

“The Dreaming Long View and the Arresting Close-Up”:
The Eggleston Cultural Center on South Main Street, Memphis

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ABSTRACT

The work of two of the South's preeminent artists — one an author, the other a photographer — converge to form the thesis of this project. The internationally recognized photographer William Eggleston (b. 1939) was born and resides in Memphis, Tennessee, which is at times the subject of his art. Eudora Welty (1909-2001), of nearby Jackson, Mississippi, is one of the great 20th-century authors that the South produced; she stands among the southern pantheon alongside Tennessee Williams, William Faulkner, and Flannery O'Connor. Welty observed of Eggleston's work:

All the photographs have place as their subject. ...In landscapes, cityscapes, street scenes, roadside scenes, at every sort of public converging-point, in dreaming long view and arresting close-up, through hours of dark and light, he sets forth what makes up our ordinary world (Welty 9-10).

Cutting to the heart of the matter, Welty's take on Eggleston's work offers insight and provocation for an architectural response. Borrowing Welty's words, the programming of a museum and archive enables a "close-up" examination of the museum typology and its methods of display. Furthermore, by considering the city of Memphis, the museum can be situated within the "long view" of the city's urban fabric and shifting narrative. By relating program and site, this thesis includes the design of a museum that reaches beyond its primary role of preserving photographs. As Welty explains,

The human being — the perpetrator of or the victim or the abandoner of what we see before us — is the reason why these photographs of place have their power to move and disturb us; they always let us know that the human being is the reason they were made (Welty 11).

Within this characterization of Eggleston's subject matter is an architectural opportunity. In order to form a place that similarly "moves," architectural methods that reveal and frame human interaction will be explored. The passage of time provides another common theme in the production of architecture, photography, and place. In summation, I intend to pursue this program and site to see how time, narrative, and place may enrich architectural production.

PREFACE

The Photographer from Memphis

John Szarkowski, the man who discovered William Eggleston, proclaimed photography the best form of pictorial expression for the United States (Szarkowski 237-8). Both the medium and the nation, he said, are founded upon the ideals of “individual freedom, political equality, cultural diversity, centrifugal movement, constant experimentation, extemporization, and quick results (Szarkowski 237-8).” Indeed, Eggleston’s work exemplifies this intersection of photographic expression, American restlessness, and democratic ideals.

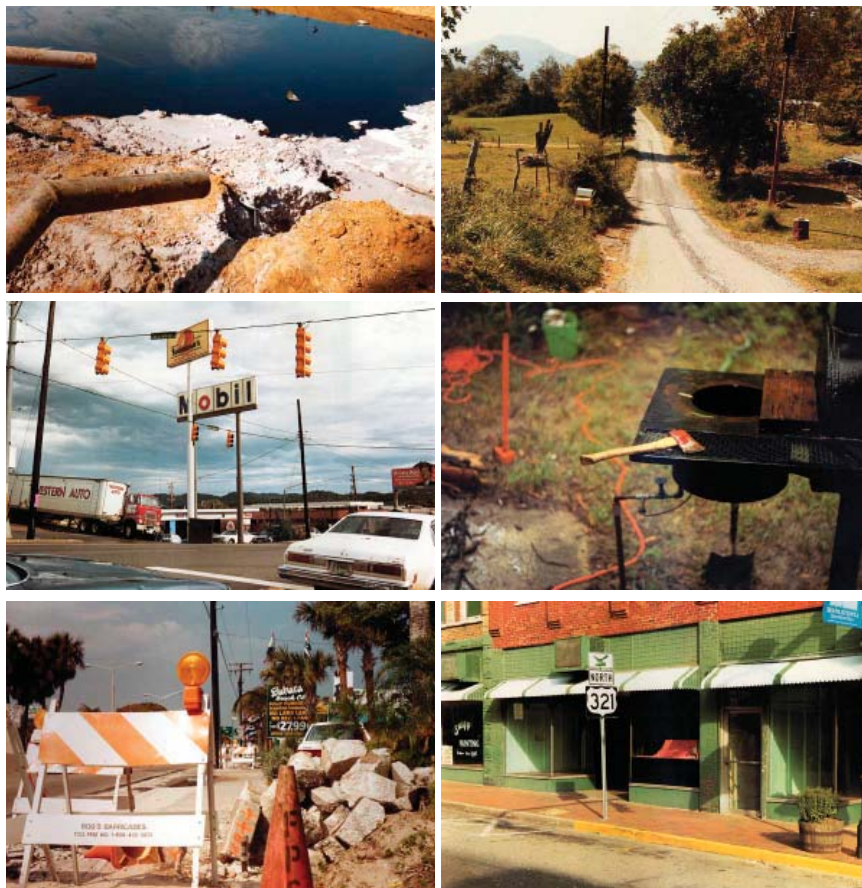
Born in Memphis, Eggleston grew up in the Delta South. After spending several years at three different universities (without earning a degree), Eggleston decided to travel to New York City to pursue his interests in photography professionally (Sampson 2). His “big break” came when John Szarkowski, the Director of Photography at the Modern Museum of Art (MOMA) from 1962-1991, saw his work (Szarkowski 236). In 1976, Szarkowski organized a show of Eggleston’s color photographs at the MOMA (Sampson 1).

This show caused controversy for several reasons. Szarkowski did much to elevate the status of photography to a respected art, yet these newly accepted “fine art” photographers worked largely in black and white (Sampson 2). Critics and fellow artists were appalled that these color, snapshot-like photographs were proclaimed “art (Cotter).” Despite being labeled “the most hated show of the year,” the show declared his presence in the art world, and established his point of view (Sampson 2). In time, his aesthetic vision and innovative dye-transfer technique solidified his position as the first art photographer to work in color (Sampson 2).

Not only did Eggleston bring a distinct eye to the art world, he became the most important visual artist from the city of Memphis (Sampson 4). His photographs made in and around the city depicted the landscape of the modern American South. Art critic for The New York Times, Holland Cotter, observed: “Although Mr. Eggleston rejects the label of regional photographer,

he was, at least initially, dealing with the complicated subject of a traditional Old South...meeting a speeded-up New South (Cotter).” These representations of a particular time and place are often described as “Southern Gothic,” aligning him with a cultural heritage including Eudora Welty, Flannery O’Connor, and William Faulkner (Cotter).

While mayor of Memphis, A. C. Wharton remarked, “William Eggleston’s singular and self-taught approach to photography changed the way that the world perceived the American South, as well as the way we perceive ourselves (Sampson 4-5).” As an exemplary artist from the city, whose compositions have become almost iconic representations of the South in his time, it is fitting that a museum and archive devoted to Eggleston be located in Memphis.



All photographs from *The Democratic Forest*, courtesy of the Eggleston Artistic Trust (EgglestonTrust.com).

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I. FRAMING

“These extraordinary, compelling, honest, beautiful and unsparing photographs all have to do with the quality of our lives in the ongoing world: they succeed in showing us the grain of the present, like the cross-section of a tree. The photographs have cut it straight through the center.

...Time in The Democratic Forest is the galvanic present, but as we were earlier made aware, the past, in its flickerings and shadowings, is also integral to the book. In the home place —any home place in the world — the long view is the one like memory’s view: it shows us everything at once.”

Eudora Welty, from her introduction to *The Democratic Forest* (pages 13-14)

The Writer and the Photographer: Eudora Welty and William Eggleston

As Welty stated, Eggleston's photographs "record" while showing us a "cross-section" of the present. Similarly, yet in a different medium, Welty's short stories and novels record and describe the Modern South. Welty and Eggleston are part of a past and present culture of the American South, made up of writers, artists, and musicians trying to come to grips with the region's complicated history, and its place in our present moment. Complimentary to these forms of expression is the modern Southern urban center: a material witness to this shifting narrative. How can architecture re-appropriate the attitude of Welty and Eggleston to frame these temporal layers?



Figure 1. The Writer and the Photographer.
(from upper left, clockwise)

Sources: Portrait of Welty by Frank Hains.
Portrait of Eggleston by Dan Winters.
William Eggleston's Cameras by William Eggleston.
Welty's typewriter courtesy Eudora Welty, LLC.

Photography and Architecture:

As Copies

Roland Barthes thoroughly dissects how a photograph can be read in “The Photographic Message,” one of the first analyses of photography’s aesthetics. In this essay, Barthes explains how a photograph can be deceptively persuasive because it appears to be an exact copy of reality (Barthes 196). In actuality, the image is connoted, or embedded with a point of view (Barthes 198). The photographer’s hand can mold the image by choosing what is photographed and what is not, by choosing what is in the foreground and what is confined to the background (Barthes 202-205). Furthermore, the person who interprets the image brings his or her own connotations (Barthes 205-207). A reader’s social, cultural, and temporal frame of mind determines how he or she interprets any symbolic meaning (Barthes 205-207). In this way, a photograph is more than an exact two-dimensional copy of the object within the frame. A photograph memorializes a moment in time, which becomes an image carrying embedded meaning. This meaning, then, shifts depending on the temporal moment, culture, and society in which it is framed and viewed (Barthes 207).

This discussion of photography provides a sensitivity to replication that is beneficial to architectural production. The limited view of historical preservation as a practice of restoring or rebuilding “copies” of the built environment is called into question. Barthes’ essay clarifies that no copy has a neutral meaning (Barthes 199). By viewing the practice of preservation as an endeavor to preserve a building as it existed during one moment in time, the shifting, temporal narrative of that building is ignored. In addition, the connotation of the preservation or restoration is also ignored. In this way, the nature of photography can inform architectural production.

As Temporal Constructions

Welty credits Eggleston's photography with capturing "the grain of the present" along with the "flickerings and shadowings" of the past (Welty 1989: 13-14). Furthermore, she describes his work as the recordings of place (Welty 1989: 9-10). In the preceding quote, Welty contrasts two ways a photograph can frame the passage of time. In the most superficial sense, a photograph produces an image of one moment in time (Welty 1989: 13-14). Indeed, at a closer examination, a closer reading, a photograph shows a wider temporal view (Barthes 199). Like film, the connotation of architectural production changes over time. Furthermore, this passage of time can physically mark, or weather, a building's surface (Mostafavi 1993: 16). This difference offers a more profound dimension to the temporality of the built environment (Mostafavi 1993: 16).



Figure 2. Untitled (Mississippi) by William Eggleston.
Source: Eggleston Artistic Trust.

As Narrative Image of Place

Agreeing with Barthes, John Szarkowski describes photography as having its own language: “[The] language is not the personal, inflected speech of a man, but the mechanical utterance of a machine, a camera. As we study his photographs, however, we recognize that although in the conventional sense they may be impersonal, they are also consistently informed by what in a poem we would call a voice. This voice is, in turn, comic, harsh, ironic, delighted, and even cruel. But it is always active and distinct -- always, in fact, a narrative voice (Szarkowski 251).” Indeed, Eggleston’s photographs exhibit this narrative language. As art critic for *The New York Times*, Holland Cotter, observed: “Although Mr. Eggleston rejects the label of regional photographer, he was, at least initially, dealing with the complicated subject of a traditional Old South...meeting a speeded-up New South (Cotter).” His photographs have even been called “iconic,” not only portraying what he saw, but defining part of the narrative of the modern South (Sampson 4-5).

Similarly, as a three-dimensional medium, architecture can seem to be an impersonal construction, unable to interact with or comment on the society and culture within which it exists. As with anything composed or constructed, however, a building is connoted by the temporal, social, and cultural, as well. In this way, the narrative image of photography can inform how architecture can describe a narrative of place.

As Memorials

To repeat the discussion of Barthes, a photograph memorializes a moment in time. Susan Sontag elaborates: “It is a nostalgic time right now, and photographs actively promote nostalgia. Photography is an elegiac art, a twilight art. ...All photographs are memento mori. To take a photograph is to participate in another person’s (or thing’s) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time’s relentless melt (Sontag 15-16).” Could the program of a museum be seen to have a similar effect? Removing an object, or a work of art, from its context and protecting it from aging is also an act of nostalgia. Does this nostalgic institution work with or against architecture’s ability to convey an ever-changing narrative and its physical testimony to the passage of time?



Figure 3. Eggleston's photographs on display at The MOMA.
Source: The Wall Street Journal.

II. SUPPORTING

“All the photographs have place as their subject. ...[P]laces appear to have loomed large for William Eggleston. Now a resident of Memphis, he has been spending his life making exemplary photographs of the world around him and thereby recording its ways. ...The photographs range widely, they are highly differing, richly varying. In landscapes, cityscapes, street scenes, roadside scenes, at every sort of public converging-point, in dreaming long view and arresting close-up, through hours of dark and light, he sets forth what makes up our ordinary world.”

Eudora Welty, from her introduction to *The Democratic Forest* (pages 9-10)

Narrative:

Architecture as Instauration

Subsequently, our contemporary cities, as well as our media, have been saturated with images (Koeck 26). This saturation only reinforces our reading and writing of images as a major (perhaps, the most prominent) narrative tool (Dodds 2005: 3). The analysis of still photography and moving images reaffirms how an architectural and spatial language relates to this way of inferring narrative from our two- and three-dimensional world (Koeck 20). As Koeck explains, “one of the narrative acts of a film is the creation of space, but what gives the moving space its coherence in time, decides the metonymy as a ‘taking place’ is here the ‘narrative itself (Koeck 21).” In conclusion, narrative is what makes space a place (Koeck 21).

One way of understanding narrative through architecture is through the concept of instauration. Through this concept, architectural production can be seen as contributing to the changing narrative of a city (Dodds 2001: 127). By reading this narrative as constantly changing, both continuous and discontinuous, a work of architecture is not defined as a “resolution,” limiting the design’s relevance to one moment in time and to one reading of the city (Dodds 2001: 128). Literally, instauration means renovation (Forster 107). This kind of renovation, as Kurt Forster defines the term, consists of “the periodic and partial remaking of a section of the city (Forster 107).” This remaking provides a new perspective of the city’s narrative, and, as such, restates its past, present, and future fate (Forster 107). Like the Eiffel Tower, a work of instauration can provide a new, literal view of the city; as panorama, the image of the city becomes another illusion, paired with the new construction as an emblem itself (Forster 108, 113).

Memorial:

The Museum in the City, the City as Museum

The role of museums in cities is a subject much researched and discussed. In the early history of this typology, the early nineteenth-century, museums were characterized as “one of the most progressive institutions of the age (Vidler 160).” In this respect, museums were thought to be civic institutions that could educate the masses on high art and proper manners (Vidler 160). With the Modernist critique of history, the “sacred” museum became, according to Vidler, “an emblem of regression and cultural reaction (Vidler 160).” Modernists saw this institution as insulated from the living city and separate from popular culture (Vidler 160). The practice of a museum, critics wrote, was to define the past by declaring what was worth memorializing (Vidler 160). By this act, museums placed what was memorialized under a sealed bell jar, unable to change or progress in meaning (Vidler 160-161). Therefore, museums were seen as houses of the dead, not of the living city (Vidler 160).

Intellectuals and architects, influenced by this dialogue, became interested in the growing study of urban planning and its intersection with this outdated “museumological gaze (Vidler 163).” Due to the invention of photography and the rising heights of buildings, new, literal views of the city were multiplying. The images of cityscapes became more and more identified with the changing pace, technology, and forms of modernity. As Vidler writes, “Here the entire urban and regional milieu, from the street to the countryside, became an object of the museumological gaze and a potential agent of its own representation as a school of life (Vidler 163).”

Patrick Geddes, in particular, was an intellectual and designer interested in the possible relationship between the city as image and the museum’s new role (Vidler 163-165). Geddes believed if the public could see themselves and their present as interacting with an image of the past, then history and its memorialization would become relevant (Vidler 164-165). This modern museum would expand horizons by exposing the public to the widening world: local, regional, national, and global (Vidler 164-165). Key to this understanding would be a final exhibit of a camera obscura. This mesmerizing view of an expanding cityscape showed the historic parts of the city

intermingled with activities of the present (Vidler 163-165). Through this experience, he believed the public would then be able to see themselves as part of a larger narrative of time and place (Vidler 164-165).

These key points in the history of the museum typology connect city narrative, photography, and temporality. In this way, the museum typology provides an appropriate medium to explore this thesis' focus. Specifically, Geddes' camera obscura provides an interesting precedent for how the museum building can be shaped architecturally to connect an image of the city to its history.

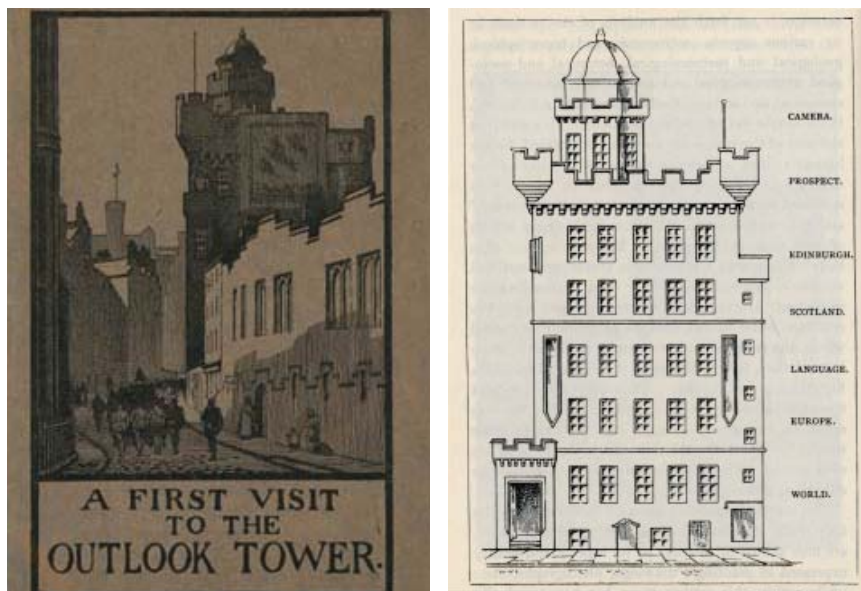


Figure 4. Geddes' Outlook Tower.
Source: Camera Obscura museum.

Choosing an Appropriate Site

The City and The River

Walter Benjamin discussed the concept of the flâneur and its influence on our modern urban landscape and cultural consciousness in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” This method of observation and the subsequent expression of urban life is one way Welty and Eggleston are alike. The city of Memphis, founded on the Mississippi River, has always been a “pass-through” city. People brought goods and raw materials down the river, across the railroads, and through the streets - stopping in Memphis to trade and sell. This market economy brought many different kinds of people from diverse backgrounds and different social classes to and through the city. The cultural heritage of Memphis bears witness to this confluence: through music, literature, and the visual arts. The intersecting social, economic, and cultural histories make Memphis an appropriate location for an architectural exploration of Welty and Eggleston.



Figure 5. The Southern Flâneur.
 Sources:
 Diagrams by author.
 Color photograph by William Eggleston
(overlaid)
 Black and white photograph by author.
(taken from the same location on Jefferson Avenue, Memphis)
 Drawing by Paul Gavarni, 1842.
 Photograph by Eudora Welty.
 Film still from *Mystery Train*, filmed in South Main, Memphis.

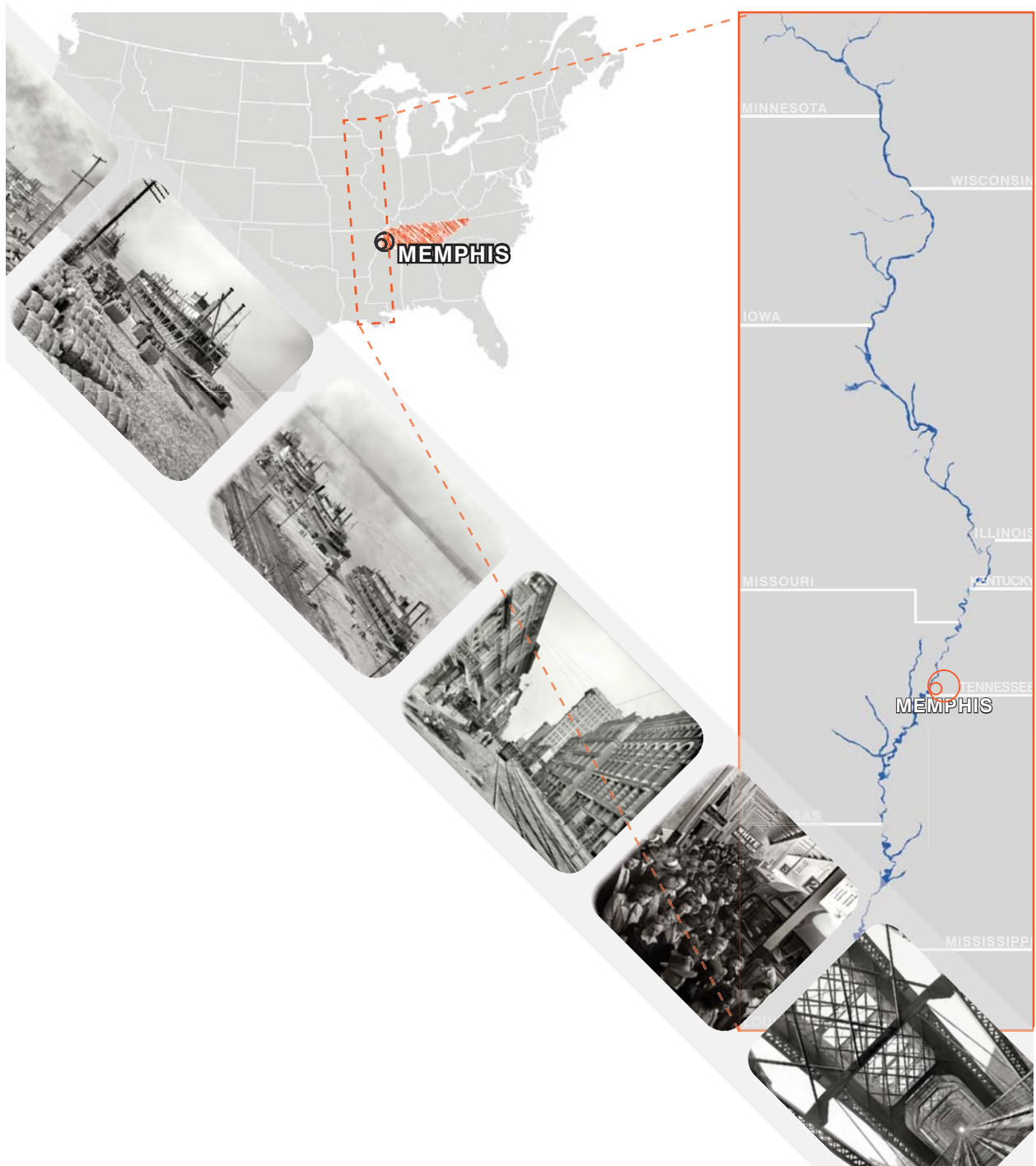


Figure 6.
Sources:

Memphis: A "Pass-Through" City.

Diagrams by author.

Photographs (from top to bottom):

Unloading cotton..., 1910.

Mississippi River levee from the custom house..., 1900.

Main Street. Memphis, Tennessee., 1906.

...Waiting for the bus at the Memphis terminal, 1943.

Memphis Bridge spanning Mississippi River..., 1985.

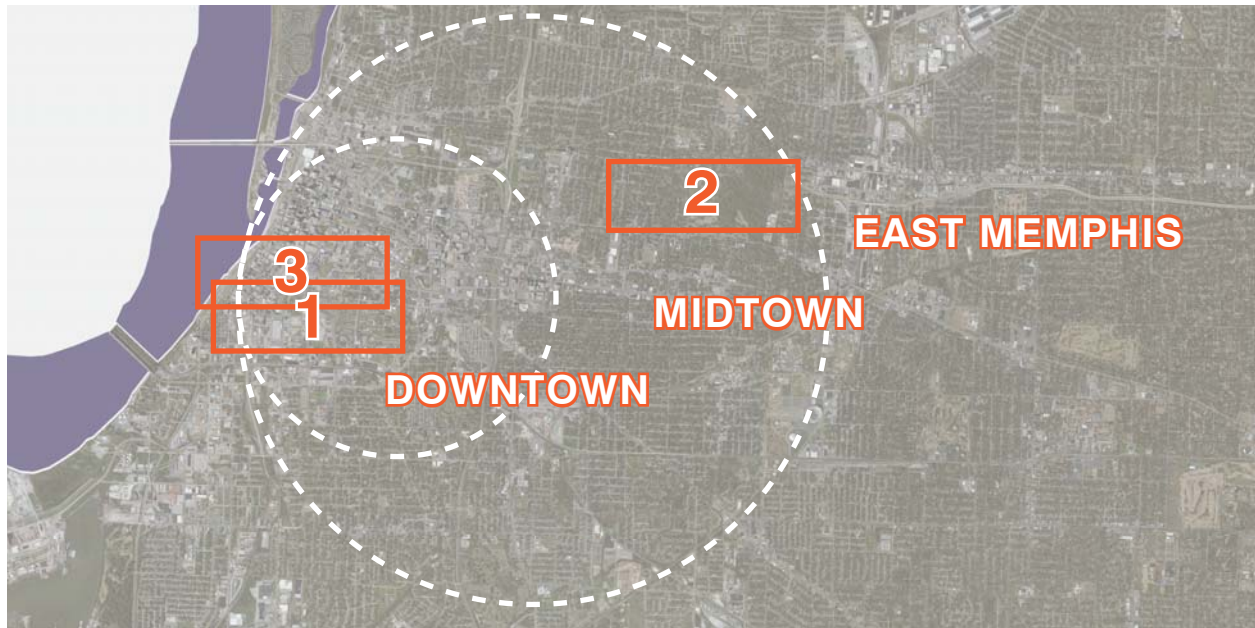


Figure 7. Locations of site options.
Source: Diagram by author.

Site Option 1: Film Row

“Film Row” is an area just south of the downtown center consisting of one-story brick buildings surrounding Vance Avenue and South Second Street. During their prime in the 1940s, these buildings were owned by major motion picture companies to house and distribute film reels across the Midsouth (Alley). After the baby boom, suburban sprawl, and the advent of the home television set, the need for these distribution centers declined (Alley). Now, movies are almost solely distributed digitally, leaving these buildings largely unused and empty (Alley).

While the history of this block has an intriguing relationship with the medium of photography, and therefore, this thesis, the site was found to be inappropriate for this project. At this time, the area is too far off the beaten path of Main Street to attract much foot traffic. As you can tell from Figure 8, this area is also surrounded by several vacant lots, ruins from the Urban “Renewal” strategy of demolition in the 1970s-80s. For these reasons, the project on this site would have to become a larger-scale urban planning project, instead of the smaller scale intended.

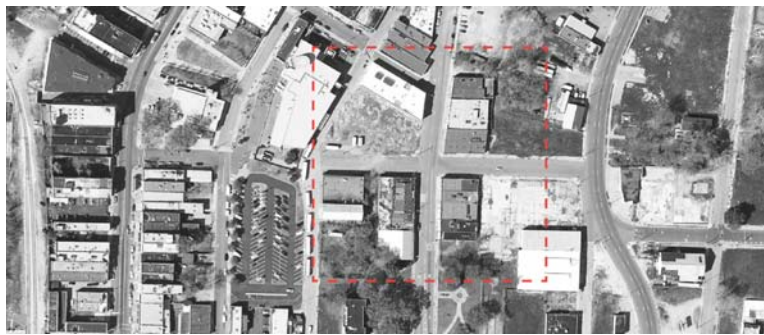


Figure 8.
Sources:

Site Option: Film Row.
Diagrams by author.

Photographs (*from top to bottom*):

first through third: street views of Film Row. Bing images.

fourth and fifth: former MCM warehouse. Taken by author.

Site Option 2: Overton Park

Overton Park is located in midtown Memphis. While the park is certainly a well-loved feature of the city, it was found to be an inappropriate site for this thesis project. In reality, there is an official committee that has been formed to assess the possibility of building a museum and archive dedicated to William Eggleston (Mehr). This committee has settled on a site (highlighted in Figure 9) located within Overton Park as their ideal location for this museum (Mehr). That being said, this site remains inappropriate for this thesis' focus for the following reasons:

First of all, the park is largely surrounded by a higher-income residential area with the highlighted site located on a larger, busy road. There is virtually no foot traffic on this part of the street, and questionable visibility for a real street presence (refer to Figure 9). It is doubtful that this location would inspire the diverse social interactions and view of the city (literally and conceptually) that this project intends. The argument used by the committee, that this location would solidify Overton as a "cultural zone," reinforces a narrow practice of urban planning. A concentrated "zone" of the city's cultural institutions in this location inhibits a more diverse population's access to these resources.



Figure 9. Site Option: Overton Park.
 Sources: Diagrams by author.
 Photographs: street views of Overton Park. Bing images.

Site Option 3: The Chisca Hotel

The Chisca Hotel is located on Main Street one block from the Orpheum Theatre and down the street from the Civil Rights Museum. The hotel was built in 1913 and catered to a middle-class clientele. (The Peabody, on the other hand, was Memphis' luxury hotel.) In the 1950s, the Hotel was home to the radio show that broadcast Elvis Presley for the first time. Later in the '50s, an Admiral Benbow Inn was built next to the Chisca, then added as an annex in the '60s. Unfortunately, the Chisca has been abandoned for the past two decades, allowing it to fall into considerable disrepair. The looming vacant buildings have created a foreboding divide between the downtown center and the revitalized South Main district.

This history has resulted in a complex site: a grand hotel from Memphis' days as a bustling center of trade, paired with a motel and "motor inn" from the mid-century, when the automobile reigned supreme. Now, the site shows signs of abandonment and decay after suburban sprawl led to the decline of downtown. Vacant lots surround the site beyond Main Street, the attempts of Urban Renewal to renew through removal.

Recently, the downtown center and South Main have experienced a resurgence. Therefore, the Chisca is placed in a prime location to benefit from rehabilitation. Its position on Main Street ensures that not only the existing hotel and annex, but its relationship to the city, has the potential to interact with the past, present, and future narrative of the city. This attention to the layered traces of human experience and activity is at the center of this thesis, as well as an underlying theme of Eggleston's photography. In this way, the Chisca presents an opportunity for re-appropriation — to interact with the material history of Memphis and to examine how a past and present landmark could become a new representation of the changing narrative of the city.



Figure 10.
Sources:

Site Option: The Hotel Chisca.
Diagrams by author.
Photographs: street views of The Hotel Chisca. Bing images.

III. REFERENCING

“Some of us grew up with the china night-light, the little lamp whose lighting showed its secret and with that spread enchantment. The outside is painted with a scene, which is one thing; then, when the lamp is lighted, through the porcelain sides a new picture comes out through the old, and they are seen as one. A lamp I knew of was a view of London till it was lit; but then it was the Great Fire of London, and you could go beautifully to sleep by it. The lamp alight is the combination of internal and external, glowing at the imagination as one; and so is the good novel. Seeing that these inner and outer surfaces do lie so close together and so implicit in each other, the wonder is that human life so often separates them, or appears to, and it takes a good novel to put them back together.”

Eudora Welty, from “Place in Fiction”

Methods of Addition

A site chosen, a series of precedents follows. These precedents were chosen because they consist of modern additions added to pre-existing constructions, and offer a cross-section of the changing architectural views and strategies of preservation and addition.

Critique

Carlo Scarpa's rehabilitation of Castelvechio (1958-1964)

Verona, Italy

Before Scarpa left his own imprint on Castelvechio, this site bore many traces of the passage of time and pivotal moments in history (Coombs 4). His rehabilitation of the grounds and the art museum within challenged the typical assumptions of restorations and historical preservation (Coombs 4). Beyond simply showing a contrast between the pre-existing constructions and his "intervention" -- a typical contrast between old and new -- Scarpa went further by offering a commentary through his edits and additions (Coombs 4).



Figure 11. Scarpa site aerial with diagram.
Sources: Diagrams by author. Aerial from Bing images.



Figure 12. View of Castelvecchio from courtyard.
Sources: Carlo Scarpa L'archivio Digitale. Museo Di Castelvecchio.

Examples 1. and 2.

The location of a former French barracks which Scarpa had demolished. The barracks had been transformed by the 1920s reconstruction to make it look like the French subjugation had never happened, and therefore, that Italy's past fell more in line with Fascist myths (Coombs 5). This demolition also served to reveal the original compound wall built before the 14th Century fort (Coombs 5). The wall serves as a reminder of the brief, more egalitarian governance of Verona before the Lords asserted their power (Coombs 5, 7). The statue of Cangrande is left intact, yet positioned precariously over the void left by the barracks' removal, perhaps a comment on the stability and values of the tyrannical rule of the Lords of Verona, who built the Castelvecchio (Coombs 5, 7).

Example 3.

The 1920s Gothic style windows and ornamentation were backed by modern mullions, a critique that further invalidates the inaccurate portrayal provided by the earlier restoration (Coombs 5-6).

Example 4.

Patches of plaster were removed to show the underlying layers of the past (Coombs 5-6).

Example 5.

Here, Scarpa placed a sacello -- modeled after the shrines erected in memory of fallen Fascists. By placing remains of Longobardic tombs within the sacello, Scarpa pointedly critiques the Fascist myth that ignores the presence of Teutonic tribes within this area in order to proclaim the uninterrupted dominance of Italic peoples (Coombs 7).

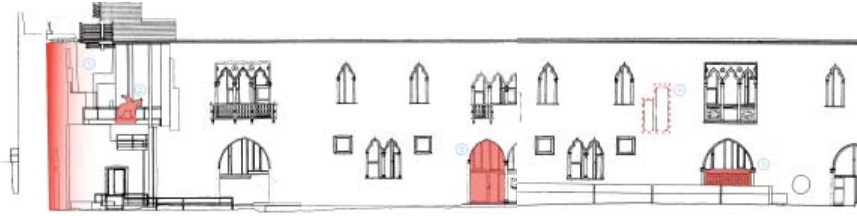


Figure 13. Examples of Scarpa's critiques (key).
 Sources: Drawing by Richard Murphy,
Carlo Scarpa and the Castelvechio.
 Diagram by author.



Figure 14. Examples of Scarpa's critiques.
 Sources: All from Carlo Scarpa L'archivio Digitale.

Analogy

Venturi's addition to the Allen Memorial Art Museum (1976)

Oberlin College, Ohio

The Allen Memorial Art Museum was originally founded in 1917. Cass Gilbert designed this first building in an Italian Renaissance style ("A Museum for Oberlin"). In his emulation of the past, Gilbert deferred to European ideals to inspire his own time ("A Museum for Oberlin"). Along with the several more buildings on campus, Gilbert also advised the design of the well-ordered and rectilinear campus plan (See Figure 15) (Blodgett). The firm of Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown designed an addition to the museum, opened in 1977. Expanding upon the Classical collections contained in the Gilbert building, the new addition provided galleries for modern and contemporary art. The Venturi addition is often cited as a prime example of postmodern architecture due to its use of ornament and symbol ("A Museum for Oberlin").



Figure 15. Venturi site aerial with diagram.
Sources: Diagrams by author. Aerial from Bing images.



Figure 16. View of Venturi's addition and the existing museum.
Sources: *Venturi, Rauch, & Scott Brown.*

The task of designing an addition to the original Gilbert building was complex. Certainly, the original museum has a complete and self-referential geometry that would relate to an addition easily (Blodgett).

The strip windows and simple geometry of the exterior is a clear reference to the International Style, yet the checkerboard facade breaks with this line of thinking by clearly embracing the use of ornament and contextual reference (Moos 180). The Venturi firm desired to create harmony with the Gilbert building by using similar pink granite and red sandstone, yet arranged the materials in an unlike yet complimentary way (Moos 180).

In this way, Venturi translated the use of ornament to suit his own architectural point of view. His critique of the modernist renunciation of ornament is more fully explained in the pivotal *Learning from Las Vegas*, "Romantic architects of the eighteenth century discovered an existing and conventional industrial vocabulary without much adaptation. Le Corbusier loved grain elevators and steam-ships; the Bauhaus looked like a factory; Mies refined the details of American steel factories for concrete buildings. Modern architects work through analogy, symbol, and image—although they have gone to lengths to disclaim almost all determinants of their forms except the structural necessity and the program—and they derive insights, analogies, and stimulation from unexpected images (Venturi p xvii)."

Dialogue

Álvaro Siza's Centro Galego de Arte Contemporânea (1993)

Santiago de Compostela, Spain

The Galician Center for Contemporary Art (CGAC) is situated on the edge of the Compostela, the medieval, historic core of the city. Sharing an edge with the monastery of Santo Domingo de Bonaval, this context provides an evocative inspiration for the form and organization of the new museum ("CGAC Building"). This relationship with historic surroundings, along with the incorporation of modernist principles, creates a dialogue between old and new ("CGAC Building"). The winding, ancient orchard of Santo Domingo de Bonaval inspires a motif recurring throughout the CGAC site ("CGAC Building"). In the recent past before the CGAC, these impressive gardens, and the surrounding neighborhood, had become ignored by the public ("CGAC Building").



Figure 17. Siza site aerial with diagram.
Sources: Diagrams by author. Aerial from Bing images.



Figure 18. View of Siza's addition.
Sources: "Galician Museum of Art." AlvaroSizaVieira.com.

This formal relationship to the gardens creates a conscientious design that includes its context in its renewal. Indeed, Siza included a rehabilitation of these gardens in the project ("CGAC Building"). Aligned as it is with the chapel and cloister, the main facade creates a gateway to the restored monastery gardens ("CGAC Building"). Extending the motif, the sloping platforms of the garden become the organizing geometry of the museum, with galleries and supplemental programming branching off of this axis ("CGAC Building"). Finally, zigzagging granite walls create a stone "orchard" roofscape, where visitors can similarly stroll, then view a panorama of the city ("CGAC Building").

The granite stone of the museum's exterior remains in line with the character of a lasting, civic building. In addition, this material choice references Galician building traditions ("CGAC Building"). The stark, angular lines, however, clearly use of Modernist language ("CGAC Building").

Mask

Piano's renovation and expansion of the Morgan Library (2006)

New York City, New York, USA

The Morgan originated as the personal library of J. P. Morgan, the illustrious New England banker and avid collector. In 1924, his son donated the library and his expansive collections to the public. Over time, the Morgan has grown into a complex made up of multiple buildings with varied architectural qualities and histories (Sciame).

The purpose of Piano's addition was to connect and unite the existing buildings of the Morgan campus: the original library designed by Charles McKim, built from 1902-1906; the Annex added in 1928, on the site of Morgan's home; and the mid-nineteenth century brownstone acquired in 1988, the home of Morgan's son (Sciame).



Figure 19. Piano site aerial with diagram.
Sources: Diagrams by author. Aerial from Bing images.



Figure 20. View of Piano's addition.
Sources: Eberle, Todd and Michel Denance. Arcspace.com.

The Morgan is located at Madison Ave and 36th. As seen from the aerial, the orthogonal edges of each building reinforce the regular street grid. Slight setbacks at the main entrances (both the current public entrance and the original main entrance to the McKim building) denote civic importance.

Piano intended to re-balance the campus through “micro-surgery (lovine).” As one journalist remarked, it is hard to consider an addition totaling 75,000 square feet as “micro (lovine).” Piano’s re-design consists of a central, glazed “piazza” interspersed with small gallery-pavilions, along with new gallery space and an auditorium placed below grade.

The interiors of the new glass-enclosed piazza differ in character, scale, and materiality with those of the original buildings. By comparing photos of this piazza (Figure 21) with those of Mr. Morgan’s rotunda, library, and study (Figures 22), it is easy to see the contrast in character. The expanses of glazing and white, powder-coated steel resemble the approach to civic buildings after the International Style, both in materiality and the

use of transparency. These interiors, however, lack an aesthetic continuity with the decadent gilding of McKim's library and the lush, even cozy, study with its layers of wallpaper, tapestries, dark wood, paintings, and other art objects.

Brief glimpses of the Annex's facade in Piano's piazza offers momentary interactions between old and new (Figure 23). Yet, there is no trace of the former Garden Court that previously occupied the same space (Figure 22)(Iovine).

This difference in character extends to the facades. Piano's design certainly makes no attempt to create continuity by an imitation of "style." Indeed, there is a clear delineation between what is an addition and what is pre-existing. Furthermore, it is hard to believe that the white, brushed steel will age in the same way as the limestone library and Annex, and the 19th-century brownstone. To clarify, Piano's materials must remain clean and white to maintain their intended character, whereas the older buildings' character of permanence will be reinforced by showing weathering over time.



Figure 21. Views of the Morgan addition.
Sources: Eberle, Todd and Michel Denance. Arcspace.com.

Journalist Julie Iovine explains the experience of this discontinuity by comparing the original entrance through McKim's rotunda (Figure 22) with that of Piano's: "The Morgan has acquired a seamless, beautiful new mask. What may be lost is the quickening, possibly even vulgar, feeling of excitement that one man wanted to impart to others by sharing his precious treasures with the world."



Figure 22. Pre-existing conditions of the Morgan.
Sources: Sciamé. The Morgan Library & Museum.
(clockwise from top left)
Brownstones, before 1903
Mr. Morgan's Library
McKim rotunda
Garden Court, 1991
Original McKim rendering
Mr. Morgan's study

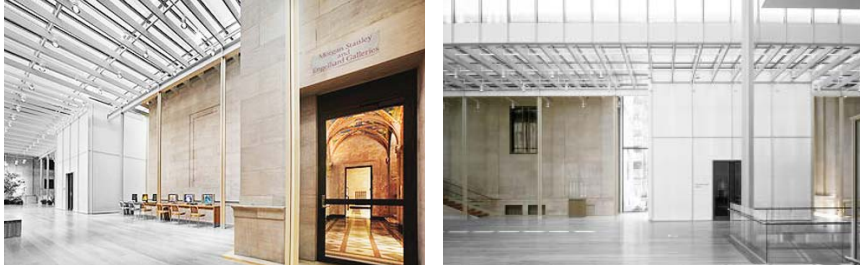


Figure 23. Intersection of the Annex with the new glass-enclosed piazza.
 Sources: Eberle, Todd and Michel Denance. Arcspace.com.
 Edited by author.

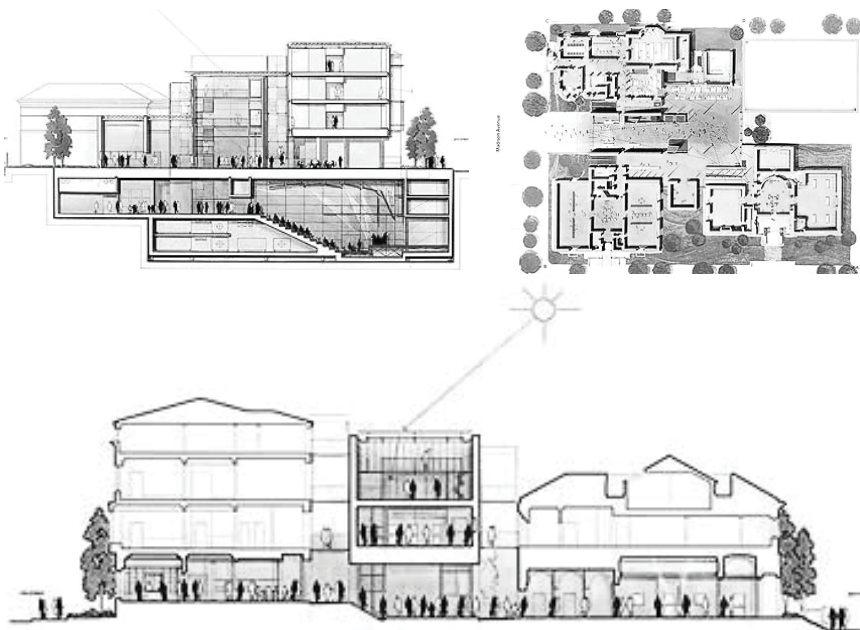


Figure 24. Piano site sections and plan.
 Sources: Piano Building Workshop.

IV. SITUATING

“The human being, unseen, remains the reason these photographs of place carry such power to move and disturb us--and, by the end, somewhat hearten us. ...A clear spring rises somewhere on the home place, for the human strain begins there for Mr. Eggleston, and we see it in what follows: it turns into a river that runs through, or underneath, every place succeeding it. Whatever is done to block it or stop its flow, it surfaces again. Pure human nature provides itself in likely or unlikely places.”

Eudora Welty, from *The Democratic Forest* (page 15)

The South Main District

[See attachments

Situating: Urban Context (A_Situating_UrbanContext.pdf)

Situating: Main Street Section (B_Situating_MainStreetSection.pdf)

Situating: Histories of Site, part 1 (C_Situating_Histories_Part1.pdf)

Situating: Histories of Site, part 2 (D_Situating_Histories_Part2.pdf)

for corresponding images and analysis.]

The Hotel Chisca

In the early twentieth-century, Memphis was experiencing a great resurgence. After the damages of the Civil War and Reconstruction, the Yellow Fever epidemic dealt another blow to the economy and population of the city. With the modernization of sanitation along with the discovery of a large aquifer, Memphis was able to return as a bustling marketplace.

This increase in trade paired with the placement of a major railroad station nearby increased the number of travelers to South Main. For this reason, there was a need accommodations for those passing through (“Save the Chisca!”). The Chisca was intended to be a popularly-priced hotel, catering to “railroad travelers and employees, mule dealers, as well as entertainers (“Save the Chisca!”).” The steel structure indicated the city’s modernization, consistent with the tearing down of several buildings along Main to be replaced by newer steel constructions. As such, the Hotel became a symbol, an instauration, of the city’s renewal and economic growth.

Like the country as a whole, Memphis experienced the prosperity of the post-war era. The advent of the automobile and growing middle class gave rise to a culture of consumerism and leisure. A representation of this time, an Admiral Benbow Inn motel was built next to the 1913 Chisca building in the late 1950s (“Save the Chisca!”). In the 1960s, the motel and “motor inn” were acquired by the Chisca (“Save the Chisca!”) appropriate the language. The Annex demonstrates how corporations of the time chose to



Figure 25. The Chisca, 1913.

Sources: “Save the Chisca!”

Postcards of the exterior and interior of the Chisca Hotel from the 1920s.

of later Modernism and the International Style to market themselves as modern and current (Curtis 395-7, 415). The placement of a pool on the Main Street side of the site, surrounded by a brick wall for privacy, expresses this turn of consciousness away from the pedestrian street and the proliferation of suburban typologies. At a deeper level, the prominent placement of this motel contrasts with the placement of the Lorraine Motel down the street and a block back from Main Street. The unresolved social tensions of the time provide a dark undercurrent to the “glossy” promise of this motel and leisure culture. Indeed, this street (and the city as a whole) would figure prominently in the conflict and violence that erupted across the country in the later 1960s through the 1970s.

In conclusion, the history of the Chisca site holds significance for this thesis’ questions. As a consistently popularly-priced hotel, the past of the site is aligned with the “democratic” and everyday aesthetics of Eggleston’s photography. The interest in choosing a site that can similarly “record the ways” of people and place is fulfilled by this juxtaposition of physical and material representations of the city’s renewal and shifting narrative. At a slightly larger scale, this district is at the center of the intense Civil Rights Era of the city. The iconic photographs taken on and around this stretch of Main are some of the most prominent images in the city’s recent memory and collective consciousness. This site, both limited to a city block and its relationship to the city as a whole, has been the location for a series of instaurations, making it fertile ground for another.

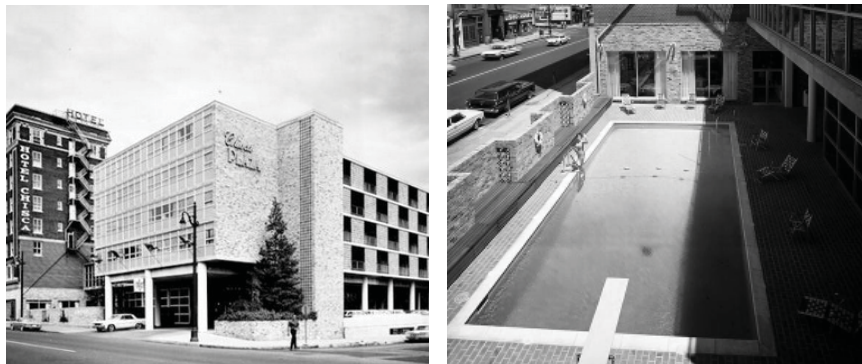


Figure 26. The Chisca, 1960s.
Sources: “Save the Chisca!”

[See attachments
Situating: Existing Plans (E_Situating_ExistingPlans.pdf)
Situating: Existing Sections (F_Situating_ExistingSections.pdf)
Situating: Existing Elevations (G_Situating_ExistingElevations.pdf)
for additional documentation of the existing conditions.]



Figure 27. Existing site plan, $1/256" = 1' 0"$.
Sources: Drawing by author.



Figure 28. The Chisca, S Main façade.
Sources: Photographs and montage by author.



Figure 29. 1913 Hotel: main entrance, ground floor.
Sources: Photographs and montage by author.



Figure 30. 1913 Hotel: Men's Lounge, ground floor.
Sources: Photographs and montage by author.



Figure 31. 1913 Hotel: stair to ballroom, ground floor.
Sources: Photographs and montage by author.

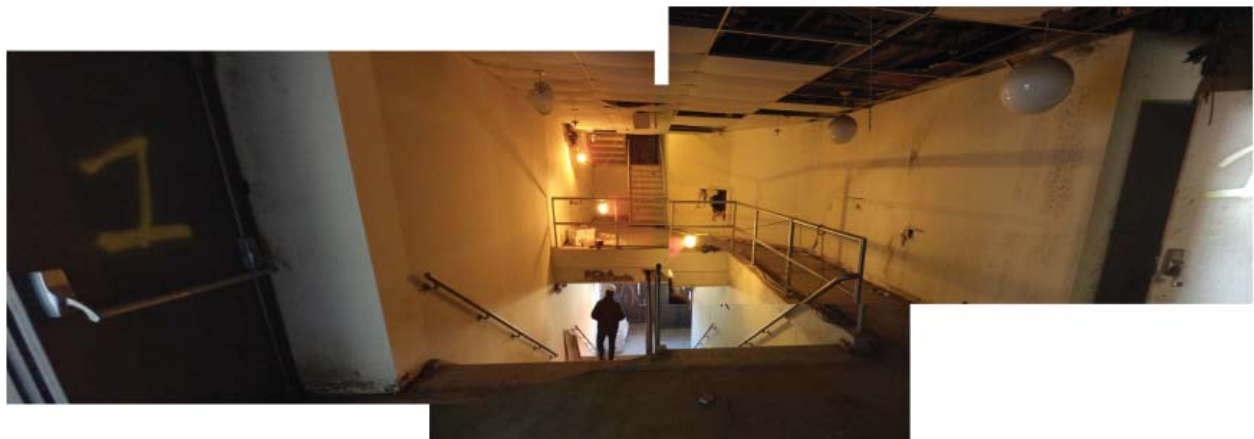


Figure 32. 1913 Hotel: stairs to ground from ballroom.
Sources: Photographs and montage by author.



Figure 33. Between the Hotel and the Annex: the ballroom.
Sources: Photographs and montage by author.



Figure 34. 1913 Hotel: view of The Chisca sign, from roof.
Sources: Photographs and montage by author.



Figure 35. Between the Hotel and the Annex: the pool.
Sources: Photographs and montage by author.



Figure 36. Between the Hotel and the Annex: ground floor.
Sources: Photographs and montage by author.



Figure 37. Between the Hotel and the Annex: second floor.
Sources: Photographs and montage by author.



Figure 38. 1960s Annex: third floor.
Sources: Photographs and montage by author.



Figure 39. 1960s Annex: exterior stair.
Sources: Photographs and montage by author.



Figure 40. 1960s Annex: second floor, center.
Sources: Photographs and montage by author.



Figure 41. 1960s Annex: third floor, center.
Sources: Photographs and montage by author.



Figure 42. 1960s Annex: third floor, facing main street.
Sources: Photographs and montage by author.

V. FORMING

“Feelings are bound up in place, and in art, from time to time, place undoubtedly works upon genius. . . . It may be that place can focus the gigantic, voracious eye of genius and bring its gaze to point. Focus then means awareness, discernment, order, clarity, insight — they are like the attributes of love. The act of focusing itself has beauty and meaning; it is the act that, continued in, turns into mediation, into poetry. Indeed, as soon as the least of us stands still, that is the moment something extraordinary is seen to be going on in the world.”

Eudora Welty, from *Place in Fiction*

Re-Programming The Chisca

There are a several ways in which this quote from Eudora Welty's classic essay on place and narrative craft is instructive to this task. Welty's words offer a reminder of the visual power of a single still photograph; the frozen image is itself an act of "focusing," an act of standing still to reflect upon reality. Furthermore, the act of regarding and contemplating a photograph could become a moment of focus, of standing still. Ideally, The William Eggleston Museum and Archive would offer such an opportunity: to pause, to see, to ponder — to focus amongst the hurried pace of urban life.

By drafting programming guidelines, the design of such a museum becomes a focused endeavor. The following square footage estimates and spatial qualities will be used as a datum to organize this design.

Existing Program

<i>(1913 building)</i>	<i>(sq ft)</i>
Hotel rooms	89000
Common public areas (lobby, dining room...)	16700
Service spaces	24120
The Grand Gold Room (ballroom)	8160
Sound Studios	2450
Retail Spaces	5300
Office space	2900
<i>(Interstitial spaces)</i>	
Central circulation	4550
<i>(1961 building)</i>	
Motel rooms	35800
Parking	60000
Retail Space	1440
Pool and Court	2900

Proposed Program

THE MUSEUM

The intention is that, while the entry and lobby areas have a clear connection with the street (clearly visible) and create opportunity for social interaction, the gallery spaces would provide ample opportunity for more introverted, quiet observation. So, while major circulation paths and the lobby could be clearly visible from the street (and create views of the city from the inside) the major gallery spaces would have limited visual “transparency” to the street and gathering spaces.

Lobby/orientation: **2600 sq ft**

Temporary exhibits: **27400 sq ft**

- *for displaying visiting exhibitions and work by the current artist-in-residence*
- *the space for temporary exhibits should be easily modified, depending on the needs of the current display; could be pavilions placed in the current vacant lot behind The Chisca, so that the temporary nature of these galleries can be paired with plantings that frame the temporality of the seasons*
- *temporary exhibit space is intermingled with “ruins” of the former Chisca hotel, interacting with that material history*

Permanent collection galleries: **35800 sq ft**

- *Eggleston gallery: rotating display of Eggleston’s work (remainder in storage)*
- *Memphis gallery: important photographs that illustrate the narrative of Memphis*

Storage and processing: **39600 sq ft**

THE ARCHIVE

quiet work spaces for study; while these spaces (except for the dark rooms and archival work spaces and storage) may have larger perforations for daylighting, they should be more controlled and separate from the public gathering spaces

Library:	4000 sq ft
Archival administration and storage:	8000 sq ft
Reading Room:	8000 sq ft

THE PHOTOGRAPHY SCHOOL

Classroom Studio:	6700 sq ft
Dark Room:	580 sq ft
Projection Room:	990 sq ft
Meeting/Conference Room:	1580 sq ft
Temporary Exhibit Space :	7750 sq ft

- *(to display student work)*

The Artist's Studio:	2400 sq ft
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- *to be used by Eggleston; later, can be used by the "artist-in-residence" for that year; open or visible to the classroom studios to encourage interactions between students and artist*

THE CULTURAL CENTER

Outdoor/indoor theatre:	5750 sq ft
Outdoor, court:	4800 sq ft
16 artist lofts with attached studio space:	20000 sq ft
Sound studios:	6000 sq ft
Observation Deck and Event Space:	12000 sq ft
Artists' exhibit and retail space:	5300 sq ft

VI. CONCLUDING

“One place comprehended can make us understand other places better.”

Eudora Welty, from *Place in Fiction*

The Eggleston Cultural Center

(See attachments

I_Concluding_ProposedPlans.pdf

J_Concluding_ProposedSections.pdf

K_Concluding_ProposedElevations.pdf

for architectural drawings of proposed design).



Figure 43. Proposed site plan, $1/256'' = 1' 0''$.
Sources: Drawing by author.



Figure 44. Approach: view south down S Main Street.
 Sources: View of existing site from Google Earth.
 Rendering of proposed site by author.



Figure 45. Approach: view north down S Main Street.
Sources: View of existing site from Google Earth.
Rendering of proposed site by author.



Figure 46. Approach: view from S Main Street [one].
 Sources: View of existing site from Google Earth.
 Rendering of proposed site by author.



Figure 47. Approach: view from S Main Street [two].
Sources: Rendering of proposed site by author.



Figure 48. Approach: view from S Main Street [three].
Sources: Rendering of proposed site by author.



Figure 49. Photography archive, level B2 [one].
Sources: Rendering by author.



Figure 50. Photography archive, level B2 [two].
Sources: Rendering by author.



Figure 51. Reading room, level B1.
Sources: Rendering by author.



Figure 52. Exhibit space, level B1.
Sources: Rendering by author.



Figure 53. Photography school, level B1.
Sources: Rendering by author.



Figure 54. Photography school studio, level B1.
Sources: Rendering by author.



Figure 55. Museum garden, ground floor.
Sources: Rendering by author.



Figure 56. Museum lobby, ground floor.
Sources: Rendering by author.

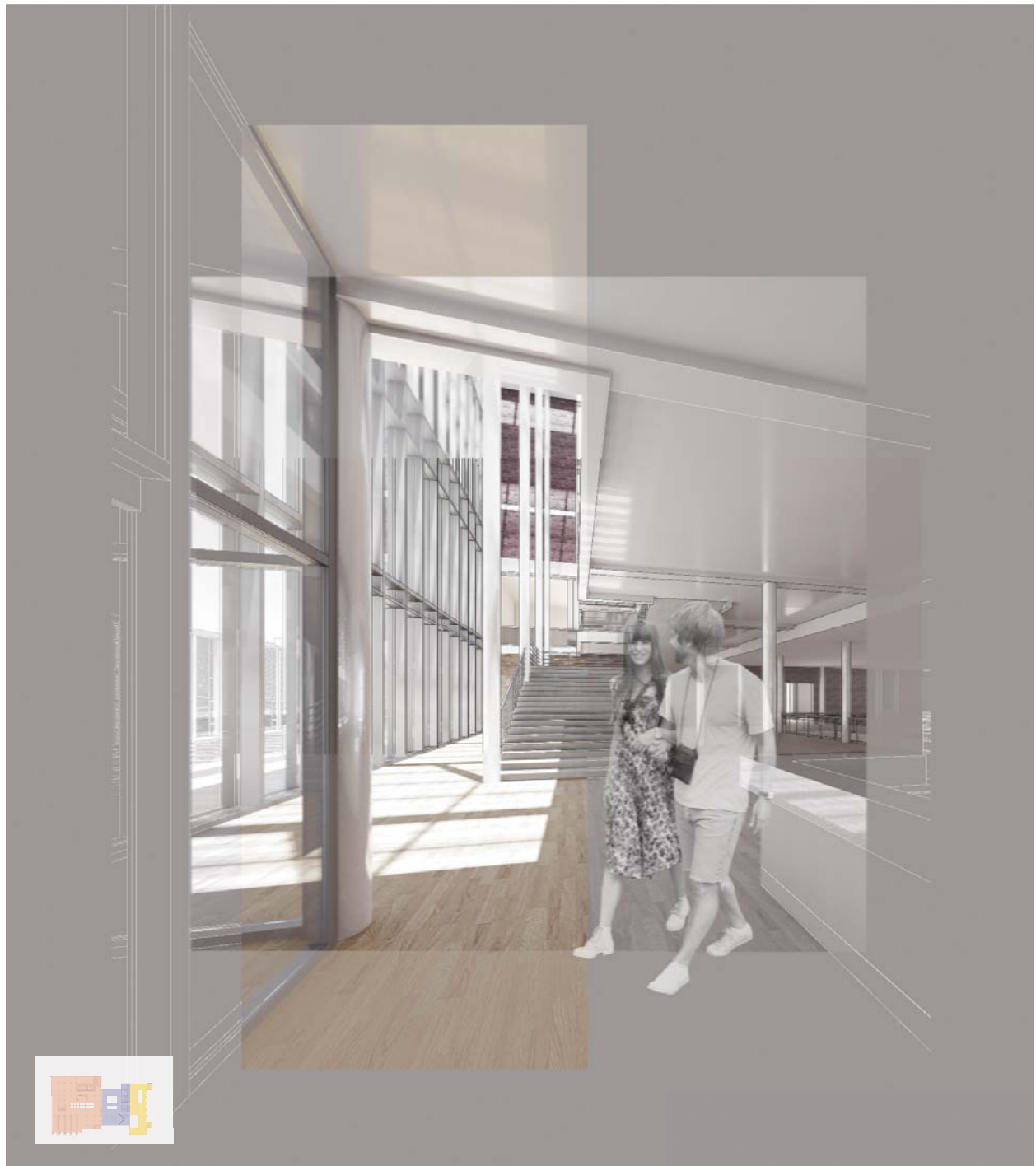


Figure 57. Museum entrance, ground floor.
Sources: Rendering by author.



Figure 58. Entrance to former hotel, ground floor.
Sources: Rendering by author.

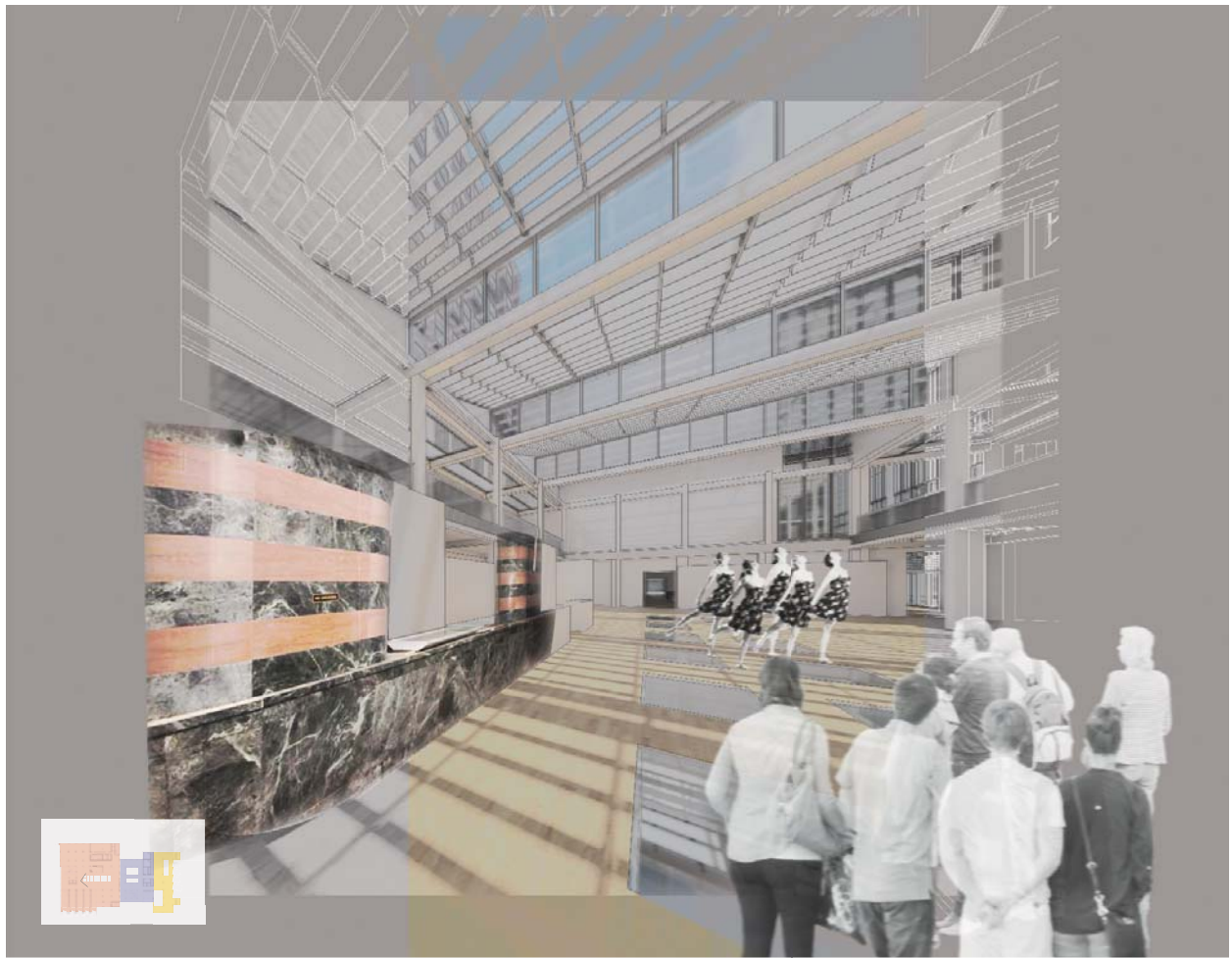


Figure 59. Former hotel lobby, proposed exhibit and event space, ground floor.
Sources: Rendering by author.



Figure 60. Former hotel lobby, proposed event space, ground floor.
Sources: Rendering by author.



Figure 61. Eggleston Galleries, second floor.
Sources: Rendering by author.

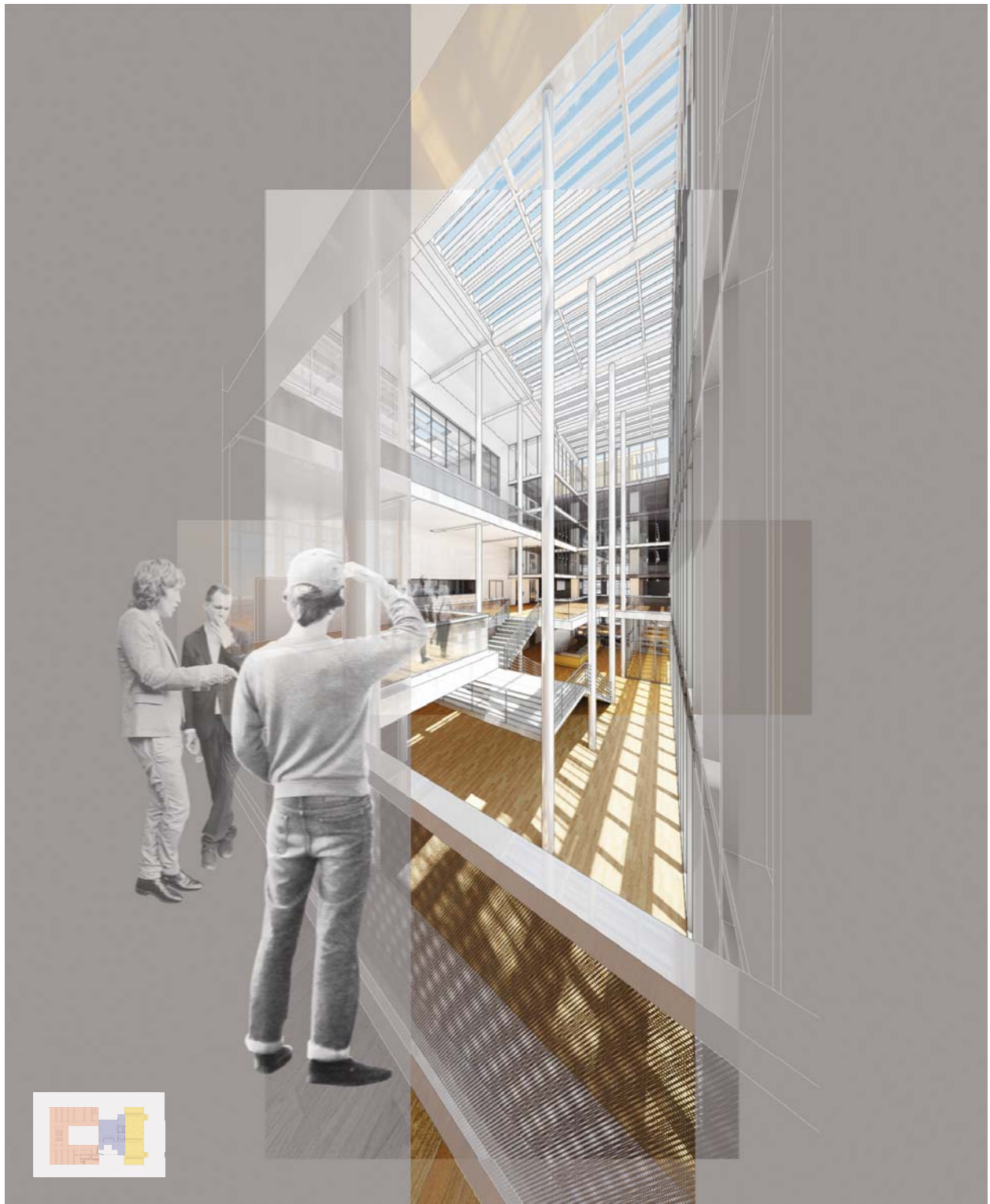


Figure 62. Lobby, second floor.
Sources: Rendering by author.



Figure 63. Museum gallery, third floor.
Sources: Rendering by author.



Figure 64. Artist's residence, ninth floor.
Sources: Rendering by author.

Postscript

From the start of this project, the strength of the thesis topic was its concern with the rich subject matter of time, memory, and place through two compelling conduits: Welty and Eggleston. The major critique of the final design is whether the program and its representation is able to encompass the preceding breadth of research and interest.

The renderings themselves could have incorporated a wider selection of media as well as more “flickerings and shadowings” of the site’s past and future. These techniques could have clarified the point of view that this is one re-construction, or instauration, of the site in a continuous history of re-making. A more cohesive use of montage would have helped these representations, as well.

Subsequently, it is questionable whether the final program is too narrow to encompass all of the social connections intended. More in-depth coverage of South Main’s demographics, or a program that offered more diverse residences, could have clarified that this Center is intended to encourage the interaction of the city’s diverse population.

Still, the relationship between this writer and the photographer, the city of Memphis, the site of the Hotel Chisca, and the museum and art-centered program provided abundant material to explore these broader topics within architecture.

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Madeline Jones was born and raised in Memphis, Tennessee. She received her Bachelor of Arts in History from Christian Brothers University in 2008. Although she valued this liberal arts education, she still sought to unite this interest in reading, writing, and ideas with her love of art and design. Travels to Boston and throughout Great Britain expanded this interest in design to a passion for learning about how design and culture shape our cities and urban spaces. In architecture, Madeline found a way to study both why and how people shape their built environment. Madeline plans to return to her beloved hometown to begin her career in architecture.