Connecting One and Many - Reinventing the Procession of the Cinema Experience

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Reinventing the Procession of the Cinema Experience

Kelly Halligan Sekely
Master of Fine Arts Thesis Project
To my husband, Jack
Your support, understanding and encouragement knows no bounds. For not a second did your confidence in me waiver, not a minute did you ever hesitate to help. You have given as much of yourself to this program as I, and if there was an honorary MFA, it would certainly be yours. You are extraordinary, my hero and my heart.

To my pups, Brady & Bitsy
Thanks for the endless supply of enthusiastic love, laughs and puppy kisses when I really needed them.

To my mom & dad
You have always believed in me. Thank you for giving me the tools and the courage to make a distant dream become reality.

To my friends
Thank you for sticking by “the invisible woman” for the past two years, forgiving all the birthdays and special occasions I had to miss and phone calls I never made. Please know that just because I wasn’t around doesn’t mean I wasn’t thinking about you. It is finally time to catch up!

To my classmates
The bond we have formed is remarkable. Each of you hold a special place in my heart and my mind, and I am thankful every day that I was blessed with you in my life. Thank you for your support, the unending laughter and for truly understanding who I am.

To Camden Whitehead
Thank you for bringing something out in me that I didn’t realize was there.

To Christiana Lafazani
Thank you for giving me this opportunity, inspiring me through support and being a friend.

To Roberto Ventura
Your knowledge and talent are astounding. Thanks for inspiring me to work hard and harder.

Randomly important shout outs go to...
Jordan (gone but never forgotten.), Hall Saunders Mulvaney, Pothary Barn, Williams & Shenill, Commonwealth Architects, hair bands, Aconga wine, Impanema, Age of Excess, Keith Fabry Reproduction, Plaza Art, Main Art, LaCasita, Samis Grotto and Zorbas Pizza
Design’s memory, reaching that little part of the back of your mind that makes you feel good without exactly knowing why.

Design is recalling the vinyl seats in your grandma’s kitchen that your bare legs always stuck to on warm days. Design is the light through the paneled windows that reminds you of hand-puppet charades. Design is the shade of green that invokes a picture of your dad in his favorite sweatshirt. Design is the color on the walls of the room where your husband proposed. Design is what those things help you remember because today is what becomes tomorrow’s past.

Memories exist for inspiration, so pay attention to and celebrate what is already there. That which has come before teaches, revealing decisive success, uncovering mistakes and providing a path for experimentation. Memory excites our unconscious emotion, connecting us to our history, the events which help us get to where we are and enables us to imagine how far we have come, making design much more than the walls you build or the flooring you select. Design is what those things help you remember because today is what becomes tomorrow’s past.
In the past, going to the movies was an event.

The grand lit marquee made a statement, ushering you inside. The elaborately decorated lobby transported you to a place in your dreams where riches and opulence abound. The curtained screen marked the start of a true storied spectacle as you sat close to your friends and neighbors dressed in their Sunday best. There was no denying that the cinema was the place to see, be seen and to socialize.

In contrast, today’s movie-going can be classified as more of a singular experience. You wait in long, solemn cattle lines to enter a cluttered lobby with loud video games, tacky candy machines and tunnel-like hallways. You sit in plush recliners in a sea of strangers and rush out of the theater before even the lights come up.

In response to this cultural shift, my proposed design solution will challenge the isolation of today’s cinema by recreating the procession associated with neighborhood movie-going of the early 1900s. I will reinvent a cinema built in 1937, the Bellevue Theater, and develop a design that is contemporary, incorporating both modern technology and interests of today. The design will explore the spatial connections between one and many, fostering both the individual and group experience associated with the big screen – the cinema procession of the past.

In the past,

"At the typical mall multiplex, by contrast, you churn through...tunnel-like hallways to your theater, or rather, theater-ette, a rectangular box where the seats are huge, pillowy thrones in which, if you sink down low enough, you can imagine you're in your Barcalounger at home and not part of an audience of - eek - strangers."
- Jean Marbella, Baltimore Sun
February 13, 2007

NOW

"It's an event to see a movie there - you enter under that great, curved marquee and into a high-ceilinged, circular lobby of pastel murals and gold and, finally, into the velvet and damask cocoon of the viewing area. On special occasions, the curtains will be drawn over the screen, and their slow unfurling to reveal the screen is, well, great theater."
- Jean Marbella, Baltimore Sun
February 13, 2007

THEN

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The act of moving along or proceeding in orderly succession or in a formal and ceremonious manner

In order to more fully understand the rhythm associated with a procession, I investigated three modern processions—a wedding, a funeral and a NASCAR race. I discovered that the more solitary portion of the procession fell within the middle of the event, with the group/social event beginning and ending the procession.

The Bellevue Theater is located in the North Richmond neighborhood of Bellevue, a pleasant neighborhood with sidewalks, tree-lined streets and neighbors who care about neighbors.

It is situated on a commercial strip, MacArthur Avenue, and is surrounded by eclectic restaurants, a neighborhood market, even a coffee shop and a well-known wine store. The single-screen cinema was built in 1937 and consists of a main-level auditorium and lobby, a mezzanine lobby and balcony as well as a large projection room with film storage.

In my research, to determine how site informs cinema audience and program, I looked at three cinemas: the Rooftop Cinema in Melbourne, Australia, along with Cinebistro and the Westhampton Theater in Richmond, Virginia. The Rooftop Cinema with its unique program of city views, full-service bar and mix of classic new and art house films attracts tourists, keeps city commuters in the city for their entertainment choices, and is an overall convenience for city residents. Cinebistro, located in an upscale mall with unique-to-market retailers, offers an in-theater dining and alcohol experience that is unique to the area which will draw upscale movie-goers from all parts of metro Richmond. The Westhampton, a 1938 cinema located in a prestigious Richmond neighborhood, has survived by translating its program to its elite surroundings, maintaining character through its architectural features but adding an additional screen and showing intellectual films seen nowhere else in Richmond.

In analyzing cinema programs, I continued to examine the Rooftop Cinema and Cinebistro, but added a large multiplex located within Richmond’s city limits, Movieland at Boulevard Square. For Cinebistro, the Bellevue Theater is located in the North Richmond neighborhood of Bellevue, a pleasant neighborhood with sidewalks, tree-lined streets and neighbors who care about neighbors.

Lastly, for inspiration, I looked to the process and work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Mackintosh, a Scottish designer and architect associated with the Arts & Crafts and Art Nouveau movements, used sketchbooks as reference books. In them he captured details, working quickly, unafraid of making mistakes. Many of his captured details made their way into his architectural and interior designs.

I found that circulation was not well planned as service staff delivering food and drinks use the same entrances and exits as guests which can cause dangerous and confusing situations. Where Cinebistro excels is in offering a luxury movie and dining experience while encouraging pre- and post-movie visits to their lounge. Rooftop Cinema’s program of a movie and dining truly appears secondary to the experience offered by its location. There is no lobby and only a small box office, encouraging all interaction to take place on the roof while watching the movie or visiting the bar. Movieland succeeds in bringing luxury back to the movie-going experience in their seventeen auditoriums with custom wood and black velvet seats. But their lounge is underwhelming. Its close proximity to the entrance, lack of separation from the lobby and utilization furnishings failing to create a destination experience.

RESEARCH SUMMARY
ROOFTOP CINEMA
Melbourne, Australia
Location: Six-story commercial building

CHESTRO
Richmond, Virginia
Location: Stony Point Fashion Park Mall

WESTHAMPTON THEATER
Richmond, Virginia
Location: Residential neighborhood

Showcasing art house, classic and recent movie releases in an urban environment, Rooftop Cinema is set on the top of the iconic Curtin House on Swanston Street, in the heart of Melbourne’s bustling Central Business District. Six stories high and half a city block deep, the open-air venue features comfortable seating on canvas deck chairs for 200 people. There is also a bar which serves fresh food to order.

Swanston Street is historically one of the main streets of Central Melbourne, making up the Central Business District. It passes a number of iconic Melbourne landmarks, including St. Paul’s Cathedral, Flinders Street Station, the Melbourne Town Hall, the State Library of Victoria, the City Square and Curtin House, and is home to both the university of Melbourne and RMIT University. The street has historically experienced problems with heavy traffic, homelessness and loitering, but was redeveloped in 1992 with help from a number of public sculptures established through an art program, the most famous of these statues being a small bronze dog called Larry Latrobe. Nine tram routes currently run along the street and two of the busiest railway stations in the city are located at either end.

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Rooftop Cinema is a destination location shares building space with both edgy entertainment venues and popular local businesses is located among iconic landmarks on Melbourne's main street is in close proximity to public transportation offers a unique program - rooftop movies and bar is close to two major universities is situated on a street that is auto-free which allows for a pedestrian-friendly environment - room for cafe tables, art installations, etc.

SITE ANALYSIS

SOMETHING TO SEE AND DO

LEVEL 6

ROOFTOP CINEMA, Rooftop Bar, Beatbox Kitchen

LEVEL 5

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

LEVEL 4

WING CHUN BING PA KUNG FU ACADEMY: Provides a safe environment for teaching the principle-based system of Wing Chun.

FITTE DE FELICE: An architecture, interiors and design practice focused on residential, commercial and hospitality projects.

LEVEL 3

METROPOLIS: Voted the best bookstore in Melbourne, it carries a specialist range of books focusing on all areas of art.

SOMEDAY STORE: Clothing & accessory boutique of designers Perks & Mini.

LEVEL 2

THE TOFF IN TOWN: Classy late night boutique music venue and bar with a private club feel.

LEVEL 1

COOKIE BAR & RESTAURANT: An icon of Melbourne. His bar is classy and trendy, offering over 85 types of beer and modern food.

Built in 1922, the Curtin House, originally the Tattersalls Building, housed a gentlemen’s club on the first floor for the first eight years of its life. Later it became the headquarters of the Communist party until it was raided by police in 1940. In the 1980s, after decades of neglect, Curtin House became home to an artistic movement of opera performers and dancers. The following decade, however, saw it slide into virtual dereliction. Recently an entertainment-themed revitalisation has occurred, making the Curtin House the place to go to socialise.

Audience...

- city residents
- college students
- tourists: 1.5 million per year
- city commuters: 765,000 daily

The cinema's unique program offers...

- city views
- an outdoor experience
- full-service bar
- food service
- mix of classic, new and art house films

This program attracts tourists, keeps city commuters in the city for their entertainment choices and is an overall convenience for city residents.
Within its “neighborhood,” Stony Point Fashion Park, Cinebistro:
is in close proximity to female-focused shops like A Pea in the Pod, White House/Black Market, bebe and Ann Taylor.
has exposure to ATM traffic.
is in direct line of sight for those entering from Dillard’s rear parking lot.

However...

it is located in an area of the mall with the highest concentration of vacant storefronts.
its closest anchor, Dillard’s, is not a unique destination.
it has poor parking lot signage and no direct entrance from the parking lot.

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The Westhampton Theater opened in 1938 as a single screen theater with a balcony. In the 1980s, it was separated into two theaters. It is currently owned by Regal Cinemas and specializes in showing alternative, independent and foreign films. Located in one of Richmond’s higher end neighborhoods and surrounded by the University of Richmond and two private schools, it is one of only two remaining movie houses still open inside the city limits of Richmond. All the other area theaters are multiplexes.

The cinema’s unique program offers:
- a gourmet menu
- dining in theater seats or in lounge
- alcohol served in-seat
- an outdoor terrace
- reserved seating
- classic movies shown in the lounge
- six theaters

This in-theater dining program is unique to the Richmond area. Since Cinebistro’s target audience is upscale movie-goers, this demographic will travel from all parts of metro Richmond for the experience. In essence, making the site and location inconsequential.

AUDIENCE
- Stony Point Fashion Park shoppers
- upscale movie-goers
- movie-goers looking for unique experience
- adults over age 21 only
- place of residence not an issue due to niche audience

The Westhampton Theater is located in Richmond, Virginia.

1. University of Richmond
2. Virginia Research Institute
3. Country Club of Virginia
4. St. Christopher’s School
5. St. Bridget’s School
6. St. Catherine’s School
7. Westhampton Theater
8. Willow Lawn Shopping Center

Image courtesy of www.ctsmarchitects.com
Photo courtesy of Jack Coursey
AUDIENCE
- University of Richmond students
- Residents of this prestigious West End neighborhood
- Independent film aficionados
- Upscale destination shoppers from all parts of metro Richmond
- Movie-goers craving an elegant, authentic movie environment

The cinema’s unique program offers:
- two theaters
- art house and independent films
- gourmet concession stand
- paintings displayed by local art league
- elegant Williamsburg architecture including fireplace, original signage and brass fixtures

Located within Libbie & Grove’s “On the Avenue,” an area which markets itself as having “retained its character with personalized service and attention that only local merchants and professionals can offer,” this neighborhood theater has survived by translating its program to its elite surroundings, becoming much like an art gallery. It has kept its character through maintenance of original architectural features, added a second theater to maximize choice, and made the decision to feature intellectual films which cannot be seen anywhere else in Richmond.
## CINEMA COMPARISON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Movieland</th>
<th>Cinebistro</th>
<th>Rooftop Cinema</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of theaters</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of seats per theater of seats</strong></td>
<td>16 - 300</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of aisles</strong></td>
<td>1 or 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of rows</strong></td>
<td>9 - 16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seat dimensions</strong></td>
<td>27” x 31” x 42”</td>
<td>33.5” x 33” x 44”</td>
<td>25.5” x 13” x 32”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aisle width</strong></td>
<td>42”</td>
<td>42”</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Row depth</strong></td>
<td>4’2”</td>
<td>8’0”</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Box office</strong></td>
<td>Standard box office with entrance vestibule prior to entering lobby</td>
<td>Reception-like desk within lobby interior</td>
<td>Small black pod trimmed in lilac velvet with standard desk-height table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lobby size</strong></td>
<td>Large, double-height open space; includes small bar and concessions</td>
<td>Mid-size space with box office and seating separated from lounge</td>
<td>No lobby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concessions</strong></td>
<td>Standard - candy, popcorn, sodas, pizza</td>
<td>In-theater dining as well as standard movie concessions</td>
<td>Bar with meals served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bar</strong></td>
<td>Yes, awkward corral near front entrance</td>
<td>Yes, with signature movie-themed drinks and large comfortable lounge</td>
<td>Large rooftop bar with seating and views of movie screen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patio</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Rooftop bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party rooms</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In-theater dining</strong></td>
<td>Concessions only</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In-theater alcohol</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MOVIELAND
- Richmond, Virginia

### CINEBISTRO
- Richmond, Virginia

### ROOFTOP CINEMA
- Melbourne, Australia
- Rooftop bar
- Yes, with signature movie-themed drinks and large comfortable lounge
- Bar with meals served
- Large rooftop bar with seating and views of movie screen

### PATIO
- No
- Yes
- Rooftop bar
The amount of cinema space outnumber both back of house and social space by 3:1. The spaces which are given hierarchical importance are located around the perimeter of the structure, radiating from the back of house area at the center of the space. Circulation of service staff and cinema patrons into and out of individual cinemas does not appear to have been considered. As this is a dinner theater, service staff traffic into and out of the cinema is high, more critical and more dangerous as food and beverage is being served.

Central vertical symmetry appears to be the intended direction for the space. However, the existing structural footprint of the mall limited that placement. There are three theaters on each side of the imagined axis, however two of the cinemas on the right side of the structure had to be rotated to fit. The mass of spaces on each side of the axis remains equal.

Although this is a cinema environment, natural light does play an important role. Daylight fills the space through large glass patio doors and large clerestory windows in the lobby and lounge.

There are six cinemas, all of approximately the same size. The majority of seats are loveseat format with a retractable armrest for separation. Each seat reclines and enjoys its own swivel tablet for dining.

Although this cinema environment, natural light does play an important role. Daylight fills the space through large glass patio doors and large clerestory windows in the lobby and lounge.

Cinema space is repetitive, each theater housing the same number of seats.
One takes either the elevator or ascends the newly built exterior access stair to the 6th floor box office. The exterior access stair from the 6th floor are the only means to the rooftop.

There is no lobby at the Rooftop Cinema. The small box office is on the 6th floor while the bar is on the rooftop. The bar is of ample size and is covered by recycling timber pergolas with retractable awnings. Full meals are served and plenty of seating is offered.

Full brightly colored lounge chairs perched on green synthetic “smartgrass” lawns are offered seating, along with terraced seating in the rear on surrounding deck with underneath storage.
The lobby celebrates the industrial history of the building with concrete floors, metal beams and a catwalk. Clerestory windows provide the opportunity for the large lobby to get ample daylight. There is a beer and wine counter with several dining tables directly to the left of the entrance. While this area was created to encourage patrons to relax with a beverage prior to and after their movie, its close proximity to the entrance and lack of separation from the main lobby fail to create a destination experience.

The entrance is a rectangular vestibule with four sets of double doors - one on each side and two on either end of the main facing wall - allowing access from all parts of the expansive parking lot. The small box office is inside, centered on the facing wall. This vestibule creates a defining entry experience, separating the parking lot from the lobby.

There are 17 auditoriums, each with between 100 and 300 seats. In contrast to the industrial feel of the lobby, the auditoriums are more luxurious with seats backed in customer wood with black velvet upholstery. Two auditoriums are equipped to show 3D movies.

1 - Science Museum of Richmond
2 - Children's Museum of Richmond
3 - The Diamond
4 - Sportsbacker's Stadium
5 - Virginia Union University
6 - Movieland at Boulevard Square
Charles Rennie Mackintosh

Sketchbooks are an integral part of the process of most artists, designers and creators. As discussed by Roger Billcliffe, “The sketchbook enables one to experiment, to play around with composition, plan, elevation or sections, to concentrate on specific features or ornament, even to doodle, if it will remain a record of, hopefully, private thoughts, and need have none of the deliberation or precision of measured drawings.”

Sketchbooks were of particular importance to architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Mackintosh sketched from childhood through to his fifties, even after he ceased to practice architecture. He sketched what was of interest to him, from buildings to flowers, from timetables to gravestones. To Mackintosh, “...his sketchbooks were reference books, to be thumbed through for a particular detail, an endless source of inspiration. But they were also scrap books, family albums, lasting memories of family holidays, where all of the group had their initials recorded on the drawings.”

Mackintosh did not hide the fact that he chose his subjects with purpose. He only sketched things which he knew could be used in his later designs. Mackintosh believed that architecture should be influenced by the past, but not dependent on it. This is indicative of the sketches he chose to create - nothing modern, usually traditional vernacular styled houses, cottages and cathedrals.

“Mackintosh was a natural and prolific draughtsman” (Billcliffe, 12.) He sketched quickly with “...no hesitation, no rubbing out of mistakes. If there are any they are cleverly incorporated into the design.” As in his own designs, his sketches concentrated on details, which were given as much space and attention as his architectural sketches. Of particular importance to Mackintosh were structural details of flowers, of which he studied all his life. Also of note, Mackintosh would often use pattern and structure in his sketches, putting two sketches or a plan, section and elevation on one page with deliberate overlapping to form a pattern that relayed a personal design concept.

Notice the vestibule detail at the Glasgow Art Club designed by Mackintosh in 1893, three years after the sketch of S. Maria Delle Grazie was completed.

Sketchbooks

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The square motif was a favorite of Mackintosh and was often used in the design of his interiors.

Notice how the flower elevation details influence the poster design.
History and Use

The Bellevue Theater was built in 1937 by architect H. Carl Messerschmidt in the North Richmond neighborhood of Bellevue. The theater drew moviegoers from all parts of the city, showing second-run movies and ten-cent Saturday morning double-features while also hosting neighborhood talent competitions and women’s meetings. The Bellevue also served as the location for WRVA’s radio’s “New Dominion Barn Dance”, a live Saturday evening country music showcase, from 1957-1964.

Occasionally, Hollywood actors and actresses would visit the Bellevue to promote their body of work while Warren Beatty and Shirley MacLaine, who grew up in the Bellevue neighborhood, attended Saturday morning features. Johnny Cash and Willie Nelson graced the Bellevue stage with the New Dominion Barn Dance.

The theater was purchased in 1966 by Samis Grotto to serve as the Shriner’s main headquarters. The Shriner’s leveled out the theater floor, covered the original marquee with white metal panels, converted the lobby into a kitchen and added furnishings. However, much of the building including light fixtures, carpeting and the original movie screen and backstop still remain intact.

Bellevue Theater
4028 Bellevue Avenue
Richmond, Virginia
1. Original exit sign
2. Original carpet in lounge and balcony
3. Original entrance doors removed and covered with kitchen counter and cabinets. Original molding still exists but has been painted.
4. Original wall sconce in cinema area
5. View from the stage of the Bellevue
6. Stairs to the lounge
MacArthur Avenue is largely destination driven. Customers come with something specific in mind - to pick up something forgotten at the grocery store, for a pizza to take home, to drop off their car to be serviced. There is little to keep them on MacArthur beyond their intended purpose.

Quality of product or experience must outweigh convenience. Dos Amigos offers fresh, build-your own burritos, but the new business was struggling. They recently shut their doors after only a few months. They were replaced by a delivery restaurant, The Mill at MacArthur.

Carytown Books went out of business while Barnes & Noble and public libraries flourish.

Stir Crazy introduced later hours and added wine and beer to their menu but did not experience the increased traffic they needed to support the additional costs.

Map courtesy of www.macarthuravenue.com, Photo courtesy of www.beeradvocate.com, Personal photo deadrichmond at www.flickr.com
Circulation to Use - Main Level

Circulation to Use - Mezzanine

Circulation to Use - Projection Room

Additive/Subtractive - Section

Additive/Subtractive - Plan

Additive/Subtractive - Section

Massing

Parti

Symmetry

Proportion

Geometry

Small to Large Spaces

Structure

Circulation to Use - Mezzanine

Small to Large Spaces
Through the acknowledgment that movies, once a group event, have become much of a solitary and personal experience, it seemed clear that through design I would investigate how individual and group could be melded into a single experience, a modern procession recreating the event of movies past.

What would define that individual and group experience were the main programmatic spaces in the cinema and how those spaces connected and transitioned.

Those main spaces are:
- entrance/lobby
- lounge
- cinema/auditorium
- balcony

**CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

**PURPOSE**
To explore connections between a group of objects

**METHODOLOGY**
Determine a set of rules for construction
- small square: one side connects
- medium square: corner connects
- large square: connects through

**QUESTIONS RAISED**
What makes a group?
Is it simply a collection of things that touch?
Is something considered a group due to proximity of physical connections?
PURPOSE
To examine connections between planes arranged to create a box.

METHODOLOGY
Combine, in different directions using differing connection methods, multiple planes of the same size which are constructed of different materials to create a solid box.

QUESTIONS RAISED
How is a plane defined?
Is it individual pieces which touch?? In the same proximity??
What happens when one thing ceases to exist and another begins?
How are spatial connections defined?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>adjacencies</th>
<th>separation</th>
<th>intersection</th>
<th>penetration</th>
<th>overlap</th>
<th>narrow</th>
<th>widen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

CONCEPTUAL MODELS

1. Planar concept model 1
   1a. Detail of model 1

2. Planar concept model 2
   2a. Detail of model 2
**SPATIAL CONCEPT MODEL**

1. Lobby
2. Lounge
3. Theater
4. Balcony

**LEVELS OF CONNECTION**

**Lobby**
- Transitional space, moving from reality of street to the event of the movie

**Lounge**
- Most connected to all other spaces
- Center of social activity

**Theater**
- Requires most solitary experience in the most physically dense space

**RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAM**

- Series of personal photos
- Personal photo
- Counterpoint: diagram
CRITERIA MATRIX

LEVEL 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Square Footage</th>
<th>Adjacencies</th>
<th>Level of Connection</th>
<th>Furnishings</th>
<th>Special Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lobby</td>
<td>Cinema, restrooms, coat check, lounge</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>bench seating, modular sofas/chairs, standing-height tables</td>
<td>main entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinema</td>
<td>Lobby, lounge</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's Restroom</td>
<td>Lobby</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's Restroom</td>
<td>Lobby</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box Office</td>
<td>Lobby</td>
<td>Public access from building exterior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coat Check</td>
<td>Lobby</td>
<td>Hanging storage space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stairwell to Basement</td>
<td>Lobby</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LEVEL 2

| Lounge | 900 | Lobby, restrooms, kitchen, VIP lounge | medium | bar with seating, solo/sofa booths |
| Lounge | Low Lobby | | medium | solo/sofa-side tables |
| Kitchen | 75 | | | more kitchenette-like, no full meals |
| Women's Restroom | 150 | | | |
| Men's Restroom | 130 | | | |
| Project Room | 100 | | | |
| Manager's Office | 180 | Storage | medium | desk, office storage includes side & cash supplies |
| Employee Lounge | 170 | | | |
| Restroom | 40 | | | |
| Storage | 40 | Managers office, projection room | | film storage |
| Janitor's Closet | 30 | Partially located | | |
| Employee Hall/Balcony | 300 | | | |

BUILDING CODE REQUIREMENTS

TOTAL SQUARE FOOTAGE
7,050

ZONING
A-1: Motion picture theater, symphony & concert halls, TV & Radio studios with audiences, theaters

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS
Section 409 Motion Picture Projection Rooms
409.1: Room must be enclosed
409.2: Permanent construction, floor area of 80 s.f. for one machine, each projector shall have clear working space of 30" x 30" on each side and rear, ceiling shall be 7'6" or more, opening shall be no more than 25% of the wall area and must be closed
409.3.3: Each machine will be provided with an exhaust duct to the outside of the building
409.4: Lights that control the auditorium must be in the projection room and one other location
409.5: Must have rewind and film storage

SECTION 411 Special Amusement Buildings
Must have:
- Auto fire detection
- Auto sprinkler
- Emergency voice/alarm communication system exit markings

TYPE OF CONSTRUCTION
IBC Type IA: Masonry Noncombustible

GENERAL BUILDING HEIGHTS AND AREAS
A-1/Type B Building complex

OCCUPANT LOAD
Cinema: Assembly with fixed seat
- 144 (determined by number of seats; 3 wheelchair spaces needed)
Lobby: Assembly without fixed seats
- 187 (determined by 50/50 combination of standing space and tables/chairs)

TOTAL OCCUPANCY: 475

MEANS OF EGRESS
IBC 1004.7: Assembly with fixed seating
- Occupant load determined by number of fixed seats

IBC 1007.4: Elevators
- Comply with section 2.27 of ASME A17.1

IBC 1009.1: Stairway
- Not less than 44" wide

IBC 1010: Ramps
- Must be 36" wide, landings are 60", no more than 12.5% slope

IBC 1025: Complies with all codes listed

PLUMBING
IBC 2902.1: 1
- 1 toilet per 125 men (2 total min)
- 1 toilet per 65 women (4 total min)
- 1 lavatory per 200 (3 total min)
- 1 drinking fountain per 500 (1 min)

IBC 2903.1: 1
- 1 toilet per 125 men (2 total min)
- 1 toilet per 65 women (4 total min)
- 1 lavatory per 200 (3 total min)
- 1 drinking fountain per 500 (1 min)
FINAL DESIGN DRIVER

Treat the cinema shell, which holds the structural components of the building, as a box which houses two halves: cinema lobby.

Remaining true to the materiality of the original structure, create a concrete core that penetrates both the cinema and lobby which holds the most connected space...the lounge.
THE NEW PROCESION

1. Shoppers meandering the sidewalks of the MacArthur Avenue commercial strip are greeted by The Bellevue’s original marquee and box office.

2. Tickets are purchased, and movie-goers are welcomed at the gilded double doors by an usher who tears their ticket.

3. Guests then proceed through the expansive, efficacious lobby and embark on one of two routes:

   - **Group**
     - Gathering space, preview area, lounge or VIP lounge
     - This experience may or may not culminate in movie viewing

   - **Individual**
     - Concession, cinema

4. Movie viewing

5. Post-movie social gathering in group spaces
As the Bellevue Theater fronts the bustling commercial strip of MacArthur Avenue, the entrance is a main point of transition from that point of reality to the escape offered by the cinema experience.

Movie-goers enter into a voluminous, three-story lobby which allows for audible and visual connection to the lounge above. A concession stand and movie preview area are accessed under a single-story ceiling, which provides a more intimate setting for viewing and refreshment ordering.

A multi-landing ramp moves patrons into the cinema, the level change signaling the start of the individual event ahead.
The lounge is the most connected of all spaces, interacting with both the lobby and the cinema. It features a closed extension into the theater which encourages a group experience in cinema atmosphere, although the movie remains secondary to the social experience of the lounge.

The open balcony allows the social activity of the lounge to invigorate the lobby. It will also encourage the group experience to penetrate the isolation of the cinema space.
In a physical sense, the cinema is the most intimate of all spaces. However, its purpose begs for the most isolation.

Minimal bench-like seating with sleek, retractable armrests promote a sense of group and discourage the isolation magnified by over-stuffed, oversized recliner seats.

**Acoustic Wall Detail**

**Woven Wall in Varia Sable & Glow by 3 Form**

**Custom Theater Seats**

**Armrest Detail**

**Cinema Seating View**
In response to this cultural shift, my proposed design solution will challenge the isolation rush out of the theater before even the lights come up. In contrast, today's movie-going can be classified as a singular experience. You wait in long, solemn cattle lines only to enter a cluttered lobby with loud video games, tacky

How are spatial connections defined?

Does a plane require physical separation to signal a transition?

What happens when one thing ceases to exist and something else defined?

Do individual pieces make up a plane? If not, how is a plane

The act of moving along or proceeding in orderly succession or in a formal and ceremonious manner

Connecting One & Many

Reinventing the Procession of the Cinema Experience
The lounge is the most connected of all spaces, interacting with both the lobby and the cinema. This strategy allows the social activity of the lounge to invigorate the lobby. It will also encourage the group experience to penetrate the isolation of the cinema space.

In a physical sense, the cinema is the most intimate of all spaces. However, its purpose begs for the most isolation. Minimal bench-like seating with sleek, retractable armrests promote a sense of group and discourage the isolation magnified by over-stuffed, oversized recliner seats.

Not being a cinema aficionado or even one who attends the cinema often, I approached this design project knowing only that the cinema I designed would look nothing like the modern Movie Megaplexes that we are used to. Through much research, trial, error, implementation and critique I have learned that:

Designing a cinema is technically difficult. There are acoustic considerations, sightline considerations, slope decisions, seat placement choices... all things which can be designed through the use of complex algebraic formulas. People go to the movies to enjoy the movie, so technically things must be perfect. These technicalities affect design decisions.

Designing inside of a blank box - a simple shell of a building - can appear liberating, but actually poses quite a challenge. With just a small 55' x 88' footprint, fitting an enthusiastic program inside while maintaining necessary connections and implementing building code can compromise the square footage allotted to programmatic elements. Editing a program is imperative but can be difficult to acknowledge when so entrenched in a design project.

Connections are about so much more than physicality and proximity. Connections are the experience of moving between spaces and what you take with you or leave when moving from one place to another. It is light, it is sound, it is materiality and how those stimuli act upon one's senses.

Processions and rituals remain important to our society, both socially and traditionally. The loss of the procession as associated with movie-going has removed the social, community dimension that movies once offered. Without that procession through connected spaces, movies promise to remain an experience in isolation.

In retrospect, it was never my intention to design a movie cinema. I chose the Bellevue Theater because I was drawn to it, because I felt like it had something to say to me and my dog as we walked by each day. I knew because of its location that this building, whatever I made it, could be a social hub for the Bellevue neighborhood. I initially envisioned The Bellevue as a community center, a place for civic meetings and art displays, craft lessons and yard sales. But, in the end I found out that a cinema could certainly create that same sense of community just as well, if not better.

I absolutely believe that architecture is a social activity that has to do with some sort of communication or places of interaction, and that to change the environment is to change behavior.

- Thom Mayne
BOOKS/PUBLICATIONS


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Charles Anderson DA 89W, www.charlesandersonmackintosh.co.uk
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Toll Salmon Mudery, www.toll-arch.com
Theater Historical Society of America, www.historictheatres.org
The Valentine Museum, www.richmondhistorycenter.com
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