

**Four Architectural Design Methods for the Active Perceiver: A Study of
Phenomenology and Place in the Architectural World**

by

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my beloved friend Beige Lussier, whom I wish could have been here with me throughout this journey. May she be forever missed, and may she continue to inspire me in all my future academic ventures into philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

Dissecting the work of phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, this thesis aims to generate a collection of design methods founded in theories of perception and place. In an effort to comprehend the intangible aspects of phenomenology, photography is employed as a metaphor and as a research tool supporting the development of the final design. The methods are then tested on a set of architectures that build upon existing elements of the Grand Parade in Halifax, Nova Scotia, developing connections to their histories, existing events and imagined potentials.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis is based on theoretical concepts developed in *The Primacy of Perception*, a collection of essays written by phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In his theory of perception, he argues for an intertwining of touch-vision sensations within a unified body. For Merleau-Ponty, it is the body's movements and vision which allow us to experience depth and perspective. These experiences of distance are validated through our relative position to objects within what he calls the world of perception. We access these objects through our vision and mobile bodies, the objects are given to us as real due to an infinite number of perceptions of the object within the world of perception.¹ Merleau-Ponty regards this act of perceiving as primary, meaning that perception is “the true conditions of objectivity itself.”² Perception as primary allows for it to be the foundation of consciousness and in turn the foundation for this thesis. Using the primacy of perception to generate design methods will result in methods centralized around the body and vision, to aid in the development of these methods Edward S. Casey's concept of place will be integrated into this thesis.

Casey uses Merleau-Ponty's philosophy to re-define place in terms of the body. He asks us to reimagine place as primary, rather than place being born out of space, place will be a priori. This definition allows for place become intertwined with the body and perception. In Casey's essay titled “How to get from space to place in a fairly short stretch of time: phenomenological prolegomena,” he tells us that places belong to lived bodies and depend on them, stating that places cannot be places without

1 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “The Primacy of Perception,” in *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James M. Edie, trans. James M. Edie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 14-16.

2 Ibid., 25.

lived bodies.³ Similarly in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy he tells us that a perceived object cannot be perceived without a perceiver, and in order to be an active perceiver one must occupy a lived body.⁴ In the marriage of these concepts we conclude that place cannot be place without a perceiver, and that our mobile bodies are inseparable from place making. Thus making place as primary the perception which grants us access to it. For this thesis place will be used as a tool for site realization, and as a means of relating the body to the built environment.

In addition to place, photography is used as a tool for discovery and as an overarching metaphor. As a metaphor, photography takes the theories from Merleau-Ponty and Casey and converts them into more tangible and accessible material. This is done through the topics of framing, viewing, and photographer-object-viewer relationships. In addition to the academic texts, photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher will be discussed extensively in the theory section of this thesis. Their method of photographic collection is used as a tool for site analysis and for the generation of architectures used with the design. The photographic components of this thesis serves as a supporting method for both the design and development of the final four methods.

This thesis develops and tests design methods rooted in phenomenological concepts of perception and place. Tying together the work of Merleau-Ponty, Casey, various photographers and writers to develop four methods of designing architectures that challenge the way we interact

3 Edward S. Casey, "How to get from space to place in a fairly short stretch of time: phenomenological prolegomena," in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research Press, 1996), 18.

4 Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception," 16.

with and perceive place. These methods are then tested on the Grand Parade in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where they are used as a response to existing histories and events on the site.

CHAPTER 2: THEORY

2.1 The Primacy of Perception

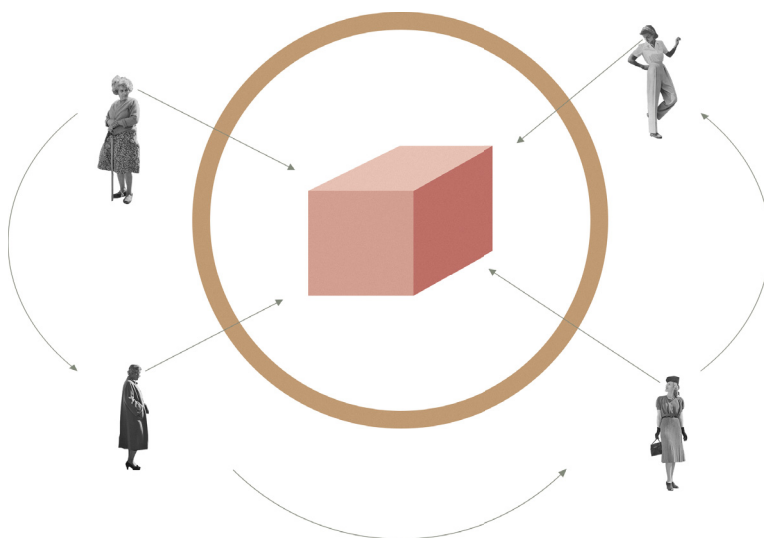
This thesis is concerned with two essays written by Merleau-Ponty, the first being “The Primacy of Perception and Its Philosophical Consequences” and “Eye and Mind.” Together these essays create a unique interpretation of phenomenology and perception. For Merleau-Ponty perception is an intertwining of our touch-vision sensations. In his philosophy it is understood that by way of vision and the body we are granted access to objects, and these objects exist within the world of perception. The world of perception, according to Merleau-Ponty, is a world in which all possible perceptions exist, it is “the totality of perceptible things and the thing of all things.”⁵ In theory, all perceivers have access to the same “world”, but their perceptions of the objects within that world differ due to an infinite number of possible perceptions. However it is the infinite perceptions that constitute those objects as “real.” The perceived object, he argues, “is not an ideal unity in the possession of the intellect ... it is rather a totality open to a horizon of an indefinite number of perspectival views which blend with one another according to a given style, which defines the object in question.”⁶ This object which belongs to the world of perception is given as a perspectival view from the vantage point of our bodies, yet we are not given every view simultaneously. We must move our bodies around the object to obtain multiple views of it, eventually permitting ourselves to define it. Merleau-Ponty provides a description of the defined object in the quote below.

5 Merleau-Ponty, “The Primacy of Perception,” 16.

6 Ibid.

If, for example, I look at a cube, knowing the structure of the cube as it is defined in geometry, I can anticipate the perceptions which this cube will give me while I move around it. Under this hypothesis I would know the unseen side as the necessary consequence of a certain law of the development of my perception.⁷

In this example Merleau-Ponty anticipates the views of the cube because it is already defined in his world. He knows that there are six equal faces, and anticipates this as he positions his body around it. Yet if we conceive of a world where the cube exists but is not yet defined with language, we would first need to inspect the object with our vision and our bodies, only then coming to understand and define its geometry.



Women view the same cube from different positions within the world of perception and each woman experiences a different view.

For the phenomenologist there is this requirement that the world of perception be public in a sense, such that no object becomes part of one's private experience. Given this condition, we would say that the cube is real because "it is given as the infinite sum of a definite series of perspectival views in each of which the object is given but in none of which is it given

⁷ Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception," 14.

exhaustively.”⁸ The cube, or object, is really there within the world of perception. It is not just one perspective and another, the object is fully present within the infinite perceptions. For Merleau-Ponty this is what it means to be a “real” perceivable object.

However, we must be careful approaching this definition for it is easy to assume that the perceived object is laden with raw sensations waiting for the mind to interpret it as knowledge. We might say that this is true if we were to subscribe to a Neo-Kantian belief, where we would also say that object validity and knowledge require some form of an ideal fundamental law. Merleau-Ponty rejects this idea in favor of one that prioritizes perception of objects. For him the objects is not a result of some ideal law, rather it is raw sense data that is projected into our minds where it is then processed and formed into objects which exist in the world of perception.⁹ In perception we expand our notion of what an object is.

This scenario also implies that the object cannot be perceived without a perceiver. The object does not exist as a loose entity ambiguously floating about in some world waiting for someone to think it to be true. The object exists as real within the world of perception, and in theory it can be perceived by all who are capable of perception. Merleau-Ponty tells us that objects are “real” within perception “if it is given as the infinite sum of a definite series of perspectival views in each of which the object is given but in none of which is it given exhaustively.”¹⁰ If we remove all definitions, words, observations of the object it still remains an object with infinite perceptions, then we

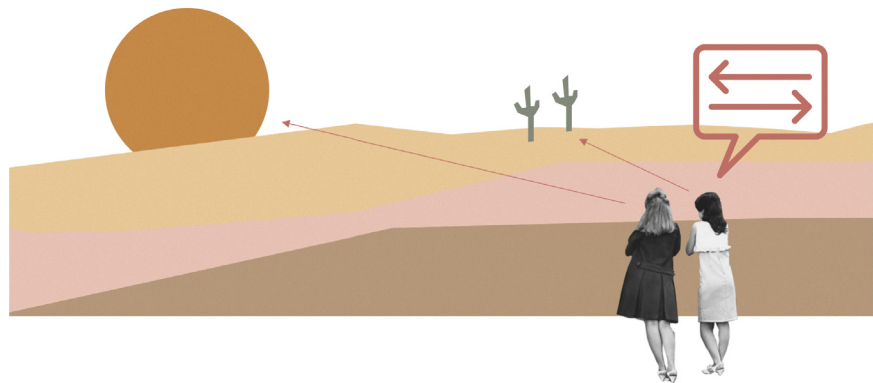
8 Merleau-Ponty, “The Primacy of Perception,” 15.

9 Ibid., 12-13.

10 Ibid., 15.

recognize it as real. However we do not say it is true, for truth is a correspondence to a statement of reality. Merleau-Ponty writes “the thing imposes itself not as true for every intellect, but as real for every subject who is standing where I am.”¹¹ The example given by Merleau-Ponty in regards to this quote is one worth mentioning.

If a friend and I are standing before a landscape, and if I attempt to show my friend something which I see and which he does not yet see, we cannot account for the situation by saying that I see something in my own world and that I attempt, by sending verbal messages, to give rise to an analogous perception in the world of my friend. There are not two numerically distinct worlds plus a mediating language which alone would bring us together. There is -- and I know it very well if I become impatient with him -- a kind of demand that what I see be seen by him also. And at the same time this communication is required by the very thing which I am looking at, by the reflections of sunlight upon it, by its color, by its sensible evidence.¹²



Two women in a landscape attempt to communicate their perceptions via language.

In this situation Merleau-Ponty addresses the essence of the primacy of perception. In the landscape there exists real objects which project sense data (light, colour, etc.) into the eye so that we may see the object. We perceive the data with our whole bodies and through perception we know, and we think about, the infinite perspectival perceptions of said object thus proving

¹¹ Merleau-Ponty, “The Primacy of Perception,” 17.

¹² Ibid.

to ourselves that indeed the thing is real. We attempt to communicate to our friend, as the object communicates to us, that they see what we see, because the object in our perceptive world exists too, in theirs. In our friend is the possibility for the same truth to exist, for they are also “objects” capable of perceiving in the same world as us. In its essence the primacy of perception is a set of theories aimed at understanding perceptible reality on the level of perceptual experience with a focus on the body of oneself and the body of another.

Many philosophers have conceived of theories in a similar vein to Merleau-Ponty, but what separates his work from others is the emphasis on the body or “body schema.” Edmund Husserl is often compared to Merleau-Ponty and although they share similar theories, Husserl was an advocate for a touch dominated perception, whereas Merleau-Ponty suggests an intertwining of vision-touch senses within the body as the key to perception.¹³ Merleau-Ponty calls for us to rethink of vision as a form of touch.

The painter “takes his body with him,” says Valéry. Indeed we cannot imagine how a mind could paint. It is by lending his body to the world the artist changes the world into paintings. To understand these transubstantiations we must go back to the working, actual body - not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement.¹⁴

In the quote above from the essay “Eye and Mind,” Merleau-Ponty tells us of a painter who sees with their eyes and paints with their hands. The body of this painter is an object within

13 Dermot Moran, “Between Vision and Touch: From Husserl to Merleau-Ponty,” in *Carnal Hermeneutics*, ed. Richard Kearney, Brian Treanor and the American Council of Learned Societies (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 232-233.

14 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind,” in *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James M. Edie, trans. Carleton Dallery (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 162.

the world of perception, it is real and occupies *real* space. This painter's body perceives all things that exist within the realm of its sight, it moves, sees and paints as one unified Being. In this painter analogy Merleau-Ponty argues that the act of painting is a metaphor to the act of perception, "painting awakens and carries to its highest pitch a delirium which is vision itself, for to see is to have at a distance."¹⁵ Painting is an act of vision by virtue of the body, the same can be said of perception. Through painting we come to understanding the intertwining of vision, touch and movement and ultimately the thesis of Merleau-Ponty's work.

Consider this body that is a "bundle of functions" which practices both vision and movement as perception, it is a body that is "a thing among things; it is caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing."¹⁶ The very thingness of our bodies implies that we are objects in the world of perception. We are *in* and *of* the world of perception. To further distill this idea Edward S. Casey's theory of place will be introduced. Casey uses Merleau-Ponty's work to imply that our bodies are both *in* and *of* place. In other words, our active perceiving bodies are both place makers and part of the places they make, thus place cannot be place without a body.

2.2 The Space Place Distinction

In Casey's essay titled "How to get from space to place in a fairly short stretch of time: phenomenological prolegomena," the idea of place being born from space is called into question. To say that we can make place out of space "entails that to begin with there is some empty and innocent spatial spread, waiting, as it

¹⁵ Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 166.

¹⁶ Ibid., 163.

were, for cultural configurations to render it placeful.”¹⁷ Casey rejects this idea, in favor of a place-as-primary model of the space-place distinction. This requires a re-conceptualization of place in terms of perception and phenomenology as defined by Merleau-Ponty.

However before reaching far into the depths of this topic it is worth clarifying the terms “space” and “place.” In the traditional sense, born out of geography, space belongs to generality and emptiness; particularity belongs to place.¹⁸ We typically define space as “absolute and infinite as well as empty and a priori in status” and as consequence place is “the mere apportionings of space, its compartmentalizations.”¹⁹ However’ in Casey’s interpretation, space will remain as general, place will remain as particular, and place will take on a priori status over space. This thesis favors Casey’s viewpoint over the latter, and will use his definition throughout.

To say that place is primary is to reject place as a product of space. Casey’s argument for this relies on the primacy of perception, stating that “there is no knowing or sensing a place except by being in that place, and to be in a place is to be in a position to perceive it. Knowledge of place is not, then subsequent to perception ... but is ingredient in perception itself.”²⁰ In order for this logic to hold true, we must first agree that perception is primary to consciousness and that we require a physical body for perception to occur. If we agree to this, we can also agree by way of logic that place making is in its most simplified form an act of perception. Let us recall a statement made by Merleau-

17 Edward S. Casey, “How to get from space to place,” 14.

18 Ibid., 15.

19 Ibid., 14.

20 Ibid., 18.

Ponty, which states that “the perceived thing itself is paradoxical; it exists only in so far as someone can perceive it.”²¹ Or in Merleau-Ponty’s paraphrased statement of George Berkeley’s theory, “if I attempt to imagine some place in the world which has never been seen, the very fact that I imagine it makes me present at that place. I thus cannot conceive a perceptible place in which I am not myself present.”²² Thus a perceived object cannot be perceived without a body, consequently a place cannot be a place without a body. In this explanation we find a method by which Beings make place through perception and their bodies, but this conclusion does not yet fully satisfy our need to reform place as primary to space.

To do so we must turn to Casey, who tells us that we are never without place, “we are not only in places but of them.”²³ Our experiences are emplaced and we are inextricably place bound. Place when regarded this way is so remarkably primary that it *is* perception, it *is* experience. Casey explains, “we realize the essential posteriority of space and time whenever we catch ourselves apprehending spatial relations or temporal occurrences in a *particular place*.”²⁴ We realize space and time as subsequent to place when we begin to understand the particulars of perception as place. The phenomenologist wishes to reduce humans to minds and things to objects, we too can reduce space and time to its essential Being. In the primary act of perceiving, which comes before all else in consciousness, we make place for ourselves. But if not for place how could space and time ever be perceived in our conscious minds? Heidegger tells us that “spaces receive their essential being from particular

21 Merleau-Ponty, “The Primacy of Perception,” 16.

22 Ibid.

23 Casey, “How to get from space to place,” 19.

24 Ibid., 36-37.

localities not from ‘space’ itself.”²⁵ Casey defines space-time as an “event” which is both spatial and temporal, but by its very definition, event must occur within a *particular* locality, a place.²⁶ Born out of place is our concept of space and time.

Rather than being one definite sort of thing ... a given place takes on the qualities of its occupants, reflecting these qualities in its own constitution and description and expressing them in its occurrence as an event: places are not only *are*, they *happen*.²⁷

Place as event constitutes that place belong to the bodies which bring about such happenings. Place is not such that you can sum up all the attainable places in the world and be presented with some quantifiable amount. This is due to the fact that our bodies are both in and of place. Bound to place we are never without it, thus with every moving body is an ever changing place. In Casey’s book *Getting Back Into Place*, he discusses the act of exploring and wandering in terms of place, “when we are moving among places in an exploratory manner, we are acutely aware of not having a place to be.”²⁸ He refers to this as the “transitional” place in which “we wander, but we wander in the vicinity of built places we know or are coming to know. Not discovery but better acquaintance is our aim.”²⁹ Within the act of wandering one familiarizes themselves with their surroundings, making place along the way. In the built environment, the more one becomes acquainted with a building the more it becomes a lived place. This is how we become place makers in the world, through our mobile bodies which carry us

25 Casey, “How to get from space to place,” 37.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., 27.

28 Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 121.

29 Ibid.

from place to place

Place making will prove to be a valuable asset for this thesis, both as a tool for exploration, eventually leading up to site selection, and as a guide for structuring design methods within the primacy of perception. By defining place here, the relationship between vision, the body and the built world begins to flourish. To further develop this marriage of theory and architecture, photography will be used as a metaphor and as an additional tool for place making.

2.3 The Photographic Frame

The photographic component of this thesis serves as an overarching metaphor for the theories of Merleau-Ponty and Casey. Metaphor here is applied in the way that the philosopher uses it. In the essay “Merleau-Ponty, Metaphor, and Philosophy,” author Jerry Gill describes the philosopher’s metaphoric mode as “the effort to comprehend an unfamiliar, frequently intangible aspect of reality in terms of, or in relation to, more familiar, tangible aspects.”³⁰ In this section when it is stated that the photograph is employed as a metaphor for this thesis, it means that the use of photograph is an effort to comprehend the philosophy of perception in a more tangible format. Specific concepts and terminology such as framing, viewing, and photographer-object-viewer relationships will be applied to perception and aid in transforming the theoretical to the built world of architecture.

The concepts found within photography that are most applicable to this thesis would be those that relate to framing and the

³⁰ Jerry Gill, “Merleau-Ponty, Metaphor, and Philosophy,” *Philosophy Today* 34, no. 1 (1990): 53, <http://ezproxy.library.dal.ca/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1301473038?accountid=10406>.

dual relationship between viewer and photographer. To aid in discussing these topics the work of the reputable photographic collectors, Bernd and Hilla Becher, will be discussed and interpreted in terms of perception. Not to be mistaken as individuals who collect photographs, the Bechers are artists who use photography to collect mundane architectures as objects worthy of display. Thierry De Duve would describe their work as the monumentalization of objects through the medium of photograph.

They 'do' photography but they are not photographers. If we are to believe the Venice Jury, they are sculptors. But the Bechers don't 'do' sculpture, they photograph it. And what they photograph is not sculpture, not until it has been photographed, not until the camera has been pointed at it, not until it has been framed out of context, not until it has been set down on bromide and prepared for aesthetic consumption and, finally, not until it has been entitled *Anonyme Skulpturen*.³¹

Described above is the ultimate power of the photograph, the camera's undeniable ability to frame and monumentalize anything the lens touches. So powerful is the camera that it has been described by Roland Barthes as a "micro-version of death."³² The camera monumentalizes the object of the photographers desire, once the trigger is pressed the moment is declared dead, in its place an image of something that once was but will never be again. The photographer who takes the same image repeatedly will never be able to declare that each image is identical. Time will always triumph, this is the burden of the photograph. What is the point of photograph then? To pronounce every moment dead, moving on to the next moment, until there is nothing left but images of time gone by. This must

31 Thierry de Duve, "Bernd and Hilla Becher or Monumentary Photography," in *Bernd and Hilla Becher: Basic Forms*, trans. Hila Walker (New York, NY: Te Neues, 1994), 11-12.

32 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 14.

not be the sole destiny for photography.

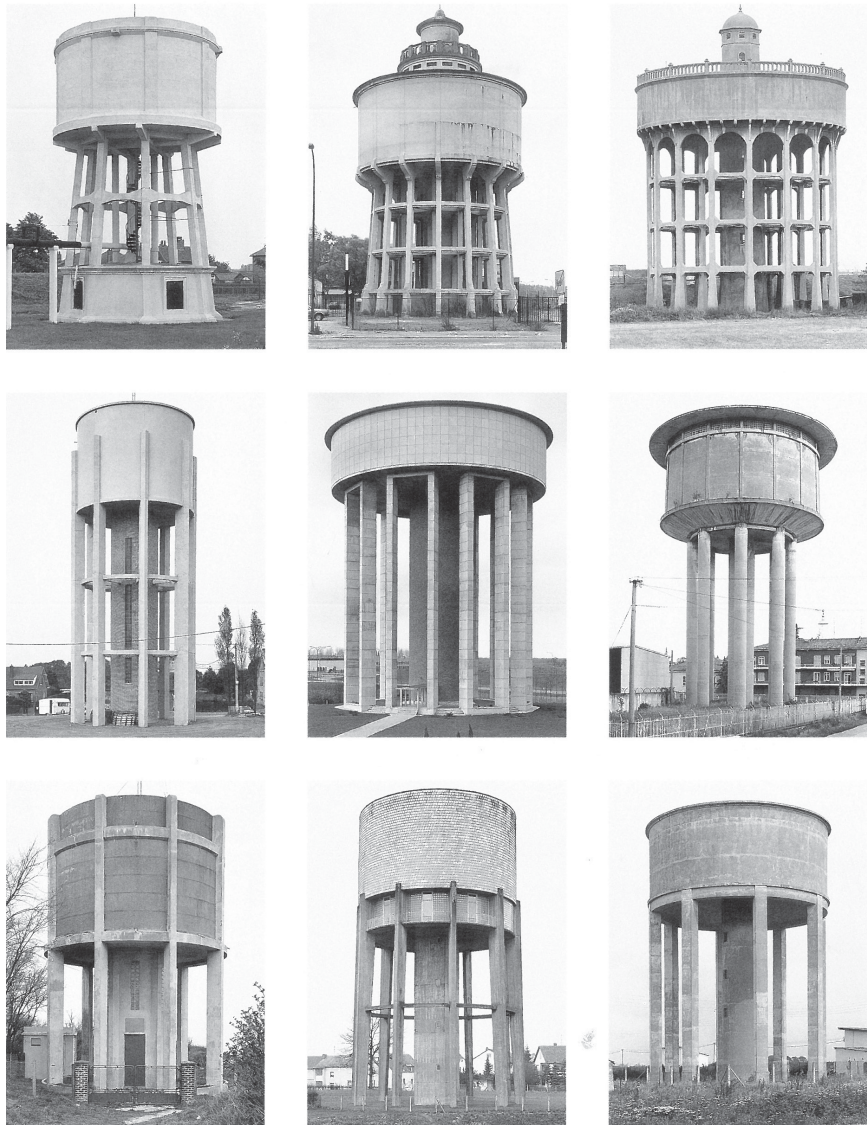
Photograph is not just death, it is also *choice*. In *Ways of Seeing* by John Berger he states that “every time we look at a photograph, we are aware, however slightly, of the photographer selecting that sight from an infinity of other possible sights.”³³ In this description of photograph Berger makes a subtle reference to phenomenology when he speaks of infinite sights. Recalling from earlier, Merleau-Ponty defines the realness of objects in the infinite possible perceptions of them. Similarly Berger argues that there is an infinite number of possible sights, the photograph is just one of them. For Berger, “to look is an act of choice,”³⁴ and if we observe photograph this way we can express the photograph as a choice of sight.

When we think about photography as choice of sight we can begin to think about the presence of the photographer in the image. Every photograph requires a photographer who chooses to point their camera at an object and monumentalize it forever. Bernd and Hilla Becher chose to photograph water towers, they made a collection of it. They did not photograph one tower, but rather many. Their whole photographic process is about choice and selection, Susanne Lange describes it as a process of “exact observation and collecting, labeling, and grouping species, objects, or information.”³⁵ When the Bechers choose to photograph a typology, they give a new life to these objects that had not previously known one another. Lange describes the photographic typology as “an act of composition through which the individual significant information contained in each

33 John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972), 10.

34 *Ibid.*, 8.

35 Susanne Lange, *Bernd and Hilla Becher: Life and Work*, trans. Jeremy Gaines (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 51.



Bernd and Hilla Becher, “Water towers, Belgium, Germany, England, France, Italy, 1966-1986,” in *Bernd and Hilla Becher: Life and Work*, trans. Jeremy Gaines (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 170.

respective shot is affirmed within the new pictorial setting.”³⁶
 The individual image may be a moment of death, but situate it
 in a collection and it rejoices for it has found a new life

³⁶ Lange, *Bernd and Hilla Becher*, 52.

Even abandoned and half in ruins, these buildings are alive. The images that the Bechers produce are not meant to help us get over their loss. Conversely, even new and functioning, these buildings are already gone. The life in the images that the Bechers give of them is no longer their life on earth. It is as if they required and act of faith from us, a faith that compels admiration, even if we don't share it. They don't spare us the pain of mourning, but they ask us to practice joy in the face of death.³⁷

The work that the Bechers do is intensely systematic, it involves selecting specific views of a typological object in a way that allows the object to be the sole focus of the image. Devoid of site specificity the image becomes the object, such that we could look at the image and say here is a water tower in front of me. Yet it is not really a tower in front of you is it? It is only an image, the water tower is off somewhere else that you are unaware of. The very fact that you can identify the water tower as something which is a real elsewhere, means that the water tower has now entered your world of perception. Not in the full sense however, because the image does not do you the justice of presenting the unseen side. A perception occurs nonetheless, and not just a perception of the image but a perception of the object in the image. It may become clear now the relationship between you as the viewer and the photographer as viewer. The photographer, out there with their camera chooses a view, they press the trigger, an image is captured, processed and then hung up in gallery for some perceiving body to encounter.

This scenario is not foreign to this thesis, let us recall Merleau-Ponty's mirror example mentioned earlier. In the mirror I make "myself into another, and another into myself,"³⁸ in the viewing of the photograph I briefly make myself into the body of the photographer. The viewer transcends the experience of the

37 de Duve, "Bernd and Hilla Becher or Monumentary Photography," 19-20.

38 Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 168.

photograph to an experience of the object within the frame. John Berger describes the image as “a record of how X had seen Y,”³⁹ now introduce a third element, the viewer. For this example, the viewer will be regarded as character Z. We have a situation where Z sees how X had seen Y. Merleau-Ponty says that consciousness is found in the body of another, where X and Z are the Beings who stand in the landscape, however this time the photograph is the language. Both X and Z see object Y, but they see it as X had seen it. The communication failures of language are lessened through the power of framing and specificity of choice in the photograph.

However this is not a perfect scenario, because it has often been said that a viewer will find some new meaning in the image which differs from the intent of the photographer. Berger informs us that a viewer will be affected by their own “assumptions concerning beauty, truth, genius, civilization, form, status, taste, etc.”⁴⁰ Despite this it could still be said that the photograph succeeds in communication to an extent, because when you look at a photo of a water tower you do not claim to actually see a person. Outside of assumptions about meaning and context one could not deny that the content of the image is simply a real water tower which existed at some point in time and space. Thus photograph is paradoxical, for it is a view represented but also a view scrutinized. Scrutinized by the camera and the viewer. It is by no means a perfect communication, but in terms of art and visual representation it will suffice as one of the better options for demonstrating perception and reality.

Photography as a form of communication is best used when

³⁹ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 10.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

the choice of framing is done purposefully. In Mary-Ann Ray's essay "Seven Partly Underground Rooms And Buildings for Water, Ice and Midgets," she describes her photographic process used for perceiving place as the "built" frame.

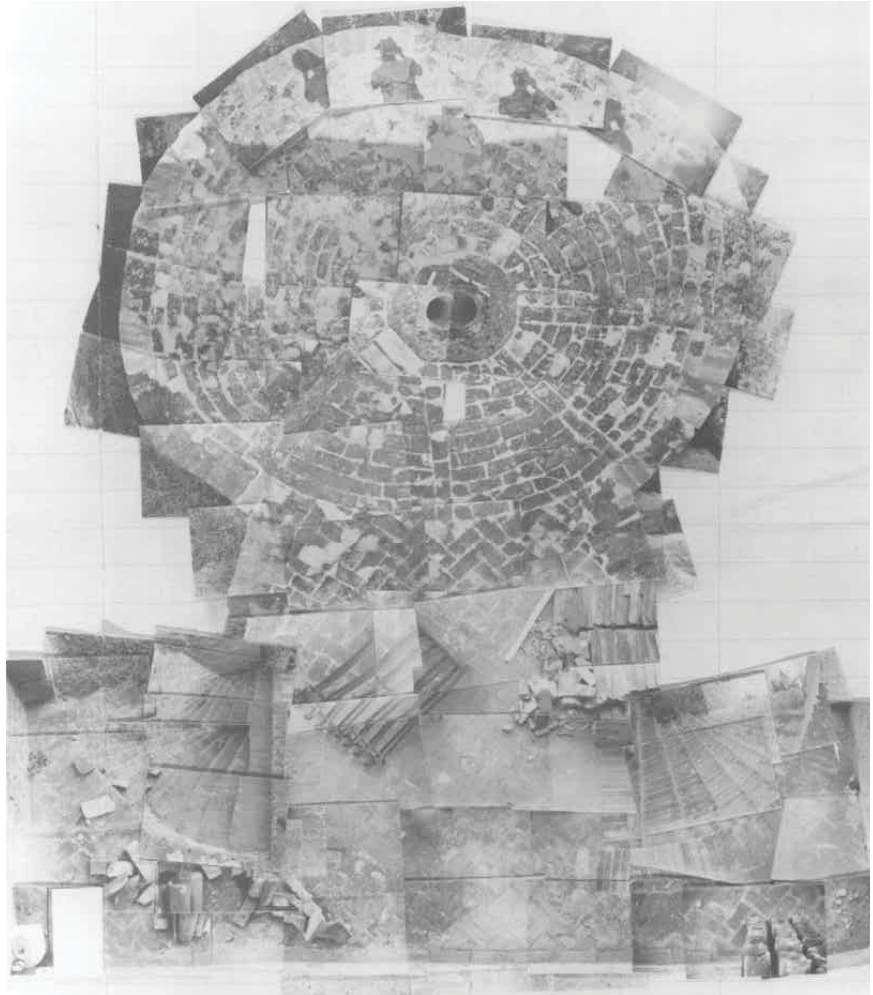
In the "built frame" photograph, the object, instead of merely a thing to look at, becomes as much, or even more so, the actual space and place occupied by the viewer. The photograph can even fluidly move in to include and turn back on us, crossing the line of viewer and object.⁴¹

The built frame method requires multiple photographs which are then stitched together afterwards to build a larger image of place. The multiple images are captured when the photographer moves their body, tracing the space with their camera. Ray argues that this method builds relationships between the subject and the edges of the frame, the product being a record of how the photographer had maneuvered through a space with their eye and body.⁴² In the built frame the photographer must make choices about their content, movements and frames. It is a collection of its own, a collection of perceptions and place.

The built frame photograph has also been explored by other artists such as David Hockney. Both Hockney and Ray have successfully employed the camera as a tool for seeing and representing place. Their work is highly influential and their methods will be useful for place making and perception within this thesis.

41 Mary-Ann Ray, "Seven Partly Underground Rooms And Buildings for Water, Ice and Midgets," in *Pamphlet Architecture 11-20* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2011), 73.

42 Ibid.



Mary-Ann Ray, "Seven Partly Underground Rooms And Buildings for Water, Ice and Midgets," in *Pamphlet Architecture 11-20* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2011), 64.



David Hockney, *David Hockney Photographs* (London: Petersburg Press, 1982) 60.

2.4 Summary

The literature discussed in this chapter will serve as the basis for this thesis. The philosophy of phenomenology is used to develop a set of design methods intended to produce architectures that emphasize movement and perception. Merleau-Ponty's work will serve as the primary text relating to phenomenology, although there is an abundance of philosophers to choose from none are quite as focused on the body as he. Ultimately the work of Merleau-Ponty will reinforce architectural ideas of touch-vision focused design with an emphasis on views and vision from the vantage point of one's body. An understanding of perception sets the tone for all that will occur in the rest of this work, for perception is primary and it is that which constitutes consciousness of Beings. Without perception we cannot interact with the built world, it is the foundation of everything that surrounds us. To design for perception is to design for consciousness, it is an attempt to make sense of the built world as it relates to the body and its vision.

In addition to perception, place will serve as a tool for comprehending the built world in relation to the world of perception. Edward Casey does an exemplary job of relating Merleau-Ponty's theory to place, and in doing so he comes to the conclusion that place making is bound to perception, reconceptualizing them both as primary. As a primary act, place making is regarded as an operation of consciousness. Without place there is no comprehending of the built world, we need place to situate ourselves within the place-world. Casey tells us that "getting acquainted with a building as a place is to enter a with-world that is at once porous and plenary. The more I am attuned with a building, the more it becomes a place I "live" in,

a lived place.”⁴³ Place is perhaps more applicable in this way, for it can be set into motion and used as a tool for exploration and site selection.

In addition to place, photography will be used for site selection. If we treat the camera as an extension of ones vision and body, it can become an extension of our perception. Photograph becomes a visual manifestation of places and perceptions, it is a visual record of the places one has been. Using Mary-Ann Ray’s built frame method, the photographer can recreate space within the image, representing more than just the singular perception and creating a larger image of place. The photograph here also serves as a tool for exploration and framing. In the act of photographic place making one is presented with the choice of frame, the choice of subject and the choice of sight. It is a tool that can be used to develop and understand perceptions of objects within our place-world.

Collectively these concepts form a foundation for perception based design methods at three different levels; the theoretical, the locale, and the tangible image.

43 Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 130.

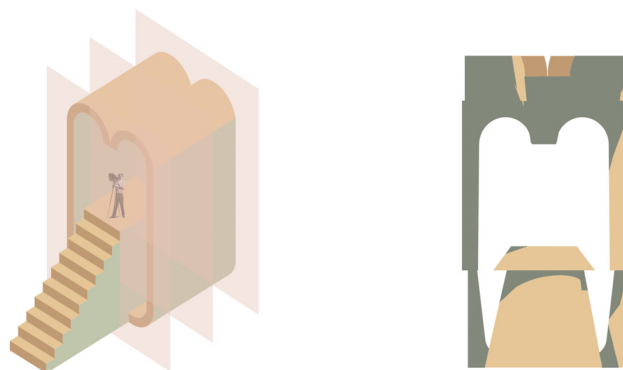
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The theories of Merleau-Ponty and Casey informed the method of place making. Using the body as a place maker and the camera as an extension of the body one can begin to explore place photographically. Mary-Ann Ray's photographic method, the built frame photograph, will be used as a tool to create place and objects. This photographic style requires movement of one's body, eye and evidently their camera. As a result the multiple frame photograph has become associated with movement, producing a collection of images, words and objects of movement.

In the collection of movement images, it was found that there was a particular set of objects that achieved movement spatially. These architectural objects became a collection of their own, eventually becoming a set of tools used in the later stages of the design project. Evidently the combination of theory, photographic and object collections lead to a final set of four design methods intended to be used for perception based design.

3.1 Photographic Place Making in the Built Frame

The built frame photograph is a method used by Mary-Ann Ray to trace space with the camera. It requires a combination of multiple frames to create one larger image. Within this thesis I use Ray's photographic method and Casey's theory of place to generate a collection of images and objects. These collections are established through an act of drifting between places, extracting objects from the world of perception along the way.



Using multiple frames for multiple perceptions.

I feel a connection with the objects and places that I encounter during the wandering. Casey describes this as a sense of belonging, “I feel that I belong there not because I have been there for an allotted stretch of time but because I am so much with the place - and it is so much with me - that we seem to belong to each other.”⁴⁴ We are *in* and *of* place, or as Merleau-Ponty claims “I thus cannot conceive a perceptible place in which I am not myself present.”⁴⁵ The act of place making thus requires some present mobile body, capable of perceiving its own environment in that very moment. The act of *photographic* place making requires a mobile body and a camera, acting as one unified Being which creates artifacts of the present.

This method was carried out by myself in Halifax, Nova Scotia. In experiencing the built frame method firsthand, it was apparent that movement and the body were essential to the method. One could not complete a built frame photograph without moving their body and camera around the object. The resulting image thus contains traces of the object and the photographer within it, Ray argues that it adjusts the relationship between subject

44 Casey, *Getting back into Place*, 128.

45 Merleau-Ponty, “The Primacy of Perception,” 16.

and author by creating place within the image.⁴⁶ Using this tool one can create a collection of images, or objects rather, that uncover the conditions of place and perception. Analyzing these photographs will allow one to reveal value terms in the images and objects. Within the photographic wandering it was found that the images and objects required movement. Casey refers to these movement places as the transitional place, or interplace, “between inner and outer as well as between front and back, right and left, and up and down.”⁴⁷ These transitional places elicit movement in the body, in this thesis they will be termed the movement objects. Within the photographic wandering particular architectures expressed movement more successfully than others, these objects are: tunnels, arches, stairs, paths, bridges, thresholds, and towers. The first set of images below depicts the movement objects in singular frames, the second set uses the built frame method. In the second set we feel the presence of the photographer, where as the first set shows the objects in their full form, the relationship between photographer and object is less apparent.



Collection of movement objects: tunnel, bridge, stair, arches, paths, tower, threshold.

⁴⁶ Ray, “Seven Partly Underground Rooms And Buildings for Water, Ice and Midgets,” 73.

⁴⁷ Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 126.



Using multiple frames to explore objects on the Grand Parade, Halifax.

Both of these collections serve to represent movement and place. The first collection demonstrates objects as transitional places while the second collection represents movement within the frame. Together they create a method for place making photographically.

3.2 Movements in Frames, Bodies and Architecture

Movement and the mobile body is essential to this thesis, it is an entity which strings together perception, place and photograph. Movement has been found in the places I made, the objects I collected and the photographs I took. Parallel to my personal studies, movement exists in Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception, Casey's concept of place and Mary-Ann Ray's photographic style. The mobile body becomes the generator of objects and perceptions, it is the key ingredient for this work.

My movement is not a decision made by the mind, an absolute doing which would decree, from the depths of a subjective retreat, some change of place miraculously executed in extended space. It is the natural consequence and maturation of my vision. I say of a thing that it is moved; but my body moves itself, my movement deploys itself. It is not ignorant of itself; it is not blind for itself; it radiates from a self . . .⁴⁸

Movement is carried out through our bodies as a development of our vision. We move because we perceive, this mobile body is inseparable from its perceptions. Thus movement is essential to this thesis. Movement manifests architecturally in the objects found through photographic wandering. These movement objects present themselves as a collection, and within that collection exists a secondary collection of movements. Similar to the way in which Casey defines the transitional places as between inner and outer, front and back, right and left, up and down, I will define the movement objects with characteristics of certain movements. These movements are walking, dancing,

48 Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 162.

climbing, wandering, under, over, in and out, up and down. Together with the objects these movements create opportunities for developing movement based architectures, and as a result perception based architectures.



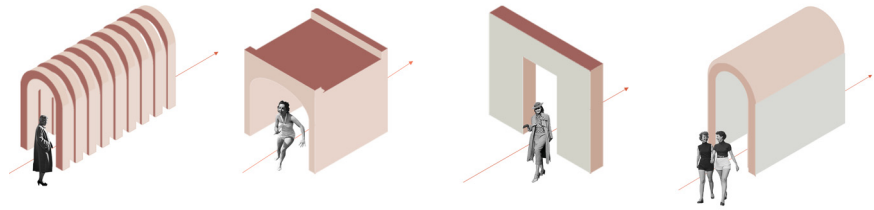
A collection of movements

3.3 A Set of Rules for Object Placements

Casey states “a bodiless architecture is as unthinkable as a mindless philosophy.”⁴⁹ The built world is intended to host bodies, those exact bodies which move and perceive the built world that they occupy. Without bodies the movement objects can host no movements at all. It is only once the movements and the objects have been married that they possess any meaning. We ask ourselves then, what movements do the objects inherently evoke? The objects are classified in three ways; as through objects, on objects and up down objects.

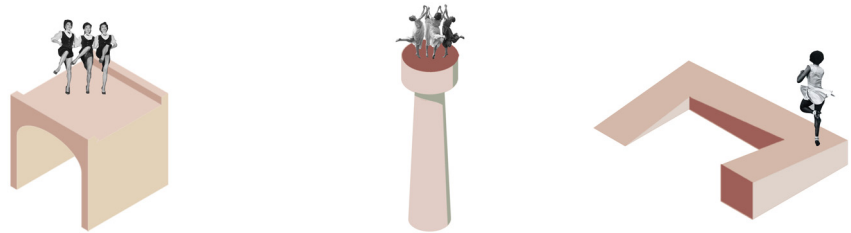
The through objects are the tunnel, the threshold, the bridge, and the arches. These objects allow users to pass through them, frame views, and they guide us towards or away from spaces. These objects encourage walking and way finding.

⁴⁹ Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 132.



A collection of through objects

The on objects are the bridge, pathway and tower. These objects encourage gathering on top of their open spaces, they allow themselves to be more open and less directed than the through objects. They can host larger groups depending on their scale and could be home to more lively movements such as dancing, skipping, running.



A collection of on objects

The up down objects are the stairs and the tower. These objects visually engage the user with their verticality, they beckon us to move higher or lower, they bring our bodies to new heights. The up down objects allow for users to experience height changes thus providing access to views from above and below. The up down objects encourage stepping and climbing.



A collection of up-down objects

These objects and their movements can be used to create architectures directed at user engagement on the level of movement, place and perception. To aid in the organization and adaptation of these objects as architectures in the real world, an additional set of perception and theory laden methods will be introduced.



Models of movement objects

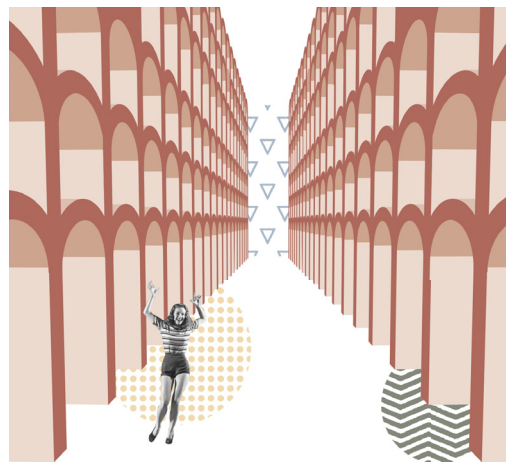
3.3.1 Method No.1: Depth in the Repeated Object

The first method is repetition. The repeating of an object can create forced perspectives, which is something that Merleau-Ponty touches on. He refers to the perspective in terms of depth, “either what I call depth is nothing, or else it is my participation in a Being without restriction, a participation primarily in the being of space beyond every [particular] point of view. Things encroach upon one another because each is outside of the others.”⁵⁰ Inherently perception contains some aspect of perspectival depth, the vantage point of one’s body relative to the space it occupies will always result in perspectival views. And in perspective it is never really such that the front most object eclipses all those behind it, but it *is* such that those objects exist in their entirety in a specific place. We know this to be true through perception; as one moves their body into the scene before them they soon will come to know that the object which lies behind has a full presence. Merleau-Ponty

⁵⁰ Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind,” 173.

explains, “every point of space is and is thought to be right where it is - one here, another there; space is the evidence of the “where.” Orientation, polarity, envelopment are, in space, derived phenomena, inextricably bound to my presence.”⁵¹ And so the forced perspective of a repeated object beckons us to move forward and prove to ourselves that indeed we are not looking at one flat homogeneous scene like a painting of the place, rather that this is a real place with real objects really exist in their specific locations

Repetition is also used as a physical manifestation of the multiple frame. The use of the built frame photograph was to convey movement photographically, similarly the use of repeated “physical” frames may be employed to create specific views, beckoning users to interact with the frame both visually and with their body. A singular frame in the physical architectural sense has the power to direct people’s attention to a singular specific views, but the repeated frame proposes something different. The repeated frame suggests that there are multiple ways to view one area, encouraging viewers to perceive a place in its totality as they move from frame to frame collecting a new view in each step.



Method for design No.1: repetition

51 Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind,” 173.

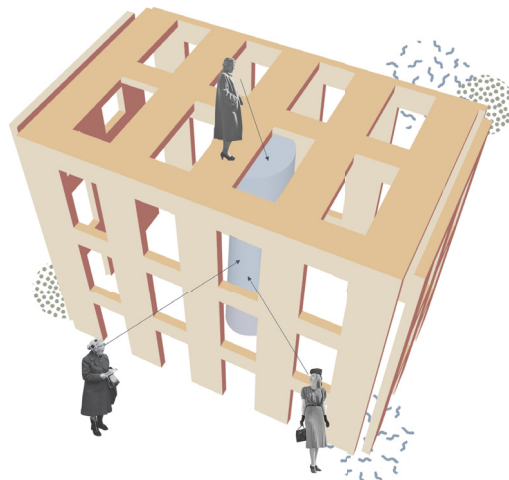
3.3.2 Method No.2: Multiple Views for the Active Perceiver

The next method is in reference to the multiplicity of views. We recall from earlier Merleau-Ponty's conditions for perception, where he states that the perceived object is always composed of an infinite number of perceptions if it is real.⁵² Taking this quite literally as a design strategy would imply making spaces which are composed of multiple viewpoints to specific objects. However in reality we cannot create an "infinite," as a result the views will be selective. As an active perceiver in this space it will become apparent that the ability to experience the object in its totality requires more than one view, the singular view will not suffice. We must move and explore it, for the unseen side of the object exists in reality but not yet in our perceptions of it. For Merleau-Ponty the object is "a totality open to a horizon of an indefinite number of perspectival views which blend with one another according to a given style, which defines the object in question."⁵³ Once an object is proven as real to the perceiver, it can begin to be defined in their world, in their sense of place. By engaging the users bodies and minds this way it can be said that they achieve what Casey calls an understanding of the "place-world" in which they are part of. The conditions of the place-world, as defined by Casey, are to have a lived mobile body which is both equally the creator of the place-world and a member of it.⁵⁴ The key condition being the mobile body, that which actively generates places through its movements and vision. Creating multiple physical viewing frames generates movement towards those views and evidently forces the viewer into an active state of perception within their own place-world.

52 Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception," 15-16.

53 Ibid.

54 Casey, "How to get from space to place," 17.



Method for design No.2: multiple view planes

3.3.3 Method No.3: Mirroring, Flipping, and Inverting

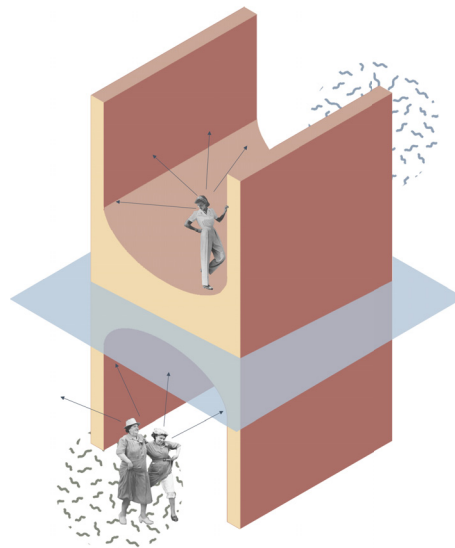
The third rule consists of mirroring or flipping objects. Mirroring of an object about an axis creates new forms of those objects which are unorthodox, in some cases the mirroring the object can allow for it to be explored in ways that would not have previously been possible. The concept of mirroring comes from Merleau-Ponty as quoted below.

The mirror's ghost lies outside my body, and by the same token my own body's "invisibility" can invest the other bodies I see. Hence my body can assume segments derived from the body of another, just as my substance passes into them; man is mirror for man. The mirror itself is the instrument of a universal magic that changes things into a spectacle, spectacles into things, myself into another, and another into myself. Artists have often mused upon mirrors because beneath this "mechanical trick," they recognized, just as they did in the case of the trick of perspective, the metamorphosis of seeing and seen which defines both out flesh and the painter's vocation.⁵⁵

The mirror for Merleau-Ponty is a tool which re-presents one's body as another body, creating space within the mirror which is both real and imaginary. In mirror exists a duplicity of things, objects, bodies. The mirror here is a representation of the world

⁵⁵ Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 168.

of perception, in mirror we see all that exists as real objects including our own body or the body of our friend. Yet as we both stand there in the mirror seeing ourselves, seeing each other, we know that our experience is not different. The mirror is similar to the landscape example discussed earlier in thesis, it makes the same claim; there are not two separate worlds of perception in my friend and I.⁵⁶ Instead me and my friend are objects in the same world and within in my friend I find another self capable of perceiving the same things as myself. To create a second self or a second space in mirror is to create new spaces for visual exploration, and in some cases grant access to views which could not be accessed before. As a design tool mirroring of objects can create new perceptions of those objects thereby allowing users to experience the object wholly. A person may situate themselves in relation to an object, yet when it is flipped, mirrored, or inverted it presents a new place which is experienced differently from its original intent. In mirrors we make a second body for ourselves, we make a second object and we make a second perceivable space.



Method for design No.3: mirroring

⁵⁶ Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception," 17.

3.3.4 Method No.4: Scaling in the Close-Up and Far Away

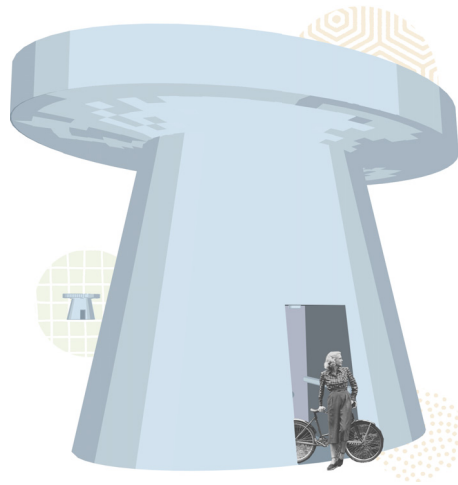
The last method pertains to scale. These objects are just objects, they have no relation to anything until there exists a human who relates themselves to the object. Scale changes the way we interact with the object, it tells us how close and far away we need to be from the object in order to experience its entirety. In Merleau-Ponty's theories we find an example of this.

I perceive before me a road or a house, and I perceive them as having a certain dimension: the road may be a country road or a national highway; the house may be a shanty or a manor. These identifications presuppose that I recognize the true size of the object, quite different from that which appears to me from the point at which I am standing. It is frequently said that I restore the true size on the basis of the apparent size by analysis and conjecture. This is inexact for the very convincing reason that the apparent size of which we are speaking is not perceived by me.⁵⁷

In the perspectival perception we observe objects as near and far away, their size in that view is relative to our position from it. Something far away appears small initially, yet when we move close it becomes larger. Some would say that we know the true size of objects in the distance because of conjecture, but Merleau-Ponty would disagree stating that we know the true size of objects only by first inspecting them with our vision and bodies until we are able to define them in our world. I only know that the car on the other end of the highway is not small because I have seen a car up close, I have at one point in time perceived the car in its entirety. In this case the car has been previously defined for me through perception, so I can confidently claim that the car is indeed not as small as it appears. In the primary sense we use our bodies and visions to prove the size and realness of objects that we hold within our perceptual field.

⁵⁷ Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception," 14.

Although we are now no longer children, we know the relative size of most things in our world, we still find ourselves experiencing changes in scale day to day. The details we focus on as we move closer to the object change with our relation to it. Far away we focus on the objects totality, move closer and we focus on the small details. As a design tool scaling of objects can change the way we view and engage with them. Certain details are successful in the close up scale while other succeed in the far away. Playing with scale of objects can create different levels of engagement with the work, like a camera with a zoom lens we can experience closeness and vastness simply by moving our bodies from one location to another.



Method for design No.4: scaling

CHAPTER 4: SITING

Selecting a site for the objects and methods to perform on was partly attributed to the photographic drifting through Halifax. Within the drift it was found that the Grand Parade currently hosted the movement objects, it had become a home for objects in the present sense. As a design site it offered a place that could host movement objects from the past along with the future movement objects of this thesis.

In photographing the site it had become apparent that the Grand Parade is raised significantly above street level. This led to the discovery of an existing “underground” portion of the grand parade. The Grand Parade, being so civil and political, it hosts a collection of memorials, city hall and a church. What would it mean to have program underneath this? It could be some form of an anti-place, something which is in opposition to what exists on top. An artful place, a place for dance and movement, a place for collaboration and reflection. An underground playground of common people enjoying a space in secret, yet also incredibly public. It could be what Grand Parade *isn't*, but it could also be what Grand Parade *is*.

4.1 Siting in the City of Undergrounds

The site selection was a combination of a few things; photographic studies and historical mappings. Both the mapping and the photographic study occurred concurrently and they simultaneously influenced each other as this thesis progressed. Beginning with the photograph, the camera was used to capture perceptions, evidently leading to a collection of movement objects. The objects had been found in various locations, yet the Grand Parade was one of the few to host all six. Certain objects on the site were more obvious to

understand than others such as the monuments, stairs, and pathways. However, the wall on Barrington Street and the corridor which separates City Hall from the parade were not as intuitive. A historical analysis of site was then needed to develop an understanding of the existing objects on the site.

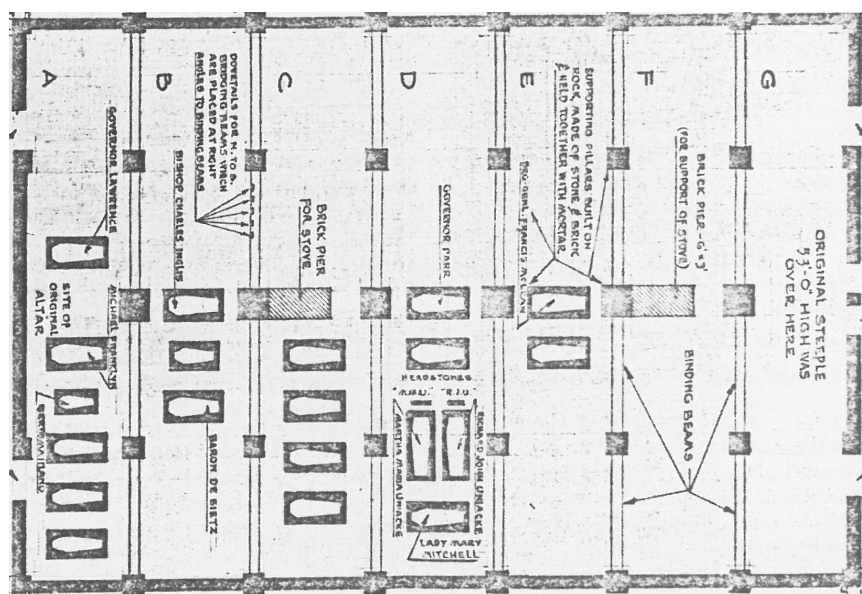
The city of Halifax was founded in 1749, with an initial city plan developed by military engineer Lieutenant John Brewse. In the centre of the original plan was the Grand Parade, which was to house a courthouse and prison on the south end and St. Paul's Church on the north end.⁵⁸ However when construction of St. Paul's began in 1750 it was placed at the southern end and the courthouse and prison were abandoned altogether.⁵⁹ The essential structure of the church was erected quickly yet the project was not actually completed until 1755, nearly a decade later.⁶⁰ The church would then undergo numerous updates and additions over the years eventually leading the last significant update in 1926 when the steeple was re-done and faced in copper.⁶¹ Despite all the changes made to the church, one thing remained; the crypt. In 1931 the floors of the church were torn up for repairs, during which the location and identification of the remains underneath were recorded. Most of the identified remains belong to governors, bishops, military officials and

58 Brian Cuthbertson, "History of the Grand Parade and Halifax City Hall," *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* 2 (1999): 71-72, <http://ezproxy.library.dal.ca/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1348884977?accountid=10406>.

59 *Ibid.*, 72.

60 Philip J. McAleer, *A Pictorial History of St. Paul's Anglican Church, Halifax, Nova Scotia* (Halifax: Resource Centre Publications, 1993), 25.

61 *Ibid.*, 133.



J. Philip McAleer, "St. Paul's plan of burials, 1931," in *A Pictorial History of St. Paul's Anglican Church, Halifax, Nova Scotia* (Halifax: Resource Centre Publications, 1993), 142.

their respective family members, totalling to 20 preserved vaults.⁶² This discovery, among others led to my fascination with the secret undergrounds of Halifax.

In 1794 Prince Edward arrived in Halifax as the commander of the Military forces in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Edward immediately went to work planning and improving the then dilapidated Citadel Hill fortress, this would be the third iteration of the Citadel. This third iteration would require levelling off a portion of the hill an additional 15 feet, the beginnings of the "underground" fortress.⁶³ The Citadel would undergo its fourth and final transformation in 1828 and would be completed in 1856. In its final design the Citadel included a large ditch that was dug around the perimeter of the fort and

⁶² McAleer, *A Pictorial History of St. Paul's Anglican Church, Halifax, Nova Scotia*, 143.

⁶³ Brian Cuthbertson, *The Halifax Citadel* (Halifax: Formac Publishing, 2001), 55-61.

a levelled off area in the centre which was dug into the hill.
⁶⁴ Giving the Citadel an appearance of being underground to the hill. Of most interest and perhaps the most curious part of the entire structure is the mysterious underground tunnel from Citadel to Georges Island.



Halifax, a city of undergrounds

⁶⁴ Cuthbertson, *The Halifax Citadel*, 65.

What does exist of this tunnel is a large sewer that runs down from the Citadel towards the harbour.⁶⁵ Although rumours of the tunnels actual use still float about, the concept of a secret underground tunnel is an exciting and imaginative leap.

Returning to 1796, during Prince Edward's time in Halifax, there was another interesting development was made on the Grand Parade. During this time Edward had the Parade levelled, walled and fenced. This required building a wall on the north end which would rise 15 feet above Barrington Street. To make use of this underground area it was initially an ice house for Mrs. Jane Donaldson, a Granville Street confectioner.⁶⁶ Many complaints were lodged against Prince Edwards dominance over the public space, in particular the people were upset that they could no longer cross through the centre of the parade along George Street. As a result public wooden steps were added off of Argyle Street shortly after, these steps exist today in stone and are frequented by users.

In 1819 Dalhousie College was erected on the north end of the site. Many citizens had not been happy with the placement of the college on the Grand Parade and support of it significantly declined after the college and city claimed to have insufficient funds for upkeep of the Grand Parade.⁶⁷ By 1870 there had been talk of establishing a city hall, and due to the dismal state of the Grand Parade it was suggested that the college be torn down and replaced by city hall.⁶⁸ Although the project did not take action until 1886, after much battle with college, the city

65 Ibid.

66 Cutherbertson, "History of the Grand Parade and Halifax City Hall," 75.

67 Ibid., 78.

68 Ibid., 79.

finally assumed ownership and construction began in 1888.⁶⁹ As for the actual Parade, renovations were made to the wall in 1885 and walks and flower beds were installed.⁷⁰ Additional changes were made to the underground portion in 1907 when stables were put in place on the west side facing Barrington Street.⁷¹ It was also proposed in 1910 that the stables be converted into comfort washroom stations for men and women, however it never came to fruition.⁷² This underground space currently remains unused today.

Within the research it had been revealed that Halifax had a history of secret underground spaces, in particular the Grand Parade, a place which had already sparked interest in the photographic wandering, was home to two of these undergrounds. In addition to researching the underground and abundance of information regarding the above ground was discovered. The above ground of the Grand Parade has always been claimed as “public” yet on many occasions it actually served anyone but the public. Instances of public outcry for reformation of the parade, occurred frequently in its history. Although it can be said that the Grand Parade space is now “public”, the number of public events which actually occur in the average year barely amounts to one full month. Using various sources such as Facebook, *The Coast* and the city of Halifax’s annual events pages, I compiled a list of documented public events which occurred on the Grand Parade in the last three years. Typical events include protests, ceremonies, barbeques, vigils, music, art and celebrations. All of these events are for

69 Ibid., 85-86.

70 Cuthbertson, “History of the Grand Parade and Halifax City Hall,” 81.

71 Ibid., 88.

72 Ibid.

the people, they are public and lively. They are exactly the type of events that should be occurring in a centrally located and historically rich place like the Grand Parade. There should be more of this activity, more liveliness to the Grand Parade on a regular basis.

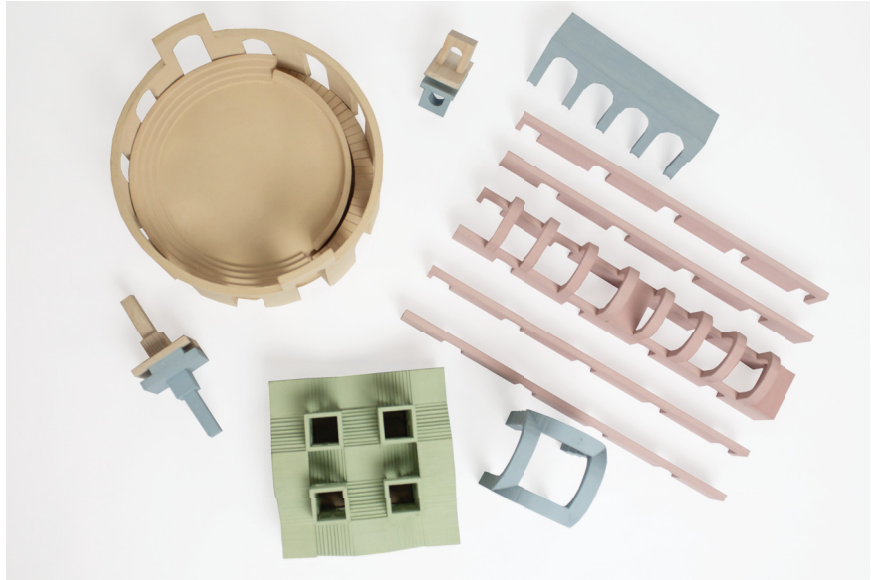
The methods up until this point had remained in the theoretical realm, they had not yet found a home to play on. Despite their non-relation to any specific site, they did provide insight as to which site would eventually be appropriate. In the objects, a serious emphasis is placed on movement, the body, and the importance of the “other” Being. Overall, these methods are intended to design architectures for mobile bodies and active perceivers. It is these mobile bodies which currently populate the events on the Grand Parade, and any intervention on the site will only serve to enhance its current uses.

4.2 A Brief Statement of Exclamation For the People

The choice to go “underground” for this design is twofold; the city already has a rich history of underground and the implications behind placing program underground. What would it mean to have a dance, art, and play space underneath the Grand Parade? It would be the “anti” place, opposite to the groomed facade of the top of the parade. To put something like this underground is to make a statement. Underneath a political and “public” place, is the real place for the people, a place that is active always and is not concerned with appearances. A place for people to enjoy themselves and their bodies; enjoy a dance with no judgment, gaze at art that has no rules, and play however they feel. It is the intent of this design to use the methods developed in perception to create perceivable and active spaces for movement. Let us come together in the underground, all

conscious Beings alike, and embrace our movements in the space that has always belonged to us! Perceive what is here and interact with it however you please, so long as you can move about this place, there is no denying that you the mobile conscious Being belongs to this place as much as any other.

CHAPTER 5: DESIGN



Collection of designed objects

5.1 The Inevitable Program

The program, is developed in two ways; through the methods and through the site. The methods, initially developed with no program in mind, came to be programful by their nature. In the earlier stages of developing the movement objects there was a natural progression towards movement based programs. The movements provided a basis for program, extracting from them the programs of dance hall, playground, and gallery.

Choosing to design a design a dance hall would provide an opportunity to create a dynamic space where users are simultaneously seeing and being seen. This could occur in both a formal an informal dance setting, so long as there are mobile bodies to populate the space. The dance hall would create scenarios that replicate Merleau-Ponty's theory perception, while also providing a space for movement.

The gallery was chosen for its more subdued movements. The

dance hall is perhaps on the more extreme end when it comes to movement, while the gallery focuses on walking and observing. The addition of a gallery space to the site will enhance the few artful events which occur on the site yearly, thus allowing for a more permanent home for art on the site. The gallery could also serve as a point of entry into the underground thus creating an engaging approach to the space.

St. Paul's church being located on the site already gives preface to a spiritual or contemplative program. This particular program will not be about any religion, rather it will be about a spiritual journey of body and mind through a designed space on the site. This perhaps will be the slowest of the movements, however it will offer individuals the chance to fully enjoy and experience their bodies and movements in the built world.

Together these programs will provide three very different spaces aimed at achieving the same goal; active perception through the mobile body.

5.2 Manifestations of Method No.1

The method of repetition and repeating frames has been described in an earlier section as a manifestation of Merleau-Ponty's theories regarding depth perception. This method hypothesizes that a design which makes use of repeated frames will encourage a movement based bodily reaction by creating forced perspectives within the frames. The basis of this hypothesis is perspective which Merleau-Ponty talks about in terms of depth and horizon.

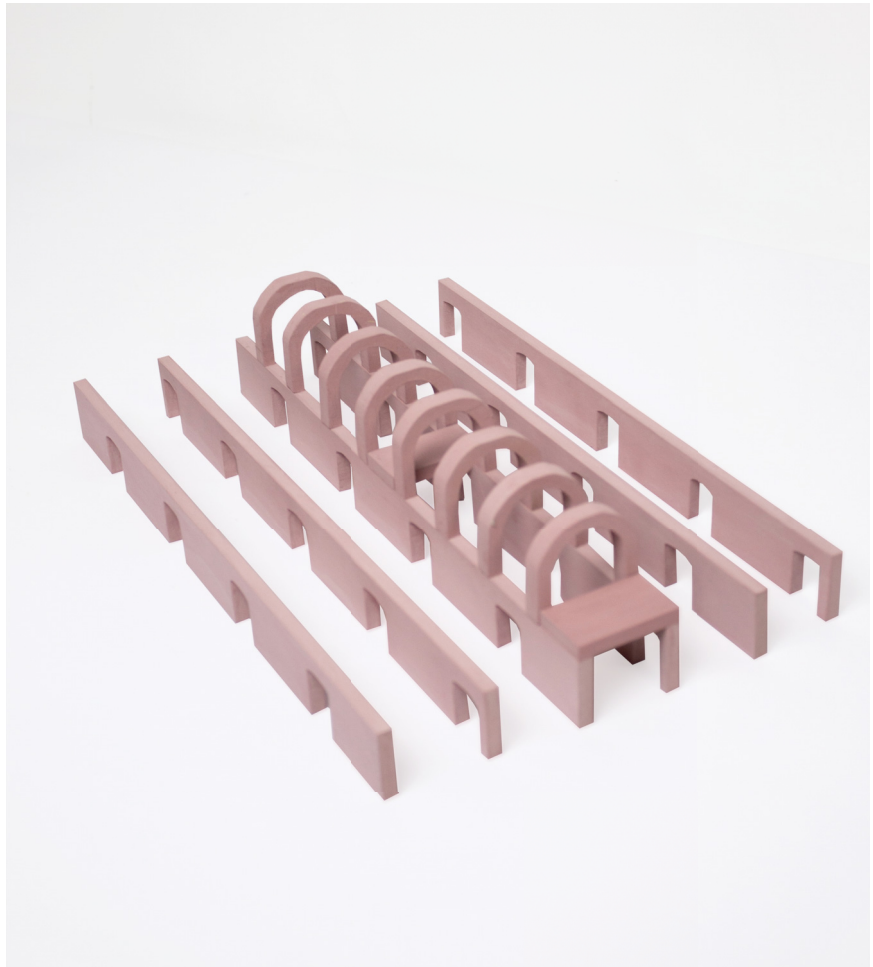
It is never really the case that things really are one behind the other. The fact that things overlap or are hidden does not enter into their definition, and expresses only my incomprehensible solidarity with one of them - my body. And whatever might be positive in these facts, they are only thoughts that I formulate and not attributes of the things.⁷³

The perspective creates a visual scenario where the front most object prevents us from viewing the objects behind given the relative position of one's body to the object. Likewise, the front most frame of a repeated frame will eclipse the view of the ones which are situated behind. Yet each frame in the repeated frame sequence has its own position within a place, and if one travels from the first frame through to the last they would become aware of each frames relative position. This act of perceiving is only capable through a mobile body for it requires that a body moves from one point to another, allowing it to perceive the entirety of the place which the body itself is part of. The type of place that the repeated frame method cultivates is one that (in theory) encourages movement by means of visual cues found in perspective.

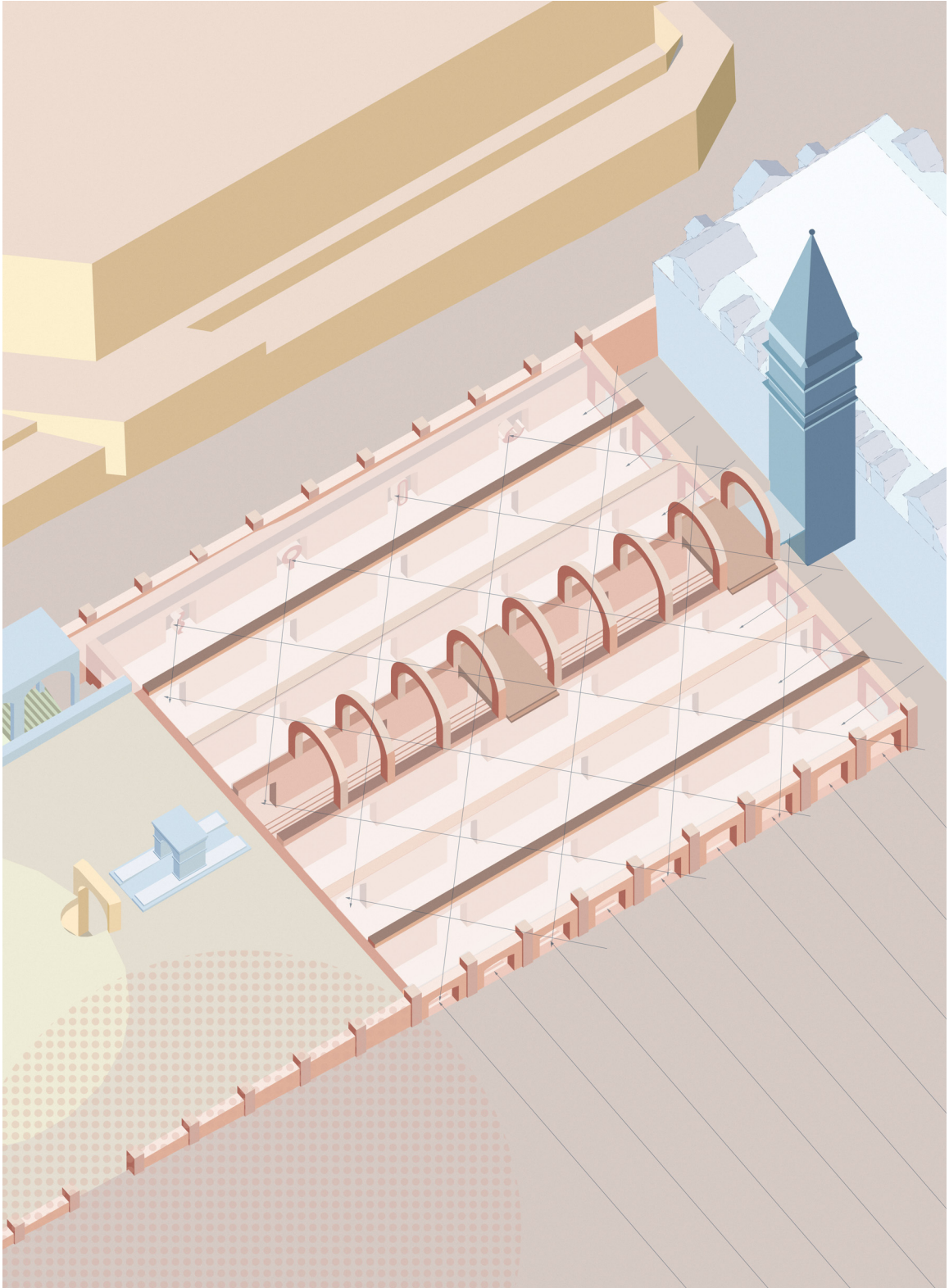
In this project the manifestation of method one is the gallery, or seven halls. The gallery is made up of a series of halls with arched openings that mimic the existing arches on Barrington Street. The arches here are part of the wall that levels off the Grand Parade and if one were to remove the stone which fills the arches they would open up to the existing underground space. This space, as discussed earlier, served many functions the most recent being a stable and a proposed comfort station in 1910. By opening up the arches to the existing underground space I was able to establish the first wall in what would eventually be a series of repeated frames. Opening this space up allows for it to be given back to the people, and being situated next to city

73 Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 173.

hall it creates a contrast between an open public art space and formal “public” political space.



Model showing five of the seven halls.



Objects on the site near City Hall.

The wall is repeated seven times across the site with the openings being alternated on each wall. Alternating the openings creates a matrix of frames that generate a series of perspectival views into the space. Moving along Barrington Street, you can view into the gallery, but only at specific frames. As you move through the space you discover more frames, and more views, exploring it fully with your body and vision.

On the grand parade level above the underground gallery is the open center hall, a repeated arch resides there and aligns with the axial relationship of objects on the site. There are two bridges that cross over the open hall, allowing one to stand in the centre of the repeated arch series, experiencing a forced perspective towards city hall or to the monument. The openness of the centre hall allows for perceivers to experience the frames above and below, as they move around the space they can line up views from above and catch glimpses into the art of the gallery below. Four of the walls from the gallery below peek out onto the grand parade surface, creating a long bench like object. These elongated benches aid the forced perspective view by drawing attention to the length of the grand parade, extending along the surface and into the horizon.



A series of repeated frames creates a dramatic perspective into the gallery.



Repeated arches on top of the Grand Parade force a perspective towards city hall.

I have chosen to speak specifically about the gallery space for the repetition method because it was my intention for it to be the most prominent example. However, this project contains designed objects that succeed in exhibiting characteristics of more than one method. The methods are easily combined and often times I will employ multiple methods on an object to enhance it in terms of perception. For example, the repeated arch or frame appears consistently throughout this project. It can be found around the perimeter of the dance hall, above the stairs on Argyle street, and within the stair complex. I believe that these areas also succeed in demonstrating the use of repetition to create visual cues for movement within the perspective, yet their designed intention is to demonstrate the next three methods. For this reason I choose to omit a discussion of those objects here, in terms of repetition, and rather speak to them where I have intended them to be.

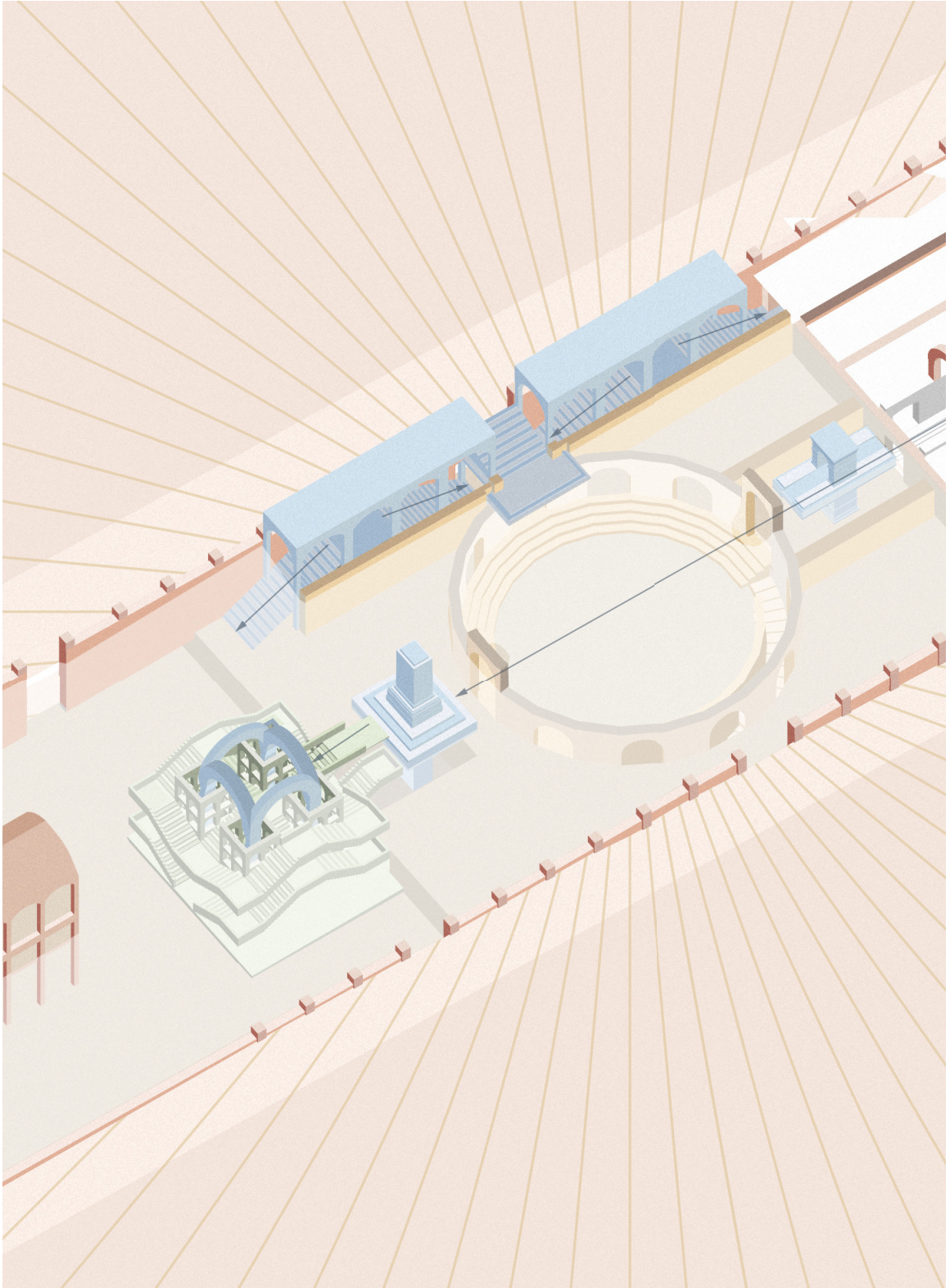
5.3 Manifestations of Method No.2

It has been stated on multiple occasions within this document the importance of “infinite” perceptions for Merleau-Ponty’s concept of reality. Objects are defined as *real* by their existence in the world of perception where they are present in the full sense; the object is *really* there within the infinite possible perceptions of it. This object and its infinite perceptions are accessed through our bodies and our vision, and it is through these perceptions that we begin to know and understand the objects in our world. For Merleau-Ponty there is a requirement that the act of perceiving be an act of both body and mind. Perception as a function of our body entails an act of movement coupled with sight. In theory one could move their body around an entire object and be able to access the infinite perceptions this way. The singular view to an object would not permit the viewer

to experience its totality because it prevents the viewer from experiencing the unseen side. Conversely a mobile body may experience multiple perceptions because they can change their vantage point, they can engage with the infinite perceptions.

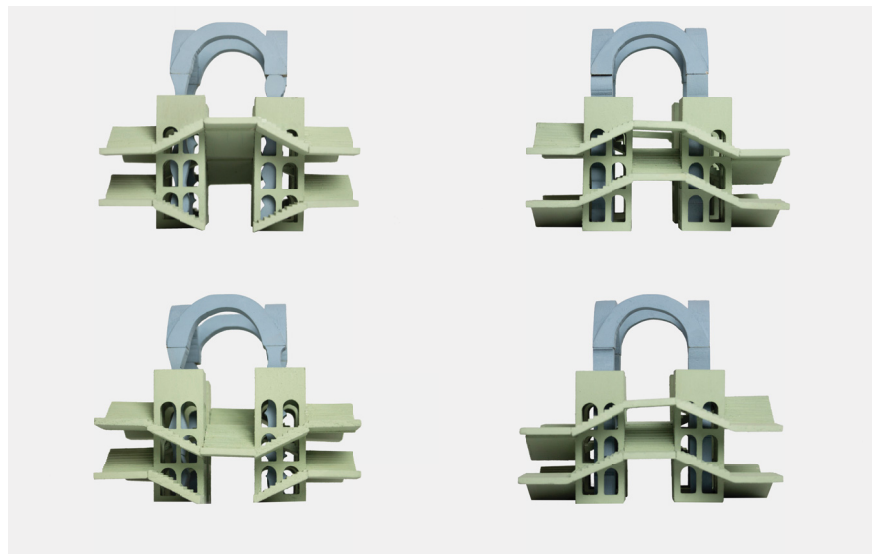
As a design strategy the infinite perception manifests as a series of frames which direct views and grant viewers total access to objects within. The purpose of this design method is to consider views and movement as one drifts about a place. Often objects, rooms or places have parts which are concealed, parts that cannot be experienced by users in their totality. If we grant an individual access to an architectural object's entirety, said individual can make for themselves an *entire place*. Casey tells us that "lived bodies belong to places" and "places belong to lived bodies."⁷⁴ Place and body are of each other, and if an entire mobile body is needed for perception then an entire place would be the most suitable in the world of perception.

⁷⁴ Casey, "How to get from space to place," 24.



Objects on the site near St. Paul's Church.

Almost all of the designed objects on the site can be experienced in their totality if one takes part in both the above and below ground places. The stair complex, situated near St. Paul's Church is designed to be a spiritual journey. The descent into the ground is a pilgrimage from the above to the below, life to death and death to life. Only in completing the entire journey does one emerge reborn after cascading into the depths of the earth. The entrance to the complex is behind the Cenotaph, and as one begins to embark on their journey they are confronted by a set of choices. At the base of the first staircase is the start of three more, each one leads you on a path around the four hollow columns, each features a set of six openings on each face. Above the complex is four arches that rest upon four columns, each column is a different shape and extends all the way into the ground. In order to experience the entirety of all four columns one must traverse every set of stairs and peer into the frames. This spiritual journey requires a mobile body that can engage with the entire place. Once the journey is underway the viewer is propelled into a place-world consisting of whole objects. Entire objects that have framed views to them, aimed at aiding the viewer in accessing the infinite perceptions.



Elevations of the stair complex.

Located in the centre of the site is an underground dance hall. The dance hall is circular in shape and features a series of arches spaces equally around the perimeter. The arches are completely open, allowing for free flowing movement between the surrounding area and the dance hall. If a viewer resides in the area exterior to the hall, they would be given an opportunity to travel along the perimeter and peer into each frame, gaining access to views on the activities within. One may even partake in the dance when they wander around and into the place, perhaps even onto the dance floor as they find their seat, making them for a brief moment the object on display.



The dance hall.



The towers in the stair complex are home to columns of various shapes. A group of women look inside and gain access to views of the columns.



Arches frame views into the dance hall where a group of women enjoy each other's company.

5.4 Manifestations of Method No.3

The mirroring of objects as a design method is derived from Merleau-Ponty's theories of perception as they relate to the body of another. Throughout his texts Merleau-Ponty makes references to the other body, or the body of a friend, in which one could find traces of themselves. The metaphor of the other body is used to describe the publicness of the world perception. The phenomenologist typically believes that a Being who has access to the world of perception, theoretically has access to the same objects and perceptions of another Being who is part of that same world, such that no experience belongs to an individual's private experience. There is a publicness to the objects within the world of perception, and for Merleau-Ponty this is often described this in terms of mirror.

In terms of design, mirroring means the actual mirroring, flipping or inverting an object about a plane. The reason for doing so is to create manifestations of the mirror in terms of the "other." In a mirrored object there is an "other" place, a place which is made up of the same contents just reoriented. In a mirrored object the intent is to have a user interact with both an original and a mirror in a different manor, yet in both instances the viewer has made a body and place for themselves. The person who interacts with the mirrored object makes themselves into two bodies, and in turn makes two places. In the mirrored object we find ourselves and the other.

On the Grand Parade the mirroring method is applied to the existing monuments on the site. Both the Cenotaph and the concrete arch are inverted about the ground plane, allowing them to exist in both the above and below ground. The inversion of these objects creates two places for the viewer to interact with them, and at specific instances one could be rewarded with

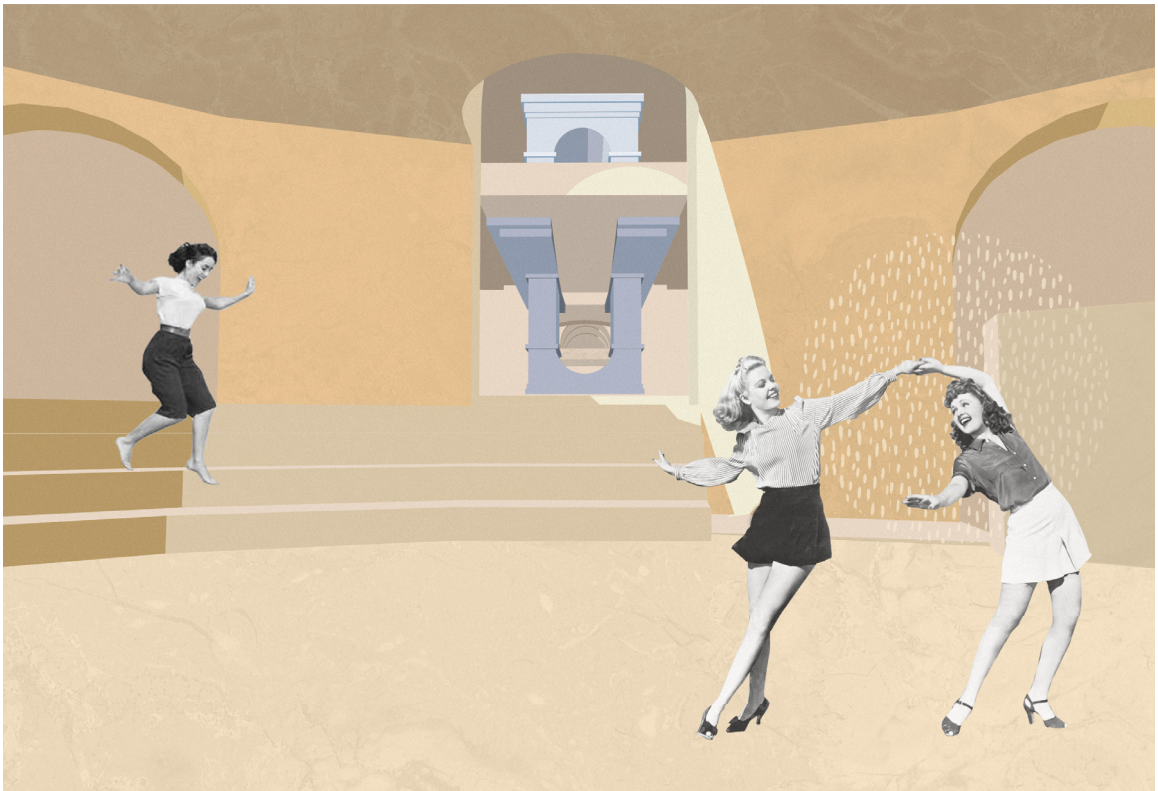
views to both the original and the inverted object. This double view allows the place maker to situate themselves in relation to both objects, perhaps even treating it as one object. The choice is yours, how will you interact with objects in the above and below, what place will you make for yourself in the mirror?



The mirrored Cenotaph.



The mirrored arch.



Views from the dance hall frame the inverted monument.

5.5 Manifestations of Method No.4

How do we come to know the scale of objects in the world of perception? Merleau-Ponty states that “it took a long time and much reflection for men to become aware of a perspectival deformation of objects.”⁷⁵ Beings did not recognize scale within the perspective until they explored objects with their bodies and vision, only coming to know their true size after the interaction took place. The scale of objects is understood through the scale of our bodies, we are always relating ourselves to our environment. We make place this way. In *Getting Back Into Place*, Casey tells us that “our living-moving bodies serve to structure and to configurate entire scenarios of place.”⁷⁶ For Casey the body is the generator of place and it is only capable of doing so because of its mobile parts. In particular Casey talks about place, the body and their relation to the near and far. The horizon perpetually exists in the far sphere of our vision and Casey informs us that “without the mobility my body provides, I would have no meaningful sense of perspective, and without perspective I could have no experience of the horizon.”⁷⁷ The horizon and perspective are results of our mobile bodies, and they are what give us incentive to move from far to near creating places for ourselves as we move. In Casey’s words, “there would be no places to which to move unless any given place were what it is in relation to an encompassing horizon.”⁷⁸ As we move towards a horizon we move into new places, and we adjust our sense of place as we encroach upon them. Move closer towards a place and the details of the objects that you

75 Merleau-Ponty, “The Primacy of Perception,” 15.

76 Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 48.

77 Ibid., 62.

78 Ibid.

focus on become dependant on your relative position to them. Objects in the distance are viewed as wholes, the intricacies of their appearance are unrecognizable in the far away. Move your body closer and the complexities of the object enter into your field of vision, your focus changes and your bodies relation to object is readjusted.

The use of scale as a design method enhances the importance of perspective and the relative size of the body to an architecture. Creating instances of varying scale dependant on perspective will create places that encourage movement. As stated by Casey, the mobile body is ingredient to place making and perspective. To experience near and far it is a requirement that your body be mobile so that it can experience the relative shift in scale. If a place is designed to host objects of varying scales in the near and far, it would create places of movement.

An example of this exists in the gallery where there are four sculptures located in the arches of the final hall, if you align your views right you might be able to see one. However, the repeated frame makes the sculpture look small in the distance, this is a result of the forced perspective, but as you move through the frames and approach the object, you come to realize that it is actually quite large. You now relate your body to the object and come to terms with relative size. The sculpture resides at the end of the horizon, it occupies a real place, with real dimensions and size. Those dimensions and size can be realized when the individual takes their body from Barrington Street into the gallery and situates themselves next to the object, thus exploring the concept of scale with a mobile place making body.

Another opportunity for an experience of scale occurs as one approaches the parade from Argyle Street. From the vantage

point of one's body on Argyle Street the arches look small and short, not much of a space at all. But when you move forward, arrive on the parade and begin your descent into the underground you realize their scale is much larger than their first appearance. The arches tower over you, and you experience their scale differently than you had on the street. Making you an active perceiver, and active place maker. The designed arches on Argyle Street frame the existing staircase while also indicating the entrance to the new designed staircases underneath. The arches respond the street and to the stairs, creating an exciting point of entry into the underground.



A woman realizes her relative scale to the object which appeared small in the distance.



The tops of the arches appear small as one approaches from Argyle Street.



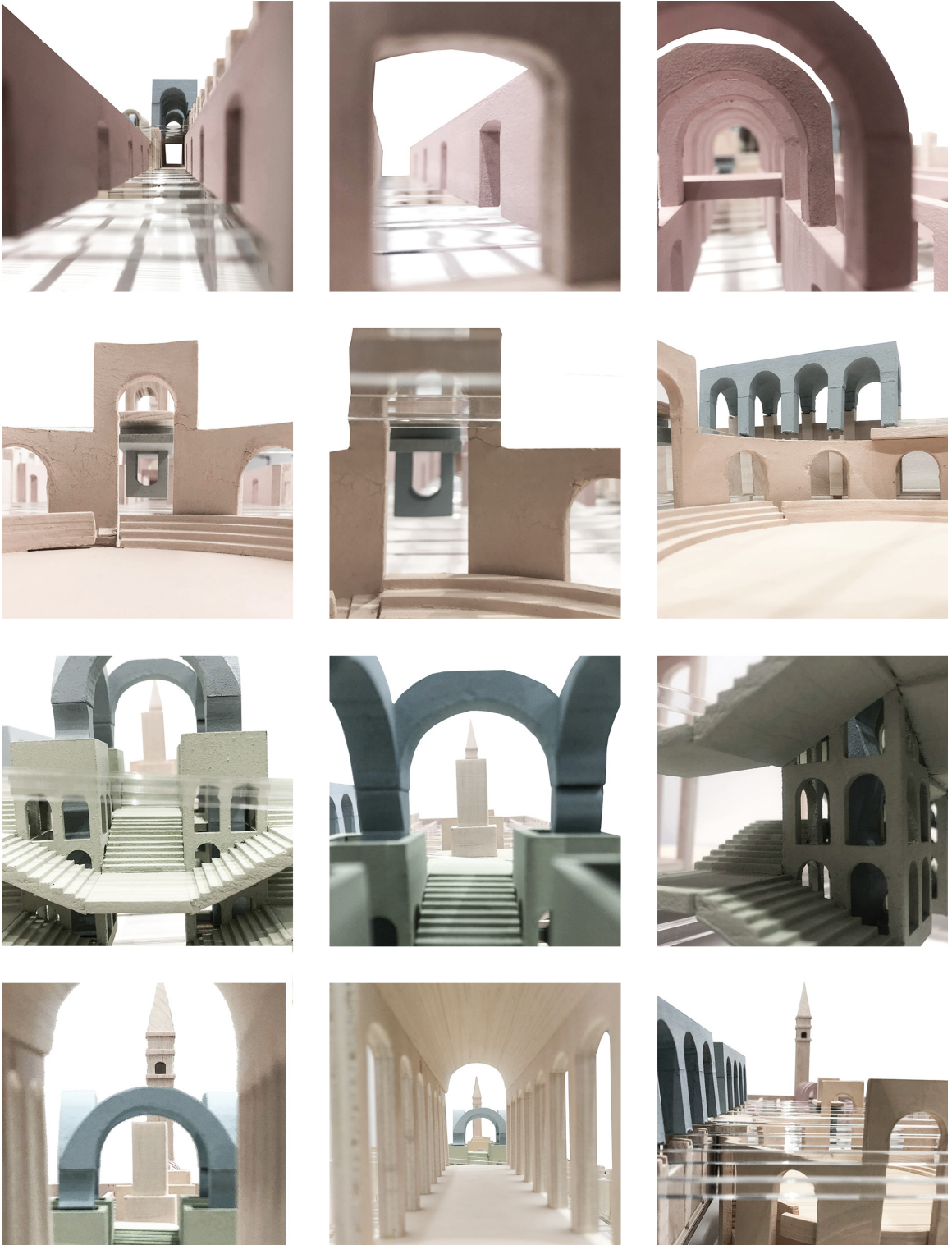
Realization of true scale once under the arches.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This project consists of a group of designed objects aimed at achieving active perceivable places that encourage user movement. Combining movement objects and movement programs such as dance, art, spirituality, parks and playgrounds, the project wishes to create active places for moving bodies. The underground design serves as an anti-place to the formalness of the place above. It is a place for active perceivers, artists, dancers, and moving conscious bodies. The design is one that asks the question: what if we were to design with the body in mind? What if we designed for perception and place making? What if we created places that encourage movement through visual cues found in perspective and perception?

I would say that this project is not complete, it is merely a start. A start to a different approach to design. This project is just one manifestation of the methods I have developed, they could take on many forms. These four methods here taught me to design with the body in mind, to make choices that would affect the way we view and interact with the built world. There could even be more than four methods if this work were to continue to develop beyond the confines of this thesis. Perhaps it could be developed further by testing the methods on various sites and in different forms, allowing the designer to compare and contrast the successes of each and then returning to the referenced texts to rework the methods. Even in my own studies it was found that there were some areas more successful than others.

After completing the project, I asked some of my peers to photograph the model, encouraging them to take photos of views they found to be interesting. The photographs below are a collection of those images



A collection photographs of the final model, captured by a number of people.

The images indicate the success of the repeated arches in the gallery space. From the images it appears that almost everyone took at least one image in the gallery space, either above or below, and they almost always exhibited aspects of the forced perspective. Additionally the dance hall was photographed multiple times. Mostly with a focus on the view from the center of the dance hall to the inverted monuments, which happens to be a view that I had selected myself in my drawings. Concluding that the dance hall and the gallery were successful in creating space of visual interest using the methods.

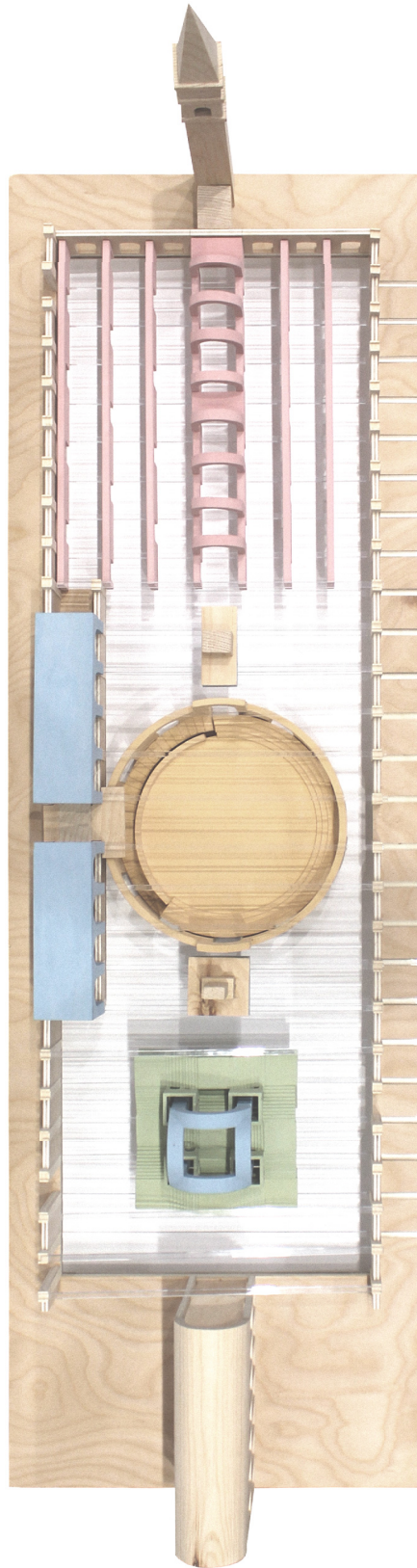
There was also a handful of images of the stair complex. Most of the views people selected in the stair complex focused on the view from inside the complex face the monument, which was also coincidentally a view I had selected myself. The third image on the right of the stair complex also captured the framed views of the blue column inside, and although it was the only image to capture this view, it did show that the concept of the stair complex was not completely neglected.

The fourth row of images was not a set of views directly intended by the methods, however it is not a set of views that are in opposition to the overall intent of the work. These images express an interest in the linearity of the site. Although I had intentionally aligned all the objects along the centre axis, I had not directly considered the views it would generate. What these photos do exhibit is the participants inclination to line up views along the length of the site, and although it is not an intended view it is still successful in demonstrating the concepts discussed throughout the project.

Ultimately this project has succeeded in creating places for perception, however I do think that it could continue to be

developed more. For example, I chose to work in digital and physical models exclusively because I felt they were the more effective tools for testing out views. I believe it would be interesting to develop methods for testing views in the traditional drawings of plans, sections and elevations. Often I found these types of drawings to be difficult to work with because I could not situate myself them the way I could in a 3D representation. Attempting to create a method for representing perception based design would be a compelling additional layer. Perhaps in some other realm this aspect of the project will be realized, for now it will exist without.

In conclusion, this thesis has worked to develop a set of design methodologies focused on theories of perception and place for the active perceiver in the architectural world.



The final project

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