

Habitat(ion)

BY JON SULENBERGER, FOURTH YEAR

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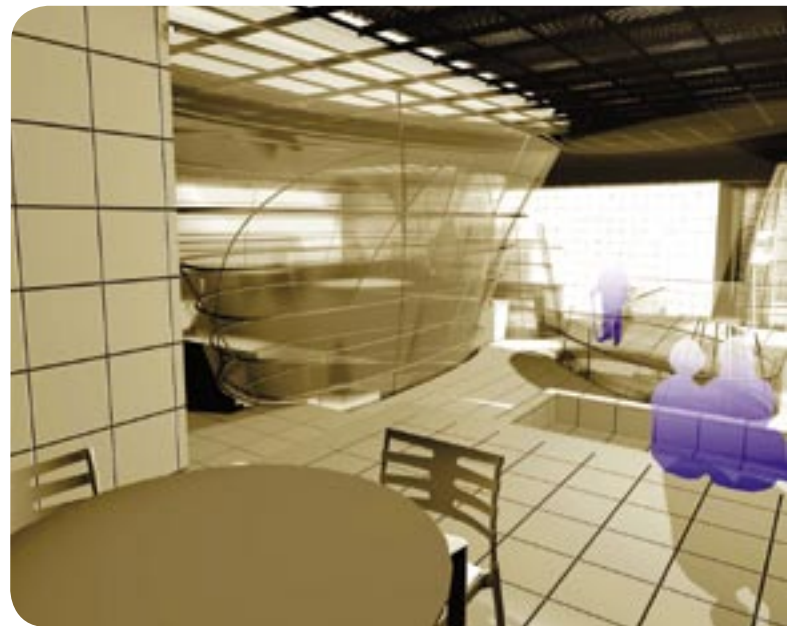
The departure point for this project was to choose a mobile condition and analyze how this condition shaped the perception of space around a user. The condition of branding (logo) was chosen both due to its repetitious nature and the fact that this nature is manifested in every aspect of life today. The iconography of logos together with the mind's ability to relate/trigger imagery enables the logo to be viewed as an element of a corporate control system. The logo can manipulate human action and emotion based upon the relationship of past personal memories and some instance of the logo. This theoretical position was the basis of a conceptual model representing a 24 hour day in which temporary conditions were physically represented and affected by the memories of logos from past experiences.

The relationship between these memories and a current temporal position was further developed into a conceptual physical model, articulating relationships between the abstract nature of the conceptual digital model and that of a body part. Treated as a system of armor, this model sought to represent the same relationships displayed between logo/memory and memory/site. The site for this exploration was the human body, but more specifically the hand, as the hand is unique in that its current position is affected by stimuli around it, say a hot stove or cold water. This stimulus triggers an automatic response within the hand in which the form changes to accommodate each new contextual condition. Much as the logo triggered responses to memories past (effecting a relationship of user and space), the site model became a physical representation of the temporary positions of the hand and how they overlap.

The relationship between the temporal conditions of expansion and contraction coupled with that of the conceptual study of memory and logo directly translated into the next step of this project: the site analysis of an urban infill condition. The site was located on a vacant parking lot at the corners of 3rd and Arch streets in Old City, Philadelphia. Examined for the existing fluctuations between programmatic space [physical] and programmatic space [influence], this analysis sought to understand the characteristics of the existing site through relationships made back to the conceptual models. An understanding of how the strength and memory of programmatic usages mixed in the streets resulted in an understanding of how these memory conditions created virtual enclosures within the street itself. The overlap of these functions was analyzed to determine the potential program for an architectural intervention within the urban fabric. The

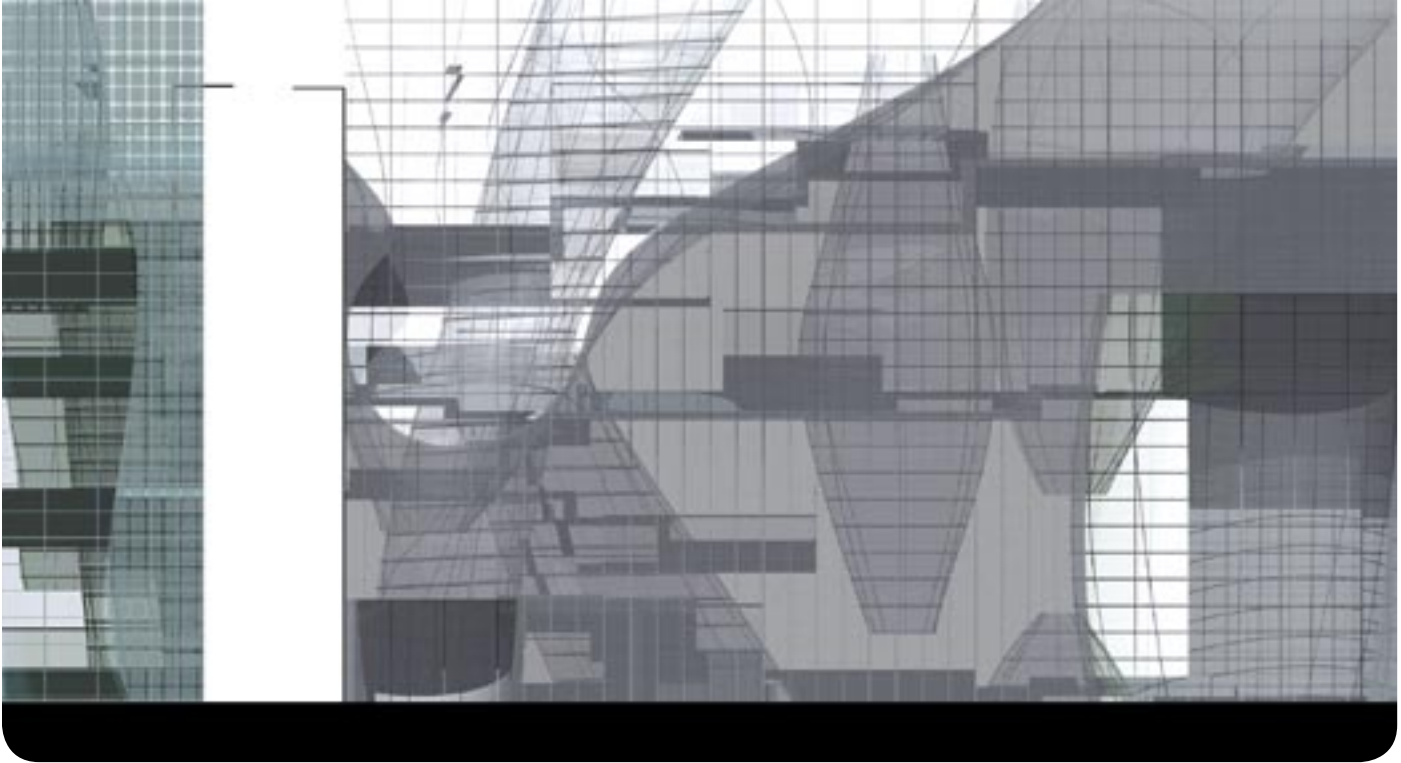
program of a religious environment that transforms into a restaurant and commercial shop was chosen both for the potential memory relationships set up by these conditions as well as the fact that nowhere on the site exists an engaging religious habitat. By analyzing the abstract site model it was determined that the user group was to be the normal flow of patrons already existing on the site.

By combining each study through the explorations and processes of this project, a logical language was implemented to guide every aspect of the architectural design. The design was first laid out as a narrative, reflecting the procession of program necessary to implement such contrasting functions as religious meditation and consumer shopping. These spaces became floor plates that adjusted through elevation/section to create the procession based upon their role within the narrative. These floor plates were then connected via/through transparent forms (memory volumes) so people could view their past or their future, both of which affect their current condition.



Interior Rendering looking at one of the “memory” voids.

These relationships were shared through the skin of the building as well. The transparent forms (memory volumes) were sliced by the façade (a condition of site and setback ruling) and still perform their function of memory since people would now be able to see into the building and out of the building to the street below. Material conditions of the façade further enforced these rules through varying degrees of transparent and semi-transparent materials, coding information about usage through material constraints.



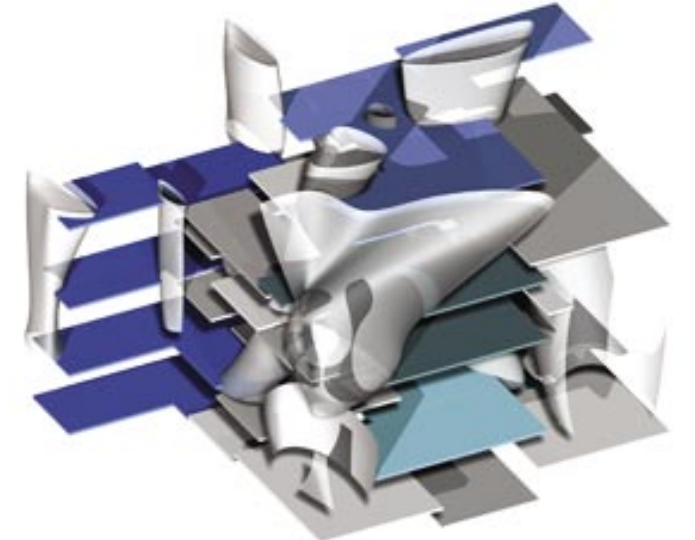
Arch Street Elevation (left) and Third Street Elevation (Right).

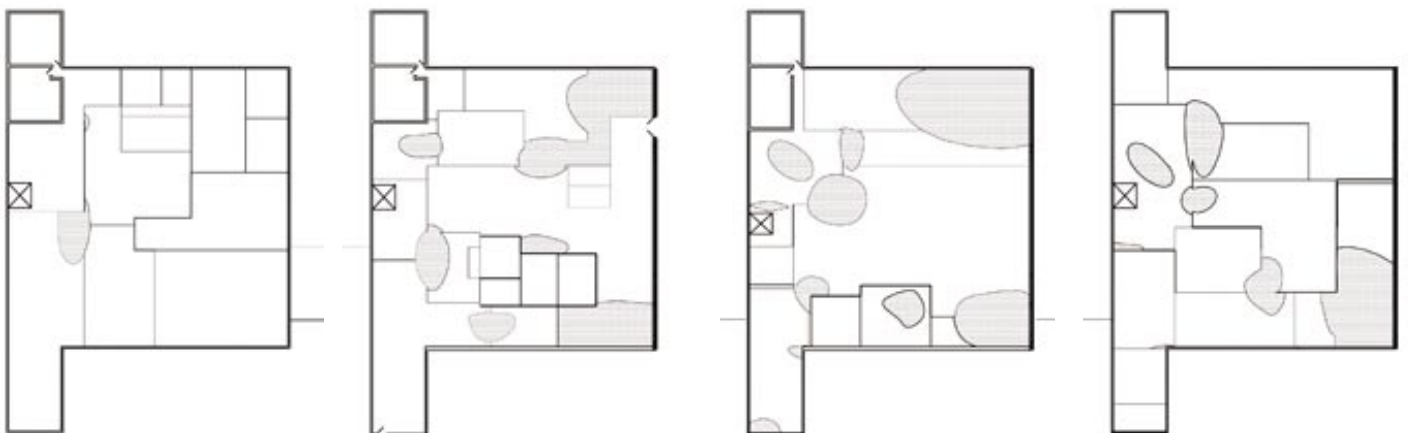
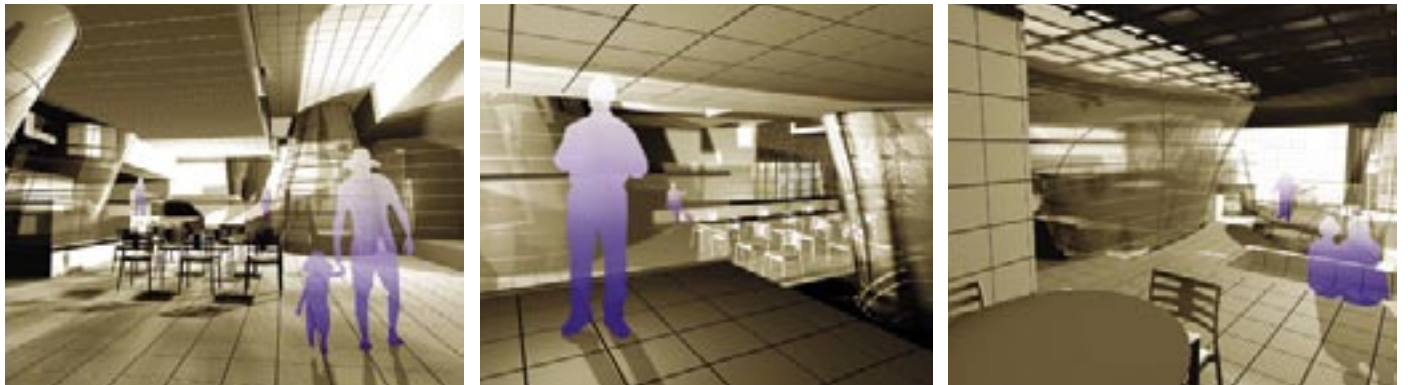
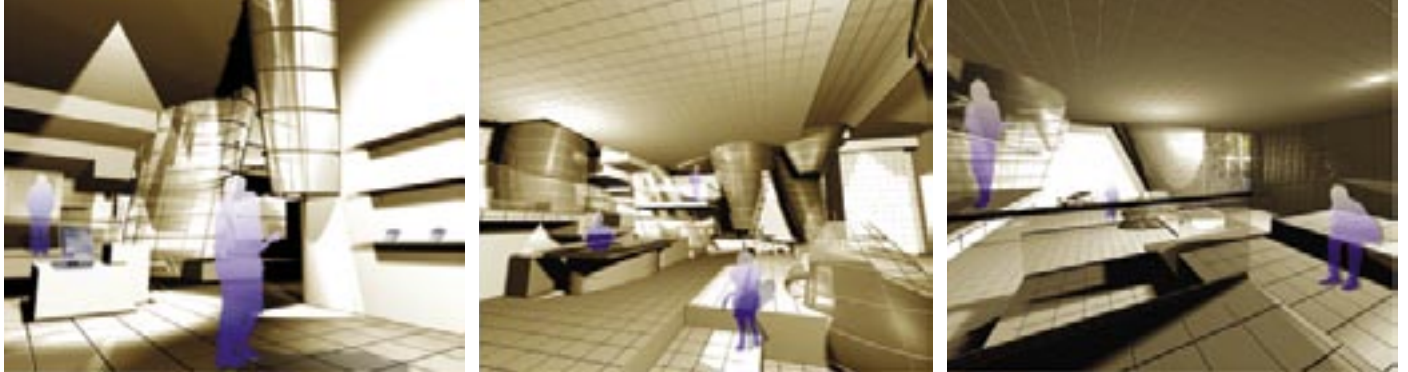
Advisor's Comments

A major role of this upper-level design studio was to teach students that the power of computer modeling offers us much more than merely the ability to represent final constructions. Too often digital media is seen as being a sort of end-game move, a technique and process reserved for the final moments of architectural investigation when it is time to finally display the results of process. However, digital tool sets afford us the opportunity to understand much more than just the resultant construction. These tool sets afford us the chance to explore and understand qualitative conditions of site, user, experience, and event, visualizing this data in ways sometimes too limited by conventional means. Treating the computer as a tool for exploration and investigation, students were able to take seemingly abstract systems developed around the idea of an event and dissect/analyze them. Through this analysis, students both witnessed and took part in the evolution of a basic idea from initial investigation all the way through to final site intervention.

This process of evolution from the abstract to the concrete form is one duly suited to the tool sets of digital media and modeling, and Jon's project is a perfect example of this process. In every step of investigation, Jon consciously reworked and manipulated the qualities (geometric, parametric, material) found in the initial qualitative investigation, using the same model (or parts from it) in every step of analysis. This process comes through clearly in the final presentation of his project, and acts as an example as to the power of digital media in design today.

- Bob Trempe, Assistant Professor and Principal Investigator





From the Final Presentation Board, which displayed all of the processes involved in the intervention from conceptual to building.