

1-1-2000

# Making Sense of the Built Environment Handout Drafts

Department of Teaching + Learning in Art + Design  
*Rhode Island School of Design*

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# SITE ANALYSIS

Roger Williams University  
School of Architecture  
Spring 2000  
Instructor: Barbara Macaulay

Assigned: Tuesday, January 25, 2000  
Part One Due: Tuesday, February 1, 2000  
Part Two Due: Friday, February 4, 2000

*These handouts  
could be adapted  
for our workshop.*

## STRANGE SPACES / MYSTERIOUS DREAMS SITE ANALYSIS

In order to create an architecture of meaning, the various sites under consideration must be thoroughly explored and understood. What are their problems, their possibilities? What are the layers of history that have marked them? What are the spirit and ideosyncracies of the people who use them? What are their dreams? What are yours?

This exercise is divided into two parts:

- Part One: Investigation and documentation.
- Part Two: Interpretation.

### PART ONE: INVESTIGATION AND DOCUMENTATION: TUNNEL SITE / ALLEY SITE

The class will break into teams to identify, describe, and document (by means of drawings, slides, photos, and video) the important built and natural features of the two sites under investigation. Since the river corridor is so closely connected to both sites, it also will become a subject of our investigation. The history of the area is equally important, and is described in the required reading handout.

#### Team #1: Base Drawings

- 1/16" site plans
- 1/16" site elevations showing adjacent buildings
- 1/16" site sections

#### Team #2: Hot Spots and Linkages

- Significant buildings and landmarks (civic, educational, historic, industrial, entertainment).
- Public plazas and parks.
- Significant skyline features, day and night.
- Important views and view corridors (especially to and across the river), day and night.
- General building massing, materials, and character along the river and the two sites.
- River edge conditions, both built and natural.
- Bridges, gateways, and important pedestrian and vehicular linkages.

Team #3: Spirit of People / Spirit of Place

- Spirit of the place, as it varies from day to night: color, texture, sound, smell, ambiance. Spirit of the people: aspirations of RISD, East Siders, and Downtown mix.
- Where people meet to interact, where people go to be alone.
- Micro climate of the two areas: sun/ shade and prevailing winds.
- Site history, which will include a visit to the archives of the RI Historical Society.

Team #4: Site Models (to be discussed)

- Site models that include adjacent buildings, and possibly a section of the river corridor. Do we want team models or individual ones as the sketch problems are developed? Are axons and/or perspectives enough to get us started?

## PART TWO: INTERPRETATION: TUNNEL SITE / ALLEY SITE

Using the media of your choice, react to the site analysis and program. How do the sites feel, sound, look, move? How do they move you? Collect and record your ideas for their development by allowing yourself to:

- Free associate and dream.
- Use anything as a catalyst for ideas: nature, art, music, literature, even architecture.
- Use all parts of your personality: love of beauty, humor, kindness, nastiness, intellect, gut response, etherealness, sensuality...
- Record everything... do not reject any ideas initially.
- Keep a record of your thoughts in written phrases and small sketches, on trace or a material that you can incorporate into future presentations.
- You may keep private any thoughts you wish, but do record them.

Then, choose one or more ideas to explore further. Do evocative sketches in any medium, including collage, charcoal, paint, etc., and/ or small concept models to express and develop your ideas. These sketches and models will become part of your final presentation.

## REQUIRED READING

Woodward and Sanderson, *Providence, a Citywide Survey of Historic Resources*, Chapters 1&2.

# SKETCH PROBLEM

Roger Williams University  
School of Architecture  
Spring 2000  
Instructor: Barbara Macaulay

Assigned: Tuesday, February 4, 2000  
Due: Wednesday, February 23, 2000

## **STRANGE SPACES / MYSTERIOUS DREAMS URBAN INTERVENTION I: TUNNEL VISIONS**

*At night, a city is a new place, its image more expressive,  
Mysterious, full of possibilities,  
A brilliant theater of light...  
Where the commonplace is transformed into the sublime.*

The site is an abandoned railroad tunnel on the edge of the RISD campus, its sealed entrance set on a raised plinth overlooking the Downtown and the convergence of the Providence, Woonasquatucket, and Moshassuck Rivers. During this short sketch problem, you are asked to transform the tunnel's river entrance into an outdoor performance space for local performance groups, the RISD Film Festival, and the Providence Summer Convergence Festival 2000. Using built form, light, and sound, your installation should create a strong sense of character for the site. The installation can be a temporary one for spring / summer 2000, or a more permanent alteration of the area. The concept should be based on your investigation of the site, as well as inspiration from written and visual sources, poetics, history, light, movement...

### **PRESENTATION REQUIREMENTS**

- Written inspiration: literary quotes, or your own writing, to be incorporated into your visual presentation.
- Visual and sound inspiration: from nature, conceptual or built projects, gallery or installation art, film, music...
- Evocative sketches in any medium showing the transformation of the site from day to night.
- 3-D representation: a series of concept models, possibly including found object assemblage.
- Plan and section drawings.

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Spring 2000  
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Assigned: Friday, February 25, 2000  
Due: Friday, March 10, 2000

**STRANGE SPACES / MYSTERIOUS DREAMS**  
**URBAN INTERVENTION II: DOWNTOWN ALLEYS: SUIT AND TIED?**

The site is a group of alleys radiating from the heart of the financial district, each one with a distinct character. Although busy during the day, in the evening the area is deserted and grim. Your charge is to transform the night time experience through one of these narrow passages, using light, built form, and possibly sound. In addition, it would be interesting to link the nearby small pocket park, the area in front of the Custom House addressing the river, or the Textron - Amica Building plaza, with the interventions you are suggesting. The ultimate aim is to create an energized, intriguing, and safe downtown, using both conventional and unconventional means.

**PRESENTATION REQUIREMENTS**

- Written and visual inspiration, to be incorporated into your visual presentation.
- Evocative sketches in any medium showing the transformation of the site from day to night.
- 3-D representation: a series of concept models, culminating in a larger scale, well constructed light model.
- Plan and section drawings.

These are suggested requirements....The goal is to convince us of the strength, beauty, mystery, and validity of your ideas.

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FINAL PROJECT

## **STRANGE SPACES / MYSTERIOUS DREAMS AN ALTERNATIVE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**

*At night, a city becomes a stage set in the theater of urban life.  
Riverfronts shimmer.  
Plazas pulse with energy...*

### **The Challenge**

Using your site investigations and installations as a departure point, you are challenged to create an architecture of meaning: a new alternative performing arts center for the city of Providence.

The center should engage the creative energy of the visual and performing arts communities, and involve its many diverse cultures. By creating an architecture that speaks, on a highly visible site, you have the potential to make the dreams of this group visible - and heard - within the larger urban community.

An expressive night time identity is an important part of the dream, as is moving the theatrical experience into the streets and public plazas of the city....

### **The Site**

A choice between:

**Downtown:** Emerging from the heart of the Financial District, the Downtown site overlooks the Providence riverwalks and Memorial Park. The park's edge is marked by historic structures of great beauty and interest, with the trees and spires of College Hill as a painted backdrop. Downriver the iconographic silhouette of Narragansett Electric and the Point Street Bridge mark the entrance to Narragansett Bay.

**Eastside:** The Eastside site stands on a busy corner, surrounded by a rich contextual mix: the perfection of the First Baptist Church on its New England green, a row of colonial buildings climbing up Steeple Street, and the highly textural commercial buildings of South Main. The site has the potential to become an important gateway to the Downtown.