

Common Thread: Re-envisioning a Chinese

Canadian Transcultural Centre

by

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[common thread]

Re-Envisioning a Chinese Canadian Transcultural Centre

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Canadian society is a cultural mosaic composed of individuals from an expansive range of cultural backgrounds. Through the process of globalization and ever-increasing accessibility to new people and places we are constantly being exposed to other cultures. This practicum project proposes a new typology for cultural spaces – a transcultural center that functions as a contact zone where individuals can negotiate both spatial and social relationships. Such everyday negotiations within space enables individuals to better

understand their own identity and the identities of those around them, giving them the opportunity to recognize and acknowledge cultural similarities and differences. The process of developing the transcultural centre was explored through theoretical and analytical investigations in cultural identity and interaction, phenomenology, and human geography that examined how these notions have the potential to inform an understanding of space and place, sensorial engagements, and the blurring of spatial and cultural boundaries.

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The initial points of departure of my practicum topic are two-fold: the first being an interest in the psychology of space, specifically in phenomenology and how an understanding of its concepts can be translated and applied to the practice of interior design. The second being the topic of cultural identity, and a relatively recent awareness of my own continual negotiation of who I am as a first-generation Chinese-born Canadian, and how my cultural lens affects the way I see the world and how I understand, interpret and explore design.

As I continue to explore my cultural identity, I have come to realize that to be Canadian means to host a multitude of identities as the interactions that I engage in on an everyday basis are often times with individuals who have different backgrounds and experiences than my own. In a country as culturally diverse as Canada, citizens inherently possess a multitude of identities as they make fluid adjustments to their behaviors and dispositions depending on the environment and individuals with whom they come into contact.

[common thread]

everyday negotiations



Figure 1: Participants engaging in the Human Library. Bloor / Gladstone branch of Toronto Public Libraries. November 2010. Photograph by and property of Voula Monoholias.

“People need to see that, far from being an obstacle, the world’s diversity of language, religions and traditions is a great treasure affording us precious opportunities to recognize ourselves in others.”

-- Youssou N'Dour
Musician
Starbucks: The Way I See It #21

I found Youssou N'Dour's quote as I was picking up a coffee on my way to the university, which is a typical part of my daily routine. Although I always check to see if the quote on my cup is one I have seen before, N'Dour's words seemed particularly applicable that day to what has become a part of my practicum research. The purpose of the practicum is to design a venue where, at its very core, the type of recognition that N'Dour talks about can be discovered and embraced. It would be a place where the interactions of individuals within a purposefully designed cultural space could reveal insights into the similarities and differences that exist between themselves and their families, friends, neighbors, and even strangers they pass on a daily basis. Instead of being closed-minded out of fear, intimidation, or disinterest, individuals could be tempted by spatial intrigue to engage with the context and people within it. This type of engagement

has the potential to contribute to a better understanding of other cultures, people, and places, and from these interactions individuals could begin to recognize elements of their own identity within the context of the cultural space.

Everyday, individuals are negotiating relationships. These relationships range from the more tangible realities of the individual to objects, spatial boundaries, and the bodies of other participants to the less tangible negotiation of individuals' emotional, psychological, and cultural needs. Interior designers have the demanding task of optimizing participation in the physical realm where these relationships are either fostered and facilitated, or deterred and diminished. With these relationships in mind, achieving a balance between programmatic functionality, practicality, and an environment that elicits personal ephemeral qualities that contribute to the experience of space as meaningful

and poetic becomes a major challenge to the interior designer.

Through the design of a Chinese Canadian Transcultural Centre [CCTC] my practicum project investigates the notion of interiority as an overarching concept that relates to the practice, profession, and theory of interior design, as “[i]nteriority is that abstract quality that enables the recognition and definition of an interior.”¹ It is this abstract quality of interiority that lends itself to a lived approach to spatial understanding and is therefore an appropriate vehicle to explore the design of cultural spaces. The process of unpacking the concept of interiority in the design of a cultural space will be informed by theoretical analysis and synthesis drawn from phenomenology, human geography, and cultural identity and interaction.²

¹ Christine McCarthy. “Toward a Definition of Interiority” in *Space and Culture* 8, no.2 (May 2005): 112.

² For the purpose of this study I refer to phenomenology as an interdisciplinary discourse of theory and not as a discipline itself; human geography as a

[objectives of the project]

My practicum project titled “Common Thread” is the design of a Chinese Canadian Transcultural Centre that will be supported by the strong and vibrant community of Edmonton, Alberta.³ The CCTC will be a new typology within the realm of cultural spaces. Common Thread will encompass some programmatic similarities to those of existing Chinese cultural centres, however it will differ fundamentally and spatially by incorporating programmes of everyday life while recognizing that culture and identity are in constant flux.

The role of interior design in this project is facilitated through the investigation of the notion of interiority, which according to design theorists Mark

specific area of research within the discipline of geography, and cultural interaction as the intersection between discipline and discourse and a byproduct of individuals performing their cultural identities.

³ Throughout this document Common Thread will be used synonymously with Chinese Canadian Transcultural Centre [CCTC] to refer to the project.

Taylor and Julieanna Preston is:

...the conscious and reflexive awareness of self, identity, community and others within the social environment...[I]nteriority examines the innerness of interior design as that which is felt and projected upon within the interior environment via the body as a culturally lived organism.⁴

Having been borne from interdisciplinary discourse, the concept of interiority will be investigated and synthesized through a review of a selection of theories in cultural identity and interaction, phenomenology, and human geography.

In order to gain an understanding of the typology of a cultural centre, analysis of research done in cultural identity and interaction has led to theories that surround the notions of the “contact zone” and

⁴ Mark Taylor and Julieanna Preston. “Proximities” in *Intimus: Interior Design Theory Reader*, ed. Mark Taylor and Julieanna Preston. (Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 2006), 11.

“transculturation”. These theories were catalysts for the practicum’s focus and re-envisioning the idea of a cultural centre as a new typology – the transcultural centre – that begins to implicitly imply an inclusive and open attitude to all users of the space instead of being a place that is visited exclusively by a specific ethnic group. Studies completed in cultural identity and interaction also lend an understanding of the types of cultural appropriation that can take place, and under what circumstances and conditions cultural exchanges occur.⁵ Furthermore, it gives insight into who the individual participants are and how the cultural exchanges can affect their perceived and lived identities.

Literature reviewed in phenomenology and human geography has been used to define and

⁵ Cultural appropriation is typically surrounded with a shroud of negativity and disapproval; however, I argue that in order to understand the reality of everyday cultural exchanges we must re-examine what cultural appropriation means. This is explored through an analysis of Richard A. Rogers writing on cultural appropriation in Chapter 2.

understand the embodied experience of space and place. The studies completed in these two areas inform an understanding of the reciprocal relationship between the sense of place an environment can possess and the individual’s embodied experience of space.

Phenomenology is riddled with complex issues related to being and consciousness that have often been difficult to formulate into one succinct definition.⁶

To understand phenomenology, the underlying concept of consciousness through the experience of here and now must be considered. Originating with the scientific approach of German philosopher Edmund Husserl, consciousness was defined by the idea of intentionality – that is, that all consciousness is the cognizant of something.⁷ Philosopher Martin

Heidegger, a student of Husserl’s, developed Husserl’s

⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty. *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans by Colin Smith (New York: Routledge, 1962), vii.

⁷ David Macey. *Dictionary of Critical Theory*. (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 191, 202.

theory on phenomenology from a more poetic perspective by introducing a term that described how being in the world was physically experienced but always changing – spatial and temporal – *Dasein*.⁸ French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, leaned towards a more physiological perspective on phenomenology, claiming that it was an embodied experience, and focusing on it as a study of essences.⁹ The key concept that unified these three phenomenological thinkers was that experiences of being all happen in the physical world – an environment that already exists, an environment that is envisioned and created by designers.

Geography encompasses the entire realm of place from the study of the concrete, physical location of place to the abstract concept of sense of place.¹⁰

⁸ Ibid. Heidegger is well known for his contributions to Existentialism.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 7.

Because of the phenomenological approach taken by many human geographers, there is a tendency towards a more conceptual notion of place. Place becomes the location of phenomenological experience and acts as the background to our conscience.

The transcultural centre aims to facilitate spatial experiences and encounters that provide opportunities for cultural exploration, understanding, and the negotiation of Canadian identity. The intended outcome of the design is to create a venue for an opportunity for a contact zone where collaborations are fostered that contribute to a stronger sense of Chinese and Canadian cultures in their past, present, and future. Building upon Mary Louise Pratt's definition of the contact zone, that is the "...social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other...", the transcultural centre is a place where cultural differences and

similarities can be confronted.¹¹ However, unlike Pratt's definition, the intention of the transcultural centre is to be a non-threatening and non-imperialist context where these intercultural interactions can take place.

At Common Thread this outcome will be accomplished by including two types of programmatic elements: culture-specific areas that focus on historic and contemporary Chinese and Chinese Canadian culture through access to visual media, performing arts, museum collections, gallery exhibitions, and the opportunity to participate in cultural events; and informal areas that enable users to practice and perform everyday tasks and routines at the centre, such as eating, shopping, or taking a break from day-to-day obligations. In order to accommodate different programmatic elements within Common Thread there will be spaces designed to accommodate specific

¹¹ Mary Louise Pratt. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. (New York: Routledge, 1992). 4.

activities and spaces that are designed to be flexible and respond to the changing needs of different users at different times.

[significance of the project]

The typology of cultural centres raises questions of inclusivity and exclusivity. The main concern is whether or not the intended users of the centre will perceive it as being ethnically inclusive or exclusive. The project was originally proposed as a Chinese Cultural Centre; this title held word associations to Western conceptualizations of art and culture that could imply that the project was intended for a specific ethnic group.¹² These assumptions might insinuate

¹² Richard A. Rogers. "From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation: A Review and Reconceptualization of Cultural Appropriation," in *Communication Theory* 16, no.4 (November 2006): 491.

that cultural identity is bound to geographical place and that the programmatic focus of this practicum is one of strictly sharing Chinese cultural traditions and customs. In turn this could convey a cultural outlook that seeks to perpetuate the notion of the exotic “other”; a perspective that would take on a preservationist approach to culture by implying that culture is static.¹³ Over the course of continued investigation and understanding of culture and cultural identity in the Canadian context, the project typology was re-titled as a Chinese Canadian Transcultural Centre.

As a point of departure in which to understand one aspect of the diverse cultural make-up of Canada, and as a source of direction for the project, the practicum focuses on the Chinese culture. The practicum investigates not only Chinese culture in its past, present, and future, but also what it means

¹³ Ibid. 492.

to be or not be Chinese in the Canadian context. It confronts and challenges all users, not just those of Chinese descent, to consider, compare, and reflect on how elements of Chinese culture relate to, or differ from, what they understand to be their own cultural identity. The typology of a transcultural centre has the opportunity to act as a model for other ethnic groups within Canada in the development and design of cultural spaces that are perceived as inclusive by the public. In Canada, whether or not an individual is a member of the ethnic majority, at some point in time they will have experienced some form of cultural difference where they have felt as though they could not relate to those around them. The CCTC serves as an example of how knowledge of differing cultural groups allows individuals within society to understand and accept similarities and differences. The design of cultural spaces such as the transcultural centre provides a venue that could begin to

facilitate this understanding.

Transculturation recognizes that culture is dynamic.¹⁴ It is a concept that encompasses culture as a relational phenomenon where multiple identities meet, intersect, and change.¹⁵ In a diverse society such as Canada, acts of cultural exchange and appropriation are constantly occurring through day-to-day interactions with other individuals and the spaces that they inhabit. These “[a]cts of appropriation and their implications are not determined by the intent or awareness of those engaged in such acts but are instead shaped by, and in turn shape, social, economic and political contexts in which they occur.”¹⁶ Interior spaces are a major component of the physical realm under which these

14 Transculturation as defined by Richard A. Rogers. Ibid. 491.

15 Libby Balter Blume and Lee Ann De Reus. “Transnational Families and the Social Construction of Identity: Whiteness Matters,” in *Strengths and Challenges of New Immigrant Families: Implications for Research, Education, Policy, and Service*, ed. Rochelle L. Dalla, John Defran, Julie Johnson, Douglas A. Abbott. (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009), 72.

16 Rogers. “From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation: A Review and Re-conceptualization of Cultural Appropriation,” 476.

engagements in exchange and appropriation occur, and to some extent or another reflect the notion of interiority.

Globalization and ever-increasing advancements in transportation and technology have enabled a Canadian society that is not only constantly connected to new information, people, and ideas, but also accessible to new places and environments. Individuals, in turn, process these flows of information and experiences, and negotiate understanding of their identity in accordance with them by either adopting or rejecting this new information. As transnational connections are an inevitable reality of today’s society and global flows, so too are the fluctuating transcultural identities of individuals.¹⁷

The negotiation of an individual’s identity culturally, spatially, and socially can be an unsettling

17 Wei Li, “Chinese Americans: Community Formation in Time and Space,” in *Contemporary Ethnic Geographies in America*, ed. Ines M. Miyares and Christopher A. Airriess, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 229.

feeling.¹⁸ Ultimately, to be Canadian means to be a member of a hybrid of cultures, as identity is constructed from a combination of circumstances. Individuals carry with them a “personal schemata” of experiences, beliefs, and understandings that affect how new experiences are interpreted.¹⁹ These experiences alter their perceptions so that understandings of self, others, and place are constantly being validated or changed in relationship to one another.

By engaging the body and mind through space, the use of the centre will encourage a reflexive knowledge of one’s own identity in relation to others and will help in the development of cross-cultural understanding, competency, and acceptance. This type of reflexive thinking not only benefits the individuals but

also provides the opportunity to contribute to a more thoughtful and understanding society as a whole.²⁰

[biases + limitations]

It is important to state upfront my personal disposition because my perspective in this practicum inevitably frames my view as I research, analyze, write and design. Having been born as a first generation Chinese Canadian, I have been fortunate enough to experience both cultures. I must acknowledge, however, that the majority of my understanding of the world and my identity has been informed by and carried out in the Canadian context. It is a perspective that perhaps some of my Chinese Canadian counterparts can relate

18 Blume and De Reus, “Transnational Families and the Social Construction of Identity,” 80.

19 Christian Norberg-Schulz, “The Phenomenon of Place,” in *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965-1995*, ed. Kate Nesbitt (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 425.

20 Blume and De Reus, “Transnational Families and the Social Construction of Identity: Whiteness Matters,” 79, 82.

to, but is unique from a perspective that I would carry had I spent a large portion of my life growing up in China before immigrating to Canada as a young adult. Furthermore, it should be recognized that when “our”, “we” or “us” are used throughout the practicum, that I am referring to a Western conceptualization of these topics as the majority of theories investigated are situated from a Western perspective.

[client + users]

Client support for Common Thread is found in Edmonton’s thriving local Chinese Canadian community. This community includes professionals as well as Chinese associations and institutions within the city that already assist Chinese immigrants and their families

internally through social networking. Opportunities for additional funding can be sought through the Government of Canada, Department of Canadian Heritage. Within this department are programs that designate funding and grant opportunities for arts and heritage projects with goals that are similar to that of the Chinese Canadian Transcultural Centre. The availability of such programs and funding demonstrate that there is a national interest and commitment by the Government of Canada to promote, invest in, and celebrate its culturally diverse population.²¹

One of the main focuses of Common Thread is to engage and intrigue the entire Canadian community, regardless of ethnic background. The targeted users of the centre are Canadians. Within this broad spectrum of users, however, there will be three recognizable user

²¹ Canadian Heritage, “Cultural Spaces Canada.” Government of Canada. <http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/fcec-capf/index-eng.cfm> (accessed November 20, 2009).

groups. The primary user group will include members of the client group as well as other Chinese Canadians residing in Edmonton. The individuals within this user group will have the highest frequency of attendance and use of facilities at the CCTC. The ongoing success of the centre will be sustained through their continued commitment and enthusiasm as a community.

The secondary user group will be residents of Edmonton who live or work in the Downtown and Chinatown districts. The physical proximity of these users to Common Thread generates a greater potential for use of the centre on a daily basis to fulfill the basic needs of everyday life. Through the strategic intermingling of everyday programming with cultural programming, the design intends to intrigue these users and generate an increase in their interaction with the site.

The third group of users will be composed of

visitors to Edmonton and the remainder of the residents in Edmonton who live outside of the central core of the city. These users do not frequent the area on a daily basis, and will be drawn to Common Thread specifically for its cultural programming such as attending special functions, celebrations or exhibitions. The mere presence of these users within the centre increases the chances of them exploring and engaging in some of the everyday programming the centre has to offer.

[focal point]

The key research and investigative questions leading my practicum design are as follows:

- In what ways can methods and elements of interior design be used to facilitate the construction of a

contact zone and thereby provide an opportunity for transculturation to take place?

- When it comes to a phenomenological approach to design, how can the manipulation of spatial features and qualities be used to expose sensory experiences of a particular programme? Is it a question of activating multiple senses at once and striving for an embodied experience of space or is it a question of privileging a specific sense in order to create a sensorial focus?
- In what ways can interior design facilitate the creation of a sense of place?

[research methodology]

The research methodology used in this practicum

was adapted from design theorist Terence Love's article "Theoretical Perspectives in the PhD Thesis: How many?" which was used as a framework for organizing the theoretical perspectives and approaches taken.²² Although the original intent of this article is to help inform the thesis process of a PhD student, key ideas and guidelines were drawn that are suitable to understanding the master's level practicum process. According to Love, the thesis candidate needs:

...to have an over-arching theoretical perspective that shapes and guides their overall approach to addressing the research problem. This overarching perspective sits within a hierarchical relationship with the other theoretical perspectives necessary to address different aspects of the research problem and data gathering...²³

²² Terence Love. "Theoretical perspectives in the PhD thesis. How many?" in *Doctoral Education in Design: Foundations for the Future*, ed. D. Durling & K. Friedman, (Stoke-on-Trent: Staffordshire University Press, 2000). 261-270.

²³ Ibid. 265.

The research methodology guides and frames what will be investigated and the investigation process.

The over-arching theoretical perspective used in this practicum is informed by a phenomenological approach. As phenomenologist Max Van Manen states:

[f]rom a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings. And since to know the world is profoundly to be in the world in a certain way, the act of researching – questioning – theorizing is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully part of it, or better, to become the world.²⁴

Professional aspirations of becoming an interior designer have led me to consider my own personal and subjective awareness of self and in turn to reflect

on this awareness of self in reference to the physical environments that I find myself in. Considerations began with an ontological perspective that questioned my assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding cultural identity. For example, questions included: how does a person's ethnic background inform and affect what it means to be Canadian; what does the hyphen represent in Chinese-Canadian, or any other ethnic group-Canadian; how is a person's identity informed by, and reflected in, the spaces and places he or she finds himself or herself?

The questions that were generated from this ontological perspective led to an inquiry that informed my epistemological perspective. The epistemological perspective of this practicum can be understood through two different theoretical approaches that have conceptual and theoretical overlap that support and work in conjunction with one another.

²⁴ Max Van Manen. *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. (London: Althouse Press, 1990) 5.

[HUMAN SCIENCE] The first approach is Max Van Manen's human science approach to pedagogy, which combines theories in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and semiotic theory:

...pedagogy requires a phenomenological sensitivity to lived experience (children's realities and lifeworlds). Pedagogy requires a hermeneutic ability to make interpretative sense of the phenomena of the lifeworld in order to see the pedagogic significance of situations in relations of the living children. And pedagogy requires a way of language in order to allow the research process of textual reflection to contribute to one's pedagogic thoughtfulness and tact.²⁵

Though Van Manen is speaking in direct relation to an understanding of pedagogy, the fundamental principles of the human science approach apply to the process of understanding the individual's everyday embodied experience and perceptions of space. Where

²⁵ Ibid. 2.

phenomenology is the lived experience of being in this world, hermeneutics is the process of interpreting and drawing meaning on the lived experiences and the reciprocal relationship between human beings and their environments, and semiotics is the synthesis of this interpretation into design elements that inform the spatial design of an interior.

[THE NARRATIVE] The second theoretical approach conceptualizes the fundamental notion of interiority. Adapted from the perspective of interior design theorist Cathy Ganoë, the narrative approach to design is based on Hewlett's understanding between interior design and interiority, where "...interior design's most serious purposes are not visual, technological, object-oriented, or materialistic, but rather those of interiority – internal values regarding social and personal awareness."²⁶ Furthermore, the narrative approach to

²⁶ Cathy J. Ganoë. "Design as Narrative: A Theory of Inhabiting Interior Space," *Journal of Interior Design* 25, no. 2 (1999): 1.

design incorporates the relationship between semiotics and phenomenology:

[n]arrative theory provides an additional framework that synthesizes the external/symbolic with the internal/phenomenological response to environment through the vehicle of language... By utilizing a structure based on shared language and semantic order, and a content that emphasizes personal perceptions and feelings, the narrative method joins together and augments the semiotic and phenomenological realms of experience as a means of communicating a more complete experience of the individual.²⁷

This theoretical approach allowed me to take a grounded direction when interpreting and synthesizing the theories investigated in the completion of this practicum. This synthesis informed the process of design decision-making and the final design outcomes.

²⁷ Ibid. 3.

[research methods] The epistemological perspective of the human science and narrative approaches prompted the following methods of inquiry in this practicum:

LITERARY INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS. An extensive interdisciplinary review of literature was done to develop theoretical depth for this practicum. Areas of research focused on phenomenology, human geography, and cultural identity and interaction. To synthesize the theoretical concepts underlying this practicum, the research done in these three areas were sorted and discussed under one of three themes in the review of literature: understanding cultural identity and interaction, understanding our environments, and understanding ourselves in our environments.

DESIGN PRECEDENT INVESTIGATION + ANALYSIS. A review of design precedents was done to provide visual

and conceptual examples that communicated design elements and programmatic outcomes similar to those that Common Thread aspired to achieve.

SITE ANALYSIS. Through photographic analysis and exercises in mapping an understanding of the site and building's existing condition was recorded. Images of site-specific information and maps were composed to gain an understanding of the contextual relationship the building has to the area surrounding it. Moreover, investigation was conducted at the City of Edmonton Archives and Glenbow Museum Archives to determine the historic relevance of the site, building, and its previous programming to this practicum; this investigation also assisted in establishing the significance of the project to the client, users, and city.

DESIGN EXPLORATION. The information and knowledge gathered in the first three methods of inquiry in the practicum were synthesized to facilitate design

exploration and inform decisions made during the design development phase of the project.

REFLECTION. Reflection was the final method of inquiry during the practicum. It served as an avenue for discussing the strengths and limitations of the practicum project, for example: evaluating the original intent of the project and whether or not these intentions were met, questioning what significant discoveries were made along the way in regards to the relationship between interior design and cultural identity and understanding. Furthermore it considers whether or not the practicum approach was suitable and significant to the future of designing cultural spaces.

[key concepts]

contact zone. According to Pratt contact zones are “...[the] social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.”²⁸ This practicum project seeks to re-envision this notion of the contact zone through the introduction of a new typology in cultural spaces – the transcultural centre – a place where individuals have the opportunity to engage in intercultural exchanges in a context that is non-threatening and non-hierarchical.

transculturation. A concept that recognizes culture as dynamic relational phenomenon where multiple identities meet, intersect, and as a result change.²⁹

interiority. “...the conscious and reflexive awareness of self, identity, community and others within the social environment... [I]nteriority examines the innerness of interior design as that which is felt and projected upon within the interior environment via the body as a culturally lived organism.”³⁰

²⁸ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 4.

²⁹ Blume and De Reus, “Transnational Families and the Social Construction of Identity,” 72.

³⁰ Taylor and Preston, “Proximities,” 11.

[chapter summaries]

[chapter 1] everyday negotiations. In this chapter the justification and background knowledge for the exploration of a Chinese Canadian Transcultural Centre was made. As an introduction to the practicum project, this chapter laid out the intentions of the project, and provided insight into how the research and investigation of the project would unfold throughout the practicum process. The next chapter examines the theoretical framework of the project and discusses the theories that have been privileged because of their applicability to the topic.

[chapter 2] literary investigation + analysis.

This chapter reveals the theoretical framework of the literary investigation and the relevancy of the areas

of knowledge researched in cultural identity and interaction, phenomenology, and human geography. It organizes and discusses the literature reviewed into three themes: understanding cultural identity and interaction, understanding our environments, and understanding ourselves in our environments.

[chapter 3] design precedent investigation + analysis. This chapter examines three distinct design projects that have been successful from design conception to completion. An analysis of the design elements and qualities that exist in these projects is used to consider the applicability and appropriateness of strategies used by the designers to inform the design of Common Thread.

[chapter 4] programme + design exploration. The first section of this chapter shows the development

of the design programme for Common Thread. It demonstrates why some programmatic spaces were placed in adjacency to one another and what the intended outcomes of those relationships were. The second section of this chapter discusses the design process of Common Thread throughout the practicum explaining why certain design decisions were made and the outcomes of these decisions. The chapter concludes with the final design proposal.

[chapter 5] conclusion. This chapter gives an overall summary of the project intentions, then discusses what potential there is in furthering the research that begun in this project, and what implications it has to the profession of interior design.

[**common thread**]

literary investigation + analysis

[literary investigation + analysis] **common thread**

The key concepts of Van Manen's human science approach and Ganoe's narrative approach to design provide clarity to the reciprocal relationship between human and environment.³¹ A process where an individual's understanding of the world is informed by lived experiences of being-in-this-world, which is internal and phenomenological, and the interpretation of these experiences in order to understand his or her lifeworld and the relationship he or she has to the environment and the people within it – hermeneutics. This interpretation and understanding comes from a reading of spatial and social cues in an environment that is semiotic, external, and symbolic. Whether we are conscious of this reciprocal relationship or not, our perceptual schemata can be seen as the narrative to our lives that is under constant evolution, challenging and confirming our understanding of who we are in the

³¹ Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 2.
Ganoe, "Design as Narrative," 1.

world around us.³²

The approaches of Van Manen and Ganoe provide a theoretical framework to the primary areas of knowledge investigated in this practicum. Cultural identity and interaction, phenomenology, and human geography were used to filter and extract key theoretical concepts from research conducted through a review of literature on published and peer-reviewed work in these areas. During the literary investigation, the boundaries between the filters naturally began to blend and blur into one another, revealing conceptual overlap that made it difficult to examine these areas as distinct theories. In response, the literature reviewed was organized into three themes: understanding cultural identity and interaction, understanding our environments, and understanding ourselves in our environments. Instead of reviewing the theoretical literature in isolation to the

³² Norberg-Schulz, "The Phenomenon of Place," 424.

arenas that they exist, these three themes assisted in accentuating the applicability of the studies to the practicum topic. The following sections in this chapter are a discussion of these themes and the relevant literature researched in these areas. This chapter concludes with a chart that summarizes these theoretical themes through the key theorists and concepts that informed them, the extracted design implications that these concepts revealed, and the translation of these implications into design principles and potential strategies that can be considered and used during the design process of developing Common Thread.

[understanding cultural identity + interaction]

How can the experience and embodiment of space inform an individual's perception of self in relation to the places they inhabit? The realm of cultural identity is vast and in order to gain a firm understanding of what it encompasses the literary investigation addressed theories on cultural appropriation, differentiation, and the everyday exchanges made in culturally diverse encounters.

This practicum project proposes a Chinese Canadian Transcultural Centre as a “contact zone”, a space that is activated through the interaction of individuals within it. Mary Louise Pratt, a linguist and literary theorist, defines the notion of the contact zone as “...[the] social spaces where disparate cultures

meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.”³³ It is within these zones of interaction that transculturation takes place. Transculturation according to Pratt, is a term that ethnographers have used “...to describe how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture.”³⁴ It is believed that although the flow of information expressed by the dominant culture cannot be controlled, the subordinate group has some choice in what information they choose to interpret into their own lives and what information they choose to reject.³⁵ Pratt proposes that “[t]ransculturation is a phenomenon of the contact zone.”³⁶ It is in the spatial and temporal co-presence of individuals in the contact zone that interactive

33 Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 4.

34 Ibid. 6.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

and improvisational dimensions of culturally diverse encounters occur. Common Thread provides a venue that facilitates the opportunity for a contact zone where the interactions of individuals will contribute to the centre’s sense of place.

The nature of the practicum project considers the relevance of ethnic culture and identity, and the way it is transmitted from one person to the next or one group to the next. Necessarily, it begins by questioning what drives cultural appropriation, why it happens and why it is relevant. According to Kimberly Dovey, a professor of architecture and urban design at the University of Melbourne, Australia, acts of appropriation are a form of caring about and taking from our world.³⁷ Dovey believes that “[a]s caring, appropriation speaks of our primary involvement in the world, our

37 Kimberly Dovey. “The Quest for Authenticity and the Replication of Environmental Meaning” in *Dwelling, Place and Environment: Toward a Phenomenology of Person and World*, ed. David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer. (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985), 37.

concern.”³⁸ This notion of care feeds into our ontological understandings of reality through our assumptions, beliefs and values.³⁹ Through appropriation the “taking from our world” is the process of incorporating the information gathered into our own worlds, the filtering of information and assuming of what we feel relevant into our lives and an understanding of who we are. Dovey also states that: “[a]s we open ourselves to the world of things and places, we bring them meaning through our care and concern, and at the same time these things and places lend meaning to our sense of identity.”⁴⁰ Thus, there is a reciprocal relationship of give and take between our understanding of self and the environments that we surround ourselves with. Common Thread is a deliberate attempt at fostering this reciprocal relationship and the contact zone. It provides

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid

40 Ibid. 37-38.

opportunities for exposure to Chinese and Chinese Canadian cultural experiences that have the potential to instigate the curiosity of the user, causing him or her to question their own ontological perspective and to consider how that affects their sense of identity.

Communication theorist Richard A. Rogers defines cultural appropriation as: “...the use of a culture’s symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture, [that] is inescapable when cultures come into contact, including virtual or representational contact.”⁴¹ According to Rogers there are four categories of cultural appropriation. Transculturation is one of them. Therefore, it is important to review these categories of appropriation in order to understand how transculturation is situated within the spectrum of cultural appropriation.⁴²

41 Rogers, “From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation,” 474.

42 Ibid.

CULTURAL EXCHANGE. This type of appropriation relies on the notion of an equal reciprocal exchange where the power relationship between two or more groups is symmetrical.⁴³ Although this category of cultural appropriation is favorable, it is idealistic in that it does not consider how difficult it is to identify symmetrical or asymmetrical power relations between cultures because of the varying forms that power can take.⁴⁴

CULTURAL DOMINANCE. In cultural dominance there is at least one dominant and one subordinate culture, and a relative lack of choice by the subordinate group because of the dominant group's greater disposition of power.⁴⁵ Rogers states that there are five approaches in which the subordinate group can negotiate its relationship to the dominant culture: assimilation, integration, intransigence, mimicry, and resistance.⁴⁶

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid. 478.

45 Ibid. 479-480.

46 Ibid. 481.

[CULTURAL EXPLOITATION] Cultural exploitation involves a dominant group selectively exploiting cultural elements of a subordinate culture "...without substantive reciprocity, permission, and / or compensation."⁴⁷ There are four main areas of concern with cultural exploitation: cultural degradation, preservation of cultural elements, deprivation of material advantage, and failure to recognize sovereign claims.⁴⁸

TRANSCULTURATION. The fourth category of cultural appropriation, and the most relevant to this practicum is transculturation: "[t]ransculturation posits culture as a relational phenomenon constituted by acts of appropriation, not an entity that merely participates in appropriation."⁴⁹ With this statement Rogers reiterates the idea that all cultures are dynamic and constantly changing, effecting and being affected by other cultures.

47 Ibid. 477.

48 Ibid. 486.

49 Ibid. 474.

From his perspective “...transculturation questions the bounded and proprietary view of culture embedded in other types of appropriation.”⁵⁰ Therefore, there is an underlying reciprocity between the cultures that come into contact with each other as the existing cultural elements brought by each group are absorbed and then morphed to create new elements that are meaningful to them.⁵¹

In a culturally diverse society such as Canada, acts of appropriation are unavoidable and occur through the interaction of different people on a daily basis. Common Thread deliberately creates opportunities for the user to participate in casual or formal programming within the Centre to extend an understanding of aspects of Chinese culture. Whether or not the participant is of Chinese descent, there is to some extent a reflexive awareness of self and a degree to which the user can

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid. 476.

relate to it as being the same, different, or something that he or she should consider adopting.

Rogers asks us to consider two alternative positions on conceiving transculturation as a category of appropriation: as “...a relatively new set of conditions in which appropriation occurs or [as] a new paradigm for thinking about cultural appropriation, a paradigm that challenges the validity and embedded assumptions of previous categories.”⁵² The latter perspective is more appropriate in the case of this practicum as it does not disregard past or current ways of viewing cultural appropriation, but examines these perspectives critically and questions which of its elements are in fact applicable to the current view and reality of cultural identity and understanding.

As advancements in technology continue to develop, cultural information becomes increasingly

⁵² Ibid. 491.

accessible, and as a result transculturation has become an inevitable condition of globalization, spurring the development of hybrid forms of culture. James Lull furthers Rogers' understanding of transculturation when he situates it spatially as "...a process whereby cultural forms literally move through time and space where they interact with other cultural forms and settings, influence each other, produce new forms, and change the cultural settings."⁵³ When culture is viewed as a dynamic entity, the notion that there are 'pure' cultural forms is refuted. Authenticity as the essence of a culture no longer exists, "...[t]ransculturation [as a process] synthesize[s] new cultural genres while they break down traditional cultural categories."⁵⁴ As boundaries and distinctions shift and blur, identity becomes a combination of circumstances

⁵³ Ibid. 491.

James Lull. *Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach* (revised edition). (Cambridge: Polity Press), 242.

⁵⁴ Rogers, "From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation," 491.

Lull, *Media, Communication, Culture*, 242.

instead of an essential condition. Rogers concludes that:

...in an era often described as postmodern (involving cultural fragmentation, multiplicity, indeterminacy, pastiche, and bricolage), postcolonial (in which previously colonized cultures work to recreate themselves from the remains of their precolonial and colonial cultures), and globalized (involving an unprecedented flow of people, discourses, and cultural forms from around the world), cultural appropriation is a central process.⁵⁵

A transcultural centre recognizes that cultural appropriation is a condition of everyday living and provides for the need to give this condition a physical realm where it can be examined, discussed, and explored.

In "Everyday Multiculturalism: Transversal

⁵⁵ Rogers, "From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation," 492.

Crossings and Working Class Cosmopolitans”, senior research fellow Amanda Wise from the Centre for Research on Social Inclusion, Macquarie University, uses Pratt’s definition of the “contact zone” as a point of departure to understanding strategies that are used for negotiating everyday intercultural encounters.⁵⁶ In order to “...smooth and foster relations across difference”, she believes that individuals use “mundane strategies” of quotidian transversality.⁵⁷ Quotidian transversality is described as:

...the process by which local and diasporic modes of inhabitation intersect through momentary cross-cultural transgressions and displacements in everyday, mundane situations. ...[It] highlights how cultural difference can be the basis for commensality and exchange; where

⁵⁶ Amanda Wise. “Everyday Multiculturalism: Transversal Crossings and Working Class Cosmopolitans,” in *Everyday Multiculturalism*, ed. Amanda Wise and Selvaraj Velayutham, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 21-45.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 22-23.

identities are not left behind, but can be shifted and opened up in moments of non-hierarchical reciprocity, and are sometimes mutually reconfigured in the process.⁵⁸

Wise’s conception of quotidian transversality not only addresses the intended user groups of Common Thread by acknowledging the significance of everyday programming and the potential it has in creating opportunities to negotiate and understand cultural identity, but more importantly, she reveals how this form of cultural appropriation can be mutual and non-hierarchical.

Wise discusses how the process of transversal exchanges – forms of intercultural exchange – carry with them narratives of transnational and diasporic histories which transcend the space and time of the exchange.⁵⁹ The narrative quality of sharing these

⁵⁸ Ibid. 23-24.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 27.

histories possess within them perceptual factors – such as material, sensual, and aromatic memories – as well as material connections such as place associations, that are re-embodied by the recipient of the exchange.⁶⁰ Therefore the narrative behind the transversal exchange is a phenomenological experience that leads to an embodied and lived understanding that is incorporated into the lifeworld of the individuals involved in the encounter which connects them across cultural difference.

The people who initiate these types of transversal exchanges are referred to as transversal enablers: individuals in the community who engage and facilitate “...transversal practices involving gift exchange; intercultural knowledge exchange; creating opportunities for the production of cross-cultural embodied commensality; and the production of

⁶⁰ Ibid.

spaces of intercultural care and trust.”⁶¹ The goal of Common Thread is to embody the tasks of these transversal enablers within it by creating a place where the programmatic focus formalizes the spaces of intercultural care and trust, so that individuals have the opportunity to be exposed to and engage in transversal practices.⁶² As Wise states:

...[t]he encounters...perhaps represent not so much a philosophical ideal, but examples of how in everyday situations, subjects approximate modes of recognition in practice, and in turn how a certain ethical relation is established, and how identities are reconfigured in the process.⁶³

It is through mutual responsibility and recognition through reciprocity of agents that perceived boundaries of cultural difference shift and become fluid, where

⁶¹ Ibid. 24.

⁶² Ibid. 34.

⁶³ Ibid. 35.

we gain cultural understanding and acceptance and therefore learn to live in difference. Common Thread is a physical setting where multiple identities are performed, perceived, and transformed in relation to other identities, and as a result, what can extend beyond the realm of the Centre is "...the potential to produce a more general disposition of trust beyond the concrete to the abstract Other through creating the conditions of possibility for inter-cultural trust."⁶⁴

Wise cautions that the ideals of a contact zone can be misinterpreted. When approaching issues of culture most government initiatives and policies have often led to the calcification of cultures "...within boundaries which one should mix".⁶⁵ Because of these implied boundaries certain groups have been more likely to alienate themselves within their respective

⁶⁴ Ibid. 37.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 40.

cultures.⁶⁶ This type of approach to cultural exchange pushes an idealistic image of how diverse cultures should be viewed, rather than providing opportunities where transversal exchanges occur and boundaries are negotiated in a natural interactive manner. It becomes a question of how these intercultural relations are framed. By approaching cultural exchange from a proactive perspective of transversal exchanges and intersections, the reconfiguration of one's identity becomes an embodied understanding that relates to everyday lived experiences, whether these experiences are meaningful or mundane. Just as these exchanges and intersections can be ephemeral in nature and go unnoticed, the reconfiguration of an individual's identity occurs over time and may be so subtle that the change in outlook can go unnoticed until examined under purposeful self-reflection. Wise concludes:

⁶⁶ Ibid.

There are theorists who argue that mere co-existence in diverse cities can produce a cosmopolitan disposition – where ‘indifference to difference’ and ‘toleration’ of side-by-sideness are the most ethical form of co-inhabitation. However, as Amin has argued, coming to terms with difference ‘is a matter of everyday practice...and it needs to be inculcated as a habit of practice (not just co-presence)’.⁶⁷

Common Thread is a place where identity can be practiced and exercised, and whether one is ethnically Chinese or not, an understanding of aspects of Chinese difference can be morphed and absorbed to fit an individual’s understanding of his or her identity. What Wise makes evident is the conditions that make engagements across cultural difference successful, that they are natural and not forced, that there is a level of autonomy and choice in the degree to which the user

⁶⁷ Ibid. 40.

participates in the programming of the Centre.⁶⁸

In “Practices of Difference: Analysing Multiculturalism in Everyday Life”, authors Giovanni Semi, Enzo Colombo, Ilyena Camozzi and Annalisa Frisina criticize how the majority of studies on cultural diversity take on an ideological perspective rather than considering in-depth, the dynamic lived-reality of living in a culturally diverse context.⁶⁹ Through the use of the term everyday multiculturalism, Semi et al. seek “...to reconstruct difference on a sociological level, and the recurrent situations in which it is constructed, invoked, mediated, transformed, disputed or deconstructed.”⁷⁰ They attempt to dispel difference as an aspect of inequality that informs an individual’s sense of identity, instead advocating for a concept of difference that helps

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Giovanni Semi, Enzo Colombo, Ilyena Camozzi and Annalisa Frisina. “Practices of Difference: Analyzing Multiculturalism in Everyday Life,” in *Everyday Multiculturalism*, ed. Amanda Wise and Selvaraj Velayutham, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 66.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 67.

manage an understanding of daily-lived reality and the negotiation of social boundaries.⁷¹ It is a constructivist perspective that:

...consider[s] difference to be a situated production, the result of encounters and conflicts taking place in context characterized by an asymmetrical distribution of resources and power but nonetheless necessary, in terms of attributing meaning to social reality and organizing how to operate in it.⁷²

The hope is that by providing individuals with the opportunity to recognize, understand, and accept difference in cultural spaces such as Common Thread, individuals within society can learn how to better lead their social lives in the public forum.

Semi et al. exemplify the importance of studying everyday life in this inquiry by pointing out

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid. 68.

the importance of context within their approach to understanding difference:

[o]ur attention is therefore focused on concrete, mundane, everyday interactions, where difference becomes a resource in defining the situation, regulating relations and defining social hierarchies, with the awareness that it is something unstable, in constant evolution, and always open to question.⁷³

Within this public forum an individual's identity has the opportunity to evolve through social encounters of the everyday. Furthermore, the everyday reiterates the theoretical relevance of interiority to this practicum as it brings focus back to: "...the conscious and reflexive awareness of self, identity, community and others within a social environment".⁷⁴ The spaces that individuals occupy, whether consciously or unconsciously, identify

⁷³ Ibid. 68-69.

⁷⁴ Taylor and Preston, "Proximities," 11.

and categorize them and consequently direct the way they behave. Through the articulation of space, individuals understand their roles or positions relative not only to the physical realm but also relative to the other individuals within that space. If one of these factors should change – the arrangement of space or the individuals occupying it – the social dynamic of the space also changes and roles are simultaneously revised and adjusted. What is discovered about oneself in the transversal exchanges of Common Thread could extend beyond the context of the centre and into the realm of everyday life, informing the way an individual interprets, negotiates, and understands his or her lifeworld.⁷⁵

Similarly to Wise and Semi et al., Greg Noble acknowledges the importance of understanding cultural diversity and interaction as an inescapable consequence

⁷⁵ Wise, “Everyday Multiculturalism,” 27.

Semi, Colombo, Camozzi and Frisina, “Practices of Difference,” 69.

of globalization.⁷⁶ Noble’s standpoint differs from Wise and Semi et al. in that he uses the term “everyday cosmopolitanism” – as opposed to “everyday multiculturalism” – to focus on the ethics of cohabitation and to move away from the political aspects of ethnicity.⁷⁷ He refers to everyday cosmopolitanism as “...an open-ness to cultural diversity, a practical relation to plurality of cultures, a willingness and tendency to engage with others.”⁷⁸ By examining case-studies Noble draws on the degree to which citizens engage in everyday cosmopolitanism through ‘people-mixing’ that “...helps to produce an evolving cultural diversity in which people manage the competing demands of cultural identity and social co-existence at home, at work and in leisure spaces.”⁷⁹ Common Thread creates

⁷⁶ Greg Noble. “Everyday Cosmopolitanism and the Labour of Intercultural Community” in *Everyday Multiculturalism*, ed. Amanda Wise and Selvaraj Velayutham, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 46-48.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 46.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 48.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 46-48.

this opportunity for people-mixing, so that individuals begin to incorporate a more open understanding of cultural difference into their lives. This understanding of cultural difference becomes embedded in spatial awareness as individuals develop their ability to navigate through spaces negotiating behavior and movement depending on what is appropriate for that situation.

Individuals' navigation with their bodies and the mediation of their behavior on a daily basis leads to what Noble calls a phenomenal manifestation of everyday cosmopolitanism, that is:

“...the ways cultural differences get negotiated in the habitual engagements of ordinary encounters which produce ‘local liveability’, help us to begin to understand how intercultural relations contribute to localized (as well as diasporic) sense of community.”⁸⁰

The transcultural centre helps develop a sense of

⁸⁰ Ibid. 51.

community by providing a venue where social practices of cosmopolitanism are performed through encounters of everyday life. The outcome of these practices and negotiations lead to a collective sense of identity and understanding and what Noble refers to as an intercultural community, where there is “...a sharedness of meanings and practices among consociates in particular spaces and times...”⁸¹ The transversal exchanges within the context of Common Thread have the opportunity to produce what Amanda Wise calls:

“...moments of ‘hopeful intercultural encounters’...exchanges that work towards mutuality, and the creation of relations of recognition and reciprocity which get over or around misunderstanding to produce co-existence in the local by managing intercultural relations as interpersonal ones.”⁸²

These daily encounters of cultural diversity become

⁸¹ Ibid. 59.

⁸² Ibid.

acts of recognition that are brought down to scale of the individual – versus that of a particular ethnic group – empowering the individual to better understand, negotiate and navigate herself through space and time across mutual understanding and respect.⁸³

summary of key points

This section of the literary analysis helps to define the concepts of transculturation and the contact zone in the context of this practicum, that is a non-hierarchical venue where individuals of different cultural backgrounds and identities have the opportunity to participate in cross-cultural exchanges. Through the incorporation of programming that meets the everyday needs of users, the potential of creating these opportunities for transversal exchanges increases. It further implicates some key circumstances that can

foster a greater likelihood in the occurrence of these engagements across cultural difference in Common Thread. These circumstances implied that there should be a sense of autonomy in Common Thread where the user feels like they have a choice in deciding which spaces they move through, which programmes they participate in and to what degree. This demonstrates that not only should the centre incorporate everyday programming but that the programming within Common Thread should allow for multiple levels of participation and that the spatial qualities and features of the spaces introduce these activities in a way that is simultaneously intriguing and non-threatening.

⁸³ Ibid.

[understanding our environments]

This section of the literary investigation examines theories that relate to our spatial, phenomenological, and geographical understanding of the environments we inhabit. It takes a tangible approach to our understanding of space and place by considering the spatial characteristics and cues that are in our environments. In the next section of the literary investigation, “understanding ourselves in our environments”, the focus shifts to the ways in which the environment is received and perceived by our minds and bodies, and how this perception affects the way that we interpret and behave in our environments. These two sections of the literature review discuss similar topics but from different perspectives. Therefore, many of the ideas and theories discussed have conceptual

overlap and naturally lend a level of understanding to one another.

geographical place

The philosophical and abstract underpinnings of phenomenology can be confusing and evasive in how they can be directly linked to design. Phenomenological human geography lends a tangible perspective on space and place through the notion of embodied experience, implicating the significance of meaning, movement and the sensual qualities of place, while encompassing within it notions of existentialism. In “Geographical Experiences and Being-in-the-world: The Phenomenological Origins of Geography”, Canadian geographer Edward Relph offers a succinct conceptualization of how geography, self-awareness,

and identity are interrelated.⁸⁴ Relph adopts Yi-fu Tuan's perception of being-in-the-world as "...the basic state of human existence, ...[that] indicates the fact that everything which exists has an environment."⁸⁵ This perspective of being-in-the-world points to the inseparability of understanding self without an equal consideration of the environment and context in which we find ourselves. Relph elaborates on Yi-Fu Tuan's notion of being-in-the-world through his definition of the geographical experience, which "...refers to the entire realm of feelings, acts and experiences of individuals in which they apprehend themselves in a distinct relationship with their environment."⁸⁶ It is within this understanding of geographical experience that a link can be made to the notion of interiority; that is "...

84 Edward Relph. "Geographical Experiences and Being-in-the-World: The Phenomenological Origins of Geography" in *Dwelling, Place and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World*, ed. David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer. (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985). 15-31.

85 Ibid. 17.

86 Ibid. 17-20.

the conscious and reflexive awareness of self, identity, community and others within the social environment... [I]nteriority examines the innerness of interior design as that which is felt and projected upon within the interior environment via the body as a culturally lived organism."⁸⁷

Relph furthers the relevance of the geographic experience to this practicum when describing it in reference to region, and his belief that through geographical experience, an individual can develop a relationship to a region.⁸⁸ This belief brings insight to the perspective of the users of Common Thread and what it might mean to be, or not be, Chinese. Whether an individual is a part of the diasporic population from China, a subsequent generation of Chinese Canadian descent, or of non-Chinese descent, he or she will have some regard or semblance of what China as a region

87 Taylor and Preston, "Proximities," 11.

88 Relph, "Geographical Experiences and Being-in-the-World," 22.

means to their sense of identity. As Relph explains it: “[i]dentity with a region in this way may be rather superficial and involve simplifications of personal and place differences, but it does precede any academic, geographical attempt to classify regions.”⁸⁹ Therefore, the degree to which this semblance resonates with the individual and potentially through to their outward identity will be stronger for some than for others. The programming within Common Thread exposes users to traditional as well as contemporary customs of Chinese culture, whether an individual is of Chinese descent or not, this exposure will give individuals the opportunity to explore, interpret, and reflect on what these traditions and customs mean to their own identity.

movement through space

The study of phenomenological geography

⁸⁹ Ibid.

informs an understanding of experiential place through the everyday movement of individuals from one place to another, or through the synchronized movement of many people through one particular place. Building on phenomenological theories of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, environment-behavior researcher and professor of architecture David Seamon believes that the routine movement of a body through space from one point to another is pivotal to understanding the phenomena of place.⁹⁰ Knowledge of this type of bodily movement through space will contribute to an understanding of how participants within Common Thread will use the space and further inform the development and placement of the programming within the centre. In particular these theories seem significant to the everyday programme of the space, which is the programming that enables the centre to be of use on a

⁹⁰ Cresswell, *Place*, 32.

daily basis.

In “Body-Subject, Time-Space Routines, and Place-Ballets”, Seamon defines phenomenological geography as an area of research that “...borrows from both fields of knowing and directs its attention to the essential nature of man’s dwelling on earth.”⁹¹ He believes that within the realm of phenomenology there is an inherent acceptance that:

...realizes that culture, history, and personality no doubt filter and condition patterns of living, [but that] Phenomenology [also] holds a certain given-ness to human experience which extends beyond particular person, place and moment.⁹²

Seamon uses the definitions of phenomenologist

91 David Seamon. “Body-Subject, Time-Space Routines, and Place-Ballets” in *The Human Experience*, ed. Anne Buttimer and David Seamon. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980), 148.

“...both fields of knowing...” refers to the disciplines of human geography and phenomenology.

92 Ibid. 149.

Amedeo Giorgi’s natural attitude and lifeworld to frame his study of everyday movement and the phenomena of place. These definitions explain that the world of the “...natural attitude – the unnoticed and unquestioned acceptance of the things and experiences of daily living” is encompassed within the “...lifeworld – the taken-for-granted pattern and context of everyday life, by which the person routinely conducts his or her day-to-day existence without having to make it constantly an object of conscious attention.”⁹³ Seamon believes that everyone possesses what he calls bodily intentionality, the innate ability for the body to direct routine movement and behavior subconsciously.⁹⁴ Through the analogy of dance Seamon investigates the daily routine tasks and movements of individuals through space and time.⁹⁵

He begins with the notion of the body-ballet,

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid. 155.

95 Cresswell, Place, 34.

which is “...a set of integrated behaviors which sustain a particular task or aim.”⁹⁶ Over a prolonged period of time these behaviors become habitual and merge into what Seamon labels a time-space routine. Within this time-space routine are a “...series of behaviors which are in themselves body-ballets” which become second nature and are subconsciously directed by the body-subject.⁹⁷ As this time-space routine becomes a set of context-specific actions, the body-ballets of other individuals begin to overlap within that given environment. The bodies within this environment naturally move in a synchronized manner around other objects and individuals within the space navigating and negotiating proximities and become what is known as a place-ballet. As defined by Seamon, “[t]he place-ballet is a fusion of many time-space routines and body-ballets in terms of place...[that] generates a strong sense of place

⁹⁶ Seamon, “Body-Subject, Time-Space Routines, and Place-Ballets”. 157.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 158.

because of its continual and regular human activity.”⁹⁸

An example of an individual’s body-ballet at Common Thread could include attending dim sum on a daily basis. Enroute to dim sum the participant stops to pick up the Chinese newspaper from the bookstore. At dim sum he or she engages in conversation with the staff and other diners at the restaurant. After dim sum, he or she may join in on a game of mahjong or Chinese chess. This is a body-ballet that could happen everyday wherein the individual moves through the space so often that they do so without having to consciously decide on their movements. It is a time-space routine. This time-space routine overlaps with other individuals using the same amenities thus becoming a place-ballet.

Common Thread aims to embody the notion of the place-ballet, where the environmental vitality created through regular use of the centre will foster a supportive

⁹⁸ Ibid. 159.

Cresswell, Place, 34.

and safe context that will encourage users to engage in informal transversal exchanges.⁹⁹ Seamon sets an ideal scenario for the CCTC when he states:

[p]eople come together in time and space as each individual is involved in his or her own time-space routines and body-ballets. They recognize each other and often partake in conversation. Out of these daily, taken-for-granted interpersonal dynamics, these spaces of activity evolve a sense of place that each person does his small part in creating and sustaining.¹⁰⁰

Within this statement is the implication and importance of incorporating everyday programming into the CCTC above and beyond the formal and seasonal programming. Through everyday programming layers of movement from individual body-ballets and time-space

99 Transversal exchanges as defined by Amanda Wise, "Everyday Multiculturalism," 21-45.

100 Seamon, "Body-Subject, Time-Space Routines, and Place-Ballets," 161.

routines could develop that "...regularly brings people face to face who otherwise would probably not know each other."¹⁰¹ As these individual body-ballets coincide the interactions that occur are at first impromptu and develop initially out of accidental meetings.¹⁰² Over time these impromptu exchanges could lead to the development of familiarity of the space and have the potential to develop a sense of community - a place-ballet.¹⁰³

It is not only the everyday programming that brings value to the development of a sense of place at Common Thread. Seamon discusses the qualities that a place must possess in order to come to fruition: "[p]lace...requires both regularity and variety, and order and change. Place-ballet is one means by which a

101 Ibid. 162.

102 Ibid. 159.

103 Ibid. 159-162.

Impromptu exchanges such as people-mixing as defined by Greg Noble, "Everyday Cosmopolitanism and the Labour of Intercultural Community," 46-48. And transversal exchanges as defined by Amanda Wise, "Everyday Multiculturalism," 21-45.

place comes to hold these qualities.”¹⁰⁴ This statement can be interpreted from a spatial and programmatic perspective. To create an engaging space it needs to possess both continuity – so that users know what to expect and feel a sense of security in that place – and dynamism – where the space and programming is not so predictable that it becomes redundant and loses its sense of excitement. Therefore, the CCTC needs to find a balance between being simultaneously dynamic and stable.

From a programmatic perspective, this balance at Common Thread will be found between the constant everyday programming that helps to sustain some of the basic needs of daily life, and that of the seasonal programs that include courses, workshops and annual activities, as well as the more diverse programming of special functions, festivities, and emerging Chinese

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 163.

cultural practices that present themselves throughout the course of a year.¹⁰⁵ Spatially, this balance between dynamic and stable could be found in the design qualities that come across as predictable and familiar, juxtaposed to the qualities that are unexpected and surprising. The placement of programming within the centre and the adjacencies they have to one another will facilitate the creation of layered movement and body-ballets but individually these spaces need to possess a spatial quality that draws users across the centre.

Seamon concludes with the importance in striving for the embodiment of a place-ballet and its theoretical and practical implications:

¹⁰⁵ An example of an emerging Chinese Scottish Canadian tradition is the annual Gung Haggis Fat Choy banquet dinner. An event that first started in 1998 in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada that celebrates both Chinese New Year and Scottish Robbie Burns Day. Another event that encourages intercultural exchanges is the Human Library which seeks encourage dialogue and to breakdown cultural barriers. See figure 1 on page 3.

[f]irst it joins people, time, and place in an organic whole and it portrays place as a distinct and authentic entity in its own right...[P]lace-ballet depicts a whole greater than its elements: place is a dynamic entity with an identity as distinct and authentic as the individual people and elements comprising that place. Place-ballet, in other words, is an environmental synergy in which human and material parts unintentionally foster a larger whole with its own special rhythm and character.¹⁰⁶

These conclusions demonstrate the reciprocal relationship that place identity and human identity have on each other. Through the movement of our bodies a sense of place is created by the activation of space. As we engage with space we contribute to the identity of that place, and the places that we inhabit contribute to our identity as individuals and groups.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

phenomenology, space + place

Architectural theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz examines the works of phenomenologist forefathers Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl by discussing the importance of sense of place in architecture, as he believes that it is “[a]rchitecture [that] clarifies the location of human existence...”¹⁰⁷ In his article, “The Phenomenon of Place”, he points to the potential of phenomenology to lend itself to a meaningful understanding of genius loci, or “...the spirit of particular place.”¹⁰⁸ It is within this understanding of genius loci that a reference can be drawn to the significance of the transcultural centre to society where the notion of genius loci “...provides an ‘other’ or opposite that humanity must confront in order to dwell.”¹⁰⁹ As an

¹⁰⁷ Kate Nesbitt. *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965-1995*, ed. Kate Nesbitt (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996) 412.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

inevitable condition of globalization, the purpose of the CCTC is to provoke and engage users to consider their identities in reference to others and to sustain a level of understanding and respect for Chinese and Chinese Canadian Cultures. By framing elements of the site, context, and culture layers of significance can add to experience of interaction and exchange at the Common Thread; an experience that has the potential to extend beyond the walls of the centre and develop a sense of understanding, confidence, and trust of intercultural difference.

Norberg-Schulz critiques the situated experiences of the everyday when he states: “[e]veryday experiences moreover tell us that different actions need different environments to take place in a satisfactory way.”¹¹⁰ This statement supports the spatial argument made by Seamon that in order for a place

¹¹⁰ Norberg-Schulz, “The Phenomenon of Place,” 415.

to be meaningful it must possess a balance between dynamic and stable qualities and elements.¹¹¹ Through a phenomenological approach to design these spatial qualities can be achieved. Architects and designers have focused on the elements of space that contribute to an embodied experience of place and this “...has led to a renewed interest in the sensuous qualities of materials, light, and color, and in the symbolic, tactile significance of the joint. These aspects contribute to the poetic quality that Heidegger says is essential to dwelling.”¹¹² It is this poetic quality, whether abrupt or delicate, that resonates through to the user of the space and makes the experience of that place meaningful.

Juhani Pallasmaa is an architect, architectural theorist, and advocate for a phenomenological approach to design.¹¹³ In his essay “An Architecture

¹¹¹ Seamon, “Body-Subject, Time-Space Routines, and Place-Ballets,” 163.

¹¹² Nesbitt, *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture*, 413.

¹¹³ Juhani Pallasmaa. *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2005).

of the Seven Senses”, Pallasmaa argues for the need for architects and designers to step away from the current approach to design that puts visual stimulus as its central pursuit, and that leads to a design that is experientially disconnected from the user.¹¹⁴ Instead he advocates for a thoughtful and conscientious approach to the design of spaces through an understanding of the human senses:

[t]he authenticity of architectural experience is grounded in the tectonic language of the building and the comprehensibility of the act of construction to the senses.¹¹⁵

He expands on the notion of the commonly known five senses through which we experience architecture – that is through our eyes, ears, nose, skin, and tongue – and

114 Juhanni Pallasmaa. “An Architecture of the Seven Senses” in *Questions of Perception: Phenomenology in Architecture* ed. Steven Holl, Juhani Pallasmaa and Alberto Perez-Gomez. (San Francisco: William Stout Publishers, 2006), 35.

115 Ibid.

in an emphatic manner adds two new bodily senses: those of the skeleton and muscle.¹¹⁶ Like the embodied experience of place described by phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty and environment-behavior researcher Seamon, Pallasmaa iterates the body’s natural ability to experience and perceive scale and proportion through the skeletal and muscular senses. The reciprocal interplay of these seven senses works together to elevate the participant’s conscious perception of space and place creating not only an intellectual understanding but also eliciting an emotional awareness.¹¹⁷ Through an understanding and synthesis of this notion of an embodied experience the design of Common Thread endeavors to become a meaningful place to its users and the city of Edmonton.

What becomes evident in Pallasmaa’s essay is an underlying theme in this practicum – the notion of

116 Ibid. 30.

117 Ibid.

reciprocity and the reciprocal relationship people have with their environments: “[w]e behold, touch, listen and measure the world with our entire bodily existence and the experiential world is organized and articulated around the centre of the body.”¹¹⁸ Spaces are designed with the intention to be encountered by humans, thus the focus of this intention is how individuals will experience these spaces. As individuals engage with these spaces and the people and objects within them, the space is activated and an atmospheric quality resonates. From this, a sense of place develops which, in turn, can contribute to the users’ awareness of self.

summary of key points

This section of the literary investigation demonstrates how a sequence of routine bodily movements through particular spaces – body-ballet –

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 35.

contributes to an understanding of a sense of place. The physical environment and programmatic qualities of a space provides a context in which the body is able to receive and respond to spatial and social cues, orientating the way the individual will navigate through the space. The understanding of place-ballet indicates that the design of Common Thread must incorporate key spatial qualities that vary the user’s experience in the space, keeping them engaged and interested, but at the same time offering some stability to the environment that helps users ground themselves within the space. It is not only the thoughtful placement of programmatic adjacencies within the centre that will contribute to the notion of the body-ballet through the Common Thread, but by also utilizing design elements within the spaces, such as materiality or the delineation of space, a sense of movement through these areas can further encourage the movement of the body to follow suit. This

section further prompts consideration of how Common Thread can engage an understanding of culture and the building in its past, present and future, through strategies such as framing, emphasizing, and privileging of spaces within the centre.

[understanding ourselves in our environments]

This section of the review of literature will examine theories that focus on how individuals receive and perceive their environments and the way that these perceptions of the environment help inform their behavior and understanding of identity.

perception, memory + shifting dispositions

From the time that an individual is born he or she is reading and rereading the environment in which they exist, developing what Norberg-Schulz calls perceptual schemata.¹¹⁹ The development of perceptual schemata begins in childhood and builds with each new experience and individual encounter: “[t]he schemata comprise universal structures which are inter-human, as well as locally-determined and culturally-conditioned structures.”¹²⁰ Objects within the environment act as identifiers within the spatial configuration of the place, setting these objects as pieces within conditioned perceptual structures that imply cues to how a space is read as it is encountered.¹²¹ Thus, perceptual schemata is used to reflect on an understanding of new spatial experiences and helps individuals orient themselves and

119 Norberg-Schulz, “The Phenomenon of Place,” 423.

120 Ibid.

121 Ibid. 424.

identify with that place.¹²²

It is this personal perceptual schemata that sets all users of Common Thread apart from one another. Although individuals may have similar experiences, each individual brings their own set of past experiences, ideas, and perspectives that in turn will affect their perception of the transcultural centre and their identity within, and in reference to, it.¹²³ In understanding one's identity, certain claims of identity can seem more definitive than others depending on the places and things it stands in reference to. For instance, making the claim that one is Chinese Canadian has stronger place-specific or region-specific associations than claiming that one is an interior designer.¹²⁴ The design guideline that can be drawn from Norberg-Schulz is that: "[i]t is therefore not only important that our environment

has a spatial structure which facilitates orientation, but that it consists of concrete objects of identification."¹²⁵

A thoughtful and conscientious approach to spatial design and the objects placed within it are important as they act as the points of reference to the perceptual schemata. Through every new physical confrontation an individual encounters with that environment a revised interpretation and iteration of perception and understanding of that place is materialized.¹²⁶

In Sensory Design, architect and interior designer Joy Monice Malnar and professor of fine arts at Loyola University Chicago Frank Vodvarka, examine phenomenology through the concept of perception as the data present after a sensation is received and interpreted. They challenge the designer to be conscientiously open to experiencing environments through the notion of embodiment: "[w]hen embodiment

¹²² Ibid. 424-425.

¹²³ Ibid. 425.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Cresswell. *Place*, 35.

– acceptance of our sensory, feeling selves – is embraced, sensory stimulation, movement and activities can become sources of design ideas.”¹²⁷ Malnar and Vodvarka recognize that bodies are fluid, permeable, and changing, and that there is a necessity for different types of spatial experiences to meet the needs of these bodies under different conditions and circumstances.¹²⁸ This runs parallel to the belief that identities are also dynamic and changing and that the design of cultural spaces like Common Thread can have a transformative affect on perceptions of self.

Malnar and Vodvarka simultaneously differentiate and link the connection between sensation and perception in understanding place, where: “...the full comprehension of place relies not just on sensation (the flow of data received through the sense organs)

¹²⁷ Joy Monice Malnar and Frank Vodvarka. *Sensory Design*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004) 21.

¹²⁸ Ibid. 31.

but also on perception (the data after it is processed and interpreted).”¹²⁹ They hypothesize that one way in which individuals respond to sensory experiences is through cognitive recognition of a stimulus that triggers a familiar memory situated in a specific time and place, a type of reaction that evolves out of memories which have lead to “sensory imprinting”.¹³⁰ Consistent with Norberg-Schulz’s notion of perceptual schemata, Malnar and Vodvarka believe that a stimulus can trigger a single sensation that sets into motion a memory of the same sensation in a different context, which “... can invoke still other sensations, the sum of which the mind uses to reconstruct the dimensions of particular places.”¹³¹ In reference to Common Thread, what elements and objects of design can act as identifiers to evoke memories of being or not being Chinese? Under

¹²⁹ Ibid. 21.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

new circumstances and environments, what potential do these elements and objects have in reconstructing an individual's perception of cultural identity and sense of place? Can the design elements be manipulated to imply a sense of Chinese-ness to the centre without becoming a pastiche of Chinese stereotypes? Common Thread aims to challenge users perception of what it means to be Chinese by providing a venue for transversal exchanges and people-mixing, in the hopes of developing a strong intercultural community of trust.

Malnar and Vodvarka quote Frances Downing when trying to make sense of the phenomenon of memory:

[m]emories float, waltz, and flash into our consciousness, welcome or not, infiltrating thought and powering imagination...Rather than a simple repository of experience, memory is dynamic, often seeming to form and reform experience without our conscious permission.¹³²

Therefore, memory not only recollects an image in the mind's eye of these remembered places but it also stirs a remembrance of the ephemeral qualities of that space that propels the individual into re-living the embodied experience of that place. These ephemeral qualities – which involve the sensual experiences of sight, sound, touch, taste, smell, and muscle and skeleton – affect individuals physiologically but also impact them psychologically and emotionally.¹³³

If human beings carry with them their own individual memories and perceptual schemata, what

¹³² Ibid. 21-22.

¹³³ Ibid. 22.

makes some elements and objects of space and place take on a more generalized meaning that reaches a wider population of individuals? As a society we shape our physical world through our belief systems and societal structures, and in turn the spaces that we occupy are designed to reflect and carry out these social realms. Therefore, within the cultural context of individuals' everyday lives exist the social and physical realms that accompany the perceptions of space and place. Malnar and Vodvarka point out that "...the world as a 'collective field of experience' is different for different cultures"; however at the same time there is certainty in knowing that there are shared perceptions of the environment that transfer beyond one culture.¹³⁴ Malnar and Vodvarka rationalize this point through the perspective of phenomenologist Edmund Husserl's differentiation of experience, stating that "...such

¹³⁴ Malnar and Vodvarka, *Sensory Design*, 24.

differences lay in the arena of immediate experience, whereas on a more profound level there exists a deeper more unitary life-world."¹³⁵ This understanding of the unitary lifeworld recognizes that some users of Common Thread might not be able to read, interpret, and relate to the environment. Nevertheless, even for those who cannot relate to the centre, the experience of engaging in the space will contribute to their perceptual schemata and can potentially be recollected when encountering a similar cultural setting in the future.

Psychologist James J. Gibson offers insight into how this unitary lifeworld might exist through his concept of affordances.¹³⁶ Gibson believed that the traditional perspective on the sense modalities of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch focused on a passive transmission of receiving environmental

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Edward S. Reed. *James J. Gibson and the Psychology of Perception*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) 4.

stimuli, while in reality it was through the active and intentional mode of the perceptual systems that a meaningful understanding of one's environment came to fruition.¹³⁷ His definition of perceptual systems being "...the neural and psychological processes involved in acquiring information..." he further "...emphasized the remarkable ability of the perceptual systems to search for complex information, to learn to adapt and modify their functioning, refining and improving their skill at information pickup."¹³⁸ This approach to how individuals perceive their environments reiterates the continual process of perceptual schemata, where humans constantly confront and negotiate their understanding of the world around them, receiving and perceiving information, then confirming or editing this understanding.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Norberg-Schulz, "The Phenomenon of Place," 423.

Furthermore, Gibson views the self as grounded in the world – that the self and the environment in which the self exists are inseparable.¹⁴⁰ According to Gibson, within the lifeworld are objects that yield affordances, an affordance being an environmental offering – suggesting how the individual should react or behave in reference to the object or the spatial cue that object offers.¹⁴¹ The applicability of this concept of affordances to interior design, and in particular to the design of Common Thread, is that within every individual there is an innate sensibility to perceive and comprehend the objects and environmental cues around them, and the uses that these objects and spaces have in affording some sort of action or behavior. Gibson argues "[a] single object

may yield different affordances to different people, not

¹⁴⁰ Reed, James J. Gibson and the Psychology of Perception, 280, 289, 293.

David Seamon. "Phenomenology, Place, Environment, and Architecture: A Review of the Literature," *Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter* (Manhattan: Kansas State University, 2000). http://www.arch.ksu.edu/seamon/Seamon_reviewEAP.htm (accessed September 15, 2010).

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 293.

because affordances are subjective but because they are functional, related to the observer as well as the environment.”¹⁴² This argument acknowledges that individually human beings may require different spatial circumstances to achieve a particular end, but also recognizes that a level of universality can exist in objects and spaces that elicit a similar reaction every time it is encountered. Knowledge and consideration of this innate sensibility suggests that the designer should consider how the objects and spaces they design convey these affordances, and that an opportunity exists in which the design of these objects and spaces can be employed in a fashion that presents these affordances in new and novel ways without compromising the intended function.

¹⁴² Ibid.

the reciprocity of human-environment relationship + inside-outside

Behavioral geography, an area of research often related to the philosophical arenas of existentialism, hermeneutics, and phenomenology, examines the perspectives and practices of everyday living that are embedded, habitual, and that typically go unnoticed.¹⁴³ In the article “Philosophical Directions in Behavioral Geography with an Emphasis on the Phenomenological Contribution”, David Seamon continues his examination on theory surrounding the self, daily life, lifeworld, and natural attitude.¹⁴⁴ He uses a reflexive approach to behavioral geography in order to purposefully investigate the practices of daily life that are often performed

¹⁴³ David Seamon. “Philosophical Directions in Behavior Geography with an Emphasis on the Phenomenological Contribution” in *Environmental Perception and Behavior: An Inventory and Prospect*, ed. Thomas F. Saarinen, David Seamon and James L. Sell. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984) 169.

¹⁴⁴ David Seamon. “Body-Subject, Time-Space Routines, and Place-Ballets” in *The Human Experience of Space and Place* ed. Anne Buttner and David Seamon. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980), 149.

without conscious thought.¹⁴⁵ The main intention of this reflection is "...a self-conscious consideration of lifeworld, the taken-for-granted pattern and context of everyday living through which the person conducts his day-to-day life without having to make it an object of conscious attention."¹⁴⁶

Throughout the literary investigation, references have been made to the reciprocal nature of the human-environment relationship.¹⁴⁷ Historically theories on this relationship have taken on a dualistic perspective, however, conceptualizing an imbalance in cause-and-effect between humans and the environment, where humans control and impose on the environments that they find themselves in, or vice versa, that the environment controls and imposes on humans.¹⁴⁸ In an

145 Seamon, "Philosophical Directions in Behavior Geography with an Emphasis on the Phenomenological Contribution," 169.

146 Ibid.

Norberg-Schulz. "The Phenomenon of Place," 423.

147 Seamon, "Philosophical Directions in Behavior Geography with an Emphasis on the Phenomenological Contribution," 173.

148 Ibid.

effort to dismantle this dualistic perspective Seamon's phenomenological approach to behavioral geography asserts that:

...human consciousness and experience necessarily involve some aspect of world as their object, which in turn provides the context for the meaning of consciousness and experience. There is, in other words, "an undissolvable unity" between person and world, or being-in-the-world, as phenomenologists call it to emphasize a sense of immersion and integral person-world fusion.¹⁴⁹

This approach reiterates the notion that the self cannot be viewed separately from the world because all human experience is grounded in the world, and simultaneously the human experience of the world is one that is embodied. Seamon anchors this phenomenological outlook on the human-environment relationship through

149 Ibid. 174.

Relph's definition of place and an understanding of his inside-outside continuum; where place is viewed as "...a fusion of human and natural order and a significant center of a person's immediate experience of the world...places have a meaning in direct proportion to the degree that one feels inside that place."¹⁵⁰ There are four degrees of feeling inside a place in Relph's inside-outside continuum. From this continuum an opportunity exists to gain insight into the type of relationship users could have with the CCTC.

The first degree on the continuum is that of empathetic insideness and is "...a situation where a person who is an outsider in terms of place works through concern, interest and empathy to understand that place and community to know its essential meaning and structure..."¹⁵¹ This type of user exudes that of a secondary user to Common Thread, where the

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

individual does not necessarily feel that they contribute to the overall ambience of the place, but still uses the space and the amenities within it on a regular basis.

Along the continuum existential insideness, on the other hand, is "...a situation of profound, unself-conscious immersion in place and the experience most people know when they are in their own community or region."¹⁵² This type of insideness describes a member of the primary user group of Common Thread, where the comfort level is reflected in the level and ease of engagement the individual has with the other users, programming, and space.

In opposition to these feelings of insideness, there are also degrees of feeling outside along the continuum. Existential outsideness is when the individual feels "...a sense of alienation and homelessness."¹⁵³

This could describe the way a new user feels when

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

they first encounter Common Thread. Without knowing exactly what to expect in the place the user may feel overwhelmed upon their first visit. This feeling is not only reflective of a person's first encounter with a particular space, but in a broader sense may also reflect the feeling that one feels when first immigrating to a new country or when moving to a new region or community.

The final degree of insideness on the continuum is objective outsideness, which is "...the intentional separating of person from place in order to study it selectively in terms of one particular attribute or activity."¹⁵⁴ This type of individual often personifies a type of tertiary user of Common Thread, individuals who are the most removed and least invested in the centre, choosing to participate only when some form of programming peaks their interest about the Chinese or Chinese Canadian culture. An example of this would be

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

attending the Chinese New Year festivities to observe the traditional blessings done through dragon dance performances.

What becomes succinctly obvious from an understanding and interpretation of Relph's inside-outside continuum is the realization "...that the same place may foster considerably different modes of insideness and outsideness for different individuals and groups."¹⁵⁵ The value that this statement has to the design of the CCTC is seen in how the spatial quality of the design can either promote or hinder these feelings of insideness and outsideness. The centre needs to incorporate and accommodate different levels of immersion. These differing levels of immersion give the user a sense of autonomy in the space, allowing them to negotiate the level of engagement with the programming, users, and environment. A design

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

approach that envelops this perspective provides the user with an opportunity to challenge their comfort level and to confront an understanding of themselves and their cultural identity.

social space

The notion of immersion is further discussed by geographer Bobby M. Wilson in his article “Social Space and Symbolic Interaction,” where he rationalizes the importance of studying social space in order to understand how human interaction informs an individual’s perception of space and place.¹⁵⁶ Wilson focuses on social space at the micro-level to gain an understanding of the dynamics of interaction: “... within this approach, the nature of people’s interaction in space is taken as a critical variable to the way they

¹⁵⁶ Bobby M. Wilson. “Social Space and Symbolic Interaction” in *The Human Experience of Space and Place* ed. Anne Buttner and David Seamon. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980) 135-147.

experience space. [Where] the role of social interaction [is] a critical cue to people’s movement in space...”¹⁵⁷

Wilson’s discussion of symbolic interaction is predicated on philosopher and sociologist George Mead’s notion of intersubjectivity, where “...human actions [are] in part based on things that have shared meanings...Thus, the meaning of things located in space is derived in large part from social interaction.”¹⁵⁸ It was Mead’s belief that interactive social cues – such as reference groups – could affect the way individuals within space behaved, and that this behavior was dependant on the level of association the individual felt with the group.¹⁵⁹ This conceptualization of human interaction and space not only demonstrates the human-environment relationship argument that is so prevalent throughout the literary investigation, but it

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 137.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 139.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

also reiterates the ability for shared perception and experience across a population of individuals.

Moreover, Wilson examines sociologist Tomatsu Shibutani's definition of reference groups as something that individuals use to simultaneously frame an understanding of themselves and the context in which they exist.¹⁶⁰ Shibutani theorized three potential ways in which an individual could view these reference groups:

(1) groups which serve as a dimension for comparing and ranking oneself in society; (2) groups to which [individuals] aspire; (3) groups whose perspectives are assumed by actors in an event. How one defines the situation that confronts him depends upon his organized perspective.¹⁶¹

An individual's perspective frames his or her view of what they know and understand about themselves

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

Tomatsu Shibutani. "Reference Groups as Perspectives" in *American Journal of Sociology*, 60. (1955) 564.

and the world around them, which in turn affects how they will respond and behave towards the people and environment they find themselves in.

Wilson delves into Mead's theory of symbolic interaction in order to gain an understanding of the self, where symbolic interaction is defined as the individual's interaction with a group that significantly contributes to his or her understanding of self.¹⁶² Wilson synthesizes Mead's beliefs stating that: "[i]n declaring that the human being has a self, Mead is saying that the individual can be the object of his own actions and that all of his actions are in part based upon a self-consciousness."¹⁶³ Therefore, it is an awareness of this self in reference to others and the environment that elicits an individual's behavior. As individuals move through their daily lives they are constantly encountering environments – that can range anywhere from new and

¹⁶² Wilson, "Social Space and Symbolic Interaction," 140.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

novel to old and familiar – along with the other people within these contexts. In order for individuals to grasp an understanding of self, they need human interaction to act as their referential points in which they can reflect and perform their own identity. Thus like an individual's identity, the self is under constant development, in most social and environmental encounters the individual is adjusting his or her self and identity to fit that socio-spatial context. Common Thread provides a physical context under which opportunities for interaction with people and new information and experiences can further inform an individual's understanding of self and identity.

Wilson describes Mead's three-stage typology of self in order to conceptualize how an individual is able to negotiate his or her understanding of self and the context that he or she is in.¹⁶⁴ In relationship to the CCTC, this proposed typology lends insight into

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 140-141.

how different types of users might perceive, feel, and interact within the centre. This insight lends itself to an understanding of how the approach to design can be taken, especially in terms of the types of spatial and programmatic relationships that could foster an understanding of self within the centre.

PREPARATORY STAGE – PLACE BASED COMMUNITY.

The first stage of self is where the individual is new to the context and the experiences it presents. The user's movement and negotiation of the site is the result of a fixed pattern of movement that meets specific human needs and necessities, such as moving between home and the workplace, acquiring food, and shopping. The reference group used to inform the spatial pattern in this context is usually "...acquired through interaction within the primary group of family and friends."¹⁶⁵ In Common Thread this stage can represent new users to the space,

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 141.

where there is a sense of apprehension due to a lack of experience of interacting within the centre and a lack of social association to the individuals who frequent it. With repeated and consistent use of the centre, users have the opportunity to move out of the preparatory stage and into the play stage.

PLAY STAGE – AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY. The next stage of self “...is characterized by specific roles that one carries out...[where] certain rituals are conducted which represent what the supposed purpose and actions of the group are.”¹⁶⁶ At this stage the individual has a sense of what groups he or she belongs to and can identify with them in specific contexts. This sense of membership frames their perspective and affords them feelings of stability and security: “[t]he ritualism, along with the small-scale activity pattern and well defined network, generates a social space that provides for the

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

development and maintenance of an emotional self.”¹⁶⁷

The spatial pattern of movement through this context is likely to result in daily face-to-face interactions that are typically unplanned and what Seamon referred to as time-space routines and place-ballets.¹⁶⁸ The users indicated in this stage are the primary users of Common Thread. These individuals are dedicated to the programming of the CCTC, and not only socialize and interact with other users of the space but also work with them to support the centre’s continued success.

GAME STAGE – COMMUNITY WITHOUT PROPINQUITY.

At this stage of self the individual searches for new social situations and adventures, to do this “...he often has to be able to transcend the local ritualism and restricted interaction of place-base community.”¹⁶⁹ Along with these new social situations there is often a change

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 143.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

Seamon, “Body-Subject, Time-Space Routines, and Place-Ballets,” 157-159.

¹⁶⁹ Wilson, “Social Space and Symbolic Interaction,” 143.

in environmental contexts in which the individual moves and as a result a “community without propinquity” develops; where “[i]nstead of being set by territory and face-to-face group interaction, the boundaries of such a community are often set by the spatial limitlessness of typographic and electronic communication.”¹⁷⁰ This stage of self has the potential to represent the tertiary users of Common Thread. These users are visitors to the city or residents of the city who find value in the programming of the Centre but do not frequent the space on a daily basis; instead they attend certain events, courses, and exhibitions that are congruent with their interests.

According to Wilson, “[h]ow successful one is in dealing with changing situations may depend upon the degree of congruence between the self and his pattern of spatial interaction.”¹⁷¹ The spatial

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 144.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 141.

design and programming of the CCTC is a contextual opportunity for individuals to develop and understand their notion of self. He concludes that “[t]he concept of social space and symbolic interaction allow for a better interpretation and integration of social meaning and spatial experience.”¹⁷² With this perspective, Common Thread can be seen as a place where the individual has the opportunity to confront, develop, and maintain an understanding of self.

¹⁷² Ibid. 145.

[literary investigation + analysis] **common thread**

[conclusion]

This chapter draws on insight gained from a literary investigation and analysis of published and peer-reviewed literature in the areas of cultural identity and interaction, phenomenology and human geography. The literature researched addressed theories that were relevant to the project in one or more of the following ways: theoretical justification and validity to the proposed typology of the practicum, definition of the types of spaces, engagement and programmes this typology would involve, questions and design considerations that should be contemplated during the design process, and most importantly strategies for manipulating design elements and qualities of space in order to meet the intended outcomes. The literature investigated was discussed under

one of three theoretical themes: understanding cultural identity and interaction, understanding our environments, and understanding ourselves in our environments. Each of these themes was filtered through a translation framework, which can be found in [appendix a] translation framework: literature review. The following chart summarizes the key relationships between the theoretical themes of this literary investigation by mapping the key concepts drawn from these themes, the design implications these concepts have presented, and the potential design principles and strategies to consider when designing Common Thread (see figure 2, p. 69).

Figure 2: Literary connections - design implications, principles and strategies.

topic	theorist	key concept	description
Chinese Canadian Transcultural Centre	Pratt	contact zone	social spaces where individuals of different cultures cross and interact
	Rogers	transculturation	the process through which individuals select, understand, and reinterpret information exchanged in the contact zone
	Taylor + Preston	interiority	"...the conscious and reflexive awareness of self, identity, community and others within the social environment...[I]nteriority examines the innerness of interior design as that which is felt and projected upon within the interior environment via the body as a culturally lived organism."
	Ganoe		"...interior design's most serious purposes are not visual, technological, object-oriented, or materialistic, but rather those of interiority - internal values regarding social and personal awareness"
understanding cultural identity + interaction	Wise	quotidian transversality	"...the process by which local and diasporic modes of inhabitation intersect through momentary cross-cultural transgressions and displacements in everyday, mundane situations. ...[It] highlights how cultural difference can be the basis for commensality and exchange; where identities are not left behind, but can be shifted and opened up in moments of non-hierarchical reciprocity, and are sometimes mutually reconfigured in the process."
	Noble	everyday cosmopolitanism	"...the ways cultural differences get negotiated in the habitual engagements of ordinary encounters which produce 'local liveability', help us to begin to understand how intercultural relations contribute to localized (as well as diasporic) sense of community."
understanding our environments	Seamon	body-ballet time-space routine place-ballet	the routine movement of a body through space from one point to another is pivotal in understanding the phenomena of place. bodies within a specific environment naturally move in a synchronized manner around other objects and individuals within the space navigating and negotiating proximities and become what is known as a place-ballet.
understanding ourselves in our environments	Wilson	social space	understanding the dynamics of interaction: "...within this approach, the nature of people's interaction in space is taken as a critical variable to the way they experience space. [Where] the role of social interaction [is] a critical cue to people's movement in space..."
	Seamon	human-environment relationship	the notion that the self cannot be viewed separately from the world because all human experience is grounded in the world, and simultaneously the human experience of the world is one that is embodied.

design implications...		design principles + strategies
create opportunities for “transversal exchanges” - intercultural exchanges individual identity is respected. cultural difference is seen as an opportunity for commensality and exchange in order to develop an “intercultural community” with a sense of collective identity and understanding, as well as sharedness of meaning among consociates in particular spaces and times. Common Thread is a physical setting where multiple identities are performed, perceived, and transformed in relation to other identities	a level of comfort needs to be established spatially that responds to human issues within everyday spaces of sociality to “...smooth and foster relations across difference.” as a society we shape our physical world through our belief systems and societal structures, and in turn the spaces that we occupy are designed to reflect and carryout these social realms	*everyday programming helps to sustain the place-ballet through the opportunity of overlapping body-ballets and time-space routines Use everyday programming as a lure: - grocery inherently a draw - cafe - food establishment, informal, sense of invitation to all - mahjong, chinese chess, tai chi - the ‘secret’ practices of everyday Chinese culture exposed *spatial structure that facilitates the user orientation – know where she is – and contains concrete objects of identification – can identify with the environment. Movement through space: navigation through centre is intuitive and familiar leads to a sense of security and safety
human scale and comfort: meets the programming of the space in relationship to the type of cultural engagement expected within it privacy: variation in levels of privacy to accommodated the different levels of ease the user feels within the space and to the activity or exchange taking place - public to semi-private to private a percieved sense of individual saftey, comfort and trust is needed within the Common Thread in order for users to feel comfortable engaging in new interactions and experiences	to avoid confusion a clear sense of wayfinding should be understood for programmes meeting the everyday needs of users within common thread circulation could be used strategically to create opportunities for people-mixing and transversal exchanges depending on the programmatic requirements of a space, spaces should blend and blur creating a contact zone between intersection programmes that allow opportunity for informal people-mixing and transversal exchanges	*human comfort - differing levels of privacy to meet varying levels of ease in user participation within the space. - openness of the space meets a comfortable exposure level for the activity *sense of place - spatial and programmatic requirements must find a balance between regularity and variety; everyday and special function; continuity and surprise; routine and excitement *create opportunites of a contact zone through overlapping and intersecting spaces and programmes - opportunities for exchange to take place between programmed spaces and within a particular programmed space - differing levels of programme and user commitment throughout the building both horizontally (plan) and vertically (section/elevation)
engaging space needs to possess both continuity and dynamism - sense of security and excitment engaging programme needs a sense of balance between constant and consistent everyday programming and diverse special event and function programming	variety and excitement in spaces can be found through the blurring of spatial boundaries and the sensorial engagement exposure to new cultural experiences and exchanges through the blurring of spatial milieus and boudaries sense of safety and comfort can be found through wayfinding that is intuitive to an individuals movement through space	*create opportunites of a contact zone history and culture - conceptual links and references to the building's history - movement of the body-ballet and use of calligraphy as a strategy for translated embodied movement - consider Chinese and Canadian culture in the context of its past, present and future
thoughtful and conscientious approach to spatial design and objects placed within an space act as points of reference and spatial cues people within a space also act as referential cues for the type of programme the space affords - consideration of the spatial affordances and the type of behavior they ellicit is important creating spaces that afford certain types of behavior	Mead’s Three Stage Typology of Self - Programme: 1. preparatory stage - meets everyday needs of users 2. play stage - sense of group membership by users leads them to frequent the centre for both the variety of programming and the opportunity to socialize 3. game stage - users who visit common thread seek new challenges, adventures and social situations	*blurring boundaries, spatial milieus, and movement through space - use of sensorial engagment - use of material, light, texture, and form to engage varying levels of the physical or implied delineation of space - symbolic interaction - spaces for different reference groups so that they are recognized in space, but blurring the boundaries so that there is an opportunity for exchange between different groups.

[common thread]

design precedent investigation + analysis

[design precedent investigation + analysis] **common thread**

The design precedent investigation and analysis seeks to pinpoint design strategies from existing built projects that can inform the process of designing a Chinese Canadian Transcultural Centre. The selection criteria used to choose the precedents were specifically applicable to the design of Common Thread because they address one or more of the following:

- designer's perspective and approach to adaptive re-use for the project.
- degree of Chinese design or *chinoiserie* reflected in the project – for example what, if any, elements, symbols, motifs, and objects were used.
- designer's approach to expressing Chinese culture through design – for example preservationist, interpretive, modern.
- impact of the project as a cultural space to the surrounding people, site, and context.

The precedent review adds further depth by analyzing projects through a translation framework of design

elements and qualities, which begin to reveal design considerations and guidelines crucial to the development of Common Thread. Key elements drawn from the following filters in translation framework are discussed in this chapter. The translation framework in its entirety can be found in [appendix b] and addresses the following design considerations:

- technological issues – systems, materials, structure.
- human issues including physiological, sociological, psychological – privacy, anthropometrics, human scale, comfort, proxemics, users' feelings and interactions.
- aesthetic issues including design elements – space, texture, light, form, line, temporality, shape; and design principles – scale, balance, rhythm, harmony, unity, variety, proportion, and emphasis.
- functional issues – circulation, way-finding, hierarchy values of user and client, programme and day-to-day needs, individual and group identity, cultural needs such as group interaction and transversal exchanges.

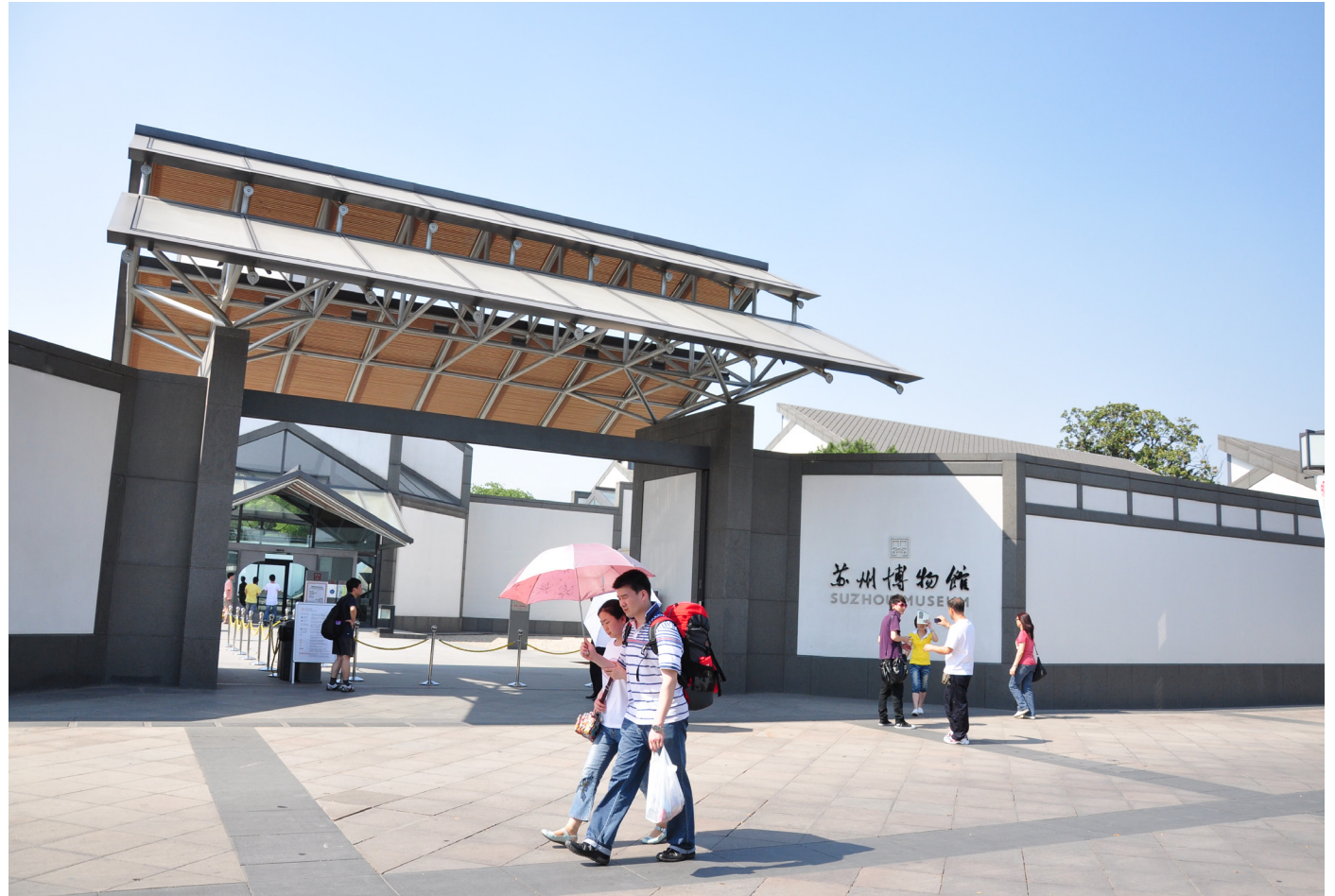


Figure 3: Main Entrance to Suzhou Museum.

[suzhou museum]

[who] I.M. Pei Architect with Pei Partnership Architects

[what] Cultural Museum, 105 486 square feet

[where] Suzhou, China

[when] Completed 2006¹⁷³

[why] Pei applies his Modernist approach to the design of the new Suzhou Museum while seamlessly paying homage and respect to the museum's historical context and significance to the city of Suzhou.

From the sixth to eighth centuries, during the Ming and the Qing dynasties - Suzhou was considered the cultural hub of China, excelling in areas such as poetry, painting, sculpture, and garden design.¹⁷⁴ The development of

the original Suzhou Museum, which opened in 1960,

¹⁷³ Architizer, "Suzhou Museum", Architizer LLC, http://www.architizer.com/en_us/projects/view/suzhou-museum/7120/ (accessed November 10, 2010).

¹⁷⁴ Paula Deitz, "Stones, Scrolls and Scholars: I. M. Pei Makes a Poignant Return to His Native Suzhou," *Architectural Review* 222, no.1328 (October 2007) 64.

was prompted by China's recognition of the importance of Suzhou's cultural past.¹⁷⁵ The original museum was situated within a converted traditional Chinese courtyard house. The new Suzhou Museum by Pei adapts the traditional courtyard structure used in the original museum by carrying a similar sense of procession from outside-in, thereby creating a spatial arrangement that lends itself to easy navigation and wayfinding.¹⁷⁶ This spatial planning allows the users to intuitively ground themselves within the museum and effortlessly move from space to space.

The procession through the museum begins at the street level where users enter the site from Dong Bei Street – a pedestrian street lined with trees and retail shops (see figures 3-5, p.75-77). As users enter the gate of the museum they are led through a hierarchy of inner and outer courtyards that act as arteries linking

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 68.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 64.



Figure 4: Dong Bei Street.



Figure 5: Shops on Dong Bei Street.



Figure 6: Diffused daylight of interior open stairwell.



Figure 7: Cast of shadow and light in the west wing corridor.

them to interior galleries of precious Chinese artifacts. The west wing of the museum holds the historic collection and takes a more stringent spatial alignment to the traditional Chinese courtyard house where small rectangular rooms, painted in tones that are reminiscent of the colors found in the artifacts, connect directly to hallways that are linked to the courtyards.¹⁷⁷ The east wing, on the other hand, is painted in the infamous Modernist stark white and houses the contemporary Chinese collection. This is where Pei moves away from the traditional courtyard house design. The hallway to the east wing leads to a large gallery space that is divided by angular walls. This spatial arrangement allows users to move from one area to another enabling, the artwork to be consumed as one cohesive whole.¹⁷⁸

In the Suzhou Museum, the strong sense of procession through the corridors combined with

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 68.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 72.

the variation in scale of the spaces branching off of them, are the most relevant strategies to the design of Common Thread. The play of light and shadow in the corridors accentuate a sense of movement through the space, encouraging users to transition from one space to the next (see figures 6 and 7, p.77). The enticing element of movement suggested by the direct use of light and shadow has the potential to activate Seamon's notions of the body-ballet, time-space routine and place-ballet between programmed spaces in Common Thread.¹⁷⁹ However, it is important to consider the ways in which these spaces of transition are actually delineated. Unlike the Suzhou Museum where movement through the space is fairly prescribed, Common Thread endeavors to maintain a sense of choice in how and in what order users move from one

¹⁷⁹ This statement references David Seamon's theory on movement and place-making discussed in chapter two: literary investigation + analysis – understanding our environments. Seamon, "Body-Subject, Time-Space Routines, and Place-Ballets," 148.



Figure 8: Panoramic view of interior courtyard garden.

space to the next. This sense of visitor autonomy can be preserved through variations of scale in demarcation, from elements as strong and solid as a vertical opaque plane, to gestures as subtle and implied as a boundary outlined on the floor through materiality. The use of sensorial engagement can also contribute to the user's sense of autonomy by triggering different levels of sensory experiences for each space, depending on its adjacencies.

Pei also utilizes a differentiation in scale in order to indicate which spaces are transitional, gathering and

exhibition. Users first enter into a large octagonal room known as the great hall. This room is filled with natural light broadcast from clerestory windows. The scale of the great hall allows users to orientate themselves before choosing to move forward into the interior courtyard garden or down one of the large corridors to either the east or west wings of the museum (see figure 8, p.79). These corridors are dotted with smaller octagonal gathering spaces that mimic the grand hall. These smaller gathering spaces act as nodal points indicating even smaller corridors that lead to galleries.



The height of these spaces progressively diminishes and spaces feel less open as users move further into each wing, creating a sense of ease and comfort for social rendezvous for visitors in the octagonal gathering spaces. This creates a sense of intimacy and individualism for visitors when viewing artifacts in the galleries. This type of variation in scale informs the design of Common Thread by demonstrating how the height and shape of a space can suggest a certain type of spatial behavior. For gathering spaces, the use of rooms that are more outward focused and large in

scale allow users to feel comfortable enough to linger and socialize in the space, as well the accompaniment of the long and narrow corridors encourages movement through from one space to the next. In the galleries the spaces become intimate and inward focused as the rooms get smaller and the ceiling planes get lower which is effective for encouraging activities that are more individual in nature.



Figure 9: Street view lined with gallery entrances.

[beijing 798 art district]

- [who] Artists, designers, gallery and museum stakeholders
- [what] A collection of art and design studios, galleries, museums, cafes, eateries, gathering spaces, and retail.
- [where] Beijing, China
- [when] 2002 onwards
- [why] A precedent of adaptive re-use projects with similar programming to that the CCTC.

In the 1950s a quadrant of forty low-rise buildings designed by German engineers were built in the northeast corner of Beijing as munitions factories. At the time, this complex of buildings was China's largest and most advanced military industrial facility.¹⁸⁰ By the

¹⁸⁰ Liane Lefaivre, "A Factory-Turned-Arts-Community Represents the New China While Paying Homage to the Old," *Architectural Record* 193, no. 2 (February 2005): 55-57.



Figure 10: Street view and signage.



Figure 11: Converted munitions factory. Interior of 798 Photo Gallery.

late 1990s, the products of these facilities had become obsolete and industrial military production had moved elsewhere in China.¹⁸¹ The abandoned and derelict buildings were transformed into affordable live-work spaces that appealed to local artists, art dealers, curators, and designers alike (see figures 9-10, p.81-82).¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.



Figure 12: Mezzanine level of 798 Photo Gallery.



Figure 13: Forbidden City, Beijing.

As tenancy increased at Beijing 798 Art District, the programming diversified from art and design studios to include spaces that accommodated events such as openings, performances, concerts, fashion photo shoots, and raves (see figures 11-12, p.83).¹⁸³ Beijing 798 is a large-scale version of the types of programming that is proposed for the Common Thread.

¹⁸³ Ibid.



Figure 14 Temple of Heaven, Beijing.



Figure 15: Public art under construction.



Figure 16: Public art sculpture.



Figure 17: Spatial adjacencies between galleries.

Beijing 798 acts as a conceptual precedent as it mimics values desired for Common Thread. For example, it references notions of cultural identity by acting as a venue that allows users the opportunity to explore what it means to be Chinese in Modern day China through a multitude of creative mediums. According to Lefaivre “[a]lthough 798 is about as far away from the Forbidden City or the Temple of Heaven,

it has great symbolic resonance - ...[it] has become the icon of the new, urban, modern China” (see figures 13-14, p.83-84).¹⁸⁴ The site and setting of these explorations confront the individual’s understanding of what it means to be Chinese as the district is filled with a sense of contradiction, tension, and negotiation (see figures 15-16, p. 84). And yet because of its peripheral

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 56.

distance from the heart of historic Beijing, there is a sense of serenity in the area. Visitors to the district may at first be startled by the difficult wayfinding but they finally give in to their own inner flaneurish tendencies (see figure 17, p.84). Common Thread aspires to achieve similar programmatic and experiential qualities of Beijing 798, thereby providing a setting where an individual's identity is, to varying degrees, confronted, questioned, confirmed or transformed. These



Figure 18: Slogan remain intact referencing the past occupancy of Gallery 798 Space.

confrontations can be as overt as attending specific special events or openings at the transcultural centre or as subtle as carrying out the interactions of daily life within it.

The gallery called 798 Space is examined to provide an analysis that is focused on the formal spatial elements and nuances of Beijing 798 Art District as a design precedent. The design of the gallery is open and unencumbered in order to portray the hierarchy of spaces within it; the hierarchy of programmes are as follows: an exhibition space, mezzanine lounge, bookstore, bar and restaurant. This hierarchy is evident through the utilization of scale and varying levels of enclosure evoking comfort levels that are appropriate to the designated programme of the particular space.

The exhibition space is evidently the most privileged space within the gallery with its large footprint and soaring ceiling volume of twenty-nine feet. The

open plan allows for the function of the space to be versatile while effortlessly paying homage to the history of the building. The design allows an unobstructed view of the massive structural forms as the weight of the saw-tooth ceiling plane is carried seamlessly to the ground through the continuation of concrete arches that frame the space. The user is reassured by a sense of stability conveyed by the relationship of the concrete posts to the heaviness of the ceiling. Depending on the type of event programmed within the exhibition space, different user interactions and movements can be elicited through the strategic articulation of space with artifacts, furniture and equipment. These spatial qualities and techniques are subtle and can be utilized within Common Thread to achieve an autonomy of movement by the user within the centre, while slightly suggesting the peripheral boundaries of spaces within it.

The value of Beijing 798 as a precedent



Figure 19: Open and flexible plan of Gallery 798 Space.



Figure 20: Sawtooth structure allows a soft diffused light to filter into Gallery 798 Space.

is found in the way that adaptive re-use has been approached and considered in the total design of the interior spaces. Although the artwork and interior architecture of the buildings are, in some cases, a jarring contrast to one another, the designers and curators of the space are able to seamlessly and respectfully display both as pieces of art. Historic remnants of some spaces have been kept as visual reminders of China's past political rhetoric, for example in gallery 798 Space where "...slogans praising the value of hard work that are painted on the walls have been preserved intact like precious historical ruins" (see figure 18, p.85).¹⁸⁵ It is clear that there is an intuitive understanding shared by the designer and the curator between the artwork and the relationship it has to the scale of the room and to the overall scale of the building (see figures 19-20, p. 86-87). This type of preservation of the historical

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

artifacts embedded within building has a stark affect that resonates through the user of the space, a quality that would be effective in making elements of the site's history of Common Thread more evident. Through the use of sensorial engagement the experience of the spaces within the centre could portray a sense of what it was like when different programmes occupied the building, and even more powerful a reminder of its historic sense of place.



Figure 21: Great (Bamboo) Wall at the Commune by the Wall. Photograph by Satoshi Asakawa. Property of Kengo Kuma & Associates.

[great (bamboo) wall]

[who] Kengo Kuma & Associates

[what] One of eleven prototype residential villas

[where] Shiguan, China¹⁸⁶

[when] Completed 2002¹⁸⁷

[why] This precedent acts as a residential example of exploration in contemporary Asian architectural identity.

In 2001 real estate developer Zhang Xin invited twelve Asian architects to design a collection of eleven residential villas known as the Commune by the Great Wall. The intention of this project was to question and examine the identity of contemporary Asian design.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Christopher Phillips, "Report from Beijing: Experiments in Living," *Art in America* 91, no. 4 (April 2003) 43.

¹⁸⁷ Kempinski Hotels, "Commune by Great Wall Kempinski: Fact Sheet" (Beijing, China), <http://www.communebythegreatwall.com/en/about/about01.shtml> (accessed November 10, 2010).

¹⁸⁸ Phillips, "Report from Beijing: Experiments in Living," 43.

Zhang short-listed twelve architects with the belief that: "[b]y inviting Asia's most promising and prominent young architects from seven countries, the developers were simultaneously emphasizing diversity and cultivating a distinctly Asian architectural identity."¹⁸⁹ Inspired by the relatively recent economic prosperity of China, the Commune by the Great Wall provided an opportunity to take a thoughtful look at identity through residential design, a perspective that was in direct contrast to that of the rapid high-rise developments that had been occurring in large cities throughout the country.¹⁹⁰

The sensitivity of the topic of design as a reflection of cultural identity challenges the designer to consider how this identity can be expressed in an innovative yet respectful way. The considerate nature

¹⁸⁹ Joseph Giovanni, "Cultural Revolution: The Great Wall Commune Offers an Architectural Vision for the New China," *Architectural Digest* 60, no. 5 (May 2003) 178, 184.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 176.

Phillips, "Report from Beijing: Experiments in Living," 43.

of the design brief for the commune villas act as an example of the way the design of Common Thread could be approached. The typology of a transcultural centre provides users with the opportunity to examine what it means to be Canadian. Common Thread gives individuals the chance to glimpse elements of Chinese culture and to consider the similarities and differences they see in their own everyday lives.

Kengo Kuma's design of the "Great (Bamboo) Wall" villa is used as design precedent on materiality. Through the meticulous and authentic use of bamboo as the most salient material in his design, Kuma is able to strategically use one element to achieve four spatial qualities of delineation, repetition, screening, and unity (see figures 21-22, p. 89 and 92). The strength and statement of Kuma's choice in bamboo as the prominent material throughout the design of the villa serves as an important design strategy that responds to

a number of different environmental conditions.¹⁹¹

Kuma's prolific use of bamboo throughout the design serves both structural and aesthetic functions (see figure 23, p.92).¹⁹² His careful attention to detail allows him to delineate space in a simplistic manner. Although he uses a number of other materials in the construction of the villa, he does so in a way that is conspicuous, sparingly using elements of stone, metal and glass to compliment the role of the bamboo in the creation of the spaces within the villa's design. This delineation of space can be seen in his repetitious and calculated use of bamboo in a hypnotic manner. The repetition created by the material conveys a sense of movement within the spaces that it delineates, carrying you not only visually through the space but also enticing the body to follow suit, initiating the gesture of the body-

191 Botond Bogнар. Kengo Kuma: Selected Works. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005), 136-143.

192 Ibid. 138.

ballet.¹⁹³

Much like the use of louvers in the corridors of the Suzhou Museum, Kuma's placement of the bamboo along all sides of the building create a play of light and shadow throughout the interior space (see figure 24, p. 93. This consistent play of light and shadow on a daily basis activates the space, creating an ephemeral quality of time passing as the sun cycles through the villa from day to night.¹⁹⁴ Even with his stringent use of bamboo throughout the design, Kuma does not sacrifice the comfort of the users. By thoughtfully placing vertical partitions on horizontal sliding structures Kuma enables users inside the villa to change the amount of exposure they have to the outdoor elements. This type of screening technique acts as an example of how different materials used throughout the design of Common

¹⁹³ Body-ballet as used by David Seamon. Seamon, "Body-Subject, Time-Space Routines, and Place-Ballets", 148.

¹⁹⁴ Bognar, Kengo Kuma: Selected Works, 138.



Figure 22: Delineation, repetition, screening, and unity. Photograph by Satoshi Asakawa. Property of Kengo Kuma & Associates.



Figure 23: Interior perspective of Great (Bamboo) Wall. Photograph by Satoshi Asakawa. Property of Kengo Kuma & Associates.



Figure 24: The play of light and shadow in the tea room overlooking Nangou Valley at the Great (Bamboo) Wall. Photograph by Satoshi Asakawa. Property of Kengo Kuma & Associates.

Thread can create differing levels of sensorial porosity, allowing some spaces to privilege a specific sense over others.

Perhaps the most valuable strategy the Great (Bamboo) Wall utilizes is the pragmatic use of one element throughout to maintain its overall sense of unity. One of the most difficult challenges of designing a transcultural centre is the ability to effectively house numerous functions in one building without sacrificing a unified spatial language. Although the function of the Great (Bamboo) Wall is specifically residential, the use of bamboo in every aspect of the design helps maintain a consistent architectural language in the villa. The design of Common Thread can adopt a similar strategy by keeping one element of the interior space consistent. This sense of consistency could be accomplished through a multitude of techniques – such as the use of the same material throughout or the use of a specific

pattern throughout – either way what is learnt from Kuma's design as a precedent is the simplistic and elegant way in which it is executed.

[design precedent investigation + analysis] **common thread**

This chapter investigates and analyzes three distinct design precedents in order to observe and interpret relevant design strategies for Common Thread. The Suzhou Museum by I.M. Pei, Beijing 798 Art District, and Kengo Kuma's Great (Bamboo) Wall were chosen not only because of their successful designs but also because each explored some aspect of Chinese culture and identity through design. Valuable insight was gained on the manipulation of areas in design that deal with scale and volume, sensorial activation, and materiality, in order to elicit behaviors like movement across space, informal gathering, or individual activity. The most significant lesson learnt was the role of materiality and how through the privileging of just one material, a design could achieve numerous goals, such as the delineation of space, sensorial porosity, bodily movement, and an overall unity to a building that accommodates a variation of programmes.

[common thread]

programme + design exploration

[from programme to design]

According to Rosemary and W. Otie Kilmer when it comes to design “[p]rogramming can be thought of as a predecessor to examining or analyzing the problem, whereas designing can be thought of as solving or synthesizing the problem from programme specifics.”¹⁹⁵ This chapter therefore begins with a collection and analysis of factors that inform the programme that affect the design of Common Thread. This analysis was carried out along a continuum of scales. At the largest scale the investigation began with a site analysis, looking first within the frame of the city, to the neighborhood, and then districts, eventually moving down to the scale of the existing building and the significance it has to the site and its users. This

was followed by a comprehensive examination of the user types of Common Thread. The final stage of this analysis was a synthesis of the site conditions and the users values and needs to determine programmatic opportunities within Common Thread. These opportunities are directed towards areas relating to the functional, spatial, and aesthetic requirements of the centre.

By examining the site, building, user, and programmatic factors, key design intentions were brought to the forefront and design issues to be privileged were made apparent. The second half of this chapter focuses on the design development of Common Thread where key design goals were prioritized, and design decisions were synthesized from the literary and programmatic research done.

¹⁹⁵ Rosemary Kilmer and W. Otie Kilmer. *Designing Interiors*. (Toronto: Thomson Learning, 1992), 179.

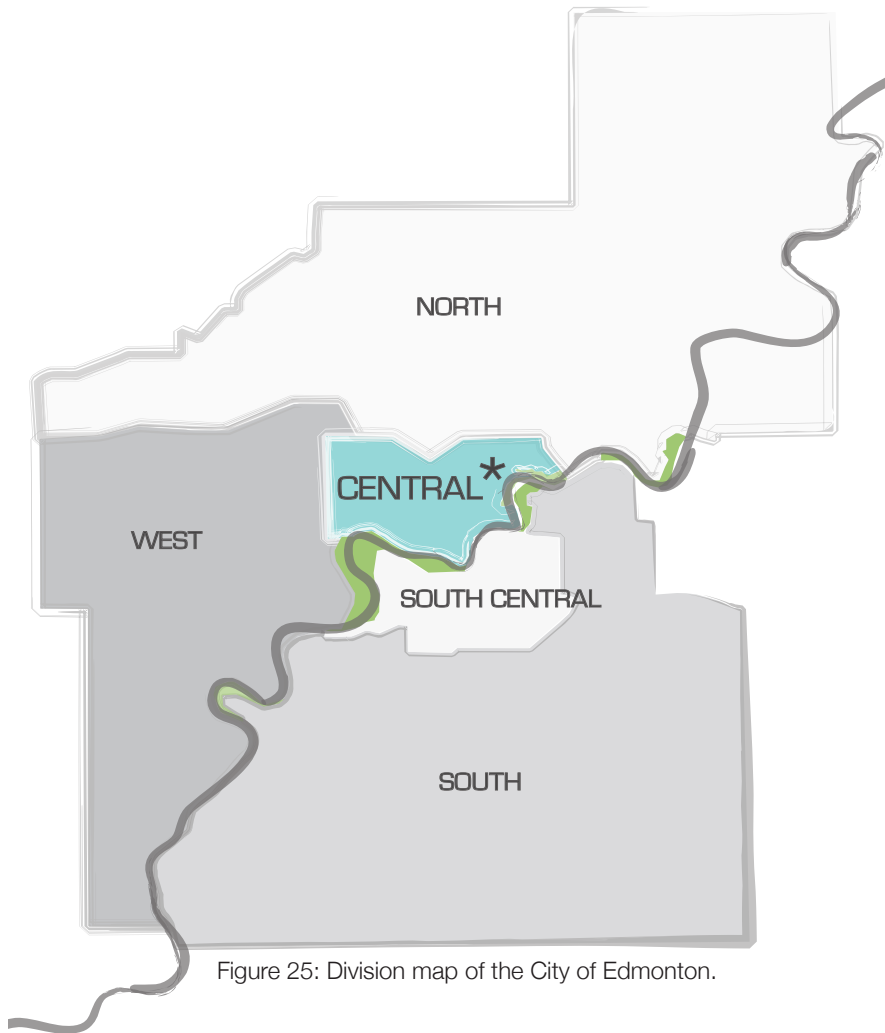


Figure 25: Division map of the City of Edmonton.

[programme]

site profile

The project is situated in Edmonton, Alberta; a city that is separated into five divisions: North, West, South, Central and South Central. The proposed site for Common Thread is within the Central division of the city (see figure 25, p.101).

Located within Central division are various culturally and characteristically distinct areas including the Downtown, Chinatown and Arts districts. In addition to these districts is a proposed project called the Quarters District.¹⁹⁶ The Quarters is a collaborative urban design vision led by the firm ONPA Architects and commissioned by the City of Edmonton. The proposal includes mixed-use development along with the

¹⁹⁶ The City of Edmonton Planning and Development Department. The Quarters Downtown Urban Design Plan: The Way We Grow. 2007. 23.

revitalization of historic properties in the area, and the transformation of a vehicular dominant streetscape to one that is primarily pedestrian and cyclist based.¹⁹⁷

Located along the periphery of the Downtown, Chinatown and Quarters districts, the proposed building site for Common Thread is an adaptive-reuse project in the vacant Red Strap Art Market (see figures 26, p.102 and figures 27-28, p. 103). This location is within walking distance to a number of the city's most important cultural, government, and community nodes, including Canada Place Edmonton's Service Canada Centre where residents of the city will find the Canadian department of Citizenship and Immigration, as well as the Canadian Passport office (see figure 29, p.104). Also located within the downtown Arts District is Sir Winston Churchill Square, an outdoor plaza that hosts festivals, events, and farmer's markets throughout the year (see

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

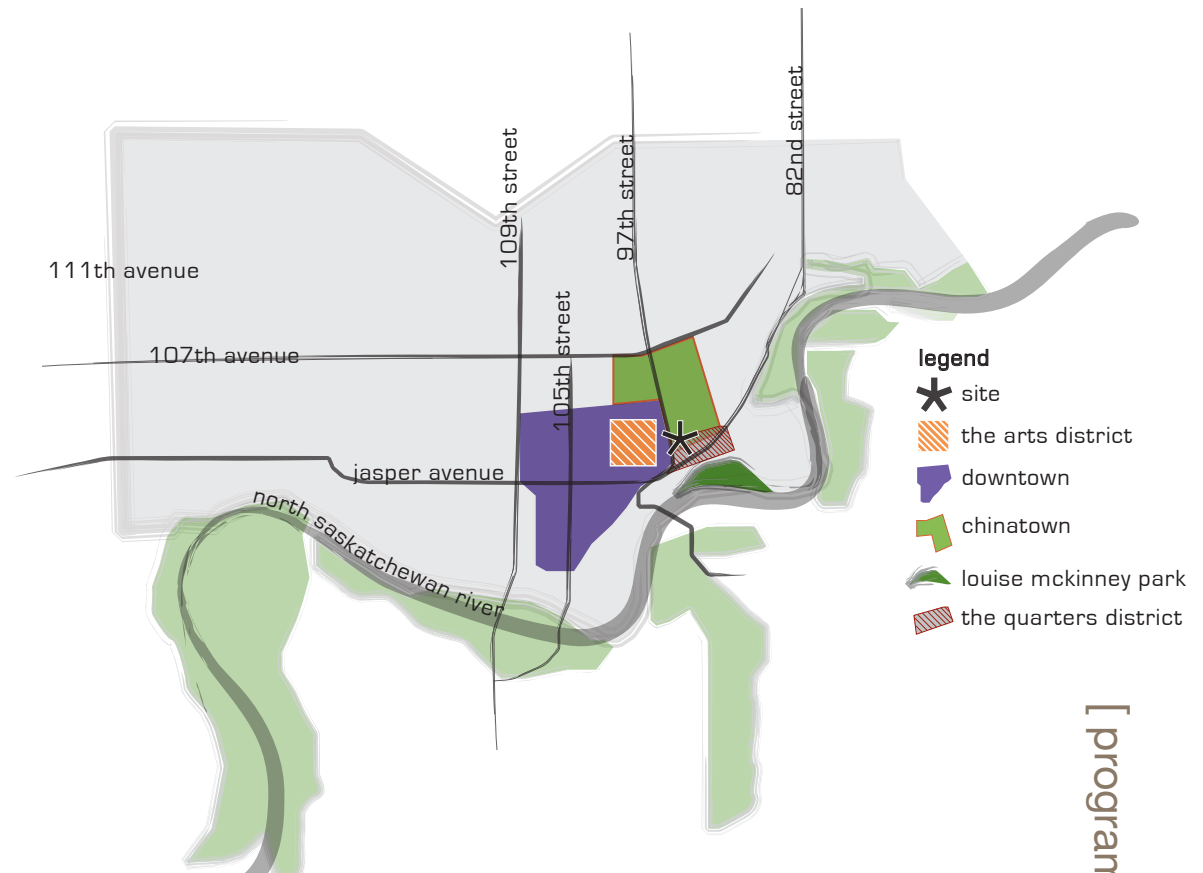


Figure 26: Map 2 – District Map of Central.

figure 30, p.105).

The Red Strap Art Market is situated a mere five city blocks from the North Saskatchewan River Valley that runs through the heart of the city and is home to some of Edmonton's most beloved parks. This river valley is one of North America's longest stretches of urban river valley parkland.¹⁹⁸ The parks have often act as venues for annual events; for example the Dragon Boat Festival hosted at Louise McKinney Park and the Edmonton Heritage Festival at William Hawrelak Park, both of which are festivals celebrating Canada's cultural diversity.

The central location of the site makes it highly accessible by both public and private transportation. Public transportation buses run in front of the building on 97th Street and the nearest light rail transportation

[LRT] stations are located in Sir Winston Churchill

¹⁹⁸ Jim Willett, "Edmonton River Valley: Information and Images", <http://www.edmontonrivervalley.com/> (accessed January 8, 2011)



Figure 27: Formerly the Red Strap Art Market, proposed site of Common Thread.



Figure 28: Perspective down 97th Street. Chinatown.

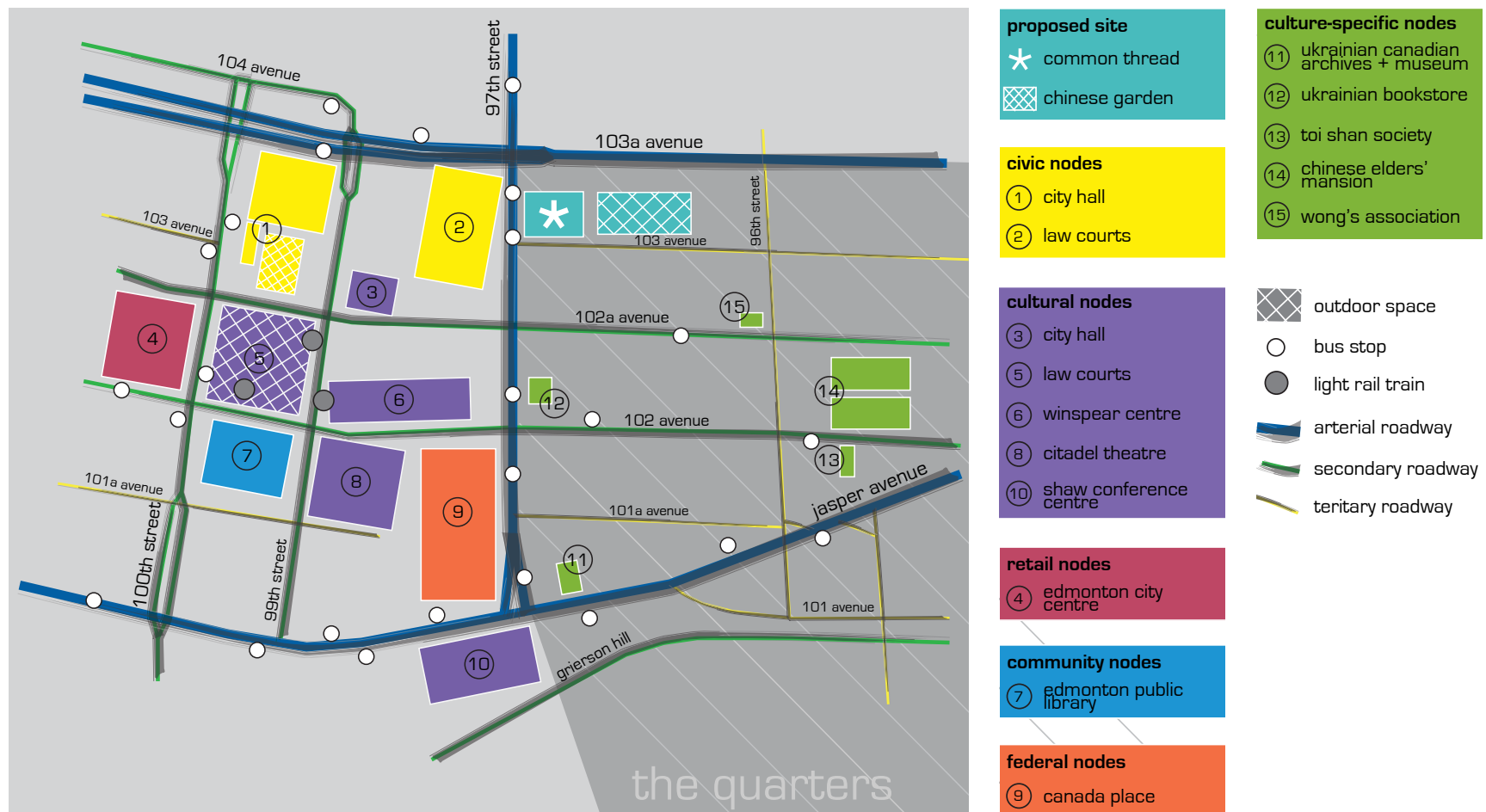


Figure 29: Map 3 – Site amenities and accessibility.



Figure 30: Sir Winston Churchill Square. Winter Farmer's Market.

Square. For the convenience of individuals travelling in their own vehicles there is a large parking lot to the east of the building as well as ample street parking.

historic significance

In order to contemplate the historical importance of the building and how that affects the design of Common Thread, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the building's timeline in terms of occupation and programme. The building, most recently known as the Red Strap Art Market, was originally commissioned in 1910 by Alexander Livingstone to accommodate his growing business in retail department stores.¹⁹⁹ The commission was given to Edmonton architect Robert Percy Barnes and in 1912 the Caledonian Department Store re-opened in

¹⁹⁹ Lawrence Herzog, "From GWG to Army & Navy" in *Edmonton Real Estate Weekly*. October 12, 2000. From City of Edmonton Archives. Np.

the completed building.²⁰⁰ By 1917 the building had been taken over by Charles A. Graham and retrofitted for his garment manufacturing company, Great Western Garment [GWG].²⁰¹

GWG began as a manufacturer of high-grade men's and boys apparel, but had its most lucrative period during World War II [WWII] producing more than seventy-five percent of Canada's military wear (see figure 31, p.107).²⁰² Post WWII, GWG became well known for their affordable denim collection. In the 1960s GWG was purchased by Levi Strauss and relocated to a new factory after WWII, leaving the new tenant, Army & Navy Department Stores Ltd. to occupy

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

Lawrence Herzog, "2006 Historical Board Plaque Awards". *Edmonton Real Estate Weekly*. http://www.rewedmonton.ca/content_view2?CONTENT_ID=1665 (accessed November 20, 2009)

²⁰² Edith Kirby, "GWG Part of the Fabric of this City" in *The Edmonton Journal*. May 7, 2004. Np.

Herzog, "From GWG to Army & Navy," in *Edmonton Real Estate Weekly*. October 12, 2000. Np.

the building from 1953 to 2003.²⁰³ From 2003 to 2007 the building was owned by Edmonton architect Gene Dub and featured affordable artists' work studios and gallery space.²⁰⁴ Recalling the nostalgic memories of his adolescent years in GWG denim, Dub named The Red Strap Art Market after Great Western Garment's Red Strap brand of jeans (see figure 32, p.108).²⁰⁵ Since the Art Market dissolved in 2007 the building has been closed to the public, and has become a temporary storage and organization hub for the resurrection of the historic Alberta Hotel (see figures 33-35, p.109).²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Herzog, "2006 Historical Board Plaque Awards," http://www.rewedmonton.ca/content_view2?CONTENT_ID=1665 (accessed November 20, 2009)

²⁰⁴ Jim Farrell, "Picture fades to black for downtown's Red Strap Market" in *The Edmonton Journal*. Thursday, May 03, 2007. Np.

²⁰⁵ Kirby, "GWG Part of the Fabric of this City," Np.

Herzog, "From GWG to Army & Navy," Np.

²⁰⁶ Lawrence Herzog, "Hoping for a rebirth" in *Edmonton Real Estate Weekly*. May 08, 2008. Np.



Figure 31: Great Western Garment Company workroom, Edmonton, Alberta. 1918. Photograph by McDermid Studio. Property of Glenblow Archives.



Figure 32: Vacant Red Strap Art Market formerly Great Western Garment Company, Edmonton, Alberta.



Figure 33: Main floor southwest panorama of the vacant Red Strap Art Market.

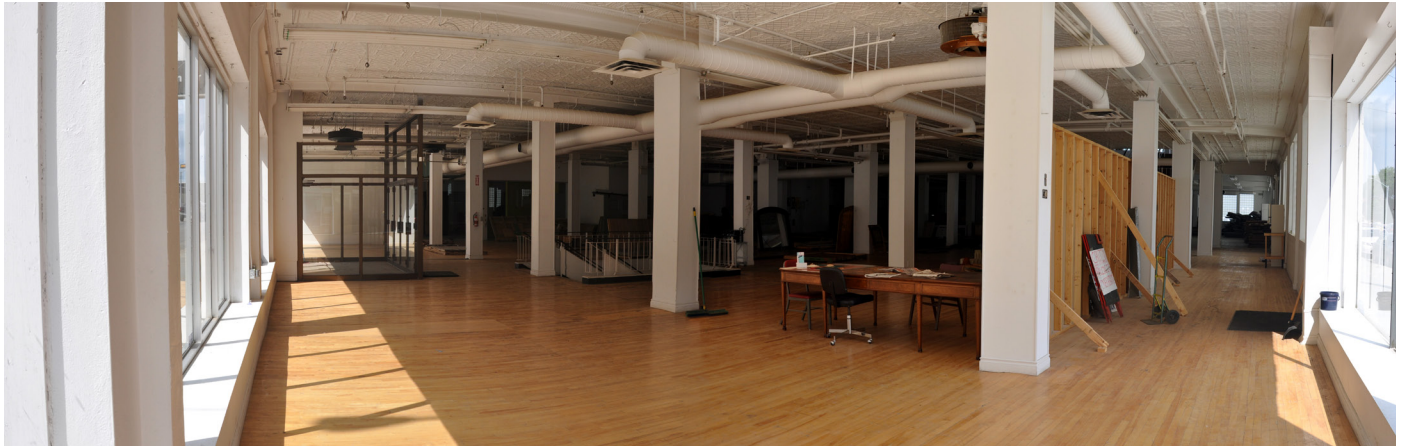


Figure 34: Main Floor northeast panorama of the vacant Red Strap Art Market.

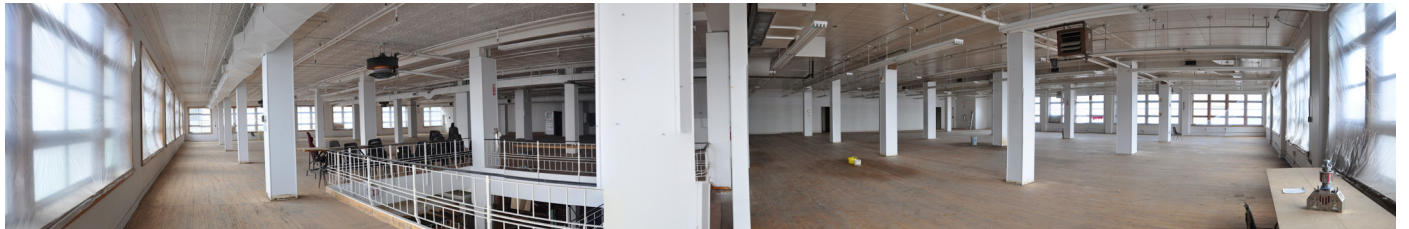


Figure 35: Second floor north panorama of the vacant Red Strap Art Market.

cultural significance

The Great Western Garment Company is of particular significance to many members of the aging Chinese immigrant community as a good portion of this population worked in the GWG factories when they first arrived in Edmonton. In an effort to build a new life for themselves and their families, individuals – sometimes multiple members from each family – worked the long hours under grueling conditions to survive in this new city they called home.²⁰⁷

The site of the Red Strap Art Market is located on the periphery of Downtown Edmonton to its west and Chinatown to its north and east. Along Ninety-seventh Street, the towering scale of Canada Place, the place where individuals go to claim their Canadian identity, and the Edmonton Law Courts dominate the

²⁰⁷ Personal communication with John Mah, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, July 5, 2010.



Figure 36: Edmonton Law Courts.

streetscape in a metaphorical standoff to the smaller and older buildings across from them (see figure 36-37, p.110-111). Although the Art Market is one of the larger buildings on the street, it is not spared from this dominance as it is seemingly confronted by the massiveness of these government agencies. This image of confrontation serves as a subtle and silent reminder of the trials and tribulations the first Chinese immigrants



Figure 37: Canada Place, Edmonton, Alberta.

to Canada had and the indisputable difficulty they must have experienced in negotiating their diasporic Chinese and Canadian identities.

Whether or not these contextual tensions are realized or recognized, the districts, buildings and streets that surround the Red Strap Art Market have nevertheless been a backdrop to the life stories of the Chinese Canadian community. By placing the Chinese Canadian Transcultural Centre in the old Red Strap Art Market, the Chinese Canadian community is given an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate their history, culture, and continued contribution to the city of Edmonton.

user profile

In section 1.5 Client + Users an introduction was given on the client as well as the types of user

user group	inside-outside continuum	3-stage typology of self	programme levels	values	freq. of use
primary	existential insideness	play stage: authentic community	- basic needs - everyday - group + community belonging - psychological + cultural needs	*group leadership *group membership *contributing member *supportive + supported *new + consistent programming	consistent
secondary	empathetic insideness	play stage: authentic community	- basic needs - everyday - group membership - educational + recreational needs - cultural needs	*group membership *supported	often
tertiary	empathetic outsiders	game stage: community without propinquity	- cultural needs - special events	*excitement *novelty	once in a while

Figure 38: Table – Understanding the user.

groups intended to visit Common Thread. To further determine the levels of programming necessary at the centre the user groups were examined through Relph's Inside-Outside Continuum and Mead's Three-stage Typology of Self in the figure 38, p.112.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ See chapter two section: understanding our environments for a description of Relph's Inside-Outside Continuum and section understanding ourselves

This first chart confirms the importance for Common Thread to utilize programmes that involve everyday activities and provide services that meet basic needs, as this is the key factor that will continue

in our environments for an explanation of Mead's Three-Stage Typology of Self.

to engage and promote on-going use of the centre. Furthermore, as an extension of this everyday transcultural experience, the programme must include cultural programming that relates to Chinese and Canadian culture in its past, present and future. At times this cultural programming will run during specific dates and times, for instance, one might take a course once a week, attend an art or film opening once a month, or attend the annual Chinese New Year celebrations. However, this notion of culture in its past, present and future can also be synthesized to promote everyday practices, such as those found in performing tai chi, enjoying a glass of bubble tea, or walking through a gallery exhibition.

Although the prominent concern thus far has been for visitors to Common Thread, it is also important to consider how the space will function to meet the

needs of the support staff of Common Thread. The following chart is an analysis of the type and number of staff needed for each programme within the centre. This chart lists the types of activities performed within these programmes and the values and needs the design of the centre must consider in order for the staff to accomplish these activities (see figure 39, p113).

programme development

The programme within Common Thread includes four main categories: consumption, education, recreation, and professional services (see figure 40, p.115). From these categories sets of goals were drawn – physical, physiological, or psychological – that the CCTC hopes to achieve. Then specific lists of programming that would achieve these goals were developed and compiled.

function	staff + freq. of use	values	activities	needs
welcome centre	1 staff member during open hours of centre; 2 additional staff members 9am - 6pm; on evenings of special events minimum 2 staff.	sense of community; social interaction at varying levels depending on time of day or if there is an event; comfort.	welcoming and greeting visitors to the centre; organizing and scheduling events; answer questions; directing users to different areas of the centre.	secure personal storage space; minimum of two computers; printer; photocopier; desk space; phones.
food kioks	1-2 staff members including owner / operator; hours daily 8am - 5pm.	efficiency; sense of community; short term social interaction.	preparing take-away food or drink for users; ability to be quick with preparation and delivery of service.	secure personal storage space; food and drink preparation equipment; prep work surface.
grocery	1 manager; minimum of 2 staff members per shift; hours daily 8am - 9pm.	efficiency; sense of community; short term social interaction.	stocking shelves; assisting customers with items in store; answering questions; completing customer purchase transactions.	secure personal storage lockers; private w/c; cash registers, 2 checkouts; office space for management; circulation for customers with carts; adequate lighting for circulation and product display.
cafe / restaurant	1 manager; cafe upto 4 servers; kitchen upto 4 staff; restaurant upto 10 servers + busers and 6 kitchen staff. Cafe hours 10am - 12pm; restaurant hours 10am - 9pm.	efficiency; sense of community; short to long term social interaction.	preparing and serving food and drink to be consumed in-house; efficiency in service to turn tables around in a timely manner; clearing and setting tables for next seating.	secure personal storage lockers; 2 private w/c; bar for beverage preparation; full working commercial kitchen; adequate circulation; flexible lighting options; office for management.
bookstore	1-2 staff members; hours daily 8am - 6pm.	efficiency; social interaction.	stocking bookshelves and displays; assisting customers with merchandise; reference desk; completing purchase transactions.	secure personal storage space; desk; purchasing space; seating.
housewares	1-2 staff members; hours daily 8am - 6pm.	efficiency; social interaction.	stocking shelves and displays; assisting customers with merchandise; completing purchase transactions.	secure personal storage space; desk; purchasing space.

Figure 39: Table – Understanding the staff.

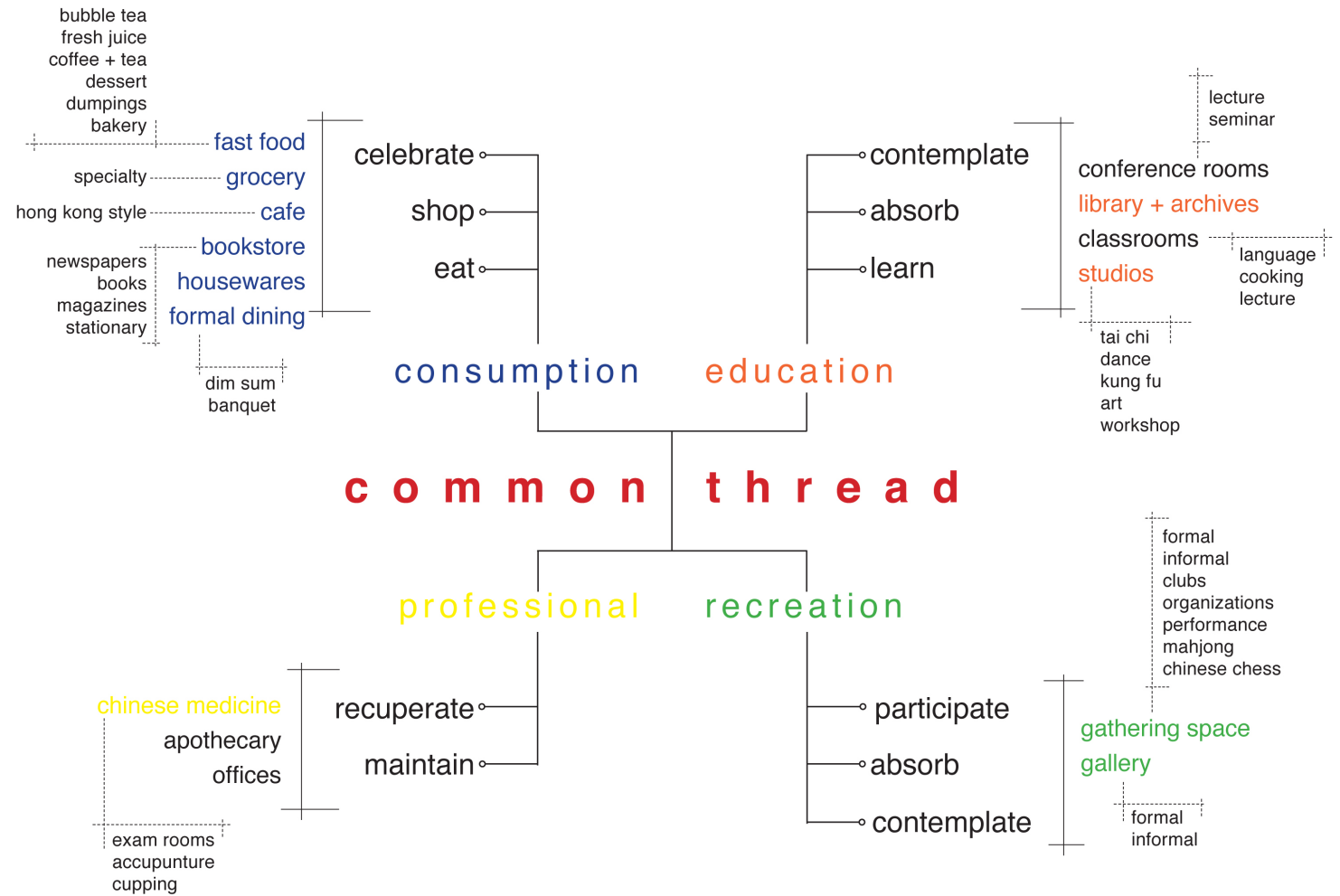


Figure 40: Table – Programme development.

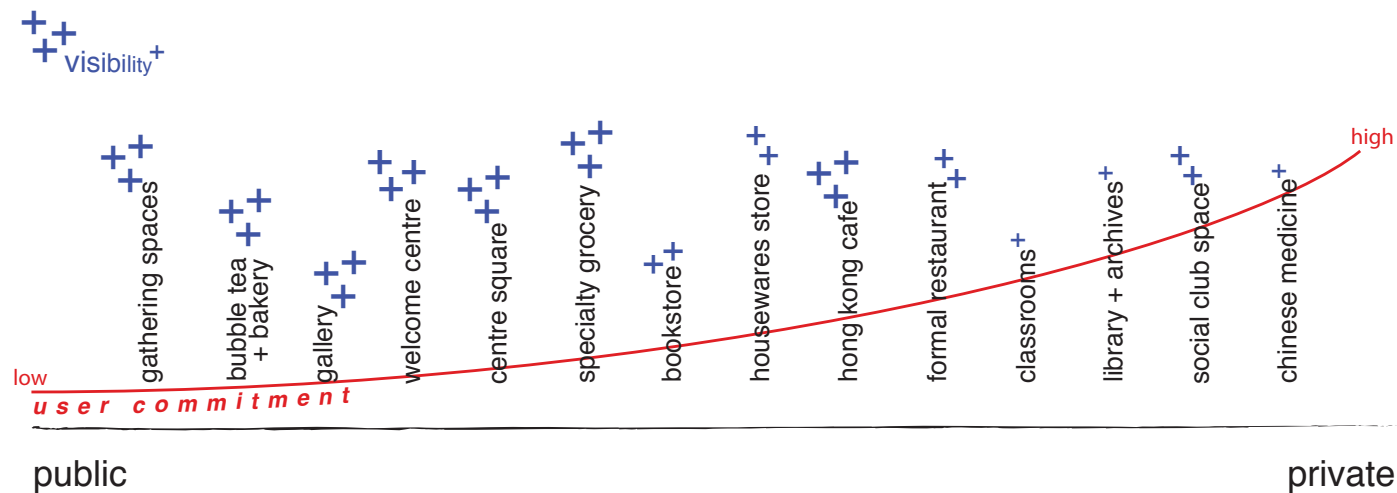


Figure 41: Table - Functions from public to private, level of visibility within the centre and level of commitment to the user.

This chart highlights in color the programmes and spaces that will be privileged within the design of Common Thread.

To organize and prioritize the types of programmes, the amount of user commitment necessary for the programme to be a success and the placement of these programmes within the CCTC, the

following chart was developed (see figure 41, p.116).

In order to understand the spatial requirements of these activities in Common Thread, the spaces were divided and analyzed through the requirements of furniture, fixtures, and equipment needed (FFE), spatial needs, the types of preferred adjacencies, the type of expected body ballet through the space and the

intended heighten bodily sense to be privileged, which can be found in [appendix c] programme activities.

programme conclusion

By engaging in the process of programming I was able to filter the key factors of the literary investigation that I performed through the intended functional areas of the space, drawing from this process a hierarchy of importance in intentions and thus enabling myself to make concrete design decisions.

The site for Common Thread has significance not only historically and in the present, but with the addition of the Quarters district there is a hopeful vision for the future of the Central neighborhood and the city of Edmonton as a whole. The addition of Common Thread would contribute to the urban fabric of the Central sector of the city and present opportunities for

individuals to engage in intercultural exchanges. The centre must therefore be an environment that the users feel both physically and psychologically safe in. The challenge is to design an environment that individuals not only feel comfortable experiencing but that also excites, in that it entices the user to engage in the programme of the centre. By promoting a programme that incorporates everyday practices of meeting basic human needs, while simultaneously embedding within it activities that have significance to Canadian, Chinese, and Chinese Canadian culture, Common Thread has the potential to promote an exploration of cultural identity.

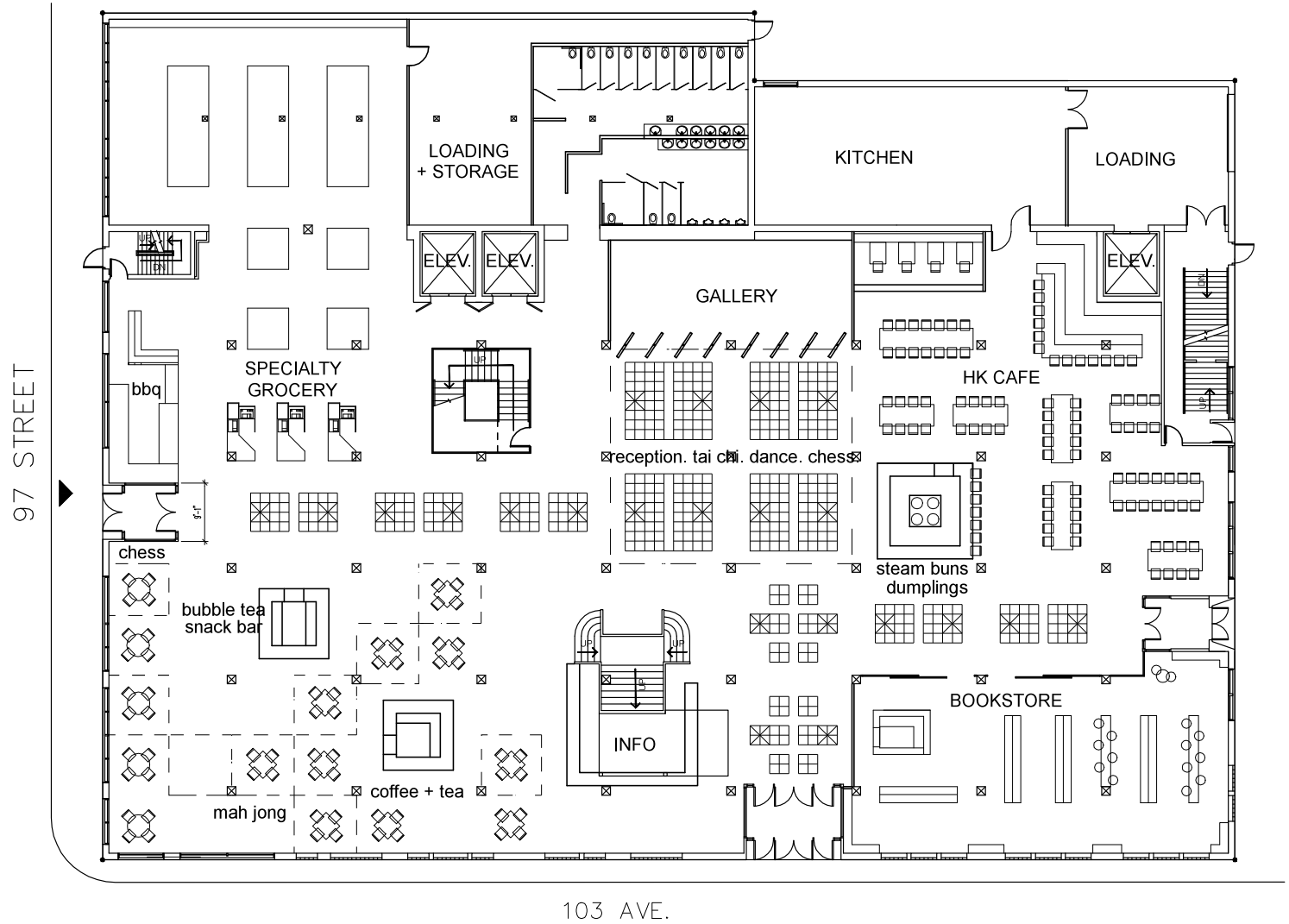
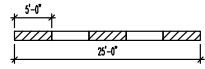
[design exploration + outcome]

The design process used was an exploration into the synthesis of understanding gained through the project's theoretical, literary, design precedent, and programmatic investigations. The analysis of these areas pinpointed three overarching design goals for the practicum: (1) create the potential for a body-ballet – develop a sense of spatial movement through the building, that encourage individuals to transition through and engage in the space and the programmes within it; (2) create opportunities for a contact zone – blurring both spatial and social boundaries; (3) engage sensorial experiences – heighten awareness and attention of sensorial engagements between spaces that contributed to an embodied experience. The design goals were explored during three distinct phases of the design process, each

one building upon the lessons learned in the earlier renditions. Each of these phases revealed a particular relationship to the structural grid of the building and was therefore titled as follows: restricted within the grid, disregard for the grid, and taming the grid.

phase one: restricted within the grid

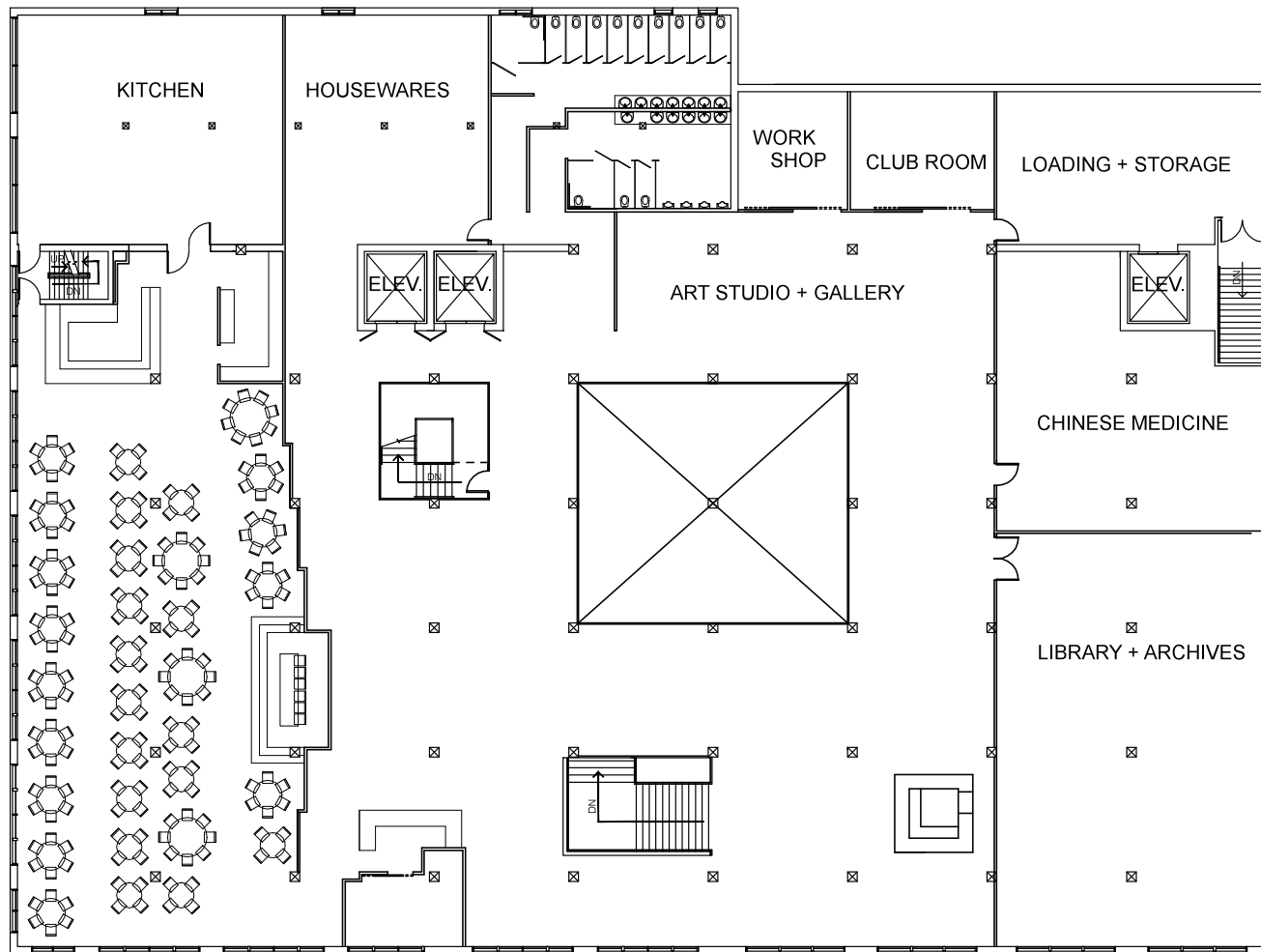
The first phase of the design explored a proposal that was situated within the structural grid of the building (see figures 42-43, p.119-120). It was a design that was able to maximize the relationship between square footage available and useable programmatic space however it lacked in many respects the key elements that were necessary to meet the project intentions. The design privileged the goal of blurring boundaries to create opportunities for the



Site/Main Floor

Building Area = 21,730 sq.ft.

Figure 42: Phase one – Common Thread main floor plan.



Second Floor
Building Area = 21,730 sq.ft.

Figure 43: Phase one – Common Thread 2nd floor plan.



Figure 44: Phase one – Centre square perspective.



Figure 45: Phase one – Chinese chess + mahjong area perspective.

informal intercultural exchanges of a contact zone and entice users into spaces that they would not typically be tempted to engage in. As a result the space was left almost completely void of any vertical partitions, leaving an expansive space that lacked a sense of hierarchy. In an attempt to blur the programmatic boundaries of these spaces, nothing within the design was privileged. The space seemed clustered and confusing with furniture and millwork that offered a slight delineation between adjacent programmes but with no focal point to ground the design. The circulatory paths throughout this proposal allowed for easy access and transition from one space to the next, but the spatial design did not encourage a sense of movement through the space in that the body would naturally want to follow. The open design left users exposed to multiple sensory experiences within each space that were engaged

simultaneously, instead of highlighting the sensorial experiences the senses triggered, and had the potential to be more distracting and disruptive. Although the mind inherently selects what sensory information it wishes to receive, the design goal was to create a sensorial engagement where the senses triggered would draw users' attention to the spaces that they occupied and those in proximity.

phase two: disregard for the grid

The second iteration of the design looked to create a gestural delineation of space in order to promote the sense of movement that was lacking in the first design proposal. The embodied movements found in writing Chinese calligraphy were used as a conceptual approach to mimicking the notion of the

body-ballet through space (see figure 46, p.124, and figure 47, p.125). The large sweeping gestures of this exercise were extracted and simplified in a way that began to outline spaces within the building (see figures 48-49, p. 126-128).

To develop an understanding of how design elements could begin to imply the delineation of movement through space a light study was done on a sketch model that examined how three different types of perforations on a vertical partition could convey a sense of progression (see figures 50-51, p 129-130). The first perforation explored was a random circular pattern where the number of perforations grew from one end to the next, this pattern revealed a soft atmospheric light that filtered through the wall but appeared to be quite static. The second perforation was a woven pattern that created a definitive edge to the vertical



Figure 46: Mimicking Chinese calligraphic movements.



Figure 47: A sample of two main floor adjacency matrices.

surface but created a diffused light that was so subtle that it did not evoke any sense of spatial movement. The final wall study was punctured with a set of vertical linear perforations that became taller from one end of the partition to the next. These vertical perforations produced a distinct pattern of light and shadow that spread and grew along the floor creating a dramatic sense of movement in the space.



The design during this phase began to frame and privilege spaces within Common Thread (see figures 52-53, p. 131-132). A sense of hierarchy began to develop and it became evident that the most important space within Common Thread was the center square as the main binding element within the building. The programmatic flexibility of the centre square affords the greatest potential in achieving the design goals.

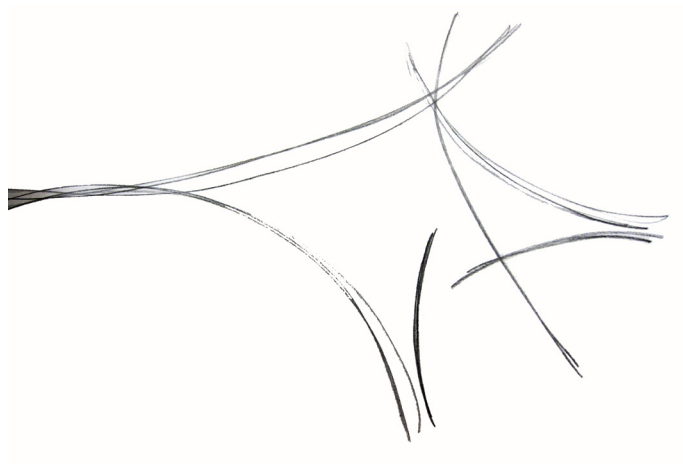
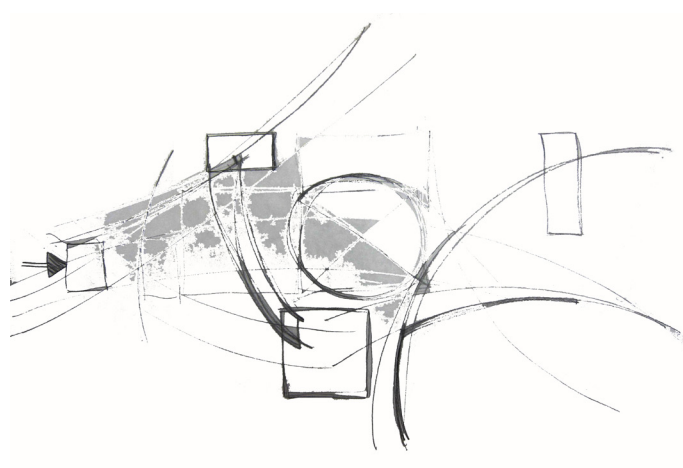


Figure 48: Phase two – a series of two gestural plans.

Depending on whether or not there is an event planned for the space, it provides an opportunity to create formal or informal gathering. Further consideration was also given to the types of sensorial connections that were happening between adjacent programmes – prompting on which senses should be accentuated and how could this be achieved.



Although this phase of the design process revealed many detailed insights on how to achieve the design goals, the main concern with this design proposal was the complete disregard it had for the underlying structural grid of the building. This caused awkward spatial relationships between the historical structure of the grid and the new design intervention.

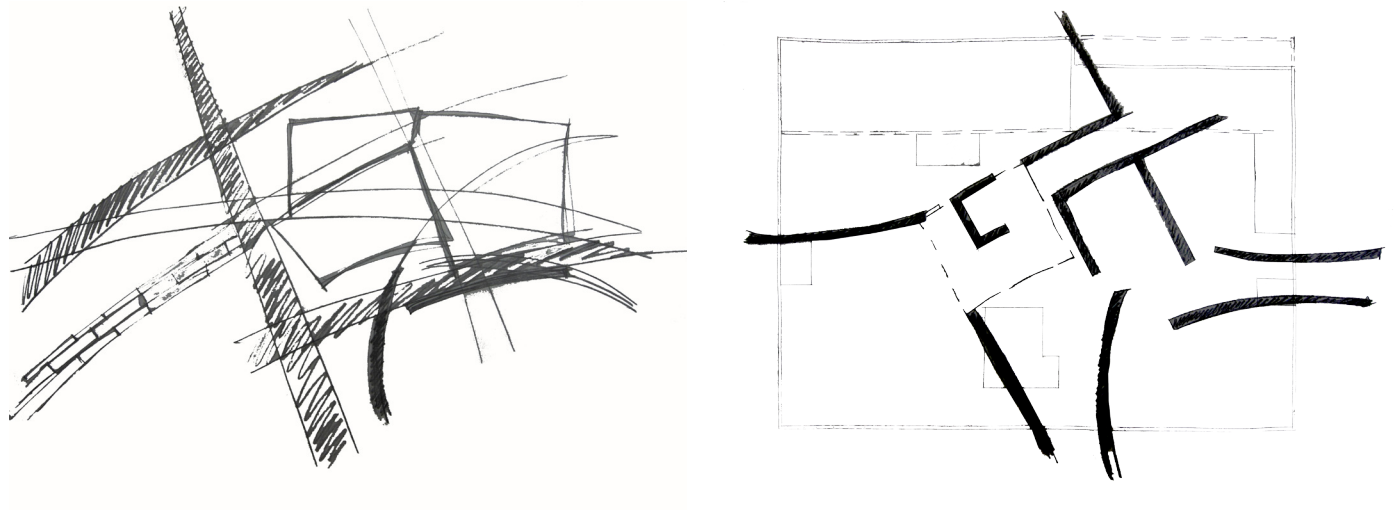
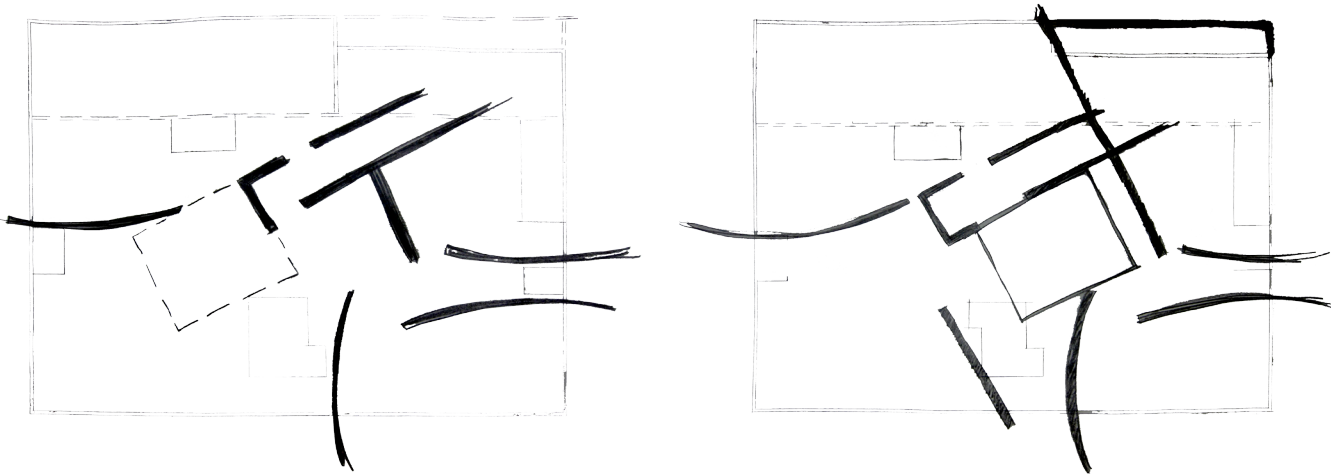


Figure 49: Phase two – a series of four gestural main floor plans exploring the relationship of the centre square to adjacent spaces.



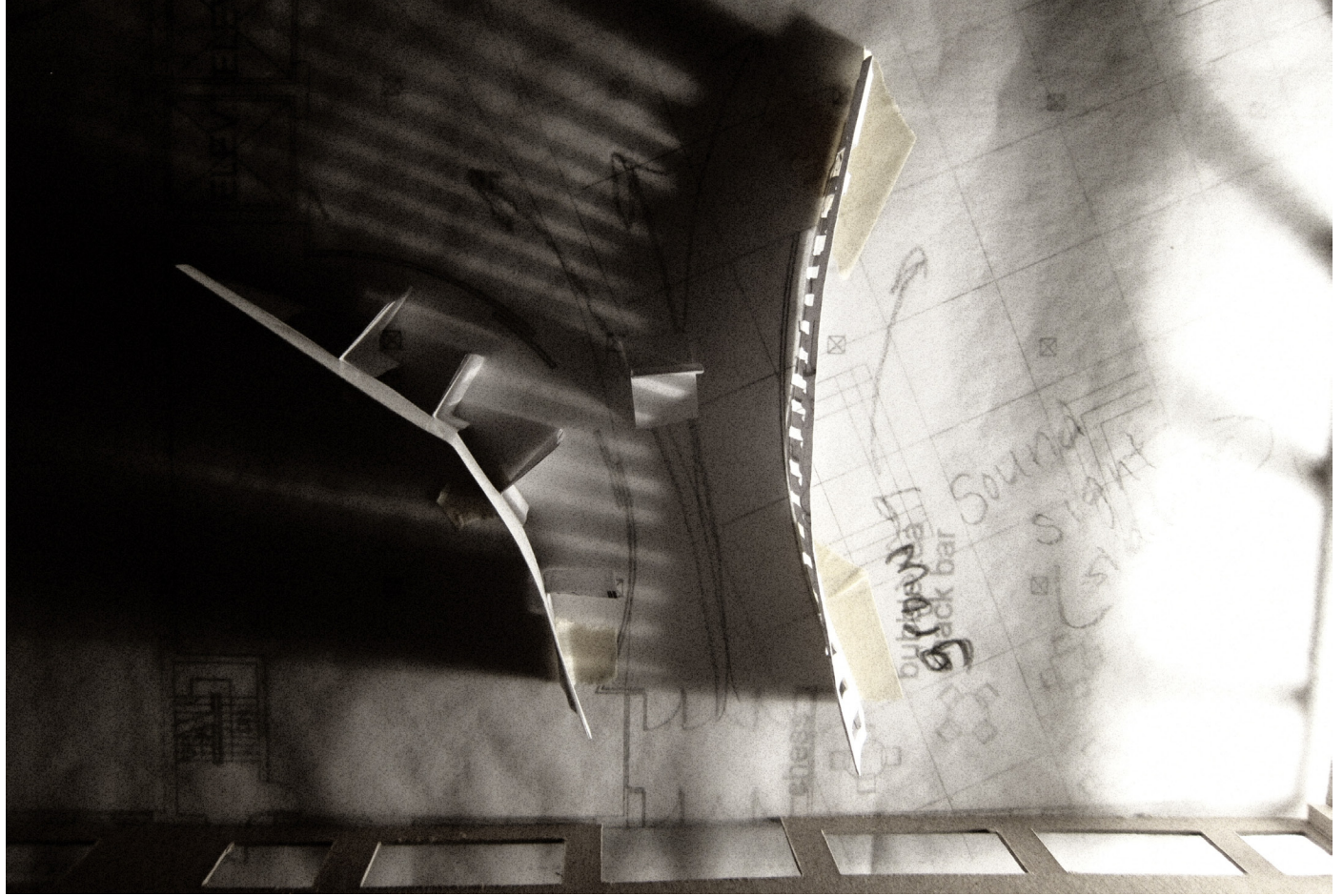
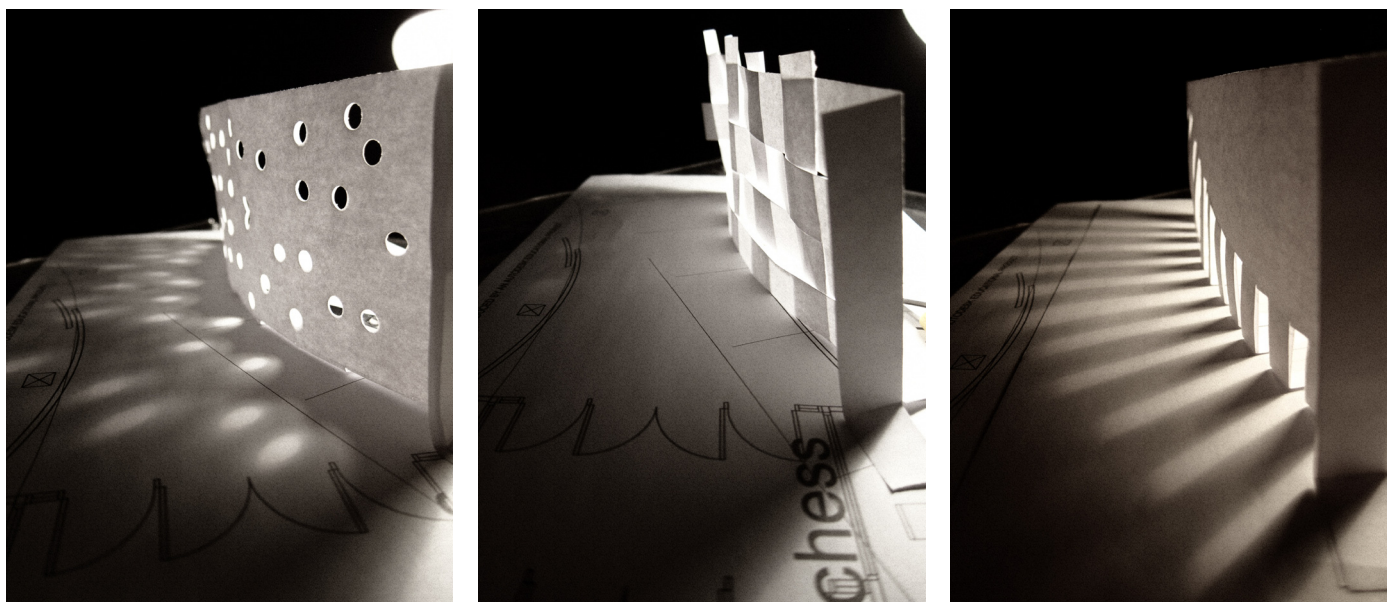


Figure 50: Sketch model light study.



Figures 51: Sketch model. A series of three photographs exploring the sense of movement created by light permeating through different types of perforations on a vertical partitions.

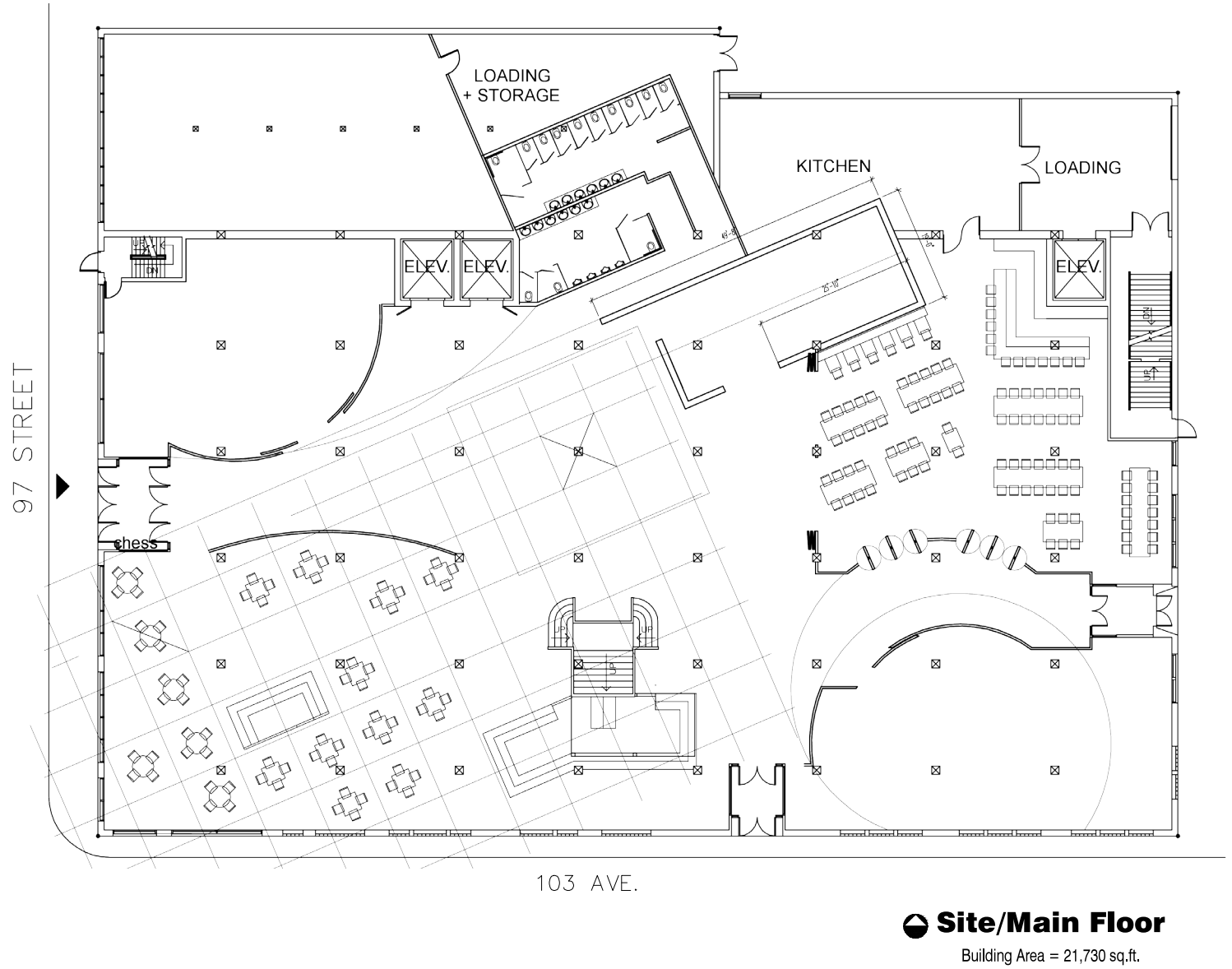
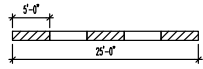
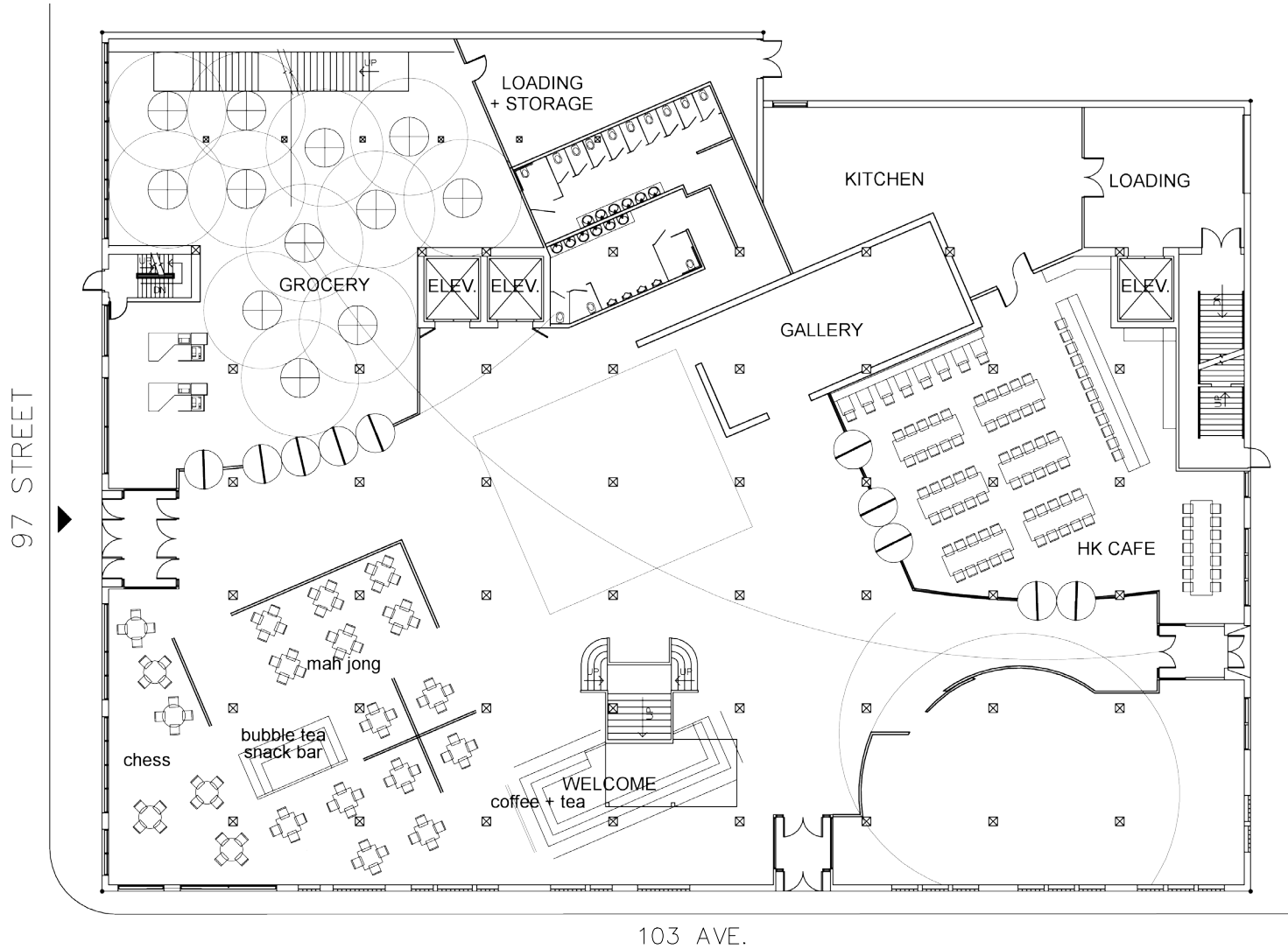


Figure 52: Phase two – Common Thread main floor plan, option F.



Site/Main Floor

Building Area = 21,730 sq.ft.

Figure 53: Phase two – Common Thread main floor plan, option G.

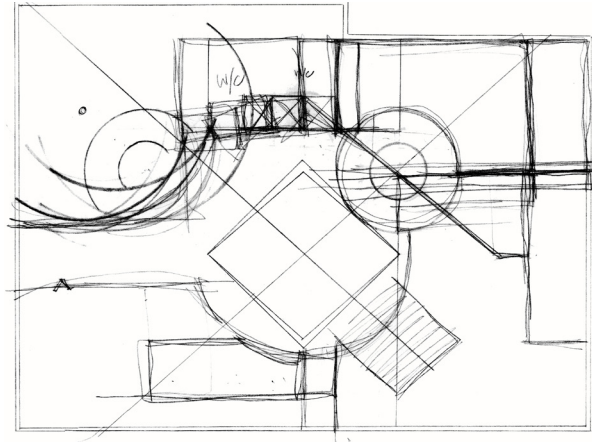
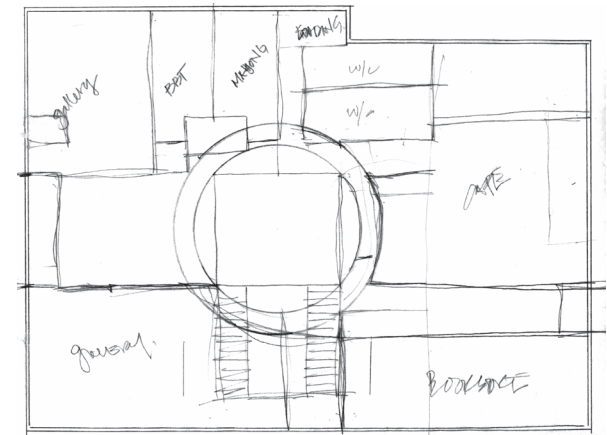


Figure 54: Phase three - a sample of four schematic sketches.

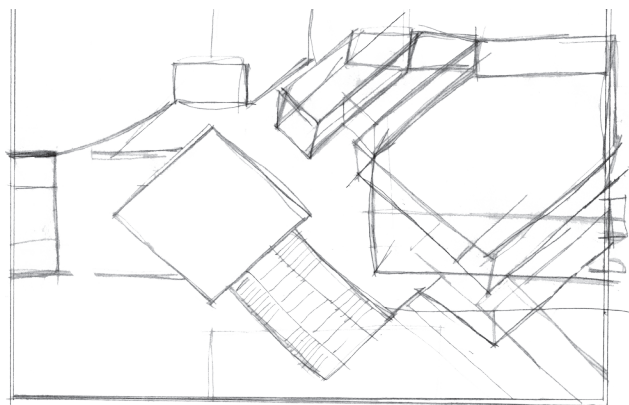
phase three: taming the grid

The awkward spatial relationships that were generated through the gestural phase of the design process led to the final phase of the design development. Taming the grid was a series of graphic exercises that began to isolate and identify the specific spatial patterns that could be found inherently in the building's structural framework. These underlying

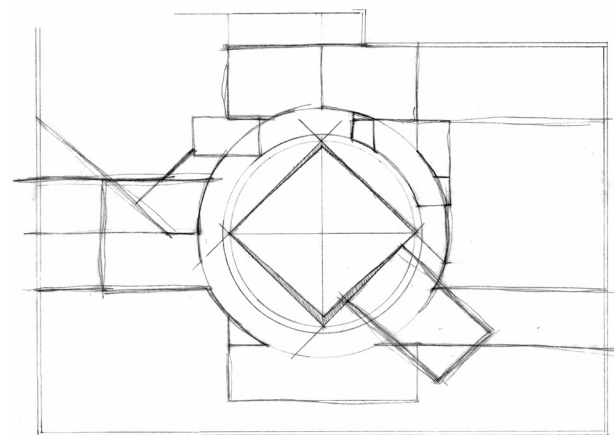


geometries within the grid began to reveal opportunities between spatial relationships and form that prompted a shuffle in a number of the programmatic spatial adjacencies within the design of Common Thread.

The layering of these programmatic adjacencies with the existing patterns found within the grid produced a number of schematics designs that were then synthesized through a series of mapping techniques



in order to determine the relevancy of the design in achieving the design goals (see figure 54, p. 133-134). The sensorial mapping techniques revealed the type of senses that could begin to seep in between programmatic spaces, and the mapping of conceptual and spatial borders, boundaries, and edges – that began to implicate degrees of porosity that might exist between the designed spaces (see figures 55-60,



p.135-140).²⁰⁹

²⁰⁹ An understanding of the concepts of borders, boundaries, and edges was interpreted through the definitions and descriptions of Edward S. Casey in "Borders and Boundaries: Edging into the Environment", where a border is a horizontal feature that implies a delineation of space and could be interpreted as a design element that has a porous range from opaque to translucent to transparent; whereas a boundary has a much more physically porous form of delineation that can act as a transition space or threshold and could be seen in this aspect as being translucent or transparent; and finally an edge being the most opaque and oppressive way of delineating space as it is typically a vertical element signifying the termination of a space to anything beyond it. Edward S. Casey. "Borders and Boundaries: Edging into the Environment" in *Merleau-Ponty and Environmental Philosophy: Dwelling on the Landscapes of Thought*, ed. Suzanne L. Cataldi and William S. Hamrick. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 67-92.

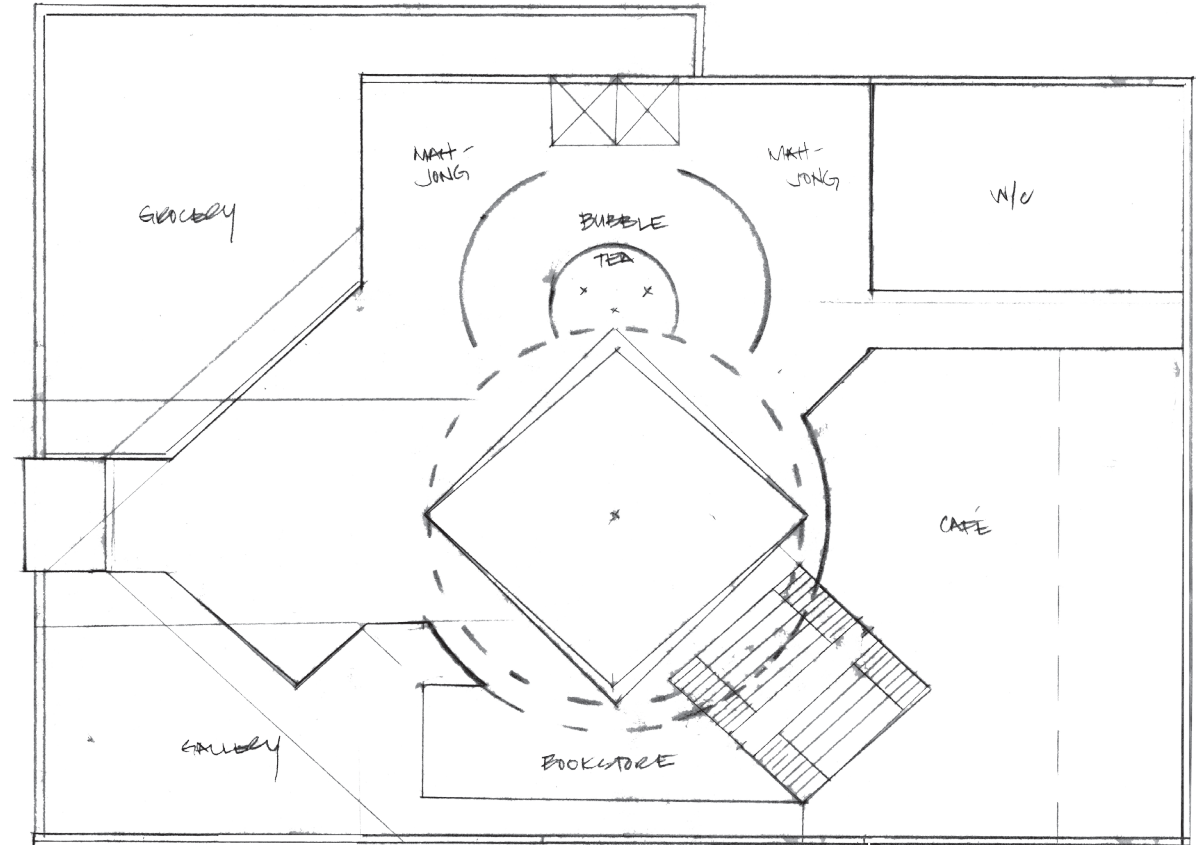
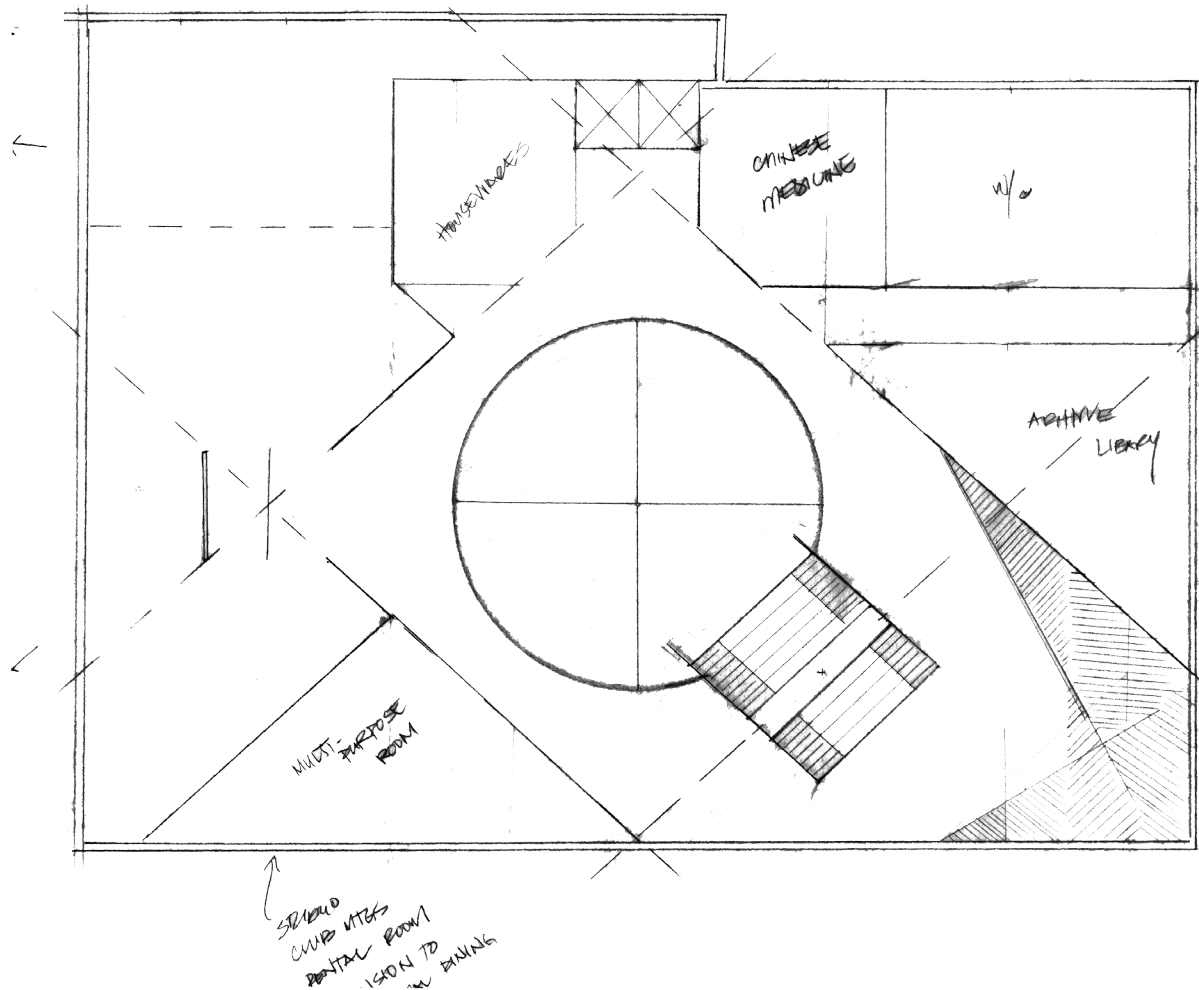


Figure 55: Phase three - Final schematic plan main floor.



◊ Purity of Form

DIM SUM
(W) FIREWALL
CLUB
STUDIO
DC. OFFICE

WIFI
INTERNET
ISLAND

Depending on
where you sit
your wifi devices
are slower / fast

— access is limited
— warnings pop up
saying site outside
is off limits in
china.

MAY 7, 2011

16-18 - 2ND FLR

Figure 56: Phase three - Final schematic plan 2nd floor.

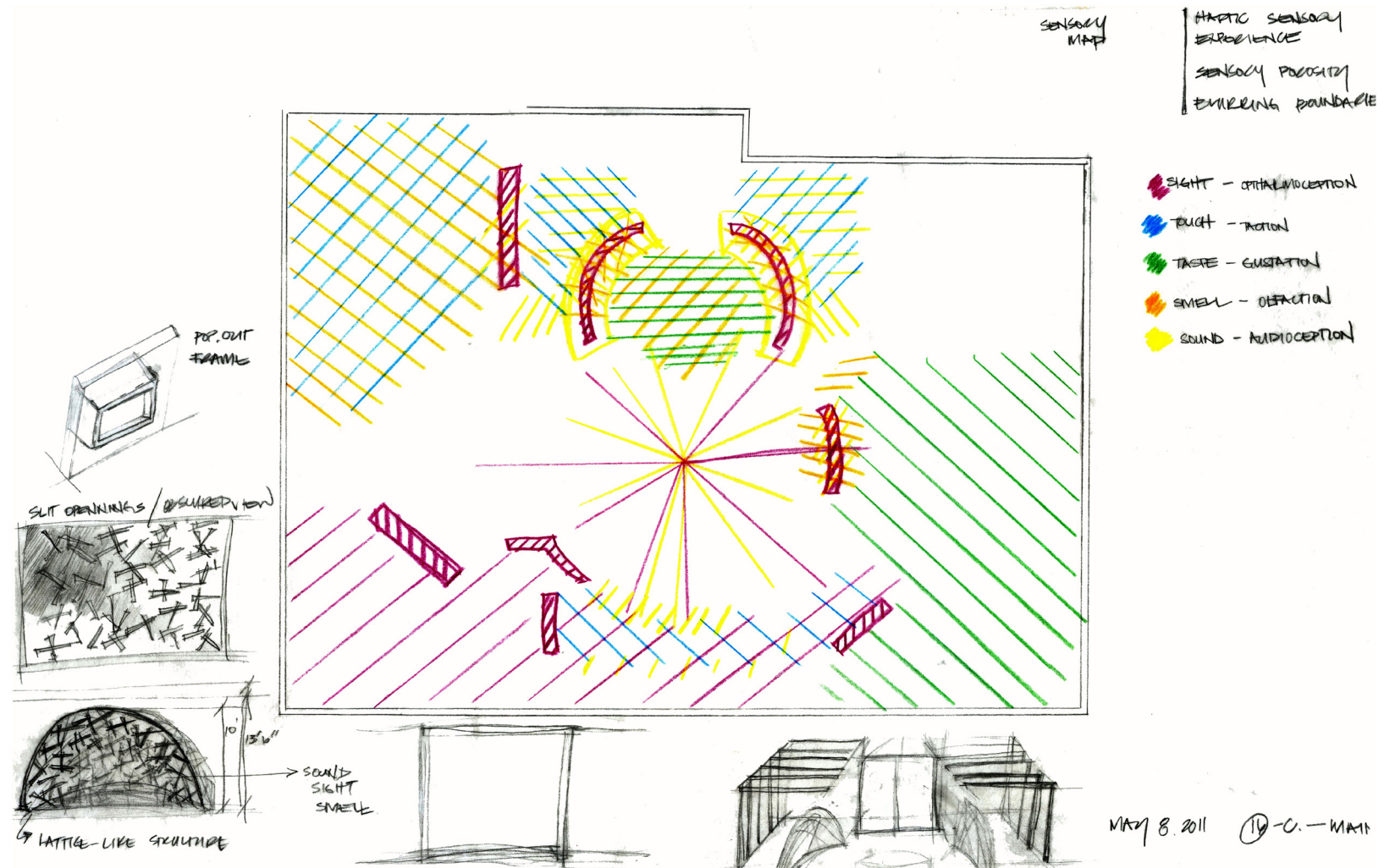


Figure 57: Phase three - Sensorial mapping. Main floor.

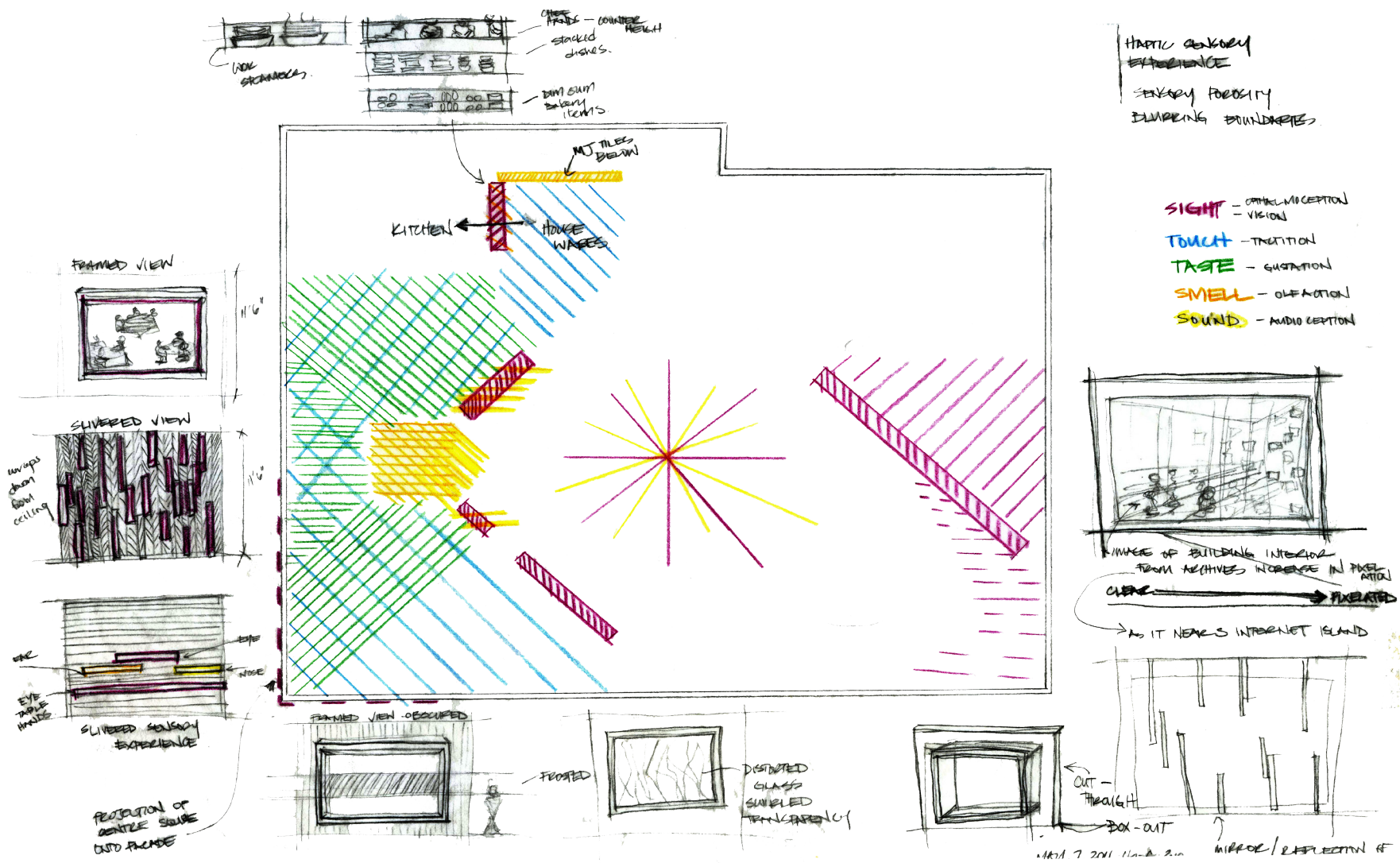


Figure 58: Phase three - Sensorial mapping. Second floor.





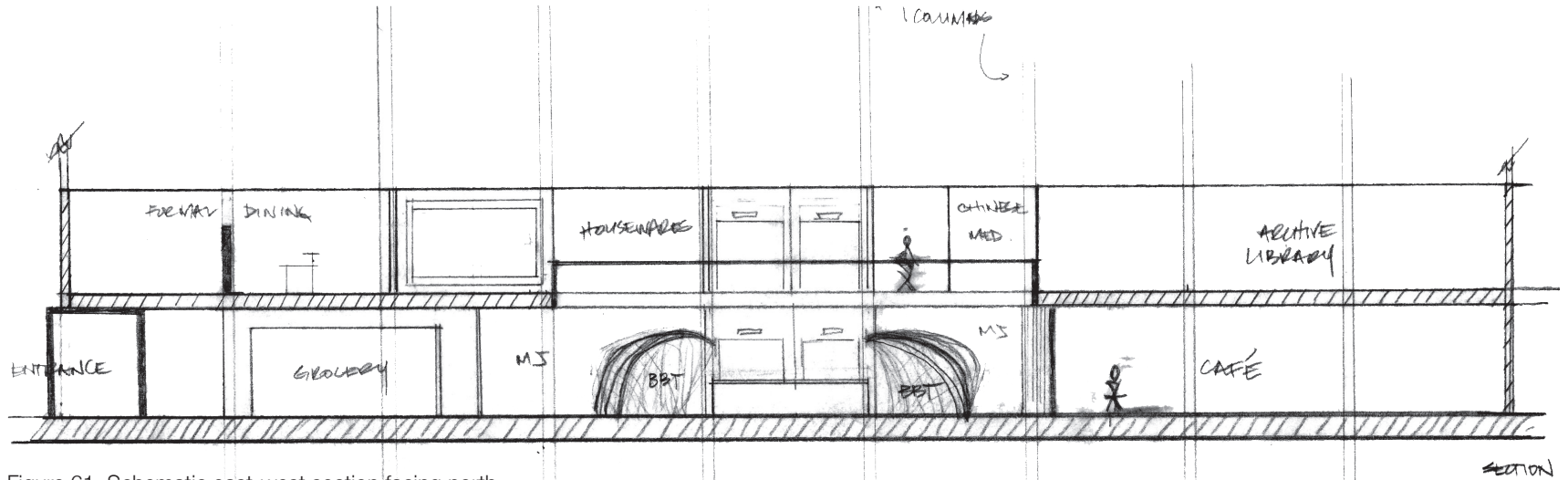


Figure 61: Schematic east-west section facing north.

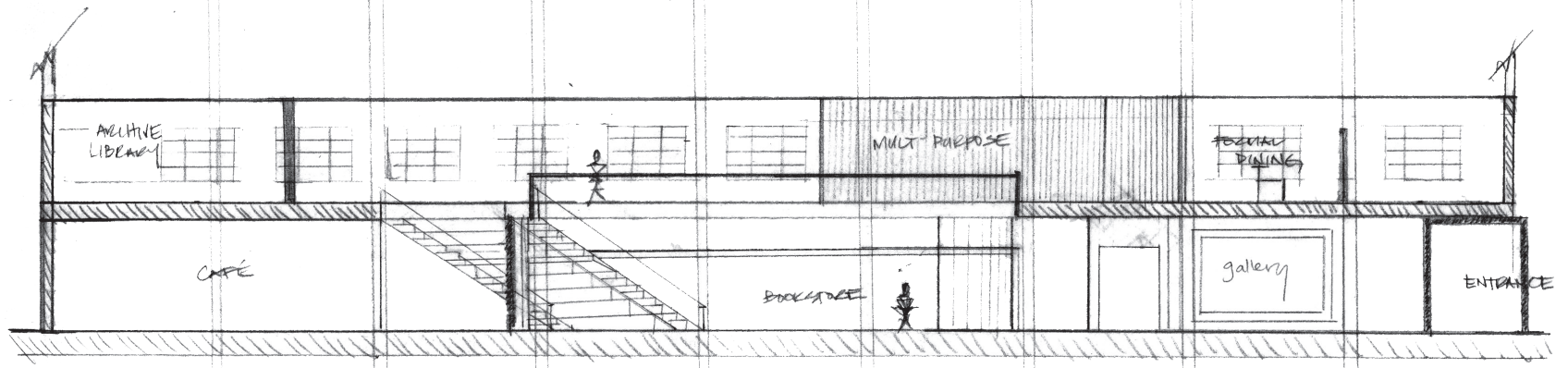


Figure 62: Schematic east-west section facing south.

the contact zone, surveillance + censorship

Although the design intention of Common Thread adopts a non-threatening interpretation of the concept of the contact zone, a truly democratic and non-hierarchical social space cannot be guaranteed as it is not only dependent on the spatial features of the centre but also on the individuals that occupy it. If we take into consideration the cultural tensions implied by the contact zone, we can begin to see contextual differences of what everyday life can be like as a Chinese citizen or Canadian citizen.²¹⁰ Instead of attempting to create a place where the extremities of these realities were imposed upon the users or disregarded completely, the design sought to illuminate these cultural realities in a way that could engage the user to consider contemporary life in China versus in

Canada. The placement of the bubble tea bar within the mahjong area, for example, is an opportunity to highlight a traditional pastime with a new cultural activity – where users of each space can glimpse into the activities of the other area. The design features some subtle gestures that accentuate issues of surveillance and censorship (see figure 63, p.144). In terms of surveillance, overt cameras were placed in specific locations of centre square and the images of these spaces will be projected within the centre or along the façade of the centre. These projections could include a bird's eye view of the events taking place in the centre square or a lowered view of users feet traversing through the space. Either way it is a commentary that makes individuals consciously aware that they are being watched. But unlike the negative undertones of surveillance in China, the cameras and projections of

²¹⁰ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 4.

the spaces can be done in a way that is playful and promotes the activities within the centre.

Another design feature that carries within it a suggestion of differences in everyday life comments on the topic of censorship in China. This feature has been programmed into the space designated as the Wi-Fi Island (see figure 65, p. 146). Placed at the top of the major staircase and adjacent to the archive library this space will be an area for browsing on mobile and web-based devices. Comfort within the space will be found through the custom designed open and enclosed seating that affords the body an opportunity to take on a number of leisurely positions, similar to the pieces titled “sitscape” by the firm Hackenbroich Architekten (see figure 64, p.145). But unlike most free Wi-Fi areas within a city, when users of the service and space try to access something that is typically censored by what

has been referred to as the Great ‘Firewall’ of China, an image of a warning will appear on the device indicating that this would have been a forbidden action in China.²¹¹

[final design]

Due to the large scale and scope of the practicum project a schematic design was completed of the entire building but three key areas were taken into further detail. These key areas exemplify some of the design outcomes that have led to the achievement of the design goals, and include: the centre square developed on both the first and second floors, the mahjong and bubble tea area, and the HK café.

The final schematic plan of Common Thread achieves all three of the design goals. There is an

²¹¹ Mure Dickie, “Great Firewall of China”, *Financial Times*, March 15, 2007.

obvious sense of hierarchy of spaces within the final design of Common Thread where the centre square is the main feature of the space not only when special events are taking place but also when the space is not being occupied for a specific purpose. The placement and orientation of the centre square within the centre accentuates a sense of movement between the programmatic spaces (see figures 66-75, p.147-156). The sense of hierarchy and movement is accentuated by the grand gesture of the main vertical staircase that doubles as a form of seating during special events and presentations, or alternatively as a place to take a pause, visit with a friend, or have lunch during the course of an individual's day (see figures 76-82, p.157-160). The spaces and functions within the centre support these temporary and informally programmed activities of the centre square by providing users of the Common Thread with the opportunity to engage

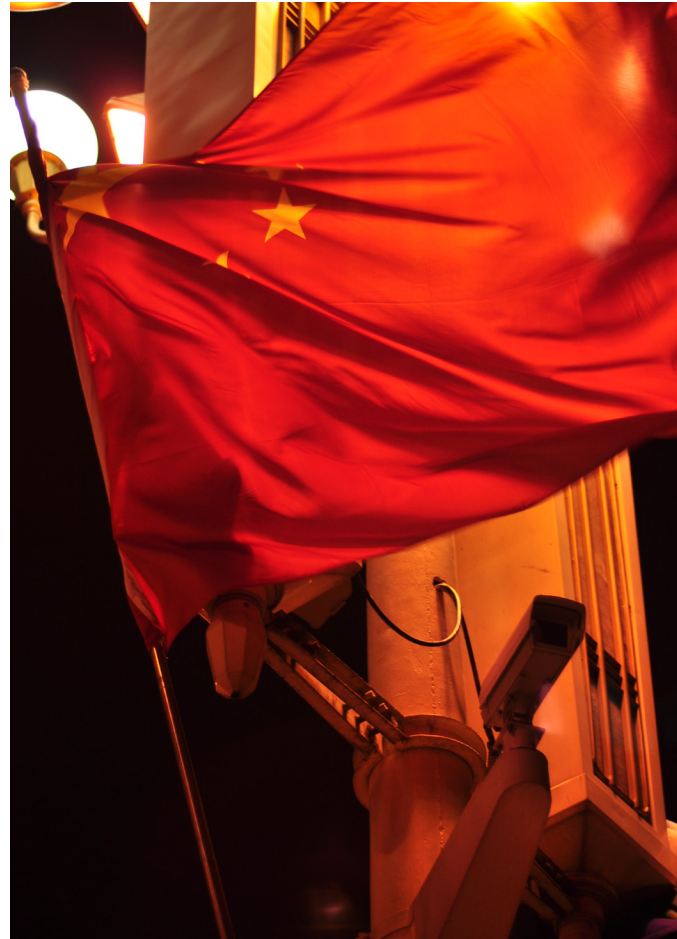


Figure 63: Surveillance camera at Tianamen Square.

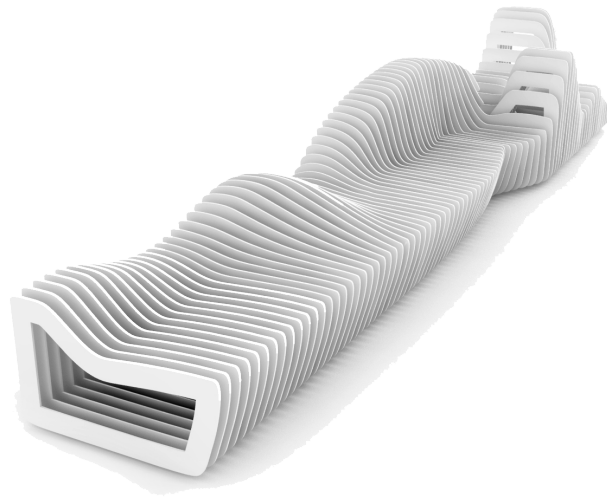
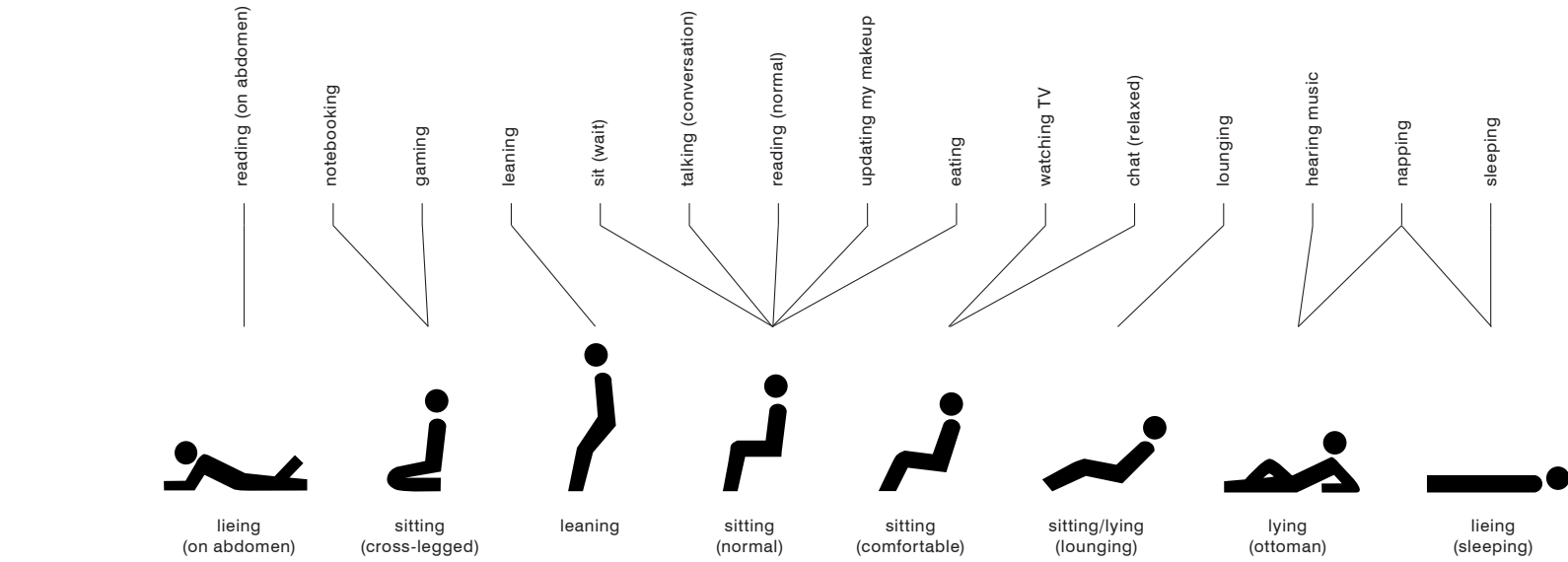


Figure 64: “Sitscape - a system for a mass customized seating landscape” by Hackenbroich Architekten. Furniture designed to support a variety of body postures. Photograph property of Hacken Architekten.

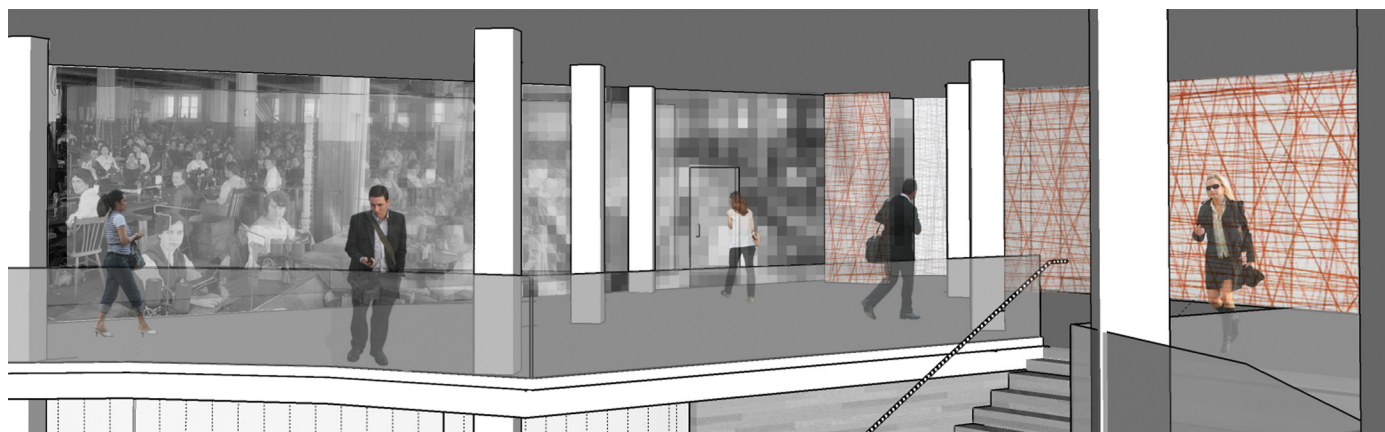


Figure 65: View of Archives Library + Wi-Fi Island.

in the fulfillment of everyday tasks, such as eating, shopping, resting, and socializing. These supporting spaces are not forgotten, however, as a sense of importance is given to them by blurring boundaries. One of the techniques used to draw attention to the activities between spaces was to frame them within each other. For example the bubble tea vendor is set within the mahjong area, the bookstore is within the gallery, and there is an unexpected framed perspective from the cafe into the bookstore (see figure 90, p.164). Through the framing of spaces within spaces, a sense of importance is given to these activities portraying them

as part of the narratives of everyday life. The particular privileging of specific senses within certain spaces further emphasizes the notion of blurring boundaries by creating awareness of neighboring spaces through varying levels of sensorial porosity that are not typically heightened between areas. For instance, the use of perforations on the wall separating the specialty grocery store and the mahjong area, as well as the perforations in the ceiling and floor plane between the mahjong area and the housewares store on the floor above, enable the washing sound of mahjong tiles to filter through to these adjacent spaces (see figure 83, p.161).

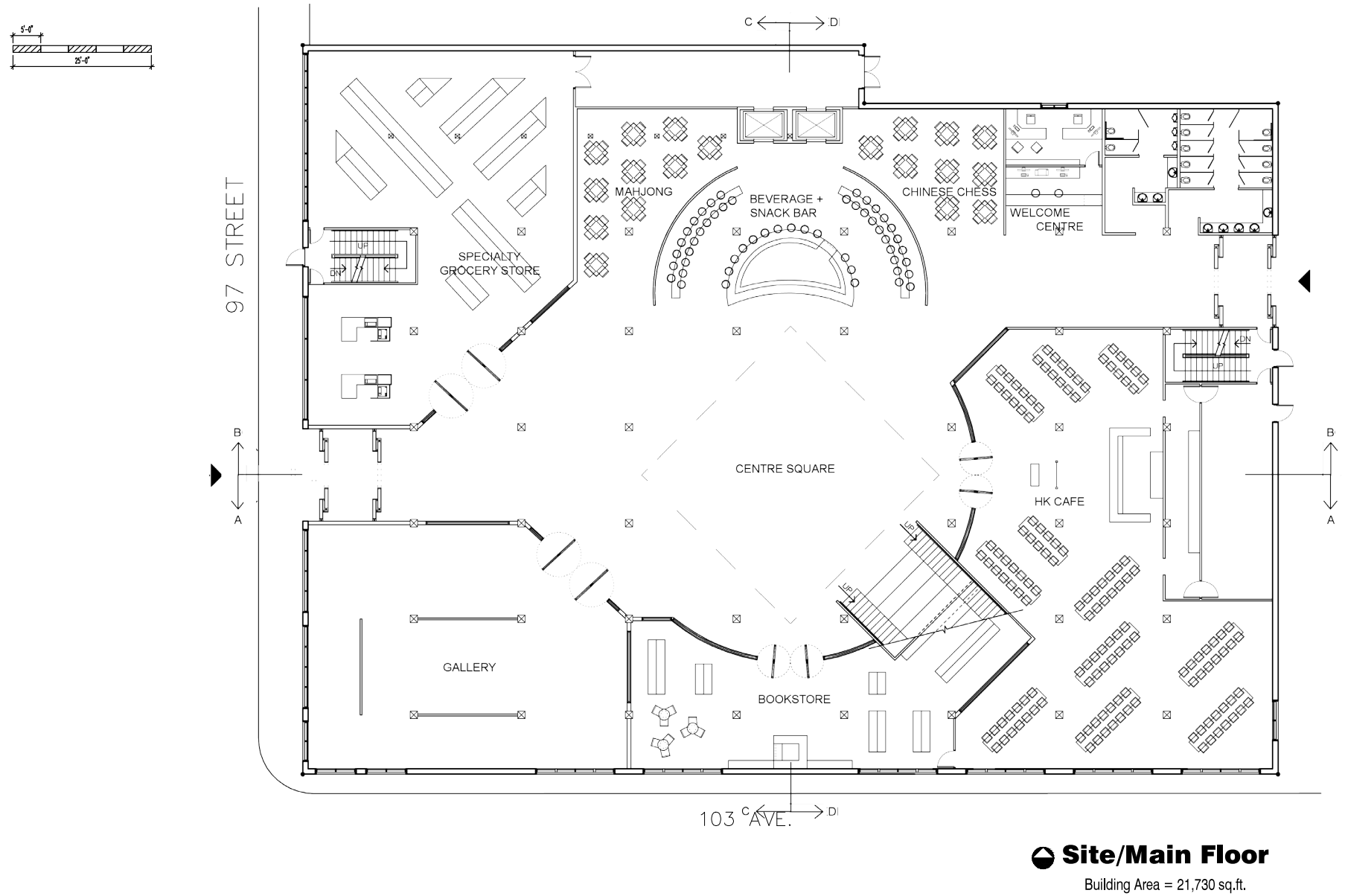
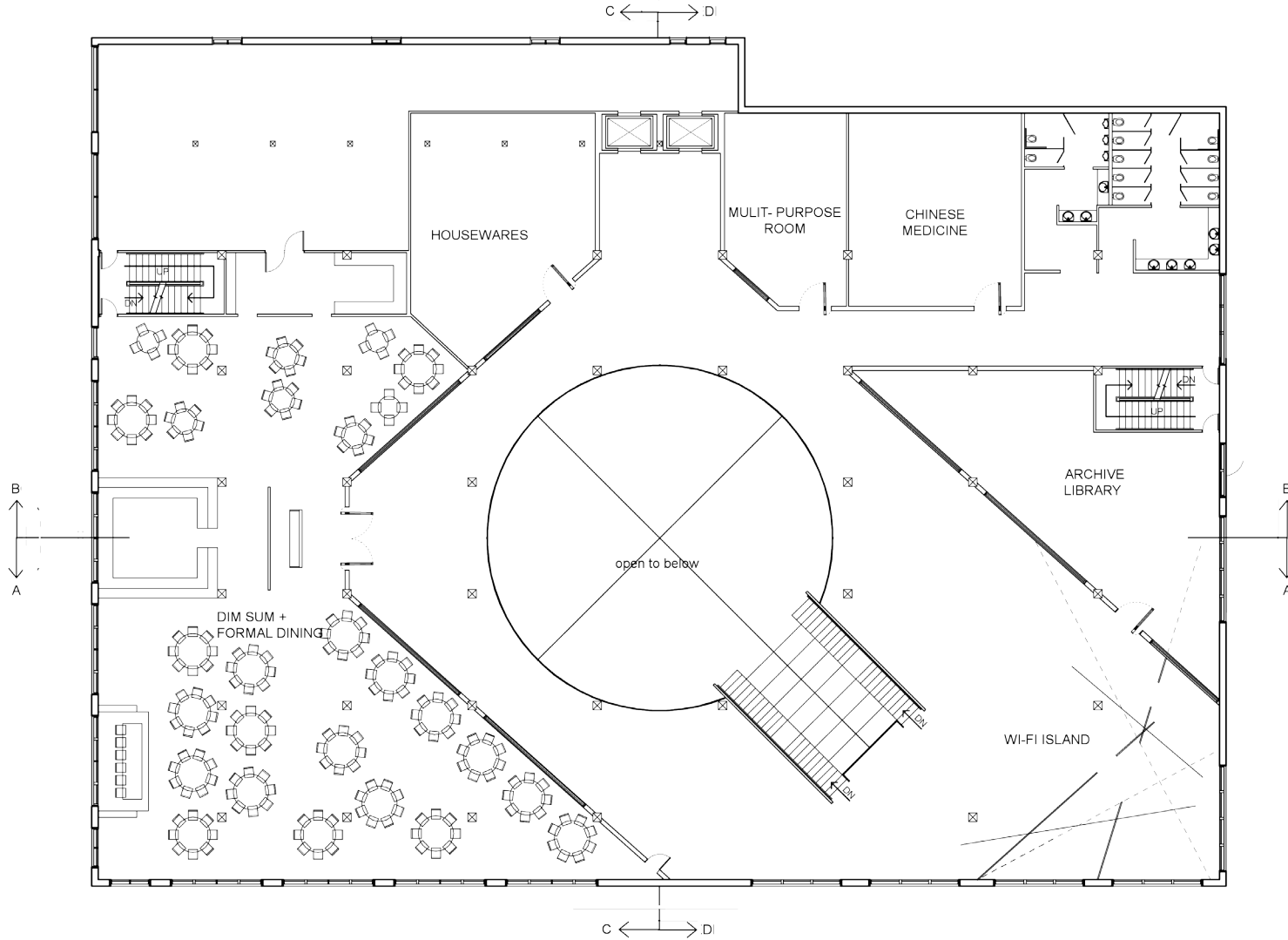


Figure 66: Furniture plan - Main floor.



Second Floor
Building Area = 21,730 sq.ft.

Figure 67: Furniture plan - Second floor.

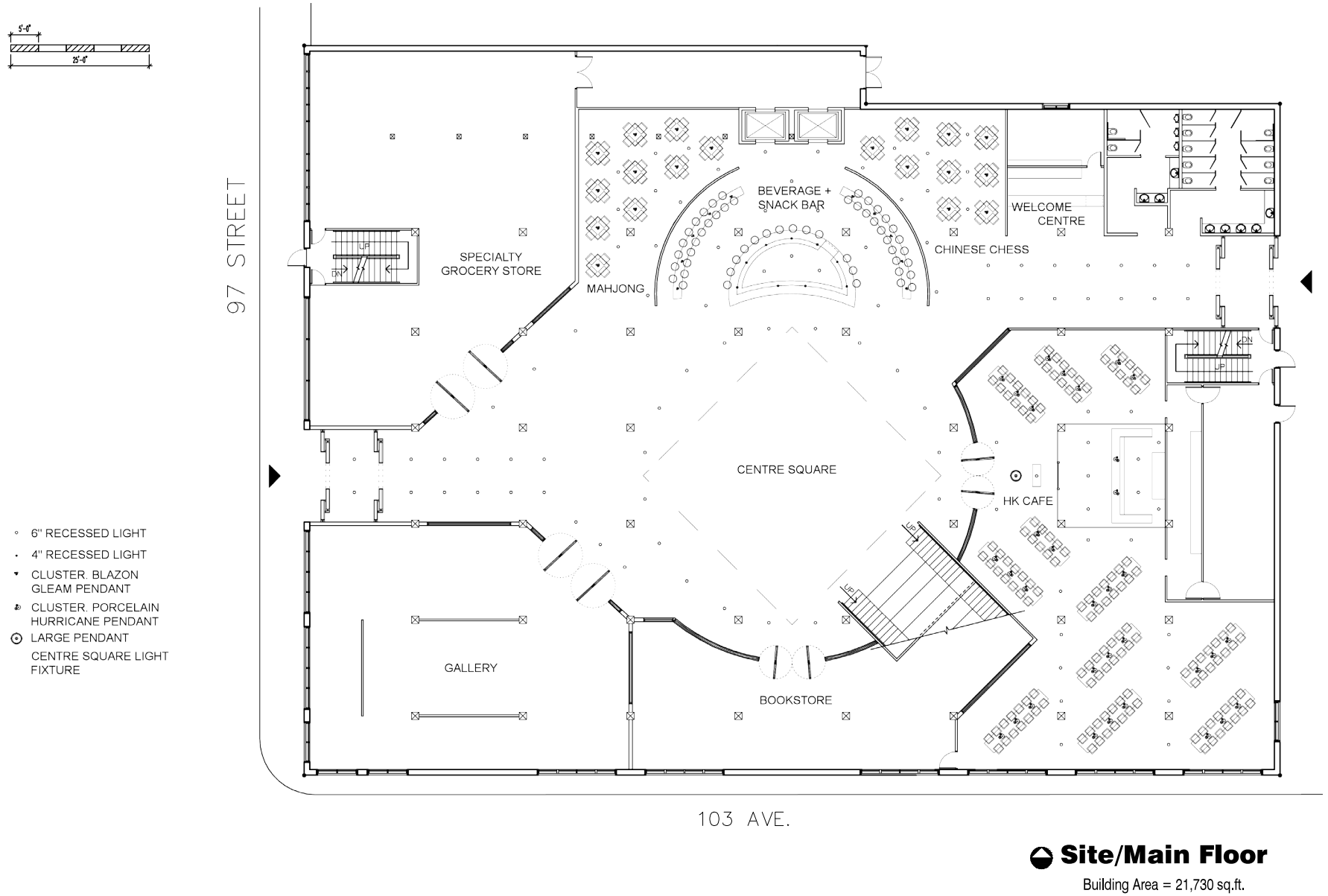
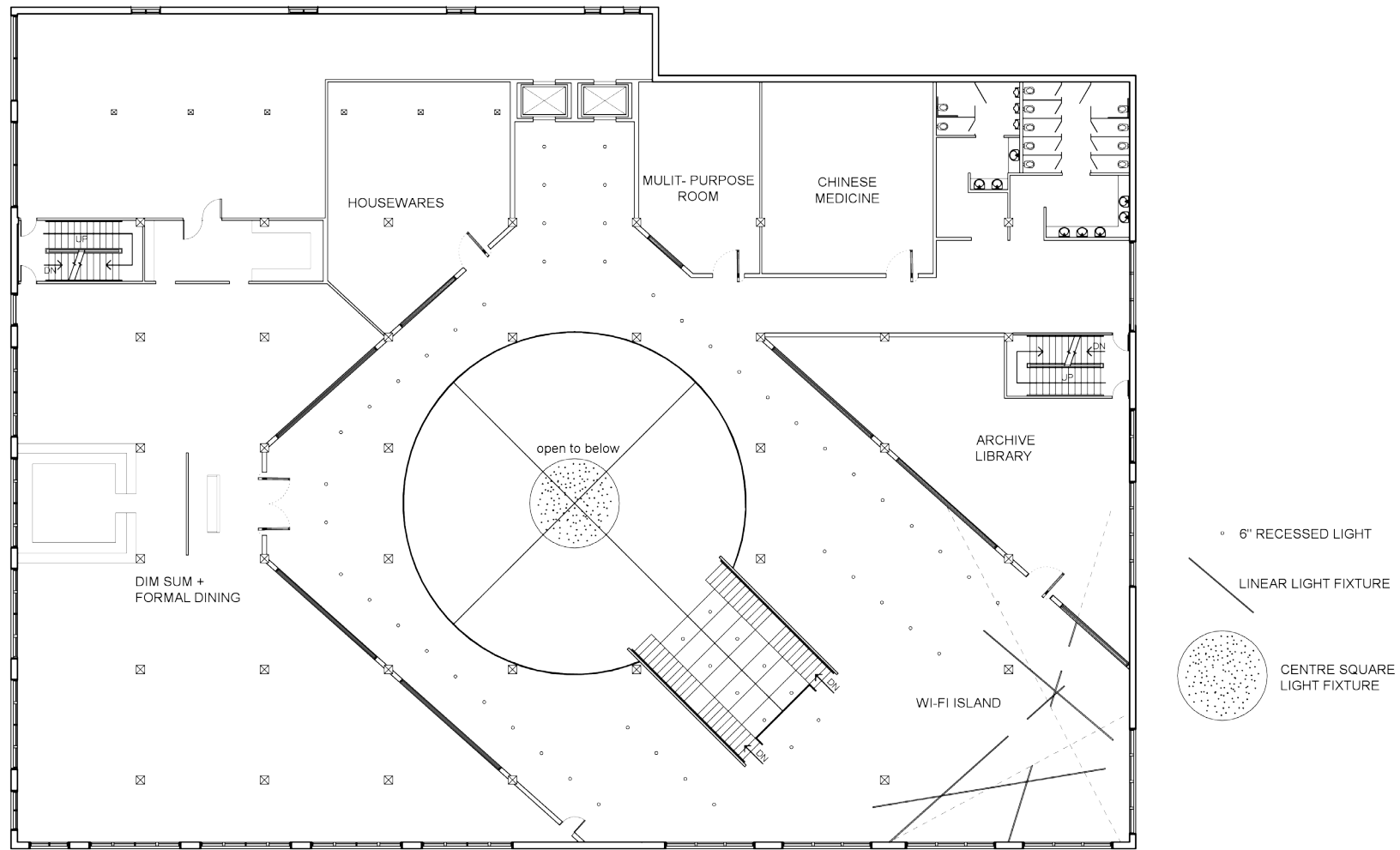
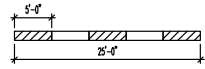


Figure 68: Lighting plan - Main floor.



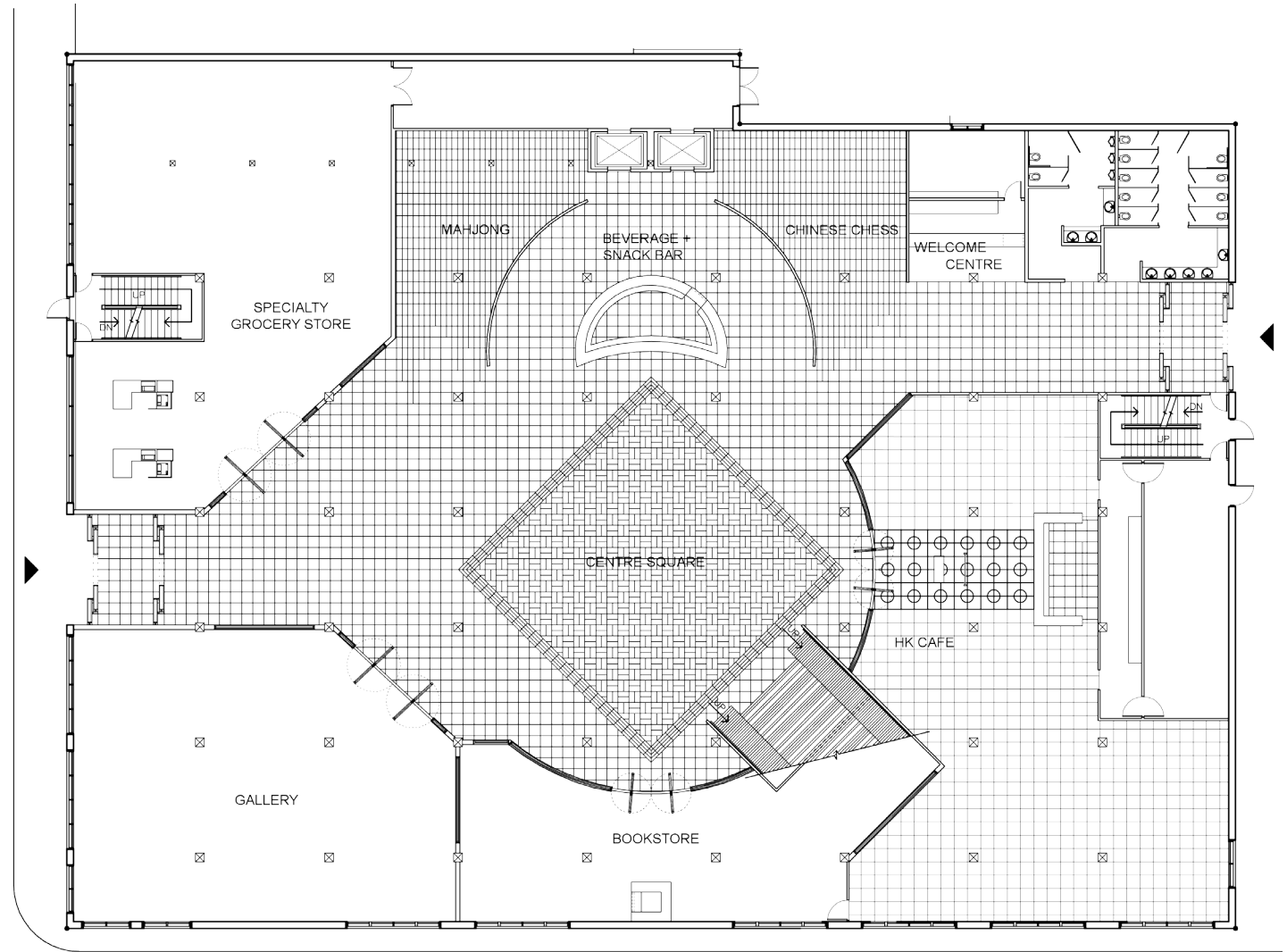
Second Floor
Building Area = 21,730 sq.ft.

Figure 69: Lighting plan - Second floor.



- TILE 1 20x20
- TILE 1 10x20
- TILE 2 10x20
- ◆ TILE 1 + TILE 2 5 X 20
- ▣ CARPET TILE 1
- CARPET TILE 2
- ▨ BAMBOO

97 STREET

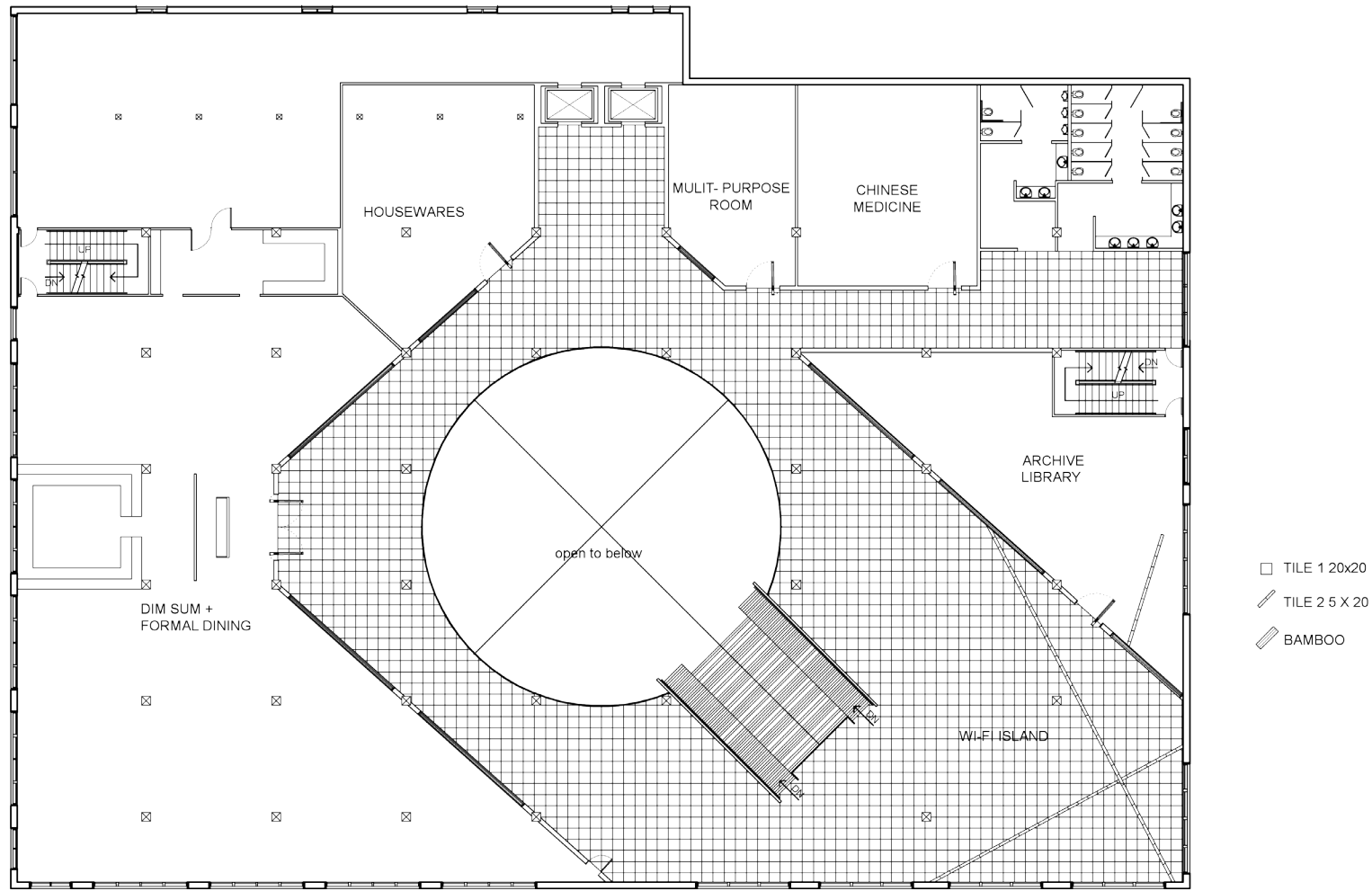


103 AVE.

Site/Main Floor

Building Area = 21,730 sq.ft.

Figure 70: Finish plan - Main floor.



Second Floor
Building Area = 21,730 sq.ft.

Figure 71: Finish plan - Second floor.

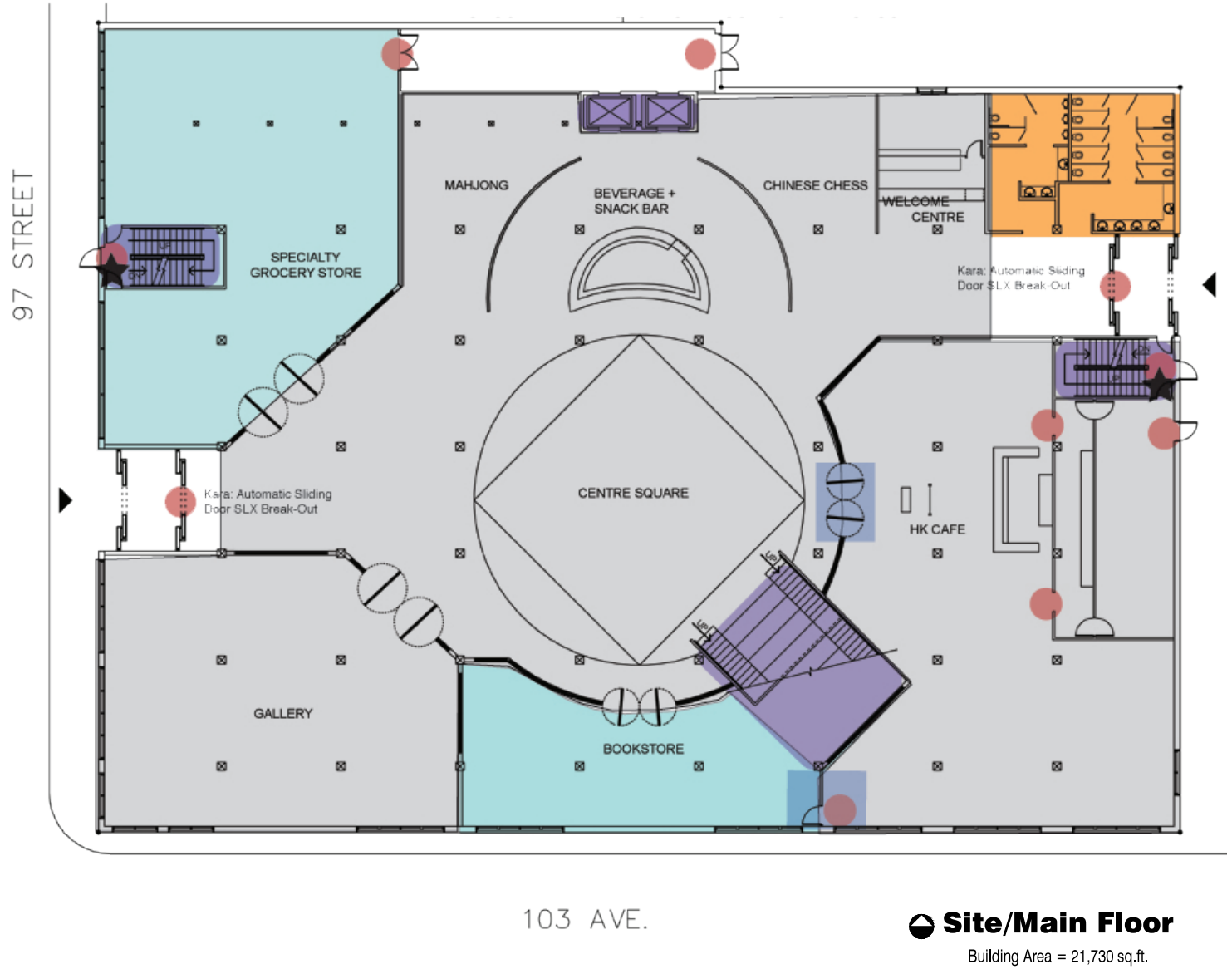
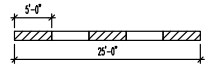
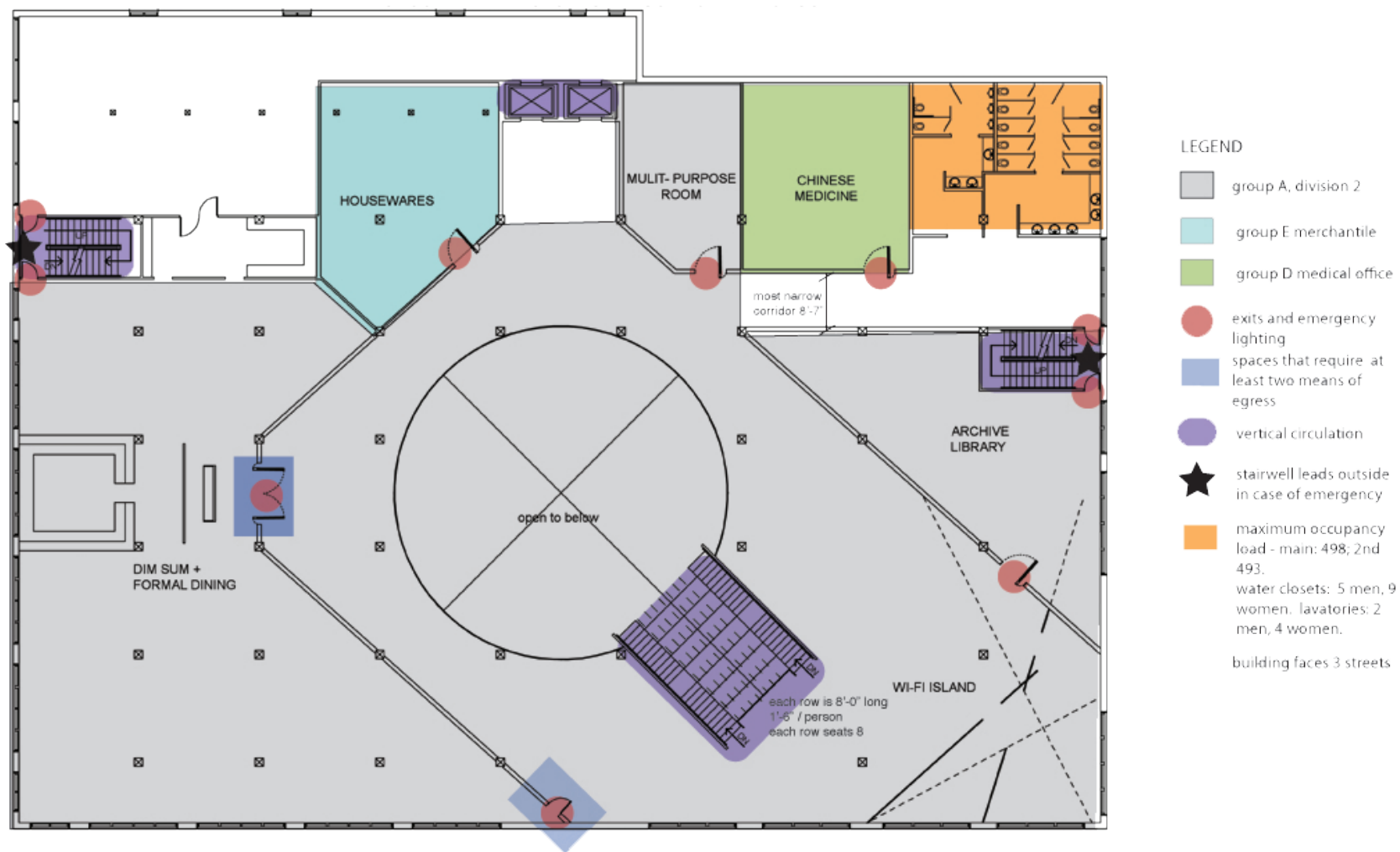


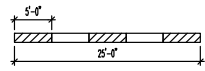
Figure 72: Building code plan - Main floor.



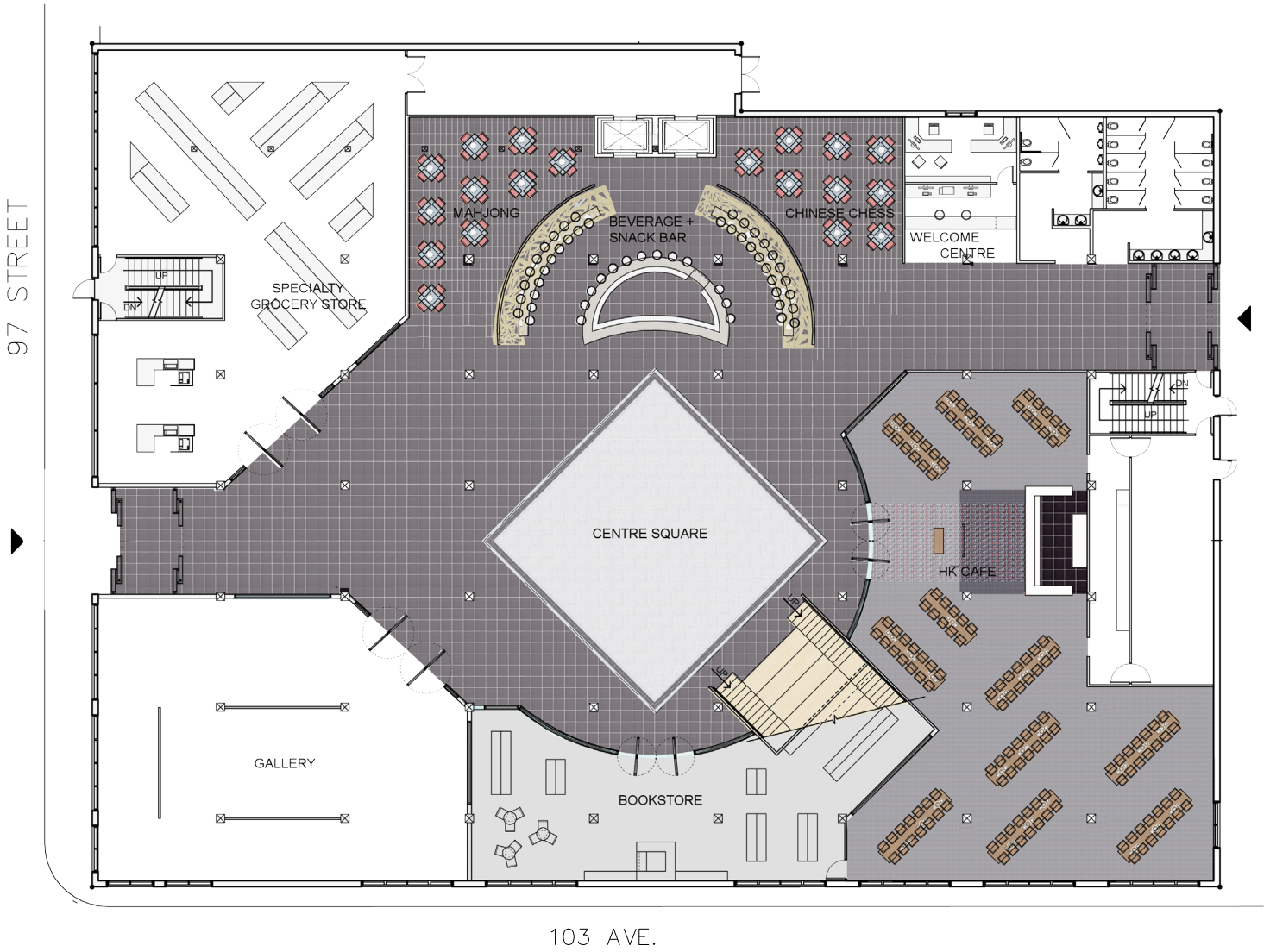
Second Floor

Building Area = 21,730 sq.ft.

Figure 73: Building code plan - Second floor.



97 STREET

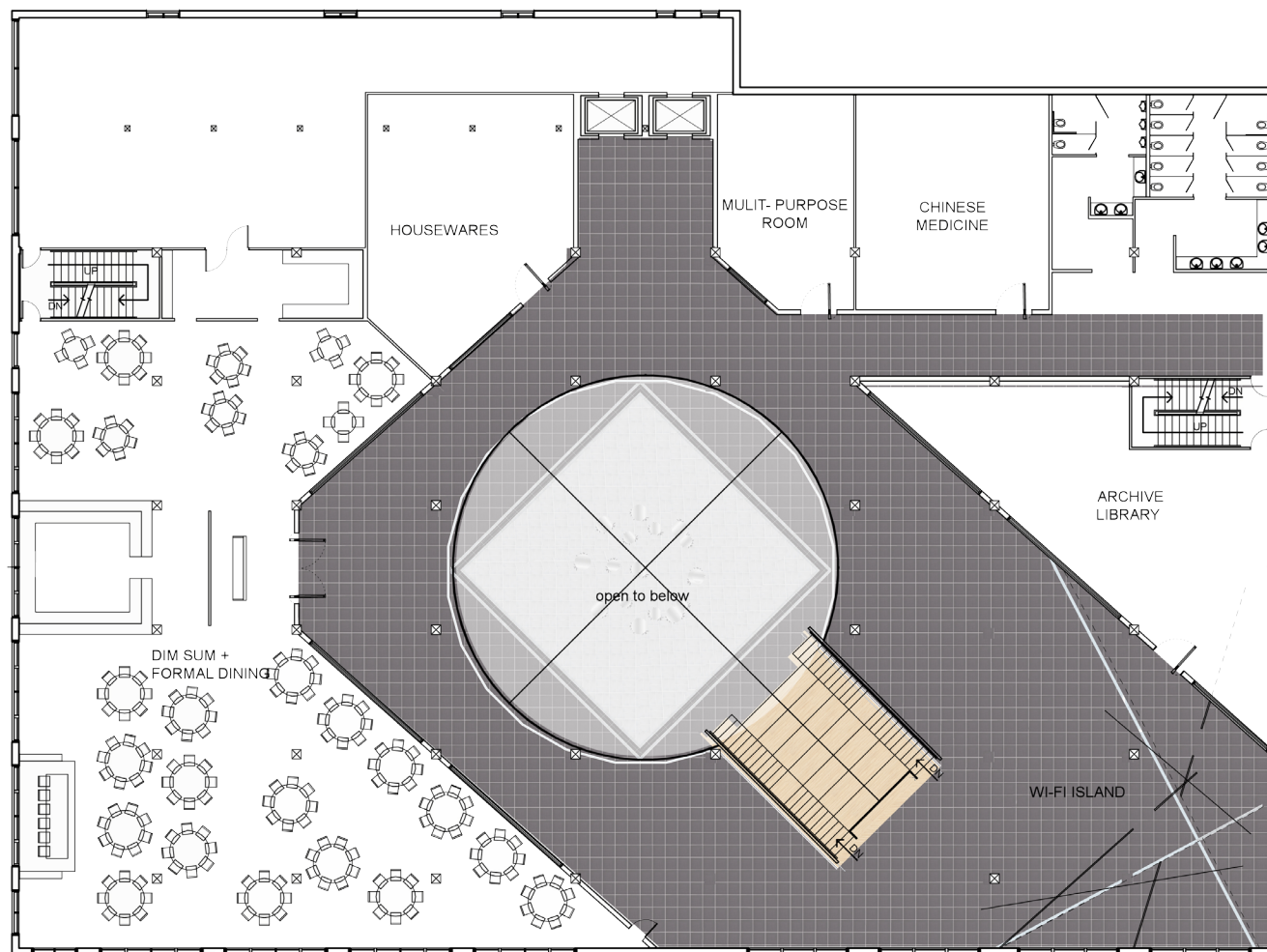


103 AVE.

Site/Main Floor

Building Area = 21,730 sq.ft.

Figure 74: Rendered plan - Main floor.



Second Floor
Building Area = 21,730 sq.ft.

Figure 75: Rendered plan - Second floor.



Figure 76: Section AA - looking south.



Figure 77: Section BB - looking north.



Figure 78: Section CC - looking west.



Figure 79: Section DD - looking east.



Figure 80: Centre Square staircas during a documentary screening.

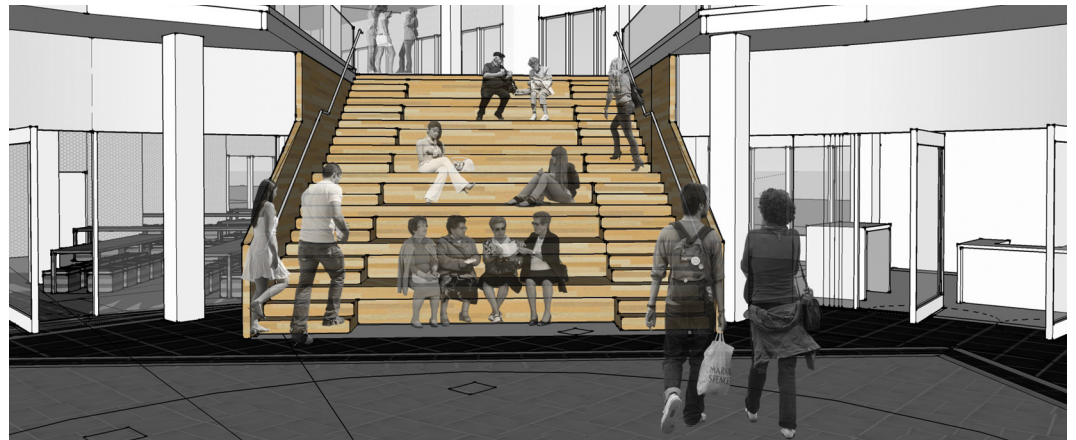


Figure 81: Centre Square staircase acts as vertical circulation, seating, and space for gathering.



Figure 82: Perspective from front entrance into Centre Square.

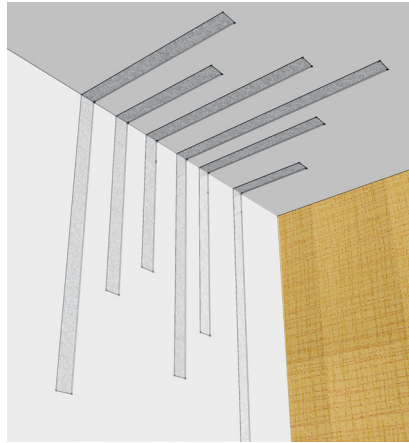


Figure 83: Sound perforations between Mahjong, Specialty Grocery + Housewares.



Figure 84: Perspective into Mahjong Area.



Figure 85: Bubble Tea bar.

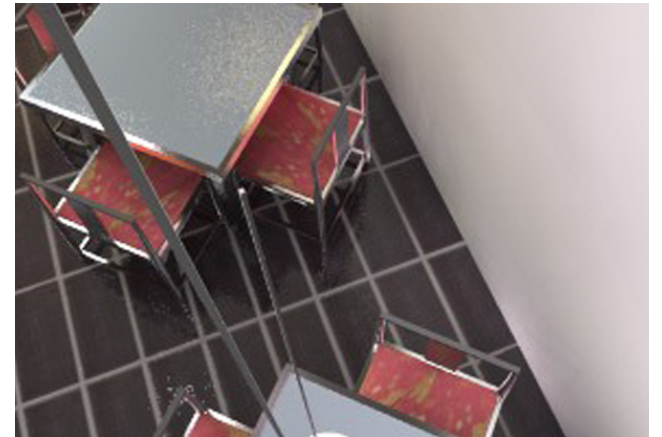


Figure 86: Mahjong tables + chairs.



Figure 87: Perspective from Centre Square to Bubble Tea + Mahjong Area.



Figure 88: Communal seating in the HK Cafe creates greater opportunity for transversal exchanges.



Figure 89: Perspective of HK Cafe from Cafe entrance.



Figure 90: Interior perspective of HK Cafe towards Bookstore window + Cafe entrance.

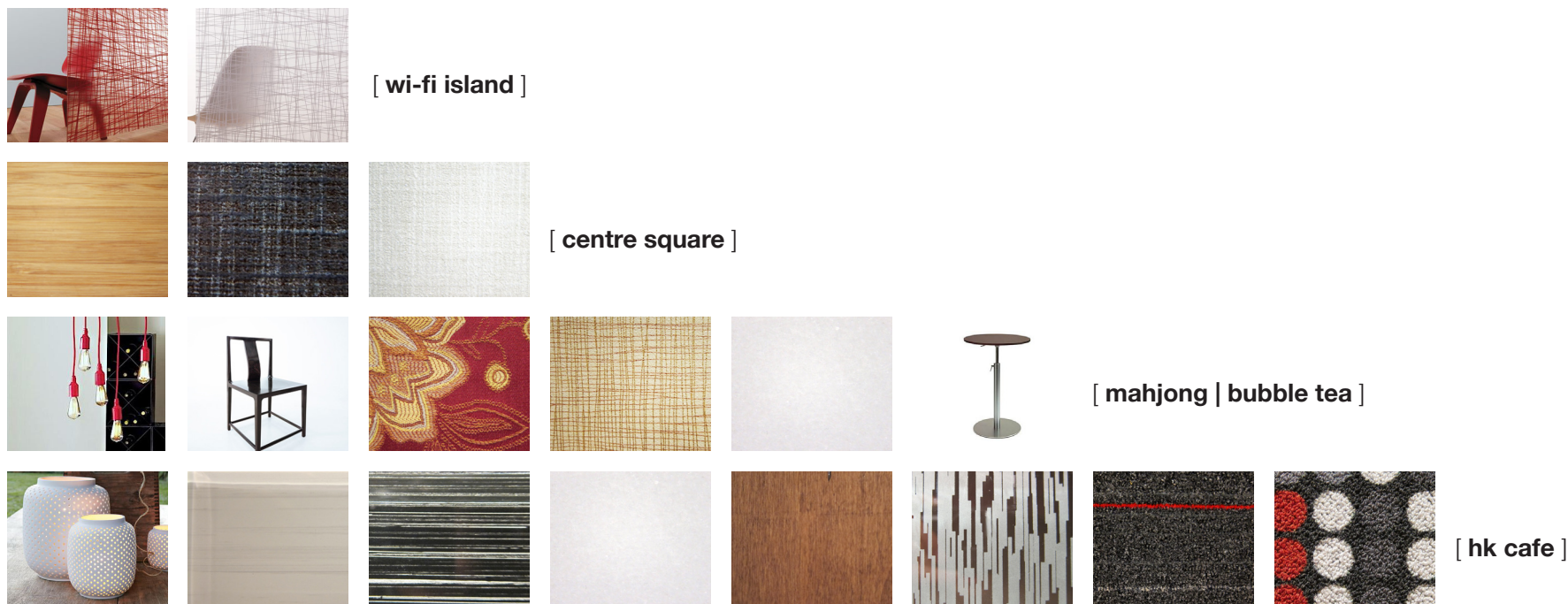


Figure 91: A selection of furniture, fixtures and finishes.

[common thread]

reflections

[Interiority is]...the conscious and reflexive awareness of self, identity, community and others within the social environment...[I]nteriority examines the innerness of interior design as that which is felt and projected upon within the interior environment via the body as a culturally lived organism.²¹²

“...interior design’s most serious purposes are not visual, technological, object-oriented, or materialistic, but rather those of interiority – internal values regarding social and personal awareness.”²¹³

²¹² Taylor and Preston., “Proximities.” 11.

²¹³ Ganoe, “Design as Narrative,” 1.

This practicum project has provided the opportunity to examine several of the conceptual layers embedded within the notion of interiority and the type of implications it has to the practice of interior design. The typology of a transcultural centre provides a new framework for looking at space as an intersection of culture. Unlike traditional cultural centres or spaces, the transcultural centre is a place where the ethnic affiliations of the visitor do not preclude whether or not the individual will feel welcome. The intention is to create a non-hierarchical cultural space where the user is able to find physical and mental balance in his or her everyday life.

Through the proposal for a Chinese Canadian Transcultural Centre, the design of Common Thread aimed to facilitate spatial experiences and encounters that provided opportunity for intercultural exchange. The

opportunity for such exchange allowed the possibility for an everyday understanding of space and cultural difference contributing to an individual's reflexive awareness of self.²¹⁴ The use of everyday programming as an initial lure into the transcultural centre engages users into subtle immersions of cultural experiences. The hope was that as these users became familiar with these environments they would begin to feel a sense of security and curiosity that would entice them to participate further and with a more committed capacity within Common Thread. As the users move and interact with the spaces and people within the centre, their overlapping body-ballets and time-space routines have the opportunity to develop into a place-ballet, where a sense of place develops over time through a meeting of cultures meaningfully set within a context of historic and contemporary significance.

²¹⁴ Blume and De Reus, "Transnational Families and the Social Construction of Identity," 79, 82.

The research-based design process of this practicum has led to a number of valuable insights when designing for a culturally specific context. Although the most important space in Common Thread is the centre square, the flexibility of the space to accommodate special events had the potential to render it inert at times. What became critical in preventing this space from becoming temporarily stagnant was the way that it was framed and supported by the spaces around it. The deliberate placement of programmatic spaces around the square not only engaged a sense of spatial hierarchy in the overall framework of the building, but these supporting spaces also worked to keep the square activated during times that the space was not slated for a specific event. The blurring of spatial and social boundaries within Common Thread afforded the users an opportunity to engage in transversal exchanges, enabling the potential for a recognition of similarities

between individuals while in the same instance, creating an understanding that would begin to diminish the intimidation and fear of living in difference. Finally, the privileging of certain senses at specific moments in the design created an opportunity for a heightened reflexive awareness of self – making individuals not only aware of the spaces and people around them but also a recognition of themselves in that context.

I have acknowledged that there are inherent biases and limitations to research and the design process of this practicum because of my disposition as a first generation Chinese-born Canadian. As a result, much of the literary investigations done during the process have been from a Western conceptualization of cultural space, interaction and identity. This practicum seeks to bring about a dialogue of what cultural space in the Canadian context means. It opens up

the opportunity for further research for designers with different perspectives to consider how a transcultural centre focused on their ethnic heritages might look and feel and what design concepts they might begin to privilege. At the same time, it affords the possibility of exploring cultural space from a perspective where the designer has no genealogical ties to that culture whatsoever. In the specific case of this practicum, the most revealing comparison could be an approach where the research and process of the design was done through a theoretical perspective based on Eastern thought and conceptualization of space, place, culture and identity.

As interior designers we are constantly receiving, analyzing, and interpreting clients' wants and needs, a reflexive knowledge of self aids in the designer's ability to relate to their clients and the users

of the space, increasing the potential for a design outcome that is simultaneously thoughtful, meaningful, and creative. The theoretical and conceptual approach to the design of Common Thread provides the opportunity to inform the design of future Canadian spaces of culture and identity. The design of spaces that explore cultural identity can seem daunting to approach as issues of ethnicity and race inevitably come into question. In a society that uses ethnic culture and traditions as a form of commodity, there is a fine line between knowing what is considered culturally sensitive and what is perceived as stereotypical representations.²¹⁵ Furthermore, if the designer has only been exposed to versions of cultural design in a context outside of the originating country, then how could he or she begin to differentiate between what

215 Sylvia Van Ziegert. *Global Spaces of Chinese Culture: Diasporic Chinese Communities in the United States and Germany*, (New York: Routledge, 2006). 10.

is and is not an authentic interpretation of that ethnic group? By accepting and acknowledging that Canada is a culturally diverse society, and that having a hybrid transcultural identity is a contemporary condition of globalization, they are freed from the fear and limitations of not achieving a design that is authentic, pure, or in essence of that culture; a notion that has been contrived by social power and rhetoric.²¹⁶ Through a design process such as the creation of this transcultural centre that considers and conceptualizes phenomenology, human geography, and cultural identity and interaction, designers have the opportunity to create culturally significant interiors that embody the notion of interiority.

²¹⁶ Rogers, "From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation," 492.

[common thread]

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[appendix a]

translation framework: literature review

Translation Framework: **Cultural Identity + Interaction**

Quotidian Transversality - [Amanda Wise] A level of comfort needs to be established spatially that responds to human issues within everyday spaces of sociality to smooth and foster relations across difference.

Everyday Cosmopolitanism - [Greg Noble] An openness to cultural diversity, a practical relation to the plurality of cultures and a willingness and tendency to engage others. Cosmopolitanism as a cultural disposition of intellectual and aesthetic open-ness to people places and experiences.

[**TECHNOLOGICAL ISSUES**]

Systems

Materials

Systems, structure and material considerations should attempt to salvage historic remnants of the building's past.

Structure

[**HUMAN ISSUES**] physiological, sociological, psychological

Privacy

differing levels of privacy depending on the level of ease the user feels within the space as well as the activity or exchange taking place; from public to semi-private to private.

Anthropometrics

physical accommodations of the space and the objects within it to meet differing levels of user participation with the context as well as with other users in the CCTC.

Human Scale

meets the programming of the space in relationship to the type of cultural engagement expected within it. For example, a more humanistic scale through a sense of enclosure for an intimate or private interaction.

Comfort

dependent on the type of behavior and exchange anticipated for that space.

Proxemics

differing levels of human proximity depending on the type of activity the user is engaged in; for example, whether the activity involves a large group, small group or individual activity

Users' Feelings + Interactions

a perceived sense of individual safety, comfort and trust is needed within the CCTC in order for the users to feel comfortable engaging in new interactions and experiences. New users may feel more comfortable engaging in cultural exchanges and activities when they have first been able to observe and understand the social cues and interactions taking place. Thus, like my own understanding and exploration in calligraphy, there is a level of observation and then imitation before the action becomes completely the user's own.

[AESTHETIC ISSUES]

Design Elements:	space	depending on the requirements of the programme, spaces within the CCTC should blend and blur creating a contact zone between their intersecting programmes that allow opportunity for informal people-mixing and transversal exchanges.
	texture	
	light	
	form + shape	
	line	
	time	a sense of the cultural context in its past, present and future is desirable. A respect for the past, and understanding of its present, and an acknowledgement of its constant state of flux.
Design Principles:	scale	
	balance	
	rhythm	
	harmony	
	unity	
	variety	
	proportion	
	emphasis	

A sensitive approach and careful marrying of the cultural reflections in Chinese and Canadian aesthetics, will result in a range of privileging some aspects, while ignoring others, or a synthesis or abstraction of the two.

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[FUNCTIONAL ISSUES]

circulation	circulation should be used strategically to create opportunities for transversal exchanges and people-mixing.
way-finding	
hierarchy values of user + client	to avoid confusion and a sense of overwhelming to new users, a clear sense of wayfinding should be understood for programmes meeting the everyday needs of users within the CCTC. transversal enablers need a level of comfort and familiarity with the space and programmes in order to engage in and facilitate transversal exchanges.
programme + day-to-day needs	
individual + group identity	
cultural needs:	individual identity is respected. Cultural difference is seen as an opportunity for commensality and exchange in order to develop an 'intercultural community' with a sense of collective identity and understanding, as well as sharedness of meaning among consociates in particular spaces and times.
group interaction + transversal exchanges	

Translation Framework: **Understanding Our Environments**

Body Intentionality - [David Seamon] A place-ballet is developed through the fusion of overlapping individual body-ballets and time-space routines. The routine movement of these individuals through the CCTC creates opportunity for people-mixing and transversal exchanges. These exchanges and opportunities not only develop a sense of intercultural community but the continual use of the CCTC helps to contribute to its sense of place.

Questions raised: What types of programmes help users meet everyday needs and tasks [body-ballet > Seamon]? Consider: What types of spatial experiences the CCTC is looking to create?

[**TECHNOLOGICAL ISSUES**]

Systems

geographical experience' [Relph]. While the historic remnants of the building's past act as a reminder to the Canadian context of the CCTC, a cultural context that is inherently transcultural and a reflection how culture itself is in constant flux. At the same time because there is a focus on understanding and interacting with Chinese culture there is a need for some reference to Chinese cultural elements and aesthetics - 'Identity to region'.

Materials

Structure

[**HUMAN ISSUES**] physiological, sociological, psychological

Privacy

Anthropometrics

Human Scale

comfort within the space and programming of the CCTC make it more apt to be a place where individuals go to meet their needs through the performance of everyday habitual tasks. This is done through creating opportunities for exchange and maintaining appropriate levels of privacy, anthropometrics, scale and proxemics in the space relative to the programming.

Comfort

Proxemics

Users' Feelings +
Interactions

On top of providing opportunity to experience aspects of the Chinese culture through formal programming the CCTC also needs to provide the appropriate programming for users to perform everyday tasks. It is these everyday tasks that will help maintain the place-ballet. These overlapping body-ballets and time-space routines will create a contact zone and the possibility of intercultural exchanges within the CCTC.

[AESTHETIC ISSUES]

Design Elements:	space	[Norberg-Schulz] everyday experiences tell us that different actions need different environments. Where the range is formal programming everyday programming - spontaneous exchanges, the spaces need to range from intentionally devoted programmatic spaces - flexible spaces. [Pallasmaa] Create spaces that offer variety and excitement through the employment of a phenomenological approach to design - seven senses.
	texture	blurring of boundaries could be done through the application of texture to delineate space.
	light	light can be used to help engage the sense of movement of time and individuals through space.
	form + shape	
	line	
	time	
Design Principles:	scale	maintain a human scale with sense and level of intimacy that is relevant to the atmosphere desired for the programme
	balance	
	rhythm	
	harmony	
	unity	
	variety	spatial + programmatic requirements >> sense of place: a balance between - regularity vs. variety; everyday vs. special programming; spatial continuity vs. a sense of surprise, interest or excitement.
	proportion	
	emphasis	exposure to new experiences through the blurring of spatial milieus and boundaries.

[FUNCTIONAL ISSUES]

	circulation	
	way-finding	a sense of safety can be found in a way-finding system that is intuitive to an individuals movement through space.
	hierarchy values of user + client	
	programme + day-to-day needs	our environment needs a spatial structure that facilitates user orientation and objects of concrete identification. [Norberg-Schulz] -
	individual + group identity	'man-place relationship': orientation > know where he is; identification > identify himself with the environment, how he is in a certain place. Use of 'affordances' [James J. Gibson] to inform and trigger 'perceptual schemata' [Norberg-Schulz].
	cultural needs:	
	group interaction + transversal exchanges	

Translation Framework: **Understanding ourselves in our environments**

Social Space - [Bobby M. Wilson] the study of social space to understand how human interaction informs individuals' perception of space and place. Mead's three-stage typology of self.

Phenomenology of the person-environment relationship - [Seamon] understanding of the user groups through Relph's inside-outside continuum.

Questions raised: what are the different conditions and circumstances of the body that need to be met through different spatial experiences.

[**TECHNOLOGICAL ISSUES**]

Systems

Materials

Structure

[**HUMAN ISSUES**] physiological, sociological, psychological

Privacy

Anthropometrics

Human Scale

Comfort

Proxemics

Users' Feelings +
Interactions

Symbolic interaction [Wilson] interactive social cues such as reference groups within the CCTC potentially affect the way individuals within the space will behave. Mead's 'intersubjectivity' like Norberg-schulz's 'perceptual schemata' states that human actions are in part based on things that have shared meaning, ..thus the meaning of things located in space is derived in large part from social interaction. Allows for 'affordances' [Gibson] to occur - shared meaning in objects.

[AESTHETIC ISSUES]

Design Elements:	space	[Malnar + Vodvarka] Bodies are fluid, permeable and changing. Therefore the CCTC to some extent needs different types of spatial experiences to meet the needs of these bodies under different conditions and circumstances.
	texture	Mead's Three-Stage Typology of Self - understanding self and context through the negotiation of self and context. >> 1. Preparatory stage: Place-based Community. Fixed pattern of movement through CCTC - meets basic human needs and necessities - reference groups: friends and family. Beginning of body-ballet + time-space routines. First level of programming that meets everyday needs. Users are new to CCTC - experiencing existential outsidership. >> 2. Play Stage: Authentic Community. User has specific role to carry out, rituals are carried out that represent the purpose and actions of the group - sense of belonging to a group - membership frames perspective and affords stability and security - spatial pattern of movement through context likely due to daily face-to-face contact that are typically unplanned; leads to body-ballet and time-space routines which provide opportunity for transversal exchanges and people-mixing. Primary users of CCTC - socialize and interact with other users of the CCTC and ensure the success of it, become transversal enablers. Develop intercultural community. >> 3. Game Stage: Community without Propinquity. Individual searching for new adventures, challenges, social situations. Transcends local ritualism and place-based community. Tertiary users - objective outsidership.
	light	
	form + shape	
	line	
	time	
Design Principles:	scale	
	balance	
	rhythm	
	harmony	
	unity	
	variety	
	proportion	
	emphasis	

[FUNCTIONAL ISSUES]

	circulation	
	way-finding	Inside-outside continuum. Existential Outsidership: new user. User's first encounter with the CCTC may be overwhelmed upon the first visit. Alienation, homelessness, new country, visiting, immigrating, new community, city or region. >> Existential Insidership: primary user + client group. comfort level reflected in the ease of involvement and engagement the individual has with the other users, programme and space at the CCTC. >> Empathetic Insidership: secondary user. Everyday programming. Doesn't necessarily contribute to the overall ambiances of the CCTC but uses the space and amenities on a regular basis. >> Objective Outsidership: tertiary user. most removed, least invested, participates specifically in programmes individuals feel are relevant to themselves.
	hierarchy values of user + client	
	programme + day-to-day needs	
	individual + group identity	
	cultural needs:	
	group interaction + transversal exchanges	

[appendix b]

translation framework: design precedents

Translation Framework: **Bamboo Wall @ Commune by the Wall Kempinski****[TECHNOLOGICAL ISSUES]**

Systems

Materials

The only villa on the commune that is a curtain walled structure. The use of glass as all exterior vertical surfaces allows architect Kuma to illustrate and emphasize bamboo as the featured material. The use of bamboo in its own right as a simultaneously structural and aesthetic element. The orientation of the bamboo in only the vertical format along walls and partitions is reminiscent of bamboo as it is found in nature.

Structure

[HUMAN ISSUES] physiological, sociological, psychological

Privacy

Movable bamboo screens along exterior walls allow the users to block views and shade sunlight as desired. Interior walls and screens are also used to delineate space, in some areas layers of bamboo are used to creating a denser wall and spaces that feel more enclosed and intimate.

Anthropometrics

Human Scale

Ceiling heights are not overly high emphasizing the horizontal plane and movement through space. The use of lower ceiling planes creates a sense of intimacy, comfort, and a feeling of home in the villa.

Comfort

Proxemics

Users' Feelings +
Interactions**[AESTHETIC ISSUES]**

Design

Elements:

rooms within
rooms space

The featured space within the Bamboo Wall is the lounge or tea room. Emphasis of this space within the villa is apparent through the placement of the small rectangular room in the overall scheme at the centre of the structure. By surrounding the room with a pool water and limiting access to the space over stone tile bridges, the room seems to stand alone and be suspended within the structure. A glass roof is used over this space allowing bamboo to be used as a ceiling plane in a rhythmic arrangement thus perpetuating a repetitious pattern of light and shadow.

texture

light

All lines within the design follow the formal linear nature of the bamboo so all of the spaces and forms created within it are rectilinear.

form + shape

line

time

The varying density of bamboo used throughout the project allows the interior spaces to be dramatically affected by light. Where as the time passes from day into night and back into day it is traced through the space as a clock itself.

Design
Principles:
variety

scale

Through the use of bamboo as the main material of the villa, Kuma is able to employ all of the design principles in an honest and poetic way. By privileging bamboo there is a risk in creating a space that feels monotonous and unchanging, however, he is able to create levels of variety by engaging these principles in different ways throughout the design.

balance
rhythm
harmony
unity
variety
proportion
emphasis

[FUNCTIONAL ISSUES]

circulation

The scale of the building as well as the linear orientation of the overall design makes circulation and wayfinding through the Bamboo Wall villa easy.

way-finding

hierarchy values of
user + client

Spaces are divided between private individual rooms on the west wing of the villa and public shared communal spaces on the east wing. There is a sense of importance to the lounge space or tea room through its strategic placement at the center of the overall structure of the building.

programme + day-to-
day needs

individual + group
identity

Bamboo is used because it is a local indigenous product of China. The villa itself is surrounded on three sides by the monumental Great Wall of China, therefore, views and perspectives out to the wall were of primary importance to the design development and decisions made.

cultural needs:
group interaction +
transversal
exchanges

Translation Framework: 798 Gallery Space @ Beijing 798 Art District

[TECHNOLOGICAL ISSUES]

Systems

Materials

concrete, brick, steel + glass

Structure

saw-tooth profile concrete + brick structure with clerestory windows. Area: 14 000 square feet. Interior height: 29 feet.

[HUMAN ISSUES] physiological, sociological, psychological

Privacy

Anthropometrics

Human Scale

exhibition space - full height space feels vast + open. Mezzanine lounge - over looks the exhibition space and gives the user a view of events taking place in it. More enclosed spaces in the bar + restaurant, bookstore.

Comfort

Proxemics

Users' Feelings +
Interactions

As an art exhibition, experiencing this space alone individual is struck by the massive forms of the structure and the way the weight of the saw-tooth ceiling structure is carried down through a continuation of the concrete arches that frame it. Relief from the heaviness of the ceiling is found in the strength of the concrete posts. Depending on the event and thus the programme of the space at that time, different interactions can be elicited from users through the articulation of space using furniture and equipment.

[AESTHETIC ISSUES]

Design

Elements:

space

exhibition space - full height space feels vast + open. Mezzanine lounge - over looks the exhibition space and gives the user a view of events taking place in it. More enclosed spaces in the bar + restaurant, bookstore.

texture

material textures of the original structure are all left exposed and displayed as a piece of artwork in + of itself.

light

abundance of natural light filters into the space through the three rows of clerestory windows reflecting off of the concrete saw-tooth structure. Embedded in the concrete floor are lights that shine up into the space for evening events.

form + shape

form + shape is created through the building's honesty in structure and materials the eye flows the edges of the saw-tooth roof and windows through the exhibition space.

line

time

sense of time passing is through light + shadow within the space as day passes into night.

Design
Principles:

scale	the heaviness of the concrete ceiling structure in contrast to the openness of the ground place
balance	
rhythm	overwhelming sense of rhythm to the space informed by the saw-tooth structure.
harmony	
unity	concrete supports for the space of the saw-tooth structure and feel as they fall into the ground plane leading the eye down and into the exhibitions space.
variety	
proportion	
emphasis	emphasis of the interior is focused on exposing the structure of the original building.

[FUNCTIONAL ISSUES]

circulation	open plan, uninhibited circulation through space.
way-finding	open plan, user is able to see clearly how to get to peripheral programmed spaces easily.
hierarchy values of user + client	the amount of space dedicated to the different levels of programming indicated that 798 Space's main focus is the exhibition space. Where all other programmes within this building are used to supplement and assist in the success of the events being accommodated in the exhibition.
programme + day-to-day needs	Exhibition space, public lounge, bar + restaurant, bookstore, office space, utility space, w/c
individual + group identity	the identity of the building is kept in tact not only through the exposing of the structure but also through preservation of the communist work mottos printed in bold on the structure. These slogans recollect and remind the users not only of the building's history, original intended use, and identity, but also reiterates the mentality that past Chinese governments encouraged.
cultural needs: group interaction + transversal exchanges	openess of the exhibition space allows for a diverse range of programming from art exhibitions tof ashion shows, product launches, press conferences, social events, and corporate meetings. The delineation of space within the exhibition area can be arranged to generate more or less group interaction depending on type of programming and the type of interaction the event hopes to encourage.

Translation Framework: **Bamboo Wall @ Commune by the Wall Kempinski****[TECHNOLOGICAL ISSUES]**

Systems

Materials

The only villa on the commune that is a curtain walled structure. The use of glass as all exterior vertical surfaces allows architect Kuma to illustrate and emphasize bamboo as the featured material. The use of bamboo in its own right as a simultaneously structural and aesthetic element. The orientation of the bamboo in only the vertical format along walls and partitions is reminiscent of bamboo as it is found in nature.

Structure

[HUMAN ISSUES] physiological, sociological, psychological

Privacy

Movable bamboo screens along exterior walls allow the users to block views and shade sunlight as desired. Interior walls and screens are also used to delineate space, in some areas layers of bamboo are used to creating a denser wall and spaces that feel more enclosed and intimate.

Anthropometrics

Human Scale

Ceiling heights are not overly high emphasizing the horizontal plane and movement through space. The use of lower ceiling planes creates a sense of intimacy, comfort, and a feeling of home in the villa.

Comfort

Proxemics

Users' Feelings +

Interactions

[AESTHETIC ISSUES]

Design

Elements:

rooms within

space

rooms

The featured space within the Bamboo Wall is the lounge or tea room. Emphasis of this space within the villa is apparent through the placement of the small rectangular room in the overall scheme at the centre of the structure. By surrounding the room with a pool water and limiting access to the space over stone tile bridges, the room seems to stand alone and be suspended within the structure. A glass roof is used over this space allowing bamboo to be used as a ceiling plane in a rhythmic arrangement thus perpetuating a repetitious pattern of light and shadow.

texture

light

All lines within the design follow the formal linear nature of the bamboo so all of the spaces and forms created within it are rectilinear.

form + shape

line

time

The varying density of bamboo used throughout the project allows the interior spaces to be dramatically affected by light. Where as the time passes from day into night and back into day it is traced through the space as a clock itself.

Design
Principles:
variety

scale

balance
rhythm
harmony
unity
variety
proportion
emphasis

Through the use of bamboo as the main material of the villa, Kuma is able to employ all of the design principles in an honest and poetic way. By privileging bamboo there is a risk in creating a space that feels monotonous and unchanging, however, he is able to create levels of variety by engaging these principles in different ways throughout the design.

[FUNCTIONAL ISSUES]

circulation

The scale of the building as well as the linear orientation of the overall design makes circulation and wayfinding through the Bamboo Wall villa easy.

way-finding

hierarchy values of
user + client

Spaces are divided between private individual rooms on the west wing of the villa and public shared communal spaces on the east wing. There is a sense of importance to the lounge space or tea room through its strategic placement at the center of the overall structure of the building.

programme + day-to-
day needs

individual + group
identity

Bamboo is used because it is a local indigenous product of China. The villa itself is surrounded on three sides by the monumental Great Wall of China, therefore, views and perspectives out to the wall were of primary importance to the design development and decisions made.

cultural needs:
group interaction +
transversal
exchanges

[appendix c]

programme activities

SPACE:	Centre Square + Gallery				
ACTIVITIES:	FFE:	SPATIAL NEEDS:	ADJACENCIES:	MOVEMENT IN SPACE:	SENSES PRIVILEGED:
transition space		Unobstructed movement through the centre square when not accommodating formal programming	The gallery + centre square to be two single entities for the majority of the time.	high level of movement through space.	
event performances, openings + receptions	moveable tables for food + information materials.	Need to have enough space around for transition around the square when it is occupied with formal programming	Opportunity for the spaces to open up into one another to facilitate event programming	Informal and formal gathering space.	*Visual: visible from most areas of the main floor as well as from opening in second floor
club gatherings	moveable chairs		Vertical circulation: elevators and staircase		
dance, kung fu, tai chi lessons + demonstrations	sound system			Pattern specific movement that informs the practice of these activities.	
viewing artwork in gallery	vertical surfaces to display physical pieces of art.			enough space to circulate + view artwork simultaneously	Depending on the programme of the space at the time flexibility in levels of visual, physical and auditoria exposure will be necessary.
	vertical surface for av projections	view to centre square.			

SPACE:	Hong Kong Style Café				
ACTIVITIES:	FFE:	SPATIAL NEEDS:	ADJACENCIES:	MOVEMENT IN SPACE:	SENSES PRIVILEGED:
Customers eating food prepared at Café	Eating and sitting surfaces	View from dining area to the centre square	Centre Square	Customers mostly stationary during time in space	*Sight, sound + smell for customers + passersby
Servers serving food and drink from the Café to the customers	Drink preparation area and server station: storage and organization of cutlery and dishes	Does the dining experience extend out beyond the threshold of the café?	Gallery	Servers moving in and around café	
Food preparation by the kitchen staff	Full production restaurant kitchen		Adjacent to bookstore	Eating + sitting surfaces adjust to the size of parties coming into the café: sliding tables?	
Host or servers greeting customers	Greeting station				
SPACE:	informal and recreational gathering space				
ACTIVITIES:	FFE:	SPATIAL NEEDS:	ADJACENCIES:	MOVEMENT IN SPACE:	SENSES PRIVILEGED:
Mah Jong (MJ)	tables + chairs to accommodate 4 players	MJ players form a square around one another.	major circulation routes to other parts of the centre.	Mainly sitting - short to long term.	*sound: washing of mahjong tiles
Chinese Chess	tables + chairs to accommodate 2 players	Chess players sit across from one another.		Short term for small breaks from routines, people watching.	visual: peaking in
Eating + Drinking: Bubble tea, snack area, Chinese tea + coffee	chairs and tables for casual seating and observers of the games	visual privacy		Long term for mah jong or chess games and meeting people.	
		sense of intimacy + privacy to play in a public area			

SPACE:	Specialty Grocery				
ACTIVITIES:	FFE:	SPATIAL NEEDS:	ADJACENCIES:	MOVEMENT IN SPACE:	SENSES PRIVILEGED:
Shopping for food items	Surfaces, shelving or containers for display of products.	Enough space for carts + shoppers to view products and circulate around	Front entry to the centre	Meandering way of moving around the grocery store while shopping	*Sight, smell, touch: "freshly picked" options from CCTC garden
Purchase transactions	Cash station: register, surface, bagging.	Consider whether registers are near the entry into store	Centre square	Sense of movement inherent	
Stocking shelves	Cart for carrying stock.	Storage + loading areas necessary	Across from informal gathering space		
		Access to back alley loading zone	Next to elevators		

SPACE:	Bookstore				
ACTIVITIES:	FFE:	SPATIAL NEEDS:	ADJACENCIES:	MOVEMENT IN SPACE:	SENSES PRIVILEGED:
Browsing through and shopping for books, magazines + newspapers	Vertical + horizontal organizational displays	Enclosed space that allows some auditory solitude from the hassle and bustle of CCTC	Two secondary entries into the CCTC are on either side	Slower movement through space, thoughtful consideration of the materials the customer is looking at	Sound: quieter space than the rest of the main floor. Hum of the CCTC comes through....subtle hinting at the activities.
Shopping for stationary	Storage for additional merchandise	Lighting should be bright enough that the customer is able to browse and staff are able to carry out their duties	Near main vertical circulation staircase	Slow wandering with stops to look at merchandise	
Purchasing area: customer + staff	Horizontal transaction surface, register + transaction space.	Purchasing area adjacent to or near the entry into the bookstore to discourage theft of products	Across from HK style café		
Reading area	Horizontal surface for resting materials on + sitting surface				

SPACE:	Restaurant				
ACTIVITIES:	FFE:	SPATIAL NEEDS:	ADJACENCIES:	MOVEMENT IN SPACE:	SENSES PRIVILEGED:
Family style dining	Round tables with chairs to accommodate seating for 4, 6, 8	Circulation and approach to table from one side. Tables can be clustered to maximize capacity	Restaurant visible from main staircase and elevators	Customers are stationary on average from 45-90 minutes	For Passersby: *Sound: of dishes and conversation within the restaurant. *Sight: opportunity to see what is happening in the restaurant without being in it - peeking in at the table height? - screening?
Dim Sum food service	Carts to push dishes of food on	Circulation space that can accommodate the passing of two parts. Cart need to pass by at least one side of every table		Constant movement as servers push dim sum carts in and around tables	For customers of the restaurant: *Smell: food being pushed around during dim sum.
Banquet celebrations	Stage that can accommodate presenters and emcees or a head table	Location visibly accessible from entire dining room. Consider elevating platform			
Host are for greeting customers	Horizontal surface to store menus and allow access to reservation book and telephone	At the entrance restaurant. Waiting area for customers with some seating surfaces		Hosts situated at the entry into restaurant to greet customers and guide them to their tables	
Servers delivering food and preparing drinks for customers.	Beverage preparation area and server station: storage and organization of cutlery and dishes	Option to combine storage and prep area with liquor bar.	Food preparation by the kitchen staff. Full production restaurant kitchen	Constant movement as servers wait on customers	
Food preparation by the kitchen staff	Full production restaurant kitchen	Access to both cold and dry storage	Accessible to the loading zone on original plan		

SPACE:	Housewares Store				
ACTIVITIES:	FFE:	SPATIAL NEEDS:	ADJACENCIES:	MOVEMENT IN SPACE:	SENSES PRIVILEGED:
Shopping for household items	Surfaces, shelving or containers for display of products.	Enough space for shoppers with baskets to view products and circulate around	Formal dining restaurant	Meandering way of moving around the house wares store while shopping	*Sight: peeks into the kitchen of the restaurant of wares sold at the store
Purchase transactions	Cash station: register, transaction and wrapping surface, bagging.	Area relatively in close relationship to entry into the store	Acessible to the loading area.	Sense of movement inherent	Carefully detailed lighting that highlights the items in the store
Stocking shelves		Storage	Next to the elevators		