form the red cells of an excited living blood stream."

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As related to the thesis, an influential comparison can be drawn. The thesis site’s location within the city’s main square, a place infused with people day and night, currently bombards the city’s inhabitants with a series of billboards too much so resembling what the Diesel Wall competition is trying to rebel against. The current billboard displays covering the incomplete structure have a very direct connection with the life of the city while offering yet again no more than ‘needless want’. While the artists’ graffiti shyly rests on smaller individual walls, often completely covered due to the placement of useless billboards, its worth and message is diminished and often remains undiscovered. Meanwhile, the gigantic coffee product advertisement (Fig. 28) remains devoid of intellectual worth of any sort. While the blame does not sit purely in the hands of the company trying to sell its coffee with some debatable graphic means of communication, the questionable issue remains why this is what the city offers in that location. The city may not be to blame as much as the individual owners of the advertisement spaces. These are very familiar issues when it comes to Tampa’s ‘colorful’ distractions of Fowler Avenue and others, but the power exists, within a large city or company to decide what their city is/should be about and what messages should be emphasized.

Future generations are influenced on a daily basis and may not be exposed to information which positively develops their process of critical and creative thinking. While the Diesel Wall competition successfully controls the type of exposure a major city’s youth gets to experience, it brings programmatic ideas related to the thesis topic. There is a reason while the coffee giant’s ad always sits in the most pronounced spot of the city- money. They can buy the space, therefore the owners of the space agree to offer it for the contracted amount of time.

While the Diesel Wall competition is in part solely sponsored by the Diesel clothing company, it has involved city officials in several cities where the artwork was to be displayed. Germany’s city officials of Zurich offered support for the competition as part of a goal to revitalize the Hardau district (Fig. 29). The city of Banja Luka could help revitalize its main square while allowing an entity such as the Diesel clothing company to control what that angle of the city offers daily.
Figure 27. Andiamo in ticinella. Source: Flickr.com, 2007.
Figure 28. [Coffee billboard]. Source: SkyscraperCity.com.
Figure 29. Diesel Wall 2008 - Zurich Winner. Source: Flickr.com, 2008.
Figure 30. This is how a lemon tastes now: personal interpretation of Diesel Wall competition concept.
V. Program Character

While its location and history illustrate a requisite for the approach to be public, the edifice could be privately owned while continuing to serve the purpose of directly entertaining the city’s inhabitants. Along with a direct dialogue for entertainment, the new structure can serve to house cultural elements which may be lacking in the city. It can be a space of collective memory while continuing the testament of cultural narration formed in its collective.

The source of entertainment the incomplete structure has been able to provide has been a type of visual and performing art. From the graffiti artist who performs a public performance while creating the artwork to later become visual art, to the skateboarder who performs a public act, leaving inevitable visual traces of public expression, to the music artist’s performance, one concludes that there is a desire for both the creation and consumption of the visual and performing arts.

Stop-frames from personal childhood remind of the various theater performances seen with classmates. In questioning the source of these performers, there was always a mention of their origin having to do with Belgrade. Somehow these actors all came from Belgrade as if there were no talented performers in Banja Luka. Looking at the city’s schools and various talents displayed through local public performances of all sorts, there appears to be a definite presence of talented and eager performers who are in need of a place which will celebrate and encourage their existence. Such a place could become a government owned educational facility, a private studio, or a combination thereof. What will be important in the end is its relationship to the public sector and how successfully it houses, encourages, and displays visual and performing art previously exhibited in the same location at a different scale.

Careful evaluation of hierarchy of relationships between the main square and the edifice should lead to an effective way of communicating different aspects of the program.
While previously examined case studies helped develop a group of individual programmatic aspirations which could potentially become key to arriving at an overall assemblage of program, there was not one instance of inspiration which advises of a distinctive type of project this edifice could become labeled as.

The edifice, dedicated to encouraging performance as well as other types of expression, would most appropriately be labeled with the enigmatic, non-specific, term of monument. While there are a countless number of monuments around the world, their monumental assimilations differ intensely. The term itself is not at all meant to imply that the structure should become one which is static, non-profit generating, or completely public in nature. The term simply suggest that the final built assembly will be the result of a recognized value of celebrating the activities the site and incomplete structure have allowed to happen in the same location during years when the city’s inhabitants needed it the most.

The structure’s and plaza’s character of being a form of canvas, a receptive ground for expression, allows for the formulation of various programmatic goals and objectives as related to how the structure can in fact become a monument encouraging such expression (Fig. 32).
Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Artists such as Borjana Mrdja\(^{15}\) find inspirations for creativity in various places including cracks of a concrete floor, expressing a form of metaphor for the idea of \textit{artery} (Fig. 33) in our bodies.

An artist can generate educational pieces which send a message other than that of ‘needless want’ as analyzed by the Diesel Wall Project. Support for the artists and how well their artwork communicates ideas, both how it is presented and how many people can be exposed to it, can be provided by entities such as the Diesel corporation, affiliates, and city government of places where the artwork can be installed.

Tampa’s Franklin Street now offers an elongated wall (Fig. 34) on which artwork can be displayed as the structure supporting the artwork has been abandoned. This initiative, inspired by organizations such as Tampa’s Urban Charrette\(^{16}\), allows for an animated experience of movement down Franklin Street. While the move revitalizes that part of the city greatly, it is still true that the structure whose walls are being utilized, is yet still abandoned and greatly underused.

A lot of real estate property is being wasted in a prominent part of the city, and one can suggest that even though this artwork does a beautiful thing for the city, one should not encourage the structure to remain underused. This is related to the thesis topic as the incomplete structure’s state naturally welcomes artwork previously discussed, but its overall character suggests that it is a prime piece of real estate property only in terms of its location and the ability to influence so many individuals on a daily basis. The only way the structure is able to generate income is through a number of episodic billboards which, when taken into the overall picture, give a sense of troubling disorder within the city’s center while even further covering up the artists’ messages which may offer a much more valuable influence to the city’s youth and others.

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\(^{16}\) \textit{Urban Charrette}, http://urbancharrette.org/ (October 2009).
Figure 34. City Art: Franklin Street, Tampa (2009).
Although artists can deliver pieces of work which are intriguing to the mind and body and beneficial to development of thought, other individuals can be a source for impeding the advancement of the overall values of a city’s civilization.

The display of artworks of any sort should be encouraged in locations of great influence such as the thesis site, while the messages sent should be selective and direct. An entity, possibly one which may also be housed within the newly redefined structure, could become an entity of influence for what will be on display and how it will affect the city.

What entities should be housed within the new structure? Many thoughts have arisen, some having to do with personal attachment to the city, others having to do with most current aspirations and research as related to the character the site has developed. Most importantly, the nature of the project should contribute to a more cohesive urban fabric, while those who were most influential to the development of the site’s character, should in no way be renounced but rather encouraged to use the spaces in a similar manner with greater and more beneficial presence overall. The structure should incorporate a program which encourages the existence of the individuals who have grown to experience this part of the city as a pleasure-ground, while serving an overall purpose of being a space of production, negating the post-war mentality of capitalizing every inch of the city.

While looking for inspiration on the type of edifice this could become, there was an encounter with an article from a native newspaper. *Gola Voda* 17, currently the only skateboarding club in Bosnia and Herzegovina overall, is a skateboarding and snowboarding club organized in Banja Luka over three years ago. While the club’s activities and formalities are unfortunately still organized and managed from the key members’ homes, its snowboarders have successfully gained approval for a snowboarding park on the mountain of Jahorina, gaining both financial support and overall acceptance from the government. The club’s skateboarders are still struggling and awaiting the day when Banja Luka’s government will recognize the positive influences a formal skateboarding park could have on the life of the city.

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Although the idea of designing a skateboarding park in this part of the city seemed very intriguing, more clarification of the ideas supporting the decision was needed.

Not only would this type of establishment allow for a continued/encouraged expression of the physical body in the city, it would help reverse some of the overall moves made in the post-war mentality of turning much of the available public spaces of the downtown region into spaces for consumption. As more and more cranes are showing up within the city, new residential and commercial structures are quickly appearing to support the growing desires for living and working within the city’s core. An important aspect of the city’s vitality seems to be diminishing as the ratio of places where people could create memories and actively be involved in defining the city’s character is now being offset by places which become destinations of consumption while a street becomes merely a way to get from one place to another, allowing for no memories to be created in between.

As described within Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space*, “(Social) space is a (Social) product [based on social production of meanings which shape our spatial perceptions and practices]”\(^1\). Ideas expressed through *The Survival of Capitalism* \(^2\) relate to the development of capitalism the city of Banja Luka is moving towards as he further makes the argument that social production of urban space is essential to the reproduction of civilization, and therefore of capitalism. The city’s vibrancy is dependent upon a healthy diversity of activity that can occur within it. The balance between spaces of production and consumption needs to be carefully evaluated and while the number of spaces for consumption is rapidly increasing, the creation of a skateboarding park could benefit the healthy mix of

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diversity needed. The city center’s, as shown on the land use map (Fig. 36) exhibits an already well-selected mixture of uses allowing for a diversity of activities to become available to Banja Luka’s inhabitants.

A problematic aspect lies in the reality that while the number of built spaces is increasing, even the cultural entities of the center seem insufficient for an active development of character. Aside from the smaller music pavilion located in the park across from the thesis site, few other cultural buildings allow the inhabitants to experience or engage in any sort of performance aiding in the production of space as most of these structures are places of consumption in the sense that one gets to the edifice, pays to get in, sees a performance depending on what the venue offers, and then leaves the structure not having created any form of memory related to that space in the city.

The skateboarding club and its support spaces could use the high-profile location of the site to an advantage and allow for a very influential dialogue between the edifice and the inhabitants of the city. The skateboarding club, as a place of performance, could become an active space of production, creating and preserving memories which define the city’s character. The inhabitants of the newly redefined structure could also allow for the exhibition of influential artworks which can replace the character of the ‘needless wants’ currently bombarding the city. Where and how this may occur will be further examined in the following section of site analysis where more groundwork for decisions will be presented.

Further programmatic aspects will be elaborated on in the section following the general site analysis.
VI. Site Analysis

While the land use map shows the availability of general qualities associated with a prerequisite for vibrancy within the city’s core, further analysis of the surroundings of the site is necessary in order to gain a better understanding of important relationships.
Pedestrian Movement

Pedestrian movement (Fig. 39 & Fig. 40) in Banja Luka’s core is currently most prominent within a section of the city connecting, through the site, the main pedestrian street (Fig. 41) to the north-east, the music pavilion (Fig. 42) to the north-west, and the market (Fig. 43) to the south-east.

Where the movements of vehicles and pedestrians meet (Fig. 44), the relationship is not overwhelming to the pedestrian and allows for a great freedom of movement comparable to most European cities.

The main pedestrian street’s nature is very welcoming to pedestrians with its textured pavement, shops on either side, and a large number of people who love strolling up and down the street at any time of day. However, it is becoming more and more commercialized as can be seen in the land use map, making the street another space for consumption except for those stops the city’s inhabitants make due to encounters with familiar faces.

For a culture of people-watchers, the site can continue to contribute to the production of space and thus memories, offsetting the effects of increased investments towards spaces dedicated purely to consumption.

The music pavilion is an asset for the city’s inhabitants as it provides free entertainment for the city on its inviting benches while the building’s transparent nature changes its state from being a place for practice to being a stage of performance for anyone who wants to stop by and see what is happening. Its variety of media, from music performances to chess tournaments with plasma score displays for the audience makes it very probable that a variety of audiences will be reached. It allows for a
Figure 40. Physical Model showing general massing of existing site and immediate surroundings as it currently exists. Brown line shows main pedestrian movement connecting the main pedestrian street, music pavilion, the site, and the market.
Figure 41. [Gospodska: a pedestrian street]. Source: SkyscraperCity.com.
production of space as memories are created with each event.

The size of the music pavilion and its more static array of performances puts limitations on the city while it is certainly still a positive aspect. The city, however, could use more of these types of spaces, preferably one that can publicly display a more fluid, physical performance such as that of a skateboarding park.

The skateboarding park's nature could mimic that of the music pavilion in the sense that the structure could open up and display the performances in various ways, engaging different senses interchangeably.
Figure 44. Diagram: Major pedestrian and vehicular movements merging.
To elaborate on the significance of the existing structure’s influential sides (Fig. 45) which have housed distracting billboards over the years, visual fields are examined further to draw conclusions on how these surfaces could continue to have that influential effect while sending messages other than those of ‘needless wants’.

As portrayed by the visual fields diagram (Fig. 46), the North-east and North-west corner of the existing structure have had the most pronounced effects reaching not only all the people moving though the square and the main pedestrian street, but also the adjacent vehicular movement as well as other pedestrians moving around the music pavilion in the park across the street.

Figure 45. Diagram: Influence of North-east and North-west corner.
Figure 46. Diagram: Visual Fields to and from the existing structure. North-west and North-east corner most influential.
Current skateboarding events (Fig. 47) are concentrated in the south-east portion of the square (Fig. 48) which currently provides the skateboarders with a larger free space and allows them to find ways to express themselves. Events are usually organized by installing rails and other skateboarding surfaces for individual performances. On days when no events are organized, the skateboarders continue to use that part of the square as weather permits. The square also allows for a small audience from the existing fountain's surround of benches (Fig. 38 & 49) while the conditions are certainly not ideal in many ways.

Not only does this mean that skateboarding activities are down any time there is rain or other harsh weather conditions, there is also the lack of different types of skateboarding surfaces available. One has to become familiar with the culture of skateboarders to realize that a simple railing installation is generally just not enough to please a large number of skateboarders. Without going into detail at this moment, there are those who would most enjoy skateboarding a bowl or pool-like surface, a pipe or parabola-shaped installation, or other types of installations. Some would rather stay away from installations specifically designed for skateboarders, and find much greater excitement in skateboarding on objects which normally serve a different purpose such as stairs, railings, planters, and loading docks. The site currently does not offer a variety of surfaces which can be enjoyed by skateboarders and is certainly not welcoming on days when weather is not cooperating.

The site’s reconsidered physical aspects can help bring a much more enjoyable experience for each type of skateboarder, the skateboarding club, as well as the audience— the city.
Figure 48. Diagram: Skateboarding at square’s South-east corner.

Figure 49. Diagram: Dialogue of audience at existing fountain.
Not only are there forces one can physically witness when moving through the city, there is hidden data one cannot necessarily grasp without some further analysis.

Only after analysis of all the events which have occurred at the site, can one come to the conclusion that the structure has served many purposes (Fig. 50). It has been a stage, a billboard, a gallery, a canvas (of many sorts), and a welcoming destination for skateboarders, wanderers, and others.

Within the immediate surroundings, two main cultural entities (Fig. 51) exist. The music pavilion as one, a building complex containing a library, museum, and children’s theater as the other. Placing a culture-infused skateboarding park within these two entities would enhance the downtown experience as only the music pavilion currently offers a possibility to witness a performance open to the city. The music pavilion’s small scale and media difference needs to be enhanced with the existence of the skateboarding park.
Figure 51. Diagram: Existing structure’s redefined use to complete cultural center of the city with its fluid type of performance.
Scale of Existing Structures

A physical model portraying the general massing of the existing structure and its immediate surroundings within the city’s core (Fig. 53 & 54) was constructed in order to establish an initial sense of scale for structures at the site in question.

A deeper study of the incomplete structure and its specific relationship to the adjacent historic hotel will be explored in detail in the future to help understand the building’s physical qualities and make design decisions with influence from the building’s built state.

Figure 52. Extents of model portraying general massing and scales.
Figure 53. Physical Model: Music pavilion, beginning of main pedestrian street, and part of incomplete structure and historic hotel shown.
Figure 54. Physical Model: Close-up of South-east corner of existing incomplete structure and square.
VII. Program Details

In order to gain a better understanding of the basic needs of a great skateboarding club, other than the general spaces such as a few offices, conference rooms, storage spaces, as well as other general utilities, a further investigation about what really makes an enjoyable skateboarding park is needed.

While the skateboarding club should be comprised of approximately 1/3 exterior ‘street’ skateboarding platforms (with duality of use) and 2/3 interior skateboarding park (with ability to be combined with exterior) for reasons having to do with the localized climate, general flexibility of spaces, and to address the different types of people who may be moving through that part of the square, the skateboarding park should accommodate a large number of skateboarding surfaces in order to become an enjoyable space for the different types of skateboarders.

It is important to understand two basic types of skateboarding: ‘Street’ vs. ‘Park’. As one may guess at first, ‘Park’ skateboarding includes skateboarding surfaces intentionally designed as part of a skateboarding park. ‘Street’ generally refers to objects not intentionally designed as skateboarding surface. These include: benches, planters, curbs, embankments, stairs, loading docks and others. They are best experienced by the skateboarder when a metal lip is available for a smooth ride. This becomes another design concern depending on the surface’s sun exposure as the metal can become quite hot.
What gets precarious is that there are ‘street’ elements available in every good skateboarding park. In this case the park includes surfaces such as bowls (Fig. 55) and half-pipes (Fig. 56), but also ‘street’-like elements which in turn are elements which mimic the look of previously mentioned street skateboarding parts such as a railing.

“Then if every society produces its own space, any ‘social existence’ aspiring to be or declaring itself to be real, but not producing its own space, would be a strange entity, a very peculiar abstraction incapable of escaping the ideological or even cultural spheres.”

The statement above relates to the thesis as a city which is becoming more devoid of meaning and memory, should now help reverse that effect by having this skateboarding park. To maximize this effect, it is not sufficient to provide only another enclosed structure with no dialogue to the city. All activities and memories associated with them would remain inside the structure. The new skateboarding park should have a direct ability to connect with the rest of the city’s inhabitants by allowing a direct experience of the performances and by influencing the city in other ways. As the skateboarding culture is generally considered a counter-culture by a large number of people, the counter-culture itself, as Lefebvre states, would have to ‘produce its own space’. What this means is that it not only exist for itself and its members, but does something for the greater self- the city. As often suggested within books written on the skateboarding culture, skateboarders are possibly the most expressive individuals to recognize the city as not just a place for working and shopping but a true pleasure-ground, and while their individual feelings are expressed through daily fluid activities within many cities of the world, their existence can do a greater good for the individual cities by incorporating means of influence other than that of a free performance. Their existence can become educational, thus further producing their own space.

Some ways to actively produce space at the site include making it possible for many to experience the beauty of the skateboarder’s performance, and educating on the creation of skateboarding platforms through a visually exposed workshop which can both present the beauty of the process of making in skateboarding and aspects which make it unique. As each skateboarder identifies with a
piece of art on the skateboard, artworks can be created and applied at the site, creating another opportunity for memories to be created.

The ‘needless want’ message (Fig. 58) from past advertisements can now be selectively reversed, making people think again. Although useful messages of some sort should be sent by the structure or rather the entity housed within it; possibilities are endless.

One thought: since skateboarders could be said to be the most desiring of a free city, free for their own use, war time was not a fun time for them as their exposure was very limited and sometimes quite dangerous. For a city as part of an area which has historically been involved in too many wars to mention, there are a number of student organizations and artists which are trying to send an educational message (Fig. 59 & 60) while portraying their disapproval of war funding for the future. They recognize the beauty of freedom and the need for a change in the Balkan territory. The messages of those organizations as well as artists such as Mladen Miljanovic\textsuperscript{16}, can be promoted to, in fact, encourage the city to think and provide a better future for generations to come.

The entire atmosphere of the skateboarding performance can be enhanced by providing a few additional opportunities for relaxation and comfort while enjoying the ‘show’. When weather is not nice enough to sit or stand outside for prolonged periods of time, an adjacent people-watching space can be available, one with a direct relationship to the performance. Not that further capitalization is encouraged, but little amenities that make it desirable to stay and grow with a space of production will help not only with some financial support, but also with the general creation of character that space will grow to possess.

“Definitions and expectations are less exclusive and more fluid, where there is greater accessibility and freedom of choice for people to pursue a variety of activities. Here is the breathing space of city life, offering opportunities for the unexpected, the unregulated, the spontaneous and the risky.”\textsuperscript{17}

The elements which have to be considered in further design steps are: the existing structure’s graffiti to be embraced/augmented; the performance [space]; the [people] watching; the stage; the ‘untouchable’ existing historic hotel and how to approach it; the walls of ‘something that means something’; and all other support spaces.

\textsuperscript{16}Mladen Miljanovic, http://www.mladenmiljanovic.info/mladen%20miljanovic%20therapy%20-%20Copy%20%2810%29.htm (November 2009)

Figure 59. Kill [1]. Note: Copyright Mladen Miljanovic, 2008.

Figure 60. Kill [2]. Note: Copyright Mladen Miljanovic, 2008.
VIII. Initial Design Concepts

While the general goals of the program will encompass a variety of relationships within the site surroundings, the main concern will be the arrival at a successful design which does not disregard any previous characters developed and rightfully encourages the existence of such.

As abstractly shown in the diagram (Fig. 61) on the right, the square, street, and park will ‘absorb’ information as the structure will ‘educate’ and inform those who are within reach. The performance space of the skateboarding park will ‘entertain’ both those who are on the square as well as those who are performing for their own entertainment. The outlook of the historic hotel will be ‘enhanced’ as their view will now encompass a live performance rather than the top of a carport structure currently at street level between the hotel and incomplete structure.

Several forces will inform the design decisions to be made. As the diagram (Fig. 62) portrays, the building’s north and north-east section will continue to serve as influential message-boards while also being a type of space that can serve as a stage or accommodate the installation of a stage when events such as a New Year’s concert are organized on the square.

The performance will be able to be experienced from the historic hotel in order to enhance the experience within it, and from the square itself. The fluid activity of skateboarding will be an internal and external activity while
the boundaries can be diminished and skateboarding events can encompass the entire built environment dedicated to skateboarding.

The existing incomplete structure will be carefully examined in order to determine how it may be able to be reused and serve a purpose both of being a monument to activities which it has allowed during and after the war, but also as a structural benefit.
IX. Preliminary Schematics

The interconnected forces (Fig. 63 & 64) previously described can be conceptualized into a 3-dimensional formal gesture. While the abstraction should in no way suggest a final design, a formal construct (Fig. 65) is explored in order to address one way of abstractly shaping the different parts which are to be formulated.

What remains evident is the ability to inform from the north and north-west, the transparency between the inside and outside performance ‘stage’ where the skateboarders will entertain, and how the existing incomplete structure can become a wholistic part of the whole composition.

A further detailed analysis of the incomplete structure as it was built is necessary and will inform of more concrete decisions to be made.
Figure 64. Sketch: Program Goal Relationships (2).
A formal construct. Explored in order to address one way of abstractly shaping the forces which will inform future design decisions.
X. Understanding the Existing Structure

Now that ground rules had been established, it was important to understand in further detail what the incomplete structure itself offered in terms of a usable palette which may have a high amount of influence on further design decisions.

After an elaborate and often discouraging search for pre-war construction drawings, a helpful personality was found and made it possible to acquire scans of pieces of the drawings from 1984. With minor adjustments due to the limited level of completeness the scans captured, the general form of the structure (Fig. 67) was replicated to provide a better understanding of the 3-dimensional form while serving as a reference as well as another design tool.

The model, showing all levels aside from the column-lined ground floor, indicated an available palette of an approximately 14’ high ceiling at ground level, with 4 additional stories of approximately 9’ high ceilings in the North and North-East, and 3 such additional stories on the Southern portion of the structure. The roof surface, actually an attic floor as the roof was never constructed, is comprised of a series of shafts in the locations where the different model stories are held in place by basswood sticks rather than gluing them together. These shafts were later converted into individual light wells in order to lighten some of the darker portions towards the middle of the existing structure as the double-loaded corridor portions

Figure 66. Existing Structure within Central Core.
Figure 67. Physical Model of Existing Structure to be Used as Design Tool.
suffered greatly in the amount of qualitative natural light they could receive.

Schematic floor plans (Fig. 69 & 70) were replicated concurrently in order to gain a better understanding of the 2-dimensional palette that was available to work with while also using them as underlays for much of the future design process work.

The existing structure’s footprint within the plaza is shown in Fig. 68.
Figure 69. Ground, Second, and Third Level of Existing Structure.
Figure 70. Fourth, Fifth, and Roof Level of Existing Structure.
XI. A Visit to the SPoT

After gaining a better understanding of the physical form of the incomplete structure and preparing for future design decisions, it was time to get more familiar with general skateboarding elements, surface types, materiality, and a sense of scale and proportion.

There was no better place to go than to the world-famous Skatepark of Tampa (SPoT). Often described as one of the top skateboarding venues on the East Coast of the United States, a strong sense of familiarity with the Skate park existed within the skateboarding culture of Banja Luka whenever it was mentioned.

One of the main educational lessons from the visit to the park, and at the same time justification for incorporating retail elements into the skate park design, was that skate parks do not financially sustain themselves solely through the generally small membership fees they require of their members, but rather through the supporting retail spaces and what they have to offer. Spaces such as the gallery, skate shop, and small bar in the case of the SPoT, are actually much more than just places for consumption. Their configurations, which could differ from one design to another, greatly become part of a qualitative space within which memories are always created, and therefore production of space is continually present. The bar allows for the purchase of a beverage while at the same time offering a type of spatial atmosphere and seating arrangement which allows for the enjoyment of the skateboarders’

Figure 71. Skateboarding at the SPoT.
performance concurrently. As Ryan Clements of Skatepark of Tampa describes it, “...skate shops are much more than places of consumption because buying skateboarding gear, clothing, etc. is far beyond normal purchases for the skateboarder...it’s all a part of the lifestyle and a skate shop is much more than a store. Skate shops have the potential to build skate scenes where one is lacking. They bring kids in, teach them about the lifestyle, and make them hungry for more skateboarding...it perpetuates the process for the activity to continue along with supplying the items needed to participate.”
While Others Play, They Watch

Not only can the performance of the skateboarder bring vibrancy to a space while it allows non-skaters to participate in the often enjoyed people-watching activities, skateboarding itself can be very enjoyable for the skateboarder through the activity’s amazing and sometimes painful adrenaline rush, opportunity to socialize, and opportunity to play the part of the people-watcher. Everyone is eager to show off their newest trick and witness the one performed by the person in front of them.

A place where space is produced out of this mix of excited human beings is sure to bring vibrancy to any part of town. Certainly, the same will be present when the skate park is designed in the already people-infused thesis site in the central core of Banja Luka. The presence of the skateboarders will be enhanced while addressing the cultural desires of a people-watching society.

Figure 73. Reversed roles: skateboarders as people-watchers.
Reversed roles: skateboarders as people-watchers (2).

Figure 74. Reversed roles: skateboarders as people-watchers (2).
Another great aspect of skateboarding confirmed at the SPoT lead to the realization that any good skate park will change parts of its general layout at least on an annual basis. These changes most often occur in parts where simple ramps occur. In other words, more complex built skateboarding elements such as the bowl or vert ramp are usually not physically part of the change. They are generally considered more complex to build and skate and therefore are less likely to become dull to use, whereas elements such as those that are part of the street course (Fig. 75) at the SPoT are redesigned annually for the Tampa Am contest. These surfaces become part the ever-changing canvas for the skateboarder as well as other observers as the ‘performance stage’ is perceived differently each year.

These changes require support spaces which allow for easy crafting and installation of new elements and storage of excess materials which may be reused at a later point. A workshop (Fig. 77) within the SPoT allows for storage of materials such as Skatelite, the top-most surface applied to the skateboarding surfaces. The tools within the workshop allow for easy adjustments to the material while allowing for another type of production of space within which new designs are crafted. In itself, such a space could also become visually accessible to passersby, exposing them to what may be something they are not accustomed to experiencing anywhere else in their city.
Figure 76. Non-changing bowl at right with changing beginner’s course at left.
Figure 77. Workshop at the SPoT.
Time to Compare

After gaining a better understanding of general scales of various skateboarding platforms through the visit to the SPoT and further research, it was time to take into consideration the general rigid palette the existing incomplete structure offers and try to imagine how these much more organic shapes and elements could differ in scale and configuration within the available grid.

For this exercise, a few of the simple elements such as a half pipe or quarter pipe as well as the more complex elements like the bowl were configured within the grid of the structure. A simple massing model (Fig. 79, 81, 83, 85, & 87), generalizing the shape of the built element, was constructed after which a drawing (Fig. 80, 82, 84, 86, & 88) was produced to show the relationship of one or two of the possible configurations within the existing grid.

Within the drawings, a set scale was considered, showing the proportionally correct column spacing and ceiling height on the ground floor as well as the appropriate wall spacing and ceiling height proportions on the upper floors.
Figure 79. Component: Full Pipe.
Figure 80. Full pipe configured within grid of existing structure.
Component: Quarter Pipe.

Figure 81. Component: Quarter Pipe.
Quarter pipe configured within grid of existing structure.

Figure 82.
Figure 83. Component: Half Pipe.
Figure 84. Half pipe configured within grid of existing structure.
Figure 85. Component: Bowl (in section).
Figure 86. Bowl configured within grid of existing structure.
COMPONENT: Vert Ramp

- SHAPE: STANDARD (QUARTER PIPES ON EITHER SIDE OF FLAT BOTTOM, WITH VERT AFTER TRANSITION)
- SIZE: CAN VARY (ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT, WIDTH, AND LENGTH)

Figure 87. Component: Vert Ramp.
Vert ramp configured within grid of existing structure.

Figure 88.
XII. How to Incorporate Program

The previous exercise informed of several design decisions that could be made including that of having the vert ramp landing line up with another level, making it possible for observers who are inhabiting that level to experience the skateboarders’ landing or extra vert achieved.

It was important to make some initial decisions regarding the existing structure’s design palette. As portrayed in Fig. 89, there are several sections of the structure which are of a very apollonian or orderly nature. With some fairly consistent spacing, a great consistency in line-up, and no significant negative space, the highlighted portions of the structure seemed to make themselves very reusable within the future design.

The leftover space consisted of dead space, awkward angles, and a set of stair and elevator shafts from circulation which was now too small to reuse. Some of these surfaces were likely to be replaced within the new design.
Now that workable areas had been determined, it was time to get a sense of the general scale of programmatic elements when compared to that found at the SPoT. These sizes could vary greatly later on, but it was a good start to get an approximate feeling for how it may all be possible. The incomplete structure offered more space on the upper stories and it was important to find the right distribution of programmatic elements so that everything flows well together while also not seeming excessive.

The rectangles (Fig. 90) portrayed the approximate amount of space each type of space may take up within the existing structure’s footprint as well as initial thoughts on where they may be located. These sizes and locations would be adjusted later on to better address the specific program used in the project.
Shaping Decisions at Plaza Entry

It was important to make initial decisions about how the most prominent corner (Fig. 91) of the existing structure, as previously shown through the Visual Fields Diagram (Fig. 45), would be perceived and how it could make an important statement as related to the thesis.

At this stage, it was also important to decide what portions of the structure, at plaza level, would allow for certain activities to occur. Where would the newly redefined structure become a stage of performance? Where could one feel comfortable as a non-skater to join in the activities, have a drink while sitting down to watch a performance? Where could dually used street-style skateboarding elements and seating be combined outside of the enclosed space/ at the plaza?

Figure 91. Initial gestures to inform design at corner.
What does the Corner Do?

As the arrows on the process sketch (Fig. 92) show, the very entry into the plaza on the North-East corner would start to allow for a canvas of performance to show as one of the ramp sections would be incorporated into the space adjacent to the historic hotel. The people-watching area would be adjacent to the ramp section for convenient entry from the plaza level, allowing people to enter the place from which the performance can be watched without having to enter the skateboarding park itself.

Figure 92. Initial gestures to inform design at corner (2).
Further Resolution of Ground and Form

It was time to further resolve a few design decisions and to see how the ground plan (Fig. 93) and what should be incorporated within it, could start to inform what happens in the upper levels of the building. An exploration achieved through this ground plan allowed for more resolution of scale and general location of programmatic elements.

With this ground plan in mind, a 3-dimensional construct was explored through the use of the previously-constructed physical model on the incomplete structure as an underlay for perspectives (Fig. 95-99) which, guided by the goals of the thesis and programmatic needs, helped make further development of the overall form.

The place of performance always remained most important, while spaces where products could be purchased, concurrently allowing for space production, were always secondary and therefore mostly occurring in the upper levels. Some of the performance aspects were later integrated within the upper levels to further aid in the production of space within those areas.

Figure 93. Process ground plan.
The ground diagram (Fig. 94) portrays an initial attempt at generalizing the distribution of indoor elements vs. outdoor, street-style elements within the plaza.
Figure 95. Process perspective.
Figure 96. Process perspective (2).
Figure 97. Process perspective (3).
Figure 98. Process perspective (4).
Figure 99. Process perspective (5).
XIII. Exploration through Section Model No. 1

Tackling the design of the overall structure with all of the programmatic requirements was not an easy task. Therefore, a series of section models were constructed within which a number of ideas was explored.

The first section model (Fig. 103) encompassed about half of the East elevation and did not go into detail regarding structural interventions. This was the first attempt at incorporating a full pipe into the design. While extremely challenging and often only used by advanced skateboarders, the pipe could become an important element to incorporate into use on days when competitions are taking place. The pipe could also be used in alternative ways, such as an entry, and serve a dual purpose. As the pipe location within the plaza did not make too much sense due to narrowing of the plaza in that specific section, an alternative location was explored through the next model.

This model also explored the spatial characteristics of an atelier in the upper floors and how the existing structure could begin to be carved out in places where that seemed needed based on design decisions. As the atelier was to encompass works previously mentioned, some of the influential student artwork and other items needed larger spaces and higher ceilings to be available. A series of partial floor plans (Fig. 104 - 109) were produced concurrently to aid in understanding and graphically representing areas of the existing structure to be modified and how new elements could be introduced.
Figure 102. Extents of section model no. 1 within existing grid.
Figure 103. Section model no. 1.
Figure 104. Section model no. 1 ground level.
Figure 105. Section model no. 1 second level.
Figure 106. Section model no. 1 third level.
Figure 107. Section model no. 1 fourth level.
Figure 108. Section model no. 1 fifth level.
Figure 109. Section model no. 1 roof level.
XIV. Exploration through Section Model No. 2

The second section model (Fig. 113 - 117) tackled a more complex and seemingly very value engineered portion of the existing structure. With a lot less of a nicely flowing palette, much of the unusable circulation as well as other dead space found within this portion, it was time to design with sensitivity. Knowing that the intensity of the graffiti was highest at all levels of the structure facing the plaza, it was important not to remove too much.

This portion of the plaza was also of importance due to its generous size and the fact that previous skateboarding competitions (Fig. 112) have been organized within this portion of the plaza. This seemed like a much better location for the full pipe and dually the entry into the skateboarding park as well.

More considerations about structure were explored within this section model and informed later decisions.
Figure 112. [Skateboarding Competition Day at Plaza]. Note: Copyright Zulexxx.
Figure 113. Section model no. 2: overall.
Figure 114. Section model no. 2: south-east corner close-up.
Figure 115. Section model no. 2: entry close-up.
One possible resolution of the pipe entry (Fig. 116) was explored while attempting to comprise it of a half pipe, full pipe and another half pipe with a transition allowing for those who are not on skateboards to travel by the stair portion on the right.

The model included an exploration of incorporating a bowl (Fig. 117) which becomes a ceiling condition on the ground floor and further aids in the production of space within areas such as a skate shop on the upper level. Originally influenced by bowls such as that within the Supreme Skate Shop in Los Angeles (Fig. 118) as well as the Bastard Studio bowl of Milan (Fig. 119), the idea of a canvas still existed in another realm as those who may be passing or sitting under the bowl experience an ever-changing canvas of sound and vibration which others are producing upstairs. The experience within that space is never the same.
Figure 118. Supreme at night. Source: Flickr.com, 2006.
Figure 119. [Bastard Store/Studimetrico]. Source: archdaily.com.
XV. Exploration through Section Model No. 3

The section model explored (Fig. 122 - 123), in more detail, the spatial relationships as well as possible structural resolutions within a smaller section of the existing structure.

The ideas of people-watching and performance were emphasized and showed the intended porosity between the enclosed structure and the plaza within the design. The model also portrayed the desired interconnectedness between different levels of the newly redesigned structure.
Figure 122. Section model no. 3: overall.
Figure 123. Section model no. 3: close-up.
XVI. Final Schematics

The drawings in the following pages are the final result of the thesis. The consistently used color red indicates the existing structure.

The final ground level plan (Fig. 124) is all-inclusive while it situates the new structure within the plaza and shows the interior portion of the skateboarding club as a lighter shade. It illustrates the exterior portion of the street-style elements through shades a little darker than the unaltered remains of the plaza.

All upper floors (Fig. 125 & 126) are illustrated with the same color representing the existing structure, while new interventions are any color other than gray. All visible levels are shown in shades of gray as the level interconnectedness was important within the overall design.

Further design outcomes can be seen through a select number of perspectives (Fig. 127 - 136), sections (Fig. 137 & 138), and elevations (Fig. 139 - 142).

Perspectives 133 and 134 are a tribute to the Diesel Wall ideas discussed in previous sections and superimpose two such examples onto the new structure’s most prominent corners. The possibilities are endless and aim to promote ‘walls of something that means something’ versus the ‘mindlessness’ previously encouraged at the site by billboards calling for consumption of products and services.

Figure 124. Ground Plan.
Figure 125. Second, Third, and Fourth Level.
Figure 126. Fifth Level and Roof Level.
Figure 127. Perspective: Bowl ceiling condition at full pipe/entry.
Figure 128. Perspective: At vert ramp.
Figure 129. Perspective: At outdoor street-style section.
Figure 130. Perspective: At people-watching and street-style section.
Figure 131. Perspective: At North-West Plaza Entry.
Figure 132. Perspective: At North-West Plaza Entry (2).
Figure 133. Perspective: the walls of ‘something that means something’.
Figure 134. Perspective: the walls of ‘something that means something’ (2).
Figure 135. Perspective: View from employee wing.
Figure 136. Perspective: View from skate shop.
SECTION THROUGH PEOPLE-WATCHING, ADVANCED RAMP AND ENTRY AREA.

Figure 137. Section AA.
Figure 138. Section BB.
Figure 139. Elevation: South-East.
Figure 140. Elevation: East.
Figure 141. Elevation: North-East.
Figure 142. Elevation: South-West.
Images Cited:


Literature Cited:


