

Performing Space: A Center for Contemporary Dance

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Abstract

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Contemporary dance is an evolving art form, exploring the range of the body's movement, from the informal to the formal, pushing the boundaries between performer and audience. As contemporary dance has developed, so has the nature of, and spaces for, performance—what was once a privileged and ceremonial act, has evolved into a more democratic and unrestricted art form. This thesis explores the relationship of bodies, space, and performance through the design of a building for contemporary dance. The Center for Contemporary Dance, located at the Seattle Center, aims to reflect the evolution of this art form by providing an educational and performance venue that is integrated with its urban setting. The location of the facility at the Seattle Center provides the opportunity to navigate the realm between the closed typology of the traditional proscenium theater and unbounded public space. Transparent and flexible spaces interweave everyday movement, or the “ballet of the plaza,” with the choreographed movement of the artists. The pedestrian passer-by becomes the audience, encouraging interaction between art and everyday actions.



Sasha Waltz, *Dialogue 09* at the Neues Museum.

Performing Space

A Center for Contemporary Dance

With gratitude and sincere appreciation, I would like to thank my advisors, Louisa Iarocci and David Strauss, for their advice, support, and inspiration. I am especially grateful for Louisa's patience and guidance, as my topic changed and evolved into the one found in this document, and for David's enthusiasm and willingness to join a work in progress.

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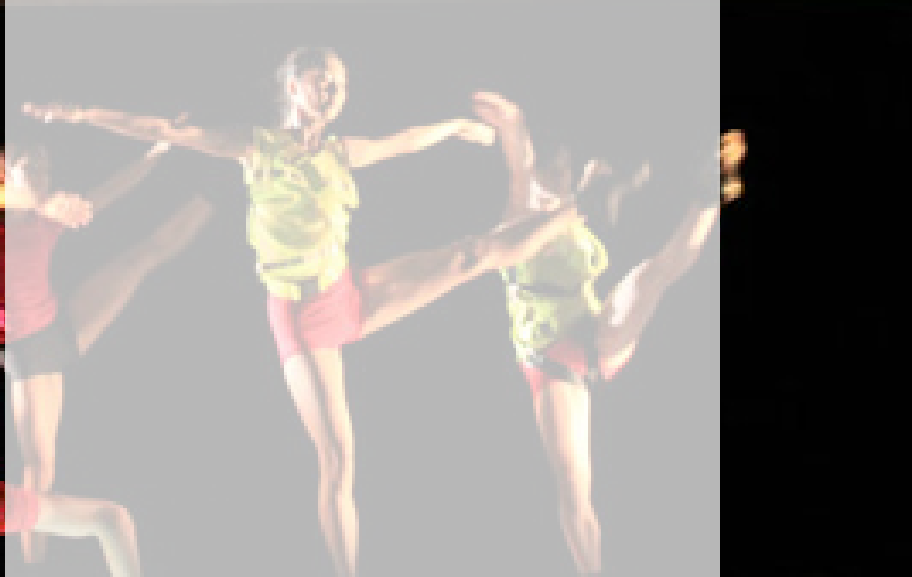
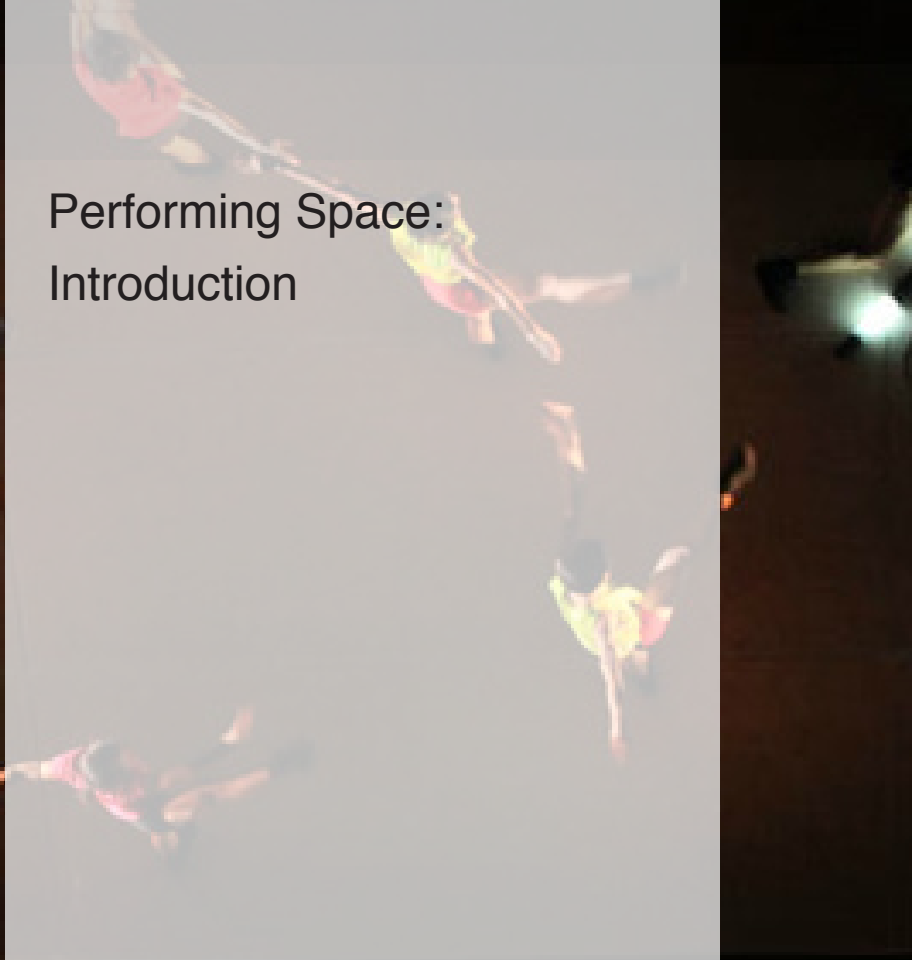
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Performing Space:
Introduction



Performing Space: Introduction

The seemingly divergent worlds of architecture and dance share space as a common medium. Practitioners in both fields strive to create and define space, and better understand the body's interaction with this ephemeral element. Both architects and choreographers design for the movement of bodies in space, but where choreographers work with the body as a primary medium, architects work with walls and other space defining or enclosing elements (figures 1 and 2). To better understand the relationship of bodies and space, this thesis begins with an exploration of the theories of Henri Lefebvre and Bernard Tschumi, among others; specifically studying theories relating to bodies creating space, space proscribing the actions of bodies, and bodies transgressing spatial boundaries. This then leads to an exploration of the history of spaces for performance, and the relationship between audience and dancing bodies.

The historical arc from court ballets, the predecessor of traditional ballet, to contemporary dance illustrates both the change in how dancing bodies move and the evolution of the spaces that contain these



Figure 1: Pina Bausch company dancers in *Pina*, directed by Wim Wenders.



Figure 2: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Frank Lloyd Wright

movements. Where court dance and traditional ballet are highly formalized performances with a strict vocabulary of movement, contemporary dance embraces an unrestricted range of motion drawn from everyday actions. Modern dancers of the twentieth century, from Ruth St. Denis to Merce Cunningham, laid the foundations for the efforts of contemporary choreographers of today to liberate dance from the constraints of ballet's vocabulary. However the results were often developed into new, but equally codified vocabularies and styles such as the Graham, Cunningham, and Dunham techniques. Contemporary dance, which has grown out of these techniques, encompasses a wide variety of styles and choreographers, and often combines traditional and formal styles of dance with everyday movement.

As contemporary choreographers continue to experiment with the physical and artistic capabilities of the dancing body, so too are the places of performance evolving to accommodate the new range of nontraditional performances. The proscenium theater, which has been the standard performance venue since the 18th century, prioritizes a single viewpoint and formally distances the audience from the performer (figure 3). In an effort to challenge these constraints, contemporary choreographers stage their works in a variety of settings ranging from intimate black box theaters to outdoor public spaces, museums, sidewalks, and even hotel rooms.

Contemporary dance became the vehicle for this project, although

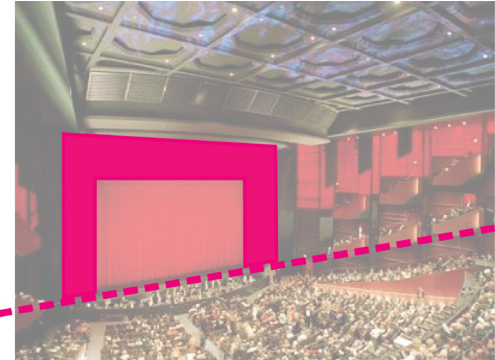


Figure 3: The traditional proscenium theater flattens and frames the view of the stage and separates the audience and performers.

everyday movement has all the same space-creating abilities that we more readily observe in dance performances. The site, Seattle Center, is itself a space of informal performances and unbounded movement. Skateboarders, buskers, street performers, and tourists interact with the spaces at the Seattle Center as audience and performer interchangeably. While this arts complex is home to several formal performance halls, it is the spaces around and between these enclosed theaters that offers the most lively and fluid exchange between viewer and performer. The design for a Center for Contemporary Dance aims to redefine the traditionally enclosed theater by making use of this relationship between everyday performance and public space found at the Seattle Center.

At the core of this project is a proposal for a new theater typology, which reduces the boundaries between performer and spectator and choreography and everyday movement. The stage is bounded only by the direction of the choreographer in this highly adaptable theater and can be configured to enclose the performance space or opened up to engage the public space at Seattle Center. The flexibility of the theater extends to the support and rehearsal spaces beyond the stage: multi-use studio spaces can accommodate performances, rehearsals, events, and exhibitions. Transparent facades further reduce the boundaries between “high art” and public space, turning daily classes into performances that can be viewed throughout the Seattle Center.

1. Bodies and Space:
Creative, Proscriptive, and
Transgressive Movement



1. Bodies and Space: Creative, Proscriptive, and Transgressive Movement

Contemporary architects and dancers share a fundamental concern with the creation of space. As architect Elizabeth Diller has observed, “architects and dancers sort of do the same thing. We’re interested in bodies and space, and we’re interested in overcoming the laws of gravity.”¹ However while dancers articulate space using the ephemeral medium of movement, architects shape and define space using more permanent structure and cladding to achieve spatial enclosure. In both disciplines the body has the capacity to shape space, either via the dancer’s viscous movement on an open stage, or through the body’s use and inhabitation of architectural spaces. At the same time, the moving body is constrained and shaped by space, either by the boundaries of the stage, space-defining physical elements like partitions and walls, and by the social meanings that dictate how users are allowed to occupy a given space. The writings of Henri Lefebvre and Bernard Tschumi, provided a theoretical foundation for this thesis, which draws upon three primary relationships between bodies, movement, and the built environment: the creative capacity of the body,

the proscriptive nature of space, and the transgressive abilities of the body.

In the 1970s Henri Lefebvre and Bernard Tschumi conducted similar theoretical explorations of the relationship between the body and space, which were published in *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre, 1974) and *Questions of Space* (Tschumi, 1975). Both theorists saw the body as the primary means of both interpreting and understanding space. While the power of interpretation is often given to the eye, Lefebvre and Tschumi argued that it is the body that is essential to our understanding of the built environment. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre observes that “it is by means of the body that space is [sensually] perceived, lived—and produced.”³ This notion stems from the epistemological dialogues regarding the relationship between phenomenology and the environment as proposed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty proposed that it is through the physical experiences of the body that we understand the physical environment and respond to it.⁴ This idea of challenging the primacy of the eye as the sole interpreter of space is evident in the work of Francis Bronet and John Schumacher, instructors at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute who designed a collaboration between dance and architecture students. Bronet and Schumacher state that bodily actions are “space-making,” unlike the space of the eye, which is in contrast preexisting, “waiting for our bodily actions”.⁵ The body’s relationship to space is the subject of architects and choreographers alike.

Creative Movement

Bodies have the capacity to create and animate space through movement, gestures, and actions, and their inhabitation and use. In *Production of Space* (1974) Henri Lefebvre writes that “bodies themselves generate spaces, which are produced by and for their gestures....Many such social spaces are given rhythm by the gestures which are produced within them, and which produce them.”⁶ Lefebvre is writing about the ways in which bodies/users imbue a space with meaning over time, producing space in a Marxist sense. Bernard Tschumi appropriated Lefebvre’s concept of spatial production and translated it for an audience of architects in *Questions of Space* (1975). Tschumi similarly, and more literally, explained the idea that bodies can “articulate and order space,”⁷ by drawing parallels between the space-creation of architecture, and that of the modern dancers in the Trisha Brown Company:

“The emphasis given to movement [shows how] dance could articulate and order space. The parallel made between the dancers’ movements and the more traditional means of defining and articulating space, such as walls or columns, is important.”⁸

Tschumi illustrated his theories and the space creative abilities of the body graphically in *The Manhattan Transcripts* (1981) by drawing the paths and motions of bodies as solid forms, as if the body is carving through a viscous

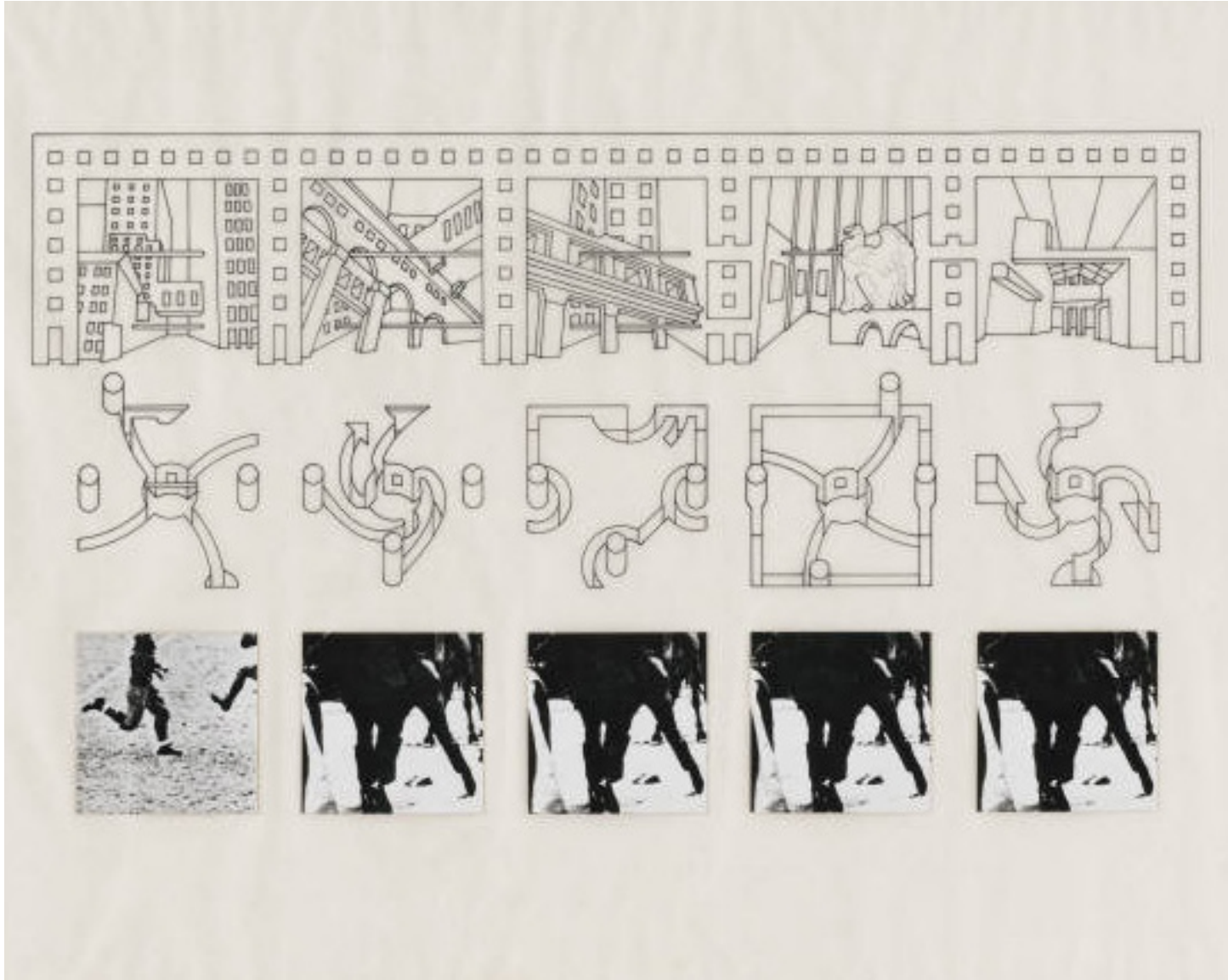


Figure 4: A series of drawings indicating space and movement from *The Manhattan Transcripts* by Bernard Tschumi.



Figure 5: The ephemeral space creation of the dancing body. Time-lapse photo of Heidi Wilson, Dancers Workshop.

element (figure 4). He states that this movement notation “suggests real corridors of space, as if the dancer had been ‘carving space out of a pliable substance’; or the reverse, shaping continuous volumes, as if a whole movement had been literally solidified, ‘frozen’ into a permanent and massive vector.”⁹ This idea of the body in motion shaping space is easily seen, and amplified, in the act of dance; the full range of motion of the body can activate and carve a distinct space out of a void. As Evelyn Gavrilou has observed in her study of the link between dance and architecture, dance reveals how the body produces form.¹⁰ The time-lapse photo at left, and diagram at right, illustrates the this impermanent activation of space as the body moves through it (figures 5 and 6). Choreography of bodies in dance results in a spatial form that is more transitory and ephemeral than the space creation found in architecture.

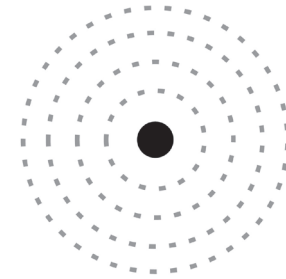


Figure 6: Creative Movement Diagram

Proscriptive Movement

Just as the moving body creates space, so is it conversely constrained and shaped space, by its physical structures and boundaries, and by social meanings of space that indicate use and behavioral patterns. In *The Production of Space* Henri Lefebvre writes that “space commands bodies, prescribing or proscribing gestures, routes and distances to be

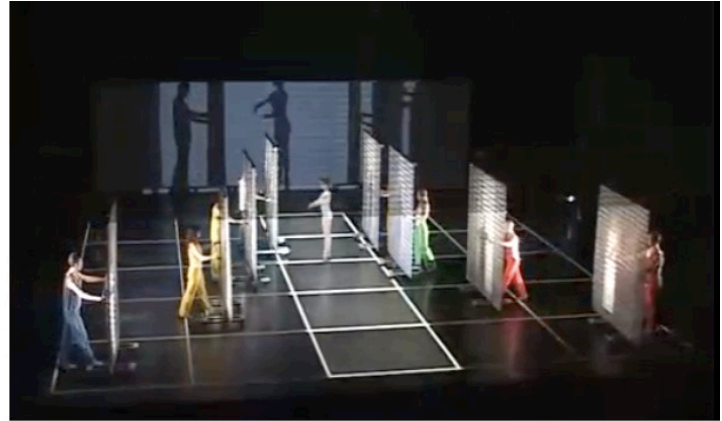
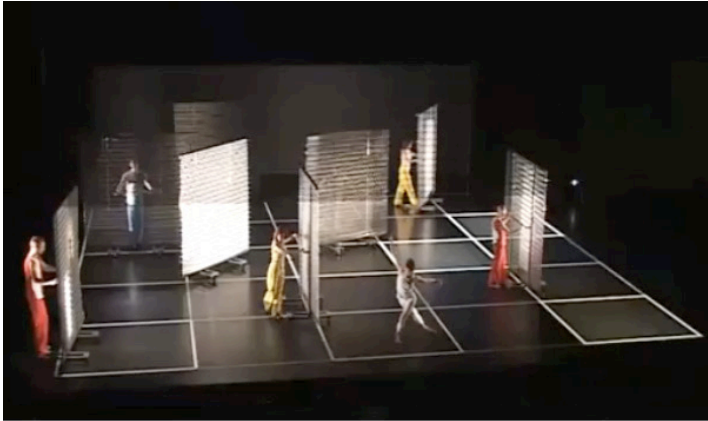


Figure 7: *Cite Radieuse*, Choreography by Frédéric Flamand and sets by Dominique Perrault for the Ballet National de Marseille.

covered. It is produced with this purpose in mind; this is its *raison d'être*.”¹¹ Lefebvre identifies a power structure imbued in the construction of space that exerts control over the movements and activities of individual and civic bodies. However, it is important to note that, for Lefebvre, it is not merely architecture as a physical constraint that determines movement, but also an embedded political and social organization of space. Space can thus be a “means of control, and hence of domination, of power.”¹² Thus gestures are not merely proscribed by physical characteristics of space, but by the historical and social meanings embedded in a space. This physical aspect of this proscriptive spatial relationship is shown in Frédéric Flamand’s choreography for the ballet *Cite Radieuse*, in which the movement of the soloist is constrained by partitions that dictate the dancer’s path and the allowed range of movement (figure 7).

Like Lefebvre, Tschumi recognizes the sociopolitical structure embodied by the built environment, however, Tschumi contends that it is often the architect who exerts control over the movement and actions of bodies as physical and social entities. He identifies specific instances, such as Frank Lloyd Wright’s Guggenheim Museum, where the architect’s perception of the user’s needs results in spaces that determine the user’s actions; “Here,” he writes, “the architect designs the set, writes the script and directs the actors.”¹³ The diagram at right, illustrates how physical and social constraints determine the body’s movement through, and



Figure 8: Proscriptive Movement Diagram

acceptable use of, a space (figure 8).



Figure 9: Transgressive Movement Diagram

Transgressive Movement

The relationship between bodies and space thus can be seen as having a reciprocal nature: space has the potential to direct and influences bodies, and bodies have the potential, at the same time, to be the generators of space itself. Ultimately the generative capabilities of the body can supersede the restrictive nature of space. Stuart Elden has observed that, for Lefebvre, the body is the primary means of resisting the social structures that are imposed by a space. He argues that Lefebvre sees the body as “the site of resistance within the discourse of power in space.”¹⁴ Thus the individual body can be seen as having the ability to recreate space, and to imbue it with new uses and meanings that challenge, and change both the sociopolitical and intended architectural structuring of space.

In this physical and social discourse, bodies have the ultimate upper hand (Figure 9). Precisely because of their mobility, bodies are able to transcend the intended meanings and uses of an environment, by skateboarding in a government plaza or staging choreography under a freeway underpass. Parkour exemplifies the physically transgressive

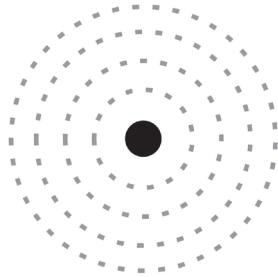


Figure 10: Parkour pushes the limits of the body and challenges the typical ways in which we move through space.

capabilities of the body; in an attempt to push the physical limits of the body, its practitioners scale, jump, and perform gymnastic feats on everyday structures (figure 10).

The complex relationship between the fixed environment and moving bodies is the starting point for further examination of the site and places where these types of movements occur (figure 11). Bodies create space and generate social meaning through physical movement and accretive use patterns. Conversely physical and social constraints dictate movement and acceptable uses of the site. Finally, more adventurous bodies transcend the proscriptive uses and movement patterns of the site, to generate new uses and meaning for existing spaces.

Creative Movement



Prescriptive Movement



Transgressive Movement

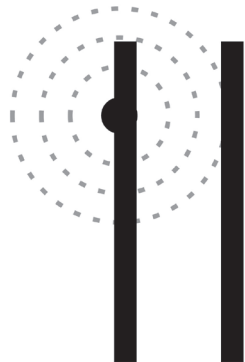


Figure 11: Creative, Proscriptive, and Transgressive Movement Diagrams

Endnotes

¹ Lanks, Belinda. "Bodies & Space: in Creating Two Soaring New Studios for the School of American Ballet, Elizabeth Diller Discovered the Connection between Architecture and Dance," Metropolis. 26.7 (2007): 116-119.

² It is important to note that where Tschumi is looking at space as it relates to architecture and urbanism, Lefebvre is looking at space for a broader materialist study of history and sociology. Stuart Elden, Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible (London: Continuum, 2004), 181.

³ Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 162.

⁴ Vera Maletic, Body - Space – Expression: The Development of Rudolf Laban's Movement and Dance Concepts, Berlin, New York, Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter, 1987, 190-91.

⁵ Frances Bronet and John Schumacher, "Design in Movement: The Prospects of Interdisciplinary Design," Journal of Architectural Education 53, no. 2, (1999): 97-98.

⁶ Lefebvre, 216.

⁷ Bernard Tschumi, Questions of Space: Lectures on Architecture, (London: AA Publications, 1990), 21.

⁸ Tschumi, Questions of Space, 21.

⁹ Bernard Tschumi, The Manhattan Transcripts, (London: Academy Editions, 1981), 10.

¹⁰ Evelyn Gavrilou, "Inscribing Structures of Dance Into Architecture", (4th International Space Syntax Symposium, London, 2003) accessed via <http://old.girshon.ru/txt/eng/32Gavriloupaper.pdf>, 32.1.

¹¹ Lefebvre, 143.

¹² Lefebvre, 26.

¹³ Tschumi, Manhattan Transcripts, XXII.

¹⁴ Elden, Understanding Lefebvre, 189.



2. Bodies and Space: Performer and Audience



2. Bodies and Space: Performer and Audience

The role of the body in the creation of space can be more closely examined in the spaces of dance and the unique relationship between performing bodies and the audience. The theoretical foundations of contemporary dance are a reaction to earlier types of performance and choreography. Tracing the history of performance, from the ballets staged at the royal courts of Europe to contemporary performance, illustrates how dance has evolved from a formal and contained activity to a boundless and democratic art form.

Court Ballet

Ballet, as we know it today, derives from traditions of social dancing, associated with festivals and other entertainment at the royal courts. The participants in these 16th and 17th century “ballets” were members of the nobility, who both performed in the production and observed it from the

edges of the dance floor and galleries above. The diagram at right (figure 12) illustrates the formal layout of the room depicted in a 16th century engraving of the Ballet Comique de la Reine (figure 13). Here the audience and performers are virtually indistinguishable and are likely to switch roles throughout the performance.

The dancing abilities of the nobility served a social purpose, and thus courtiers were expected to participate in the court ballets. As Mark Franko has written, skill and ability as a dancer, and observance of upright posture, was considered to be an indication of status, and thus courtiers necessarily possessed impeccable dancing skills.¹ The ideals of civility and the ability to dance were seen as indistinguishable within courtly life, and Franko has observed that “instructions for positions of the feet while standing are the same in dance treatises and courtesy books”² (figure 14).

The physical and social boundaries between performers in and the audience of the court ballet were typically very minimal. However, an insurmountable class boundary exists, in that the performers of court dances were comprised only of members of the upper class. For those theatrical events where the audience was seated, the royal family and nobility were given the seats with the best and closest view to the action, their vantage point being the privileged perspective around which all set designs were developed.³ As the roles of audience and performer became more distinct, the movement of the dancers was increasingly

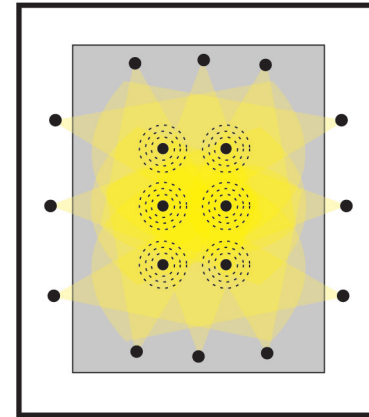


Figure 12: Court Ballet Diagram



Figure 13: *Ballet Comique de la Reine*, 1581



Figure 14: *The Art of Dancing*, Kellom Tomlinson, 1735

oriented towards this privileged, central perspective.

The Proscenium Theater

The 17th century gave rise to ballet's transition from the court to the theater, and concomitantly brought about the celebrated professional dancer. In 1641 Cardinal Richelieu staged the *Ballet de la Prospérité des armes de la France* on what is thought to be the first proscenium stage built at the Palace of Versailles, distancing the dancers from the viewing audience.⁴ Like the earlier court ballets, most of the performers are still members of the nobility, but professional dancers were brought in to perform “grotesque or acrobatic” dances.⁵ By the end of the 17th century, the political and allegorical themed ballets staged for the entertainment of the nobility were increasingly danced increasingly by professional dancers. As the courtly functions of dancing diminished, state-run ballet companies began to emerge under the patronage of the European monarchies.

With the development of the proscenium stage, and the professionalization of dance, the total separation of the dancing body and audience occurred spatially, with each occupying a distinct place in the theater (figure 15). As seen in the engraving of the *Ballet La Princess d'Elide* (figure 16) the proscenium stage frames the moving bodies against

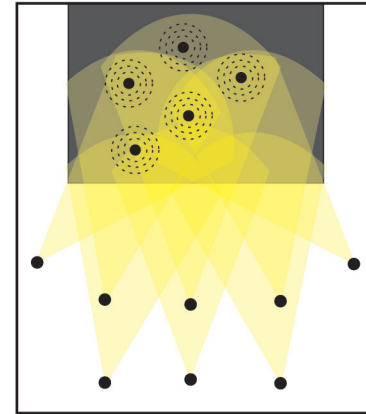


Figure 15: Proscenium Theater Diagram

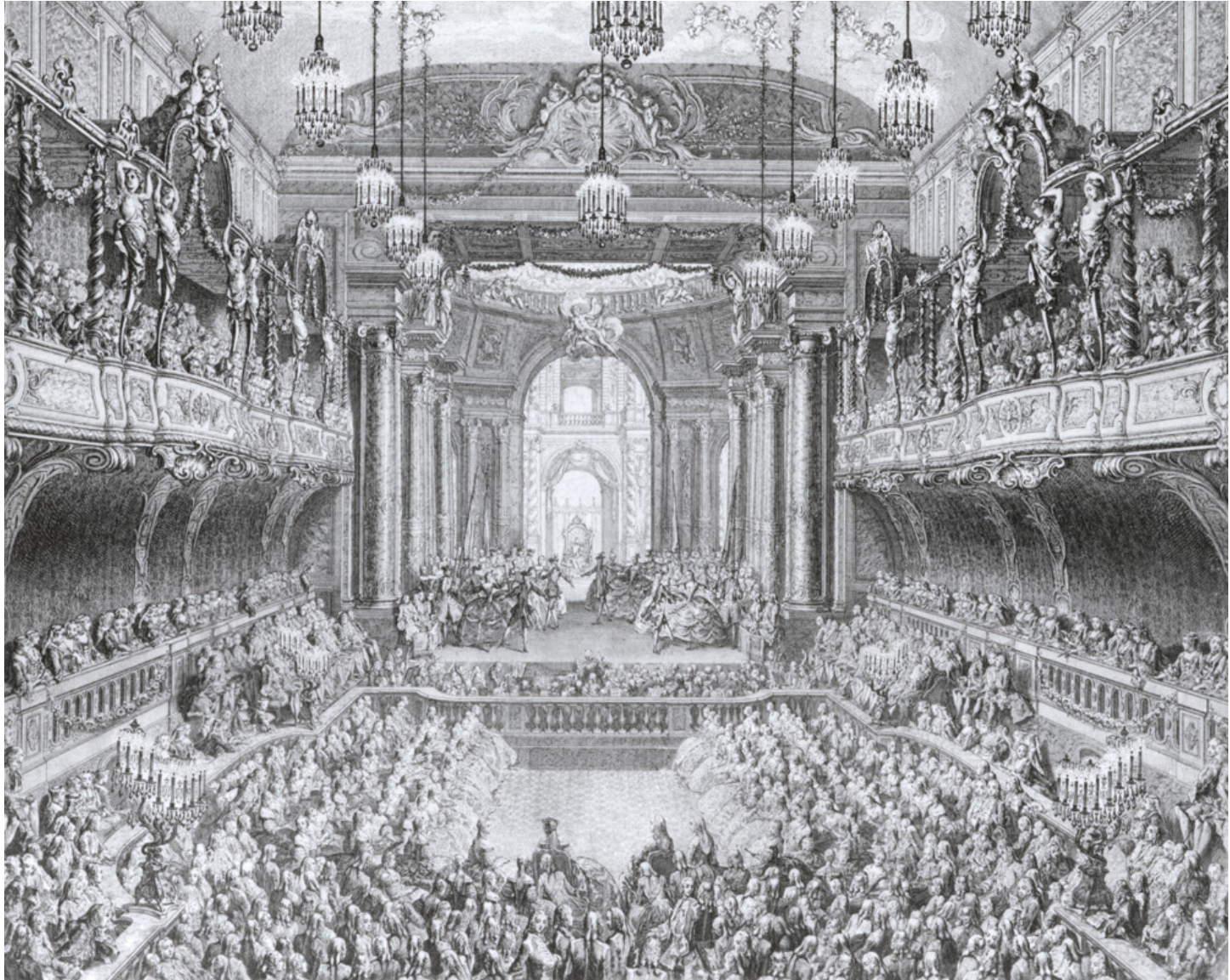


Figure 16: Engraving of the ballet *La Princesse d'Elide*, Palace of Versailles, Paris, 1673-4

a single, flattened picture plane, which the stationary, non-participatory, audience views at a distance. Susan Au likens the effect to that of a painting:

The total stage picture was often likened to a moving painting framed by the proscenium. The choreographer played the role of the painter, selecting what the viewer saw and directing his focus to different performers or areas of the stage.⁶

Additionally, the proscenium stage reinforced the social and political hierarchy of the court; not only by separating the actors and viewers, but also by creating strict seating hierarchies within the audience, giving royalty the seats with the best views, and leaving spaces with obstructed or less ideal views for members of the merchant and lower classes in attendance.⁷ While theater attendance has become more democratic in our contemporary age, the arrangement of the proscenium stage facing the audience, and higher-priced box seating, has changed little in the centuries since its development (figure 17).

Unlike its place of performance, ballet has continued to develop as an art form. Choreography in the 18th century evolved from the pattern-making sequences of the earlier century, to the story telling movement associated with the *ballet de action*. The 19th century saw the development of the Romantic Ballet, which focused on expressive movement and often



Figure 17: A stage set design for the New York City Ballet by Santiago Calatrava, 2010.

featured supernatural and exotic themes. As Susan Au has observed, the technical demands of the choreography, including dancing *en pointe*, increased with the rise of the elite professional dancer in the 18th and 19th centuries.⁸ However, as the steps became more expressive and acrobatic, and less constrained by the requirements of courtly decorum, the physical language of ballet became increasingly formulaic.

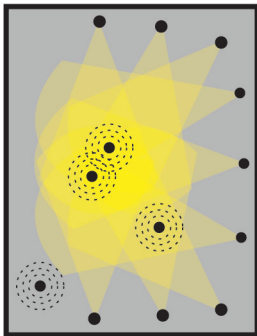


Figure 18: Black Box Theater Diagram

Modern Dance and The Black Box Theater

Choreographers and dancers in the early 20th century, including Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Isadora Duncan, Loie Fuller, and Rudolf Laban, began to look for alternatives to the codified physical vocabulary and narrative plots of traditional ballet. Artists, in the United States in particular, sought a middle ground between “the constraining technique of ballet and the flashiness of vaudeville.”⁹ Many of the companies formed at this time were led by women choreographers, challenging the long-standing patriarchal nature of ballet, and the objectifying nature of vaudeville.¹⁰ The new art form of modern dance, promoted primarily by soloists, and often independently financed, contrasted starkly with the “authoritarian” and grandiose productions of state run dance theaters.¹¹ Many choreographers banded together to rent traditional theater spaces for their

works, while others showed their work in the gardens and living rooms of their aristocratic patrons. The style of dancing was changing to reflect the nature of modern life and everyday movement, The intimate nature of these performances led to the development of in-studio theaters and the flexible black box theater. As indicated in the diagram at left (figure 18), these smaller theater venues, often a large room with lighting and seating, were more accessible to independent choreographers than the traditional proscenium theater. Emerging choreographers lacking the following to fill a large theater could present their works to new audiences in these studio-like spaces (figure 19).



Figure 19: Jonah Bokaer and Anthony Mc-Caw perform in the Brooklyn Academy of Music Black Box Theater.

Contemporary Dance and On-Site Performances

As the art form developed through the second half of the 20th century, choreographers like Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey created works using stark, percussive movements, and more grounded floor work that contrasted with the lightness of ballet. As seen in the image of Elaine Summers's 1964 work *Fantastic Gardens*, improvisation was often used in performance, further distancing dance from earlier codified vocabularies (figure 20). Martha Graham, noting the cultural parallels between modern dance and architecture, stated that "like modern painters and architects,



Figure 20: Elaine Summers and dancers performing *Fantastic Gardens* at the Judson Memorial Church, 1964.

we have stripped our medium of decorative inessentials. Just as fancy trimmings are no longer seen on buildings, so dancing is no longer padded.”¹² Choreographers including Merce Cunningham and Paul Taylor went one step further and proposed that dance need not even tell a story or even be tied to a particular emotion. Other dancers, Twyla Tharp, Trisha Brown, and Pina Bausch among them, continued to challenge the traditional physical and spatial presentation of choreography. Trisha Brown, for example, choreographed a piece in 1970 that consisted entirely of a man walking down the side of a building (figure 22). New settings for dance included galleries, gymnasiums, and outdoor spaces, thus decreasing the separation between audience and performer, and challenging the primacy of any single viewpoint.¹³ As eloquently stated in a 1998 essay titled “Torse: There Are No Fixed Points In Space,” Merce Cunningham sought to “open up the space,” to challenge the fixed focus of the proscenium stage:

What if, as in my pieces, you decide to make any point on the stage equally interesting? I used to be told that you see the center of the space as the most important: that was the center of interest. But in many modern paintings this was not the case and the sense of space was different. So I decided to open up the space to consider it equal.¹⁴

As represented in figure 21, this decentralized performance space has many viewpoints, enabling a three dimensional viewing of the choreography and the dancing bodies.

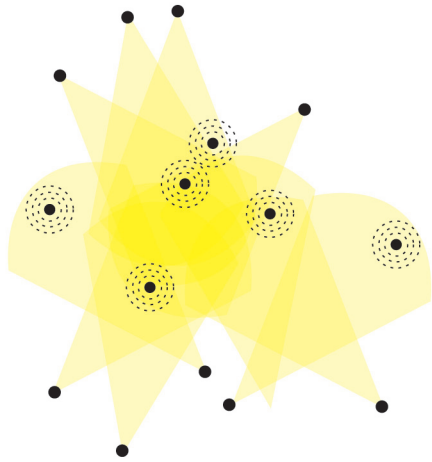


Figure 21: Decentralized Performance Diagram

Contemporary dance continues to evolve, not only by experimenting with choreographed movement, but also with the spaces of performance. As performance has moved into new and unconventional spaces, the separation between audience and performer has been blurred. In the past, rehearsal has taken place in spaces far removed from the public eye, but in the last two decades several major dance companies have moved into new facilities that have lifted the veil on rehearsal activities, inviting the public to view the informal performances that occur daily. (See Appendix II). Creating a relationship between the spaces of rehearsal and performance continues the contemporary choreographer's quest to reduce the boundaries between performer and audience, and encourages interaction between art and the everyday by bringing dance to new audiences.



Figure 22: Man Walking Down the Side of A Building, Trisha Brown Company, New York, 1970

Endnotes

¹ Mark Franko, The Dancing Body in Renaissance Choreography (Birmingham, Alabama: Summa Publications, 1986), 33.

² Franko, 31.

³ Kurt W. Forster, "Stagecraft and Statecraft: The Architectural Integration of Public Life and Theatrical Spectacle in Scamozzi's Theater at Sabbioneta", Oppositions, Summer 1977, 74.

⁴ Susan Au, Ballet and Modern Dance (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 18.

⁵ Au, 23.

⁶ Au, 155.

⁷ Hannelore Schubert, The Modern Theater: Architecture, Stage Design, Lighting, trans J. C. Palmes (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 11.

⁸ Au, 167.

⁹ Julia L. Foulkes, Modern Bodies: Dance and American Modernism from Martha Graham to Alvin Ailey (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 8.

¹⁰ Foulkes, 10.

¹¹ Susan Allene Manning and Melissa Benson, "Interrupted Continuities: Modern Dance in Germany," The Drama Review: TDR 30, no. 2 (1986), 31.

¹² Foulkes, 17-18.

¹³ Trisha Brown, for example, has staged her choreography everywhere from the lobby spaces of an art gallery, to the vertical side of a building. Frederic Flamand had staged his work in factories, swimming pools, and gardens. Raul Berreneche, "Set Pieces," Architectural Record 191, no. 9, 2003, 110.

¹⁴ Merce Cunningham with Jacqueline Lesschaeve, "Torso: There Are No Fixed Points In Space," The Routledge Dance Studies Reader, ed Alexandra Carter (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 29.

3. Spaces of Performance: Seattle Center



3. Spaces of Performance: Seattle Center

Spaces of Performance: Seattle Center

As the definition and structure of contemporary dance expands, the traditional static and fully enclosed performance spaces need to evolve to accommodate the changing art form. Locating the Center for Contemporary dance at the Seattle Center encourages a building design that embraces the everyday movement of the site, and opens the building to new uses and audiences. Seattle Center is most commonly thought of as a space for the performing arts due to the concentration of theaters on the site. But it is the public spaces between the built structures where the informal, everyday performances occur most often. This design for a Center for Contemporary Dance extends beyond the building with a reimagined site that will better accommodate the full range of performances that occur at the Seattle Center, The Center for Contemporary Dance and surrounding public amphitheater will provide flexible spaces for both formal and informal performances.



Figure 23: Site Location and City Connections Diagram



Figure 24: Artist's rendering of the monorail at the Seattle Worlds Fair, 1962.

Seattle Center: A Brief History

The 74-acre Seattle Center site sits north of downtown Seattle, at the base of Queen Anne Hill¹ (figure 23). The complex is the legacy of Century 21, the 1962 World's Fair, which was designed to showcase science, technology, and the possibilities of the dawning space age.² Seattle architect Paul Thiry was selected to oversee the planning of the fair and the civic center that would follow.³ Some ten million people attended the six month long fair, which helped to define Seattle as a world class city (figure 24).

Ownership of the fair grounds reverted back to the city of Seattle on January 1, 1963.⁵ The fair's surviving legacy is as an urban civic center that continues to house both art and science institutions to this day (figure 25). While the Seattle Center is a popular destination for tourists, patrons of the arts, and local families, the site has been criticized for being isolated from the surrounding city.⁴ Circulation through the site lacks clarity and connectivity to the surrounding neighborhood due to the center's history as a pay-for-entry World's fair venue. Many of the primary pedestrian thoroughways are blocked off or disconnected from the city grid (figure 26), and while the perimeter walls of the World's Fair have been removed, the orientation of the fair's remaining buildings is predominately inward (figure 26).



Seattle Repertory Theater:
Seattle Shakespeare Company
Theater of Puget Sound

Intiman Theater:
Possible Cornish College lease

Mercer Arena:
Future home of the Seattle Opera

McCaw Hall:
Pacific Northwest Ballet
Seattle Opera
Nesholm Family Lecture Hall
SIFF Cinema

Key Arena:
Seattle Storm
Seattle Thunderbirds

Northwest Rooms:
SIFF
Vera Project

Center House:
Children's Museum
Center House Theater
Center School (9th-12th public high school, enrollment approximately 300)
Seattle Center Administration
Food Services

Memorial Stadium

Pacific Science Center

Space Needle

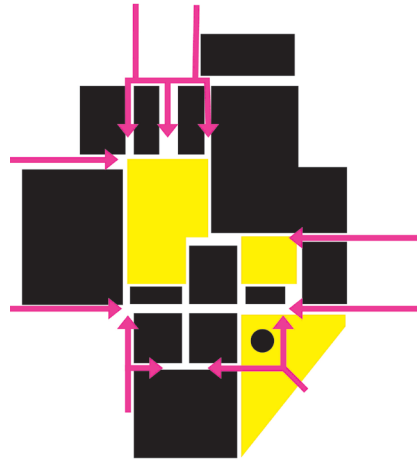
EMP

Festivals
Seattle International Film Festival
Folklife
Bumpershoot

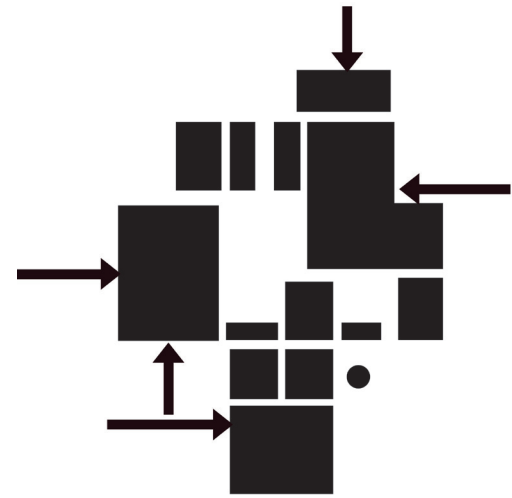
Figure 25: Users at Seattle Center Diagram



Site



Entry Points



Blocked Paths

Figure 26: Circulation and Blocked Paths Diagrams

Several master plans have addressed the anticipated future needs of the site, to further its development as a more active and accessible urban resource. The 1990 Master Plan focused largely on the Center’s “iconic” elements, typically located on the site’s perimeter, which includes the Experience Music Project, McCaw Hall, Fisher Pavilion, Pacific Science Center, and Seattle Children’s Theater.⁶ Where the 1990 plan focused on institutional users, the 2008 improvement plan focuses on the public spaces at the Seattle Center. Representatives from the Center’s major institutions, the City of Seattle, and architectural consultants from MulvannyG2, SRG Partnership, Weinstein A/U, and Gustafson Guthrie Nichol collaborated on a plan that seeks to increase access to the much needed green and recreational spaces within the city core.⁸ A key component of the plan was to increase the site’s everyday use by area residents, beyond tourism and occasional cultural excursions. In the 2008 plan, the 9-acre parcel that is currently the site of Memorial stadium, would contain a multi modal transit hub with a below ground parking garage.⁹ New pathways through the site were proposed to enhance pedestrian access and connectivity to the surrounding city.¹⁰

These unrealized 2008 proposals, were recently revisited in the Seattle Next 50 Urban Intervention design competition (figure 27), which drew 102 submissions from an international roster of designers. The competition focused on the nine acres spanning from Fifth Avenue to

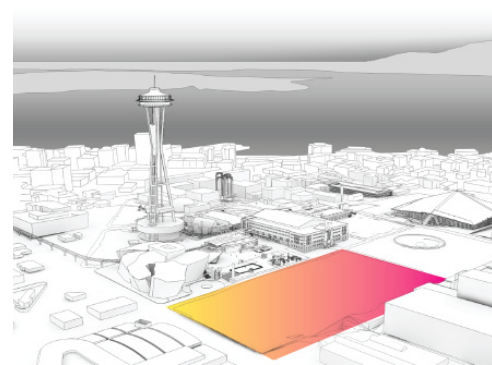
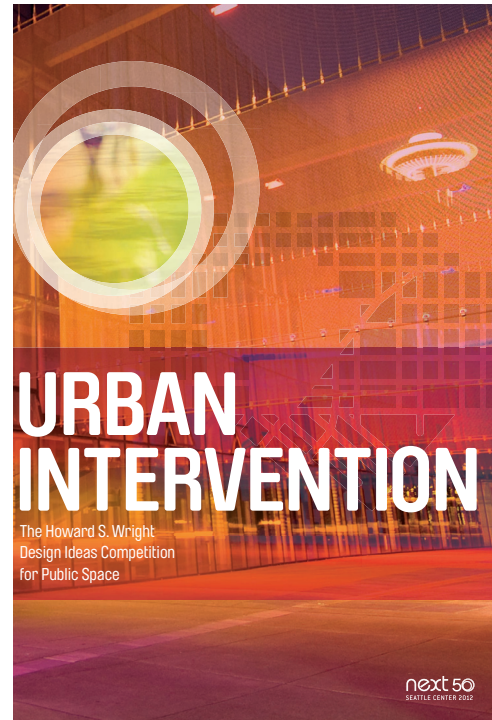


Figure 27: Images from the Seattle Center Next 50 Urban Intervention Competition



Figure 28: Visitors playing at the Seattle Center Fountain

the fountain lawn. The design brief for the competition follows the 2008 assumptions that Memorial Stadium will be demolished and underground parking and transit facilities will be built in its place. This thesis uses the Urban Intervention brief as a starting point for the design for a Center for Contemporary Dance and public amphitheater.

Seattle Center: Today

The Seattle Center is well known as a center for the arts, but the existing venues for dance, McCaw Hall and the Pacific Northwest Ballet School, are for pay-for-entry viewers only. However, Seattle Center is the location of daily informal performances, which are observed by visitors to the site. The fountain, a commonly used space of play and unbounded movement, can be viewed from the adjacent lawn, and the roof of the nearby Fisher Pavilion (figure 28). The skate park, where bodies on boards strive to push the physical limitations of gravity, can be viewed from the surrounding pathways. Buskers and street performers line the paths closest to the Space Needle, interacting with the public. As illustrated in figure 29, Seattle Center is the nucleus of a wide range of choreographed and adhoc performances, where people dance, skate, and play for the entertainment of the general public.



Figure 29: Formal and informal performance spaces at Seattle Center

Endnotes

¹ Knute Berger, “Retro Ideas from the Seattle World’s Fair That Today’s Urbanists Should Embrace,” Crosscut, June 15, 2011: <http://crosscut.com/2011/06/15/mossback/20999/Retro-ideas-from-the-Seattle-World-s-Fair-that-today-s-urbanists-should-embrace/print/>

² Knute Berger, “Back to the Future,” Seattle Magazine, February 2012, 62.

³ Berger, “Back to the Future,” 71.

⁴ Professor’s John Findlay and Jeffrey Oschner have criticized the fair as an example of “suburban invasion” of the city, and an example of a “single-use enclave” that does little to support the urban life of the surrounding city.

Knute Berger, “Retro Ideas from the Seattle World’s Fair That Today’s Urbanists Should Embrace.”

= Knute Berger, “Back to the Future,” 71.

⁶ Center Century 21 Committee and City of Seattle, “Seattle Center Century 21 Master Plan”, Adopted August, 2008, PDF document available at www.seattlecenter.com/admin/fileout.aspx?thefile=724, 3.

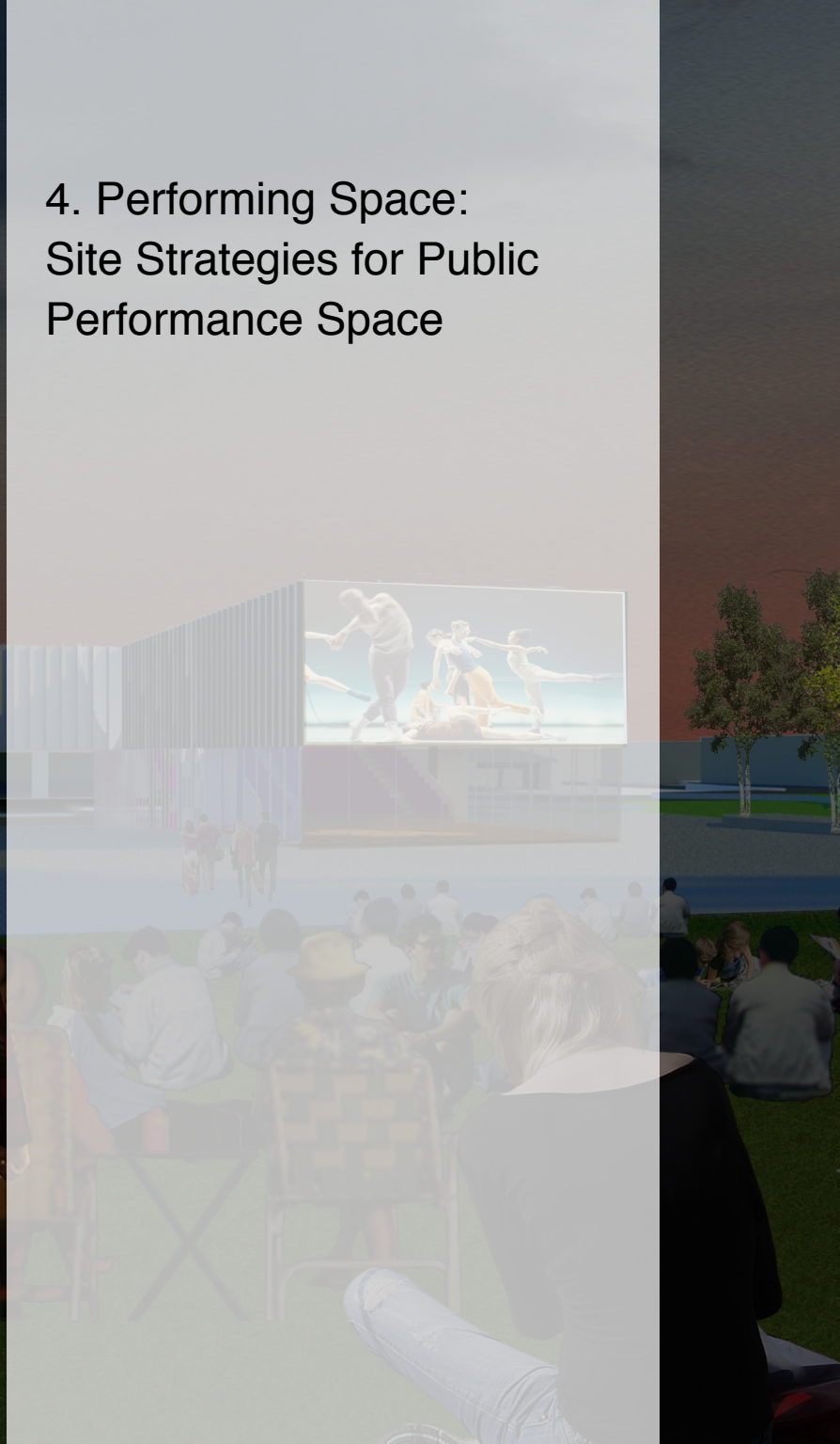
⁷ Seattle Center Century 21 Master Plan.

⁸ Seattle Center Century 21 Master Plan, 5.

⁹ Seattle Center Century 21 Master Plan, 27.

¹⁰ Seattle Center Century 21 Master Plan, 47.

4. Performing Space: Site Strategies for Public Performance Space



4. Performing Space: Site Strategies for Public Performance Space

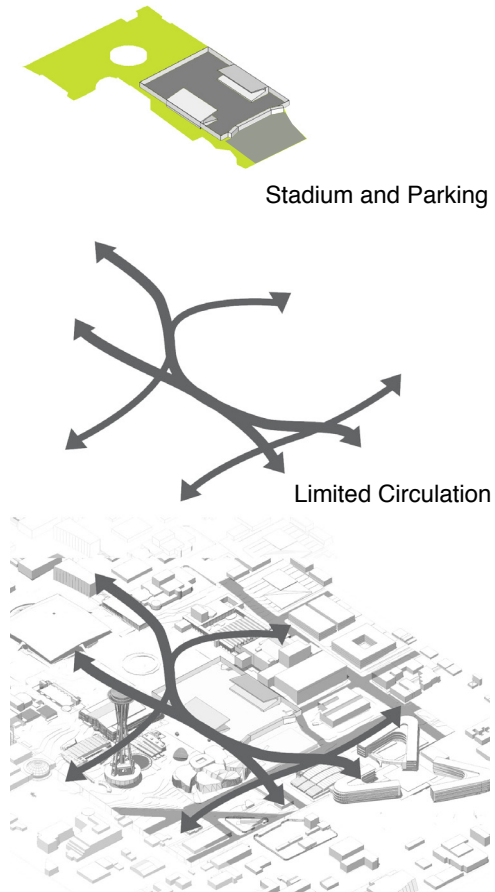


Figure 30: Existing Conditions Diagram

In its location at the Seattle Center, the proposed Center for Contemporary Dance seeks to navigate the realm between the typology of the traditionally enclosed proscenium theater and open public performance space; between choreography on the stage and everyday movement on the site. The 9-acre site spans from its eastern boundary of Fifth Avenue to the western boundary of the fountain lawn. The eastern part of the site is currently used for surface parking, and is an uninviting expanse of pavement. As one moves west into the site, the towering cement walls surrounding Memorial Stadium block views into the Seattle Center and limit the routes available to pedestrians. Access to the sizable green space inside the stadium is typically closed off to daily use, and is only open for concerts and sporting events (figure 30).

In the effort to consider the movement of bodies through Seattle Center, this building and site plan seeks to increase access to the site, and pathway links to the urban grid. The site strategies include replacing the less-often used stadium with a grassy amphitheater. This

outdoor stage works in concert with the Center for Contemporary Dance to accommodate a variety of performances and activities. The northern edge of the amphitheater is bounded by facilities for grounds keeping, and the grading of the site allows these facilities to be hidden beneath a gently sloping green roof. This inhabitable roof space doubles as an east-west pathway across Seattle Center and helps to conceal the needed back of house access to McCaw Hall and Mercer Arena. A lower roadway accommodates loading docks and grounds keeping vehicles, while the landscaped green space and path above serves pedestrians. A network of paths across the amphitheater will enhance connections to the city grid and connections across the site (figures 31 and 32).

The specific siting of the Center for Contemporary Dance, along Fifth Avenue responds to the urban edge of the site without blocking access to the amphitheater or the interior of the Seattle Center (figure 32). The building is divided into two distinct “bars,” so that pedestrian movement flows between and around the building into the amphitheater. The scale of the Center for Contemporary Dance relates to McCaw Hall and Mercer Arena to the north, and the Gates Foundation to the east, while respecting the human scale of the park space to the west.

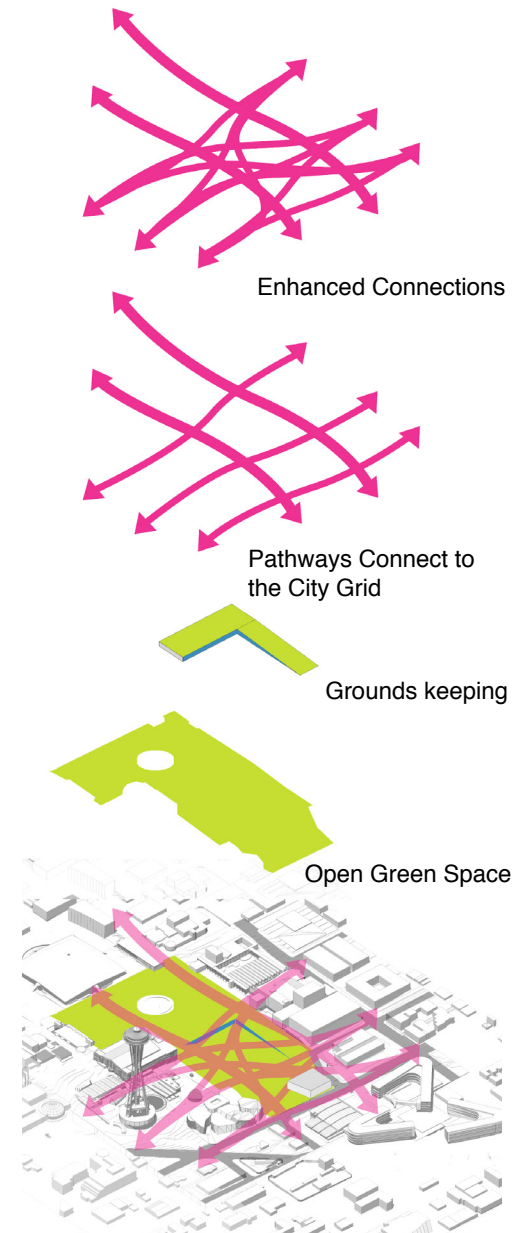


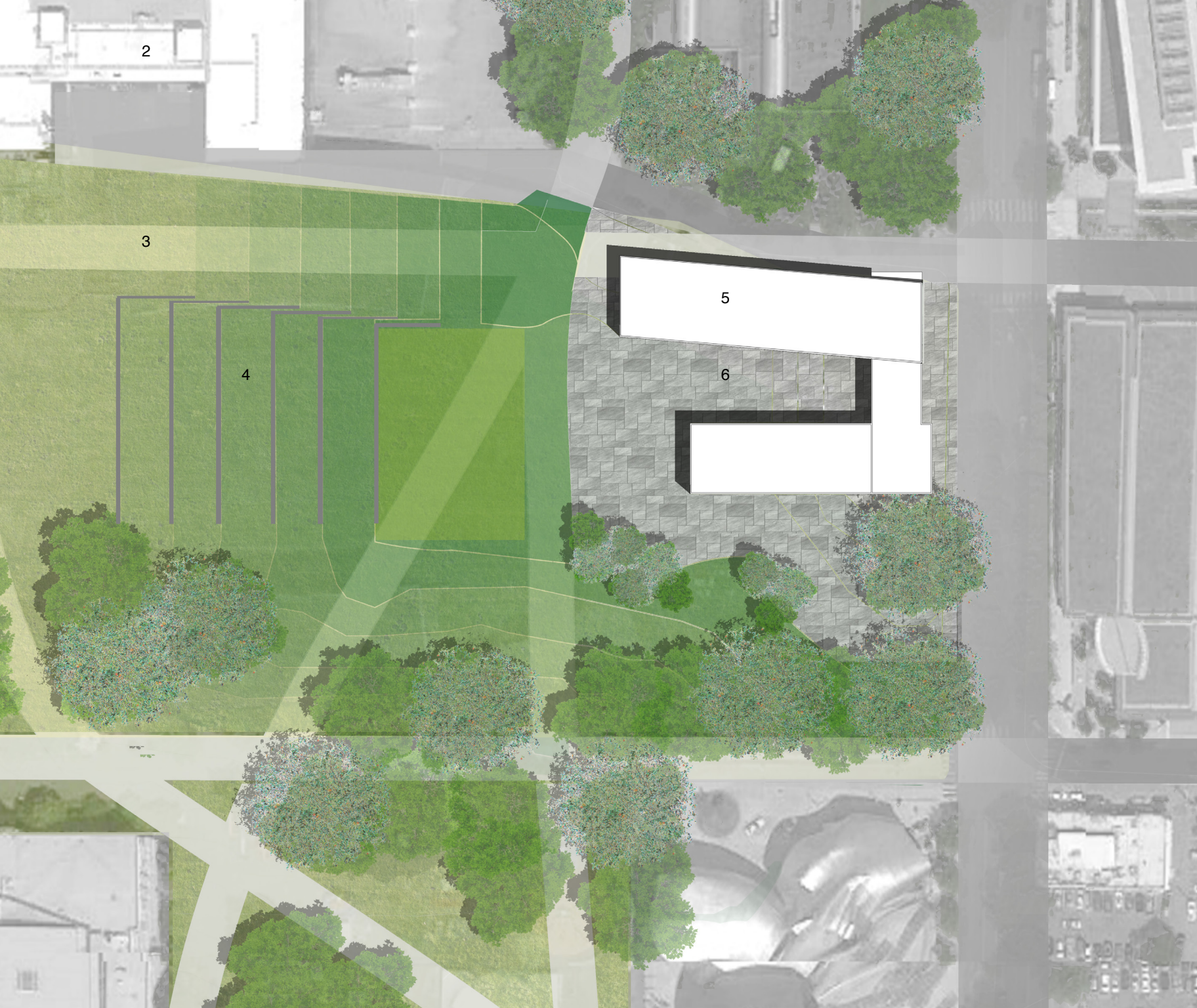
Figure 31: Proposed Site Plan Diagram



- 1 Intiman Theater
- 2 McCaw Hall
- 3 Facilities (below)
- 4 Amphitheater
- 5 Center for Contemporary Dance
- 6 Plaza

① Site Plan
1" = 100'

Figure 32: Site Plan



2

3

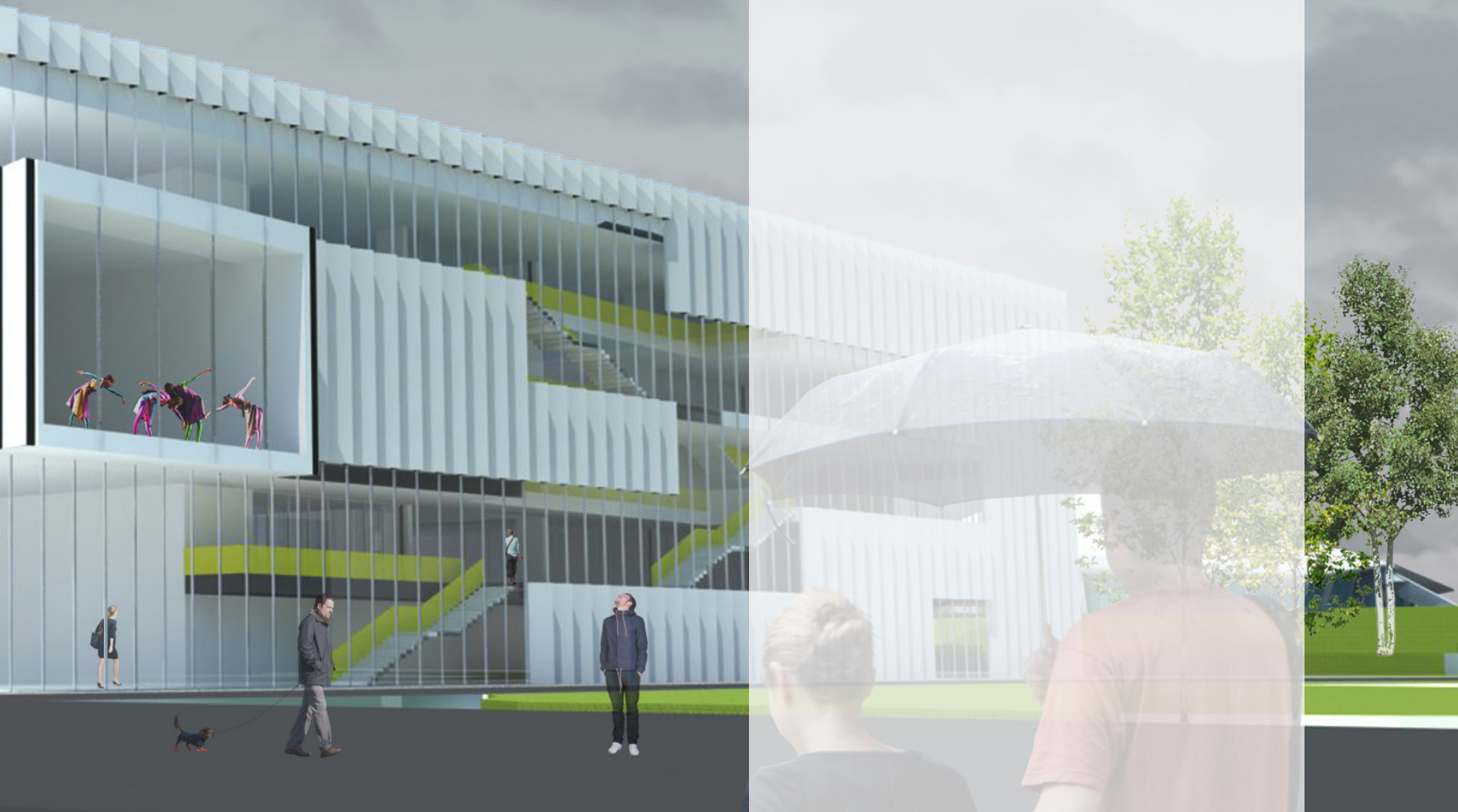
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5

6



5. Performing Space: Design for a Center for Contemporary Dance



5. Performing Space: Design for a Center for Contemporary Dance

The Center for Contemporary Dance, located on the Fifth Avenue corridor, will house a 400-seat theater, rehearsal space for professional companies in residence, and a multi-level school. The Center anchors the east side of the site, along Fifth Avenue, without blocking access to the interior of Seattle Center. The massing and scale of the building is consistent with nearby institutions, but dividing the program into two separate “bars” creates porosity and increases pedestrian access through the site. Physical and visual connections between the rehearsal spaces, performance spaces, and exterior plaza, serve to blur the boundaries between audience and performer.

In keeping with the idea of integration of public space and performance space, the theater is designed as a continuation of the amphitheater (figure 33). A LED wall, facing the amphitheater, can be used for movies in the park (figure 34a), or the LED panels can be moved to the side creating a stage for performances meant to be viewed from the amphitheater (figure 34b). “Stage-benches” in the plaza, can be

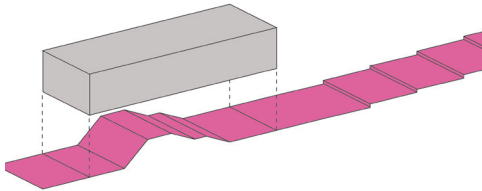


Figure 33: Stage and Amphitheater Diagram

pulled apart and used as seating, or pushed together to be used as an elevated extension of the stage (figure 34c). These benches would be constructed in a manner similar to the sprung floors found in dance studios and theaters.

The program for the Center for Contemporary Dance houses performance and rehearsal space in two distinct but connected program “bars” (figure 35). In addition to the main theater, informal and formal performances can be staged in the theater lobby, upper gallery, or black box studio. Seven studios provide rehearsal space for students and companies in-residence. A scene shop, media library, and administrative offices support the activities of the theater and the school. (See Appendix I for a full program.)

The primary, formal entrance to the theater from Fifth Avenue leads into a large, multi-use lobby (figure 37). The lobby has an oversized staircase that can be used for seating for informal performances or for watching pedestrians (figure 38). From here, visitors can access the main theater, the upper level gallery, and the black box studio theater.

The main performance space is a hybrid between a proscenium and black box theater that can shift from a fixed, frontally framed stage to a more flexible 360° arrangement. The theater has a habitable fly tower that can support a variety of stage configurations and types of performance or events. The sliding glass walls surrounding the stage can be fully

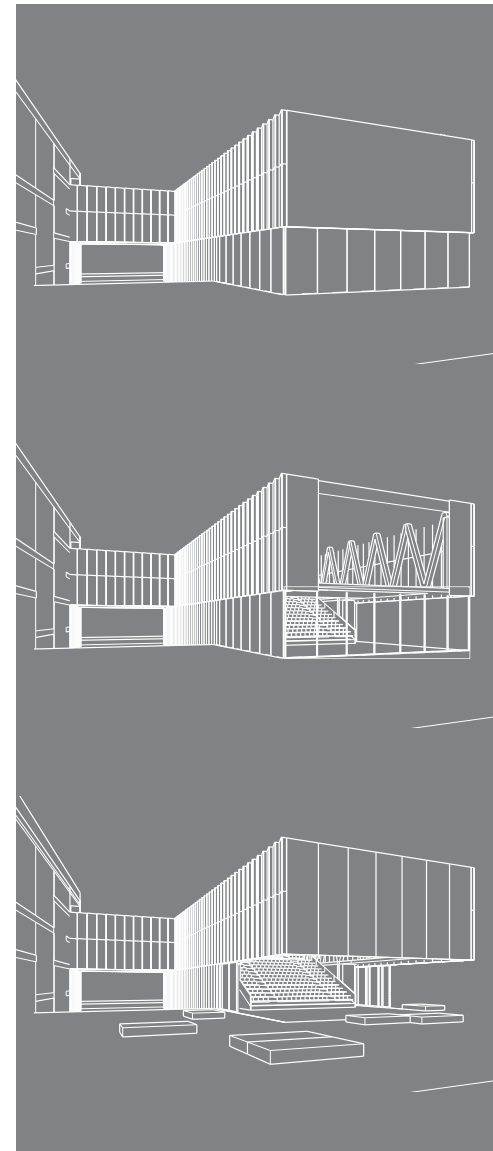


Figure 34: Theater Configurations

removed, allowing performances to spill out into the surrounding plaza (figure 39). Choreographers can configure the steel catwalks surrounding the stage to be part of the performance or to be a space for audience members. Even if the choreographer, or the weather, determines that the doors stay closed, the configurable catwalks contribute to an integration of audience and performer. A truss supported by a series of columns in the lobby enables the theater to be entirely free of walls or columns that might block the flow of activity from the interior to the exterior.

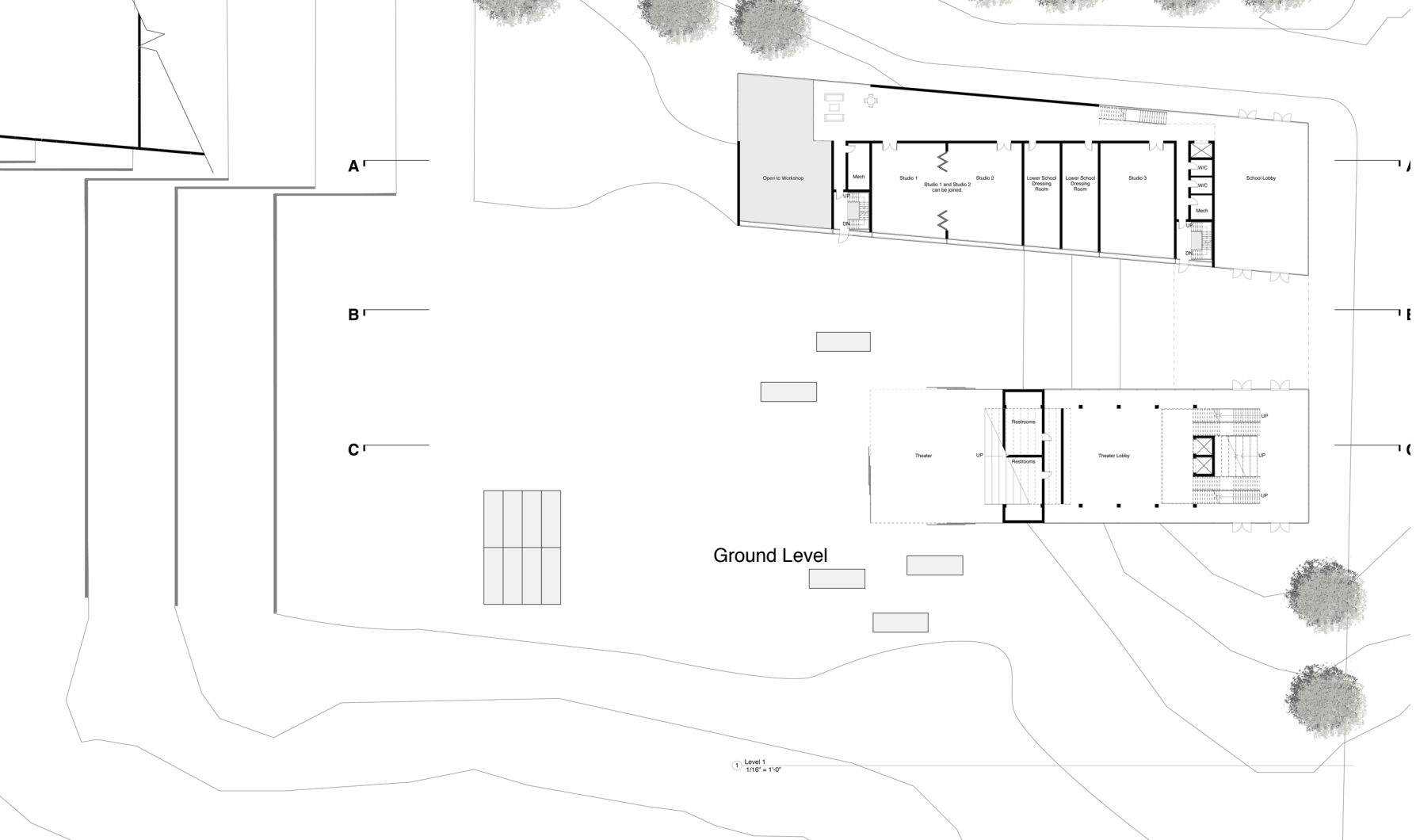
The northern “bar” houses studios for a contemporary dance school and in-residence company use. The main lobby for the school is on Fifth avenue, opposite the theater lobby. Lower level and younger students enter and proceed to the dressing rooms on the first floor. Parents and students waiting between classes can go to the lower school lounge, which overlooks two of the studios below. Upper level adult students and professional company members would follow the stairs up to a dressing room on the third floor, and a lounge on the 4th floor that overlooks the studios below (figure 42). Additional viewing spaces occur at the end of every alternating floor: the scene shop in the basement can be viewed from the first floor, and studios can be viewed from the third and fifth floor overlooks (figure 43). The fifth floor houses the administration, conference space, and a media library where dancers can watch video recordings and study archived choreography. The library opens to a roof deck, which can

also be used for class space or performances.

The school and theater are connected on level two via a gallery and black box studio theater. The black box can be accessed via the school or the more formal theater lobby so that it can be used both as a rehearsal or performance space as needed. The gallery space can be used for theater receptions, school events, or as an additional performance venue. This gallery spans the plaza below, providing shelter for performances and activities spilling out of the theater and school lobbies.

The site sections illustrate this flow of space between the “bars” and from the exterior amphitheater to the theater interior (figure 36). Staggering some of the double-height studio spaces in section provides viewing spaces and visual connectivity between studios and public spaces. The many locations for viewing classes and performances reflects the idea that a reduction of the boundary between performer and audience can be carried over to the rehearsal spaces.

In keeping with the idea that dance should not be closed off from interaction with the public, the plaza side of the school has a double skin façade for transparency and light (figure 41). Shading devices within the facade can be closed for classes with younger students or for private rehearsals. Opaque panels, set at an angle to resemble the folds of a theater curtain, alternate with transparent glazing on the north façade, to strategically reveal the main circulation paths within the studio “bar”.




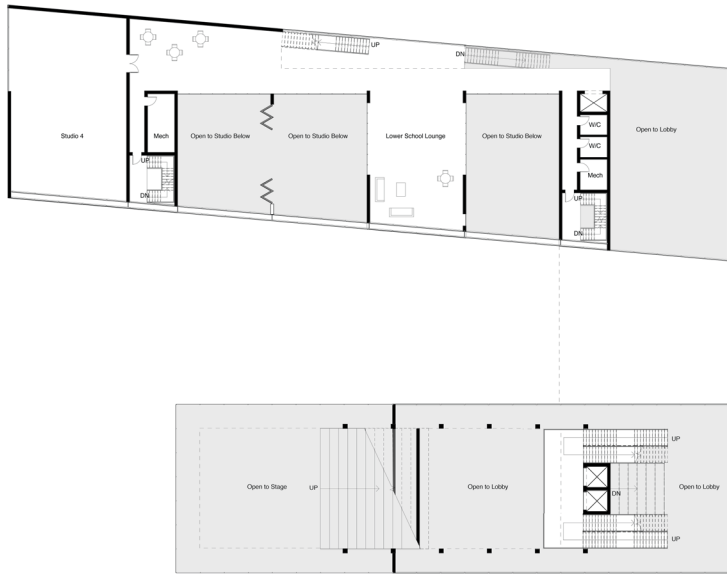

Floor Plans
 1" = 64' - 0"

Figure 35: Plans



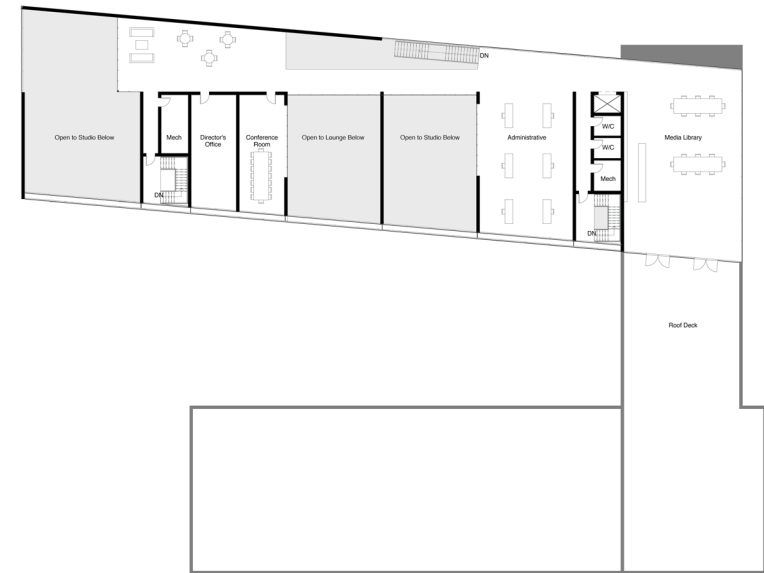
Level 2



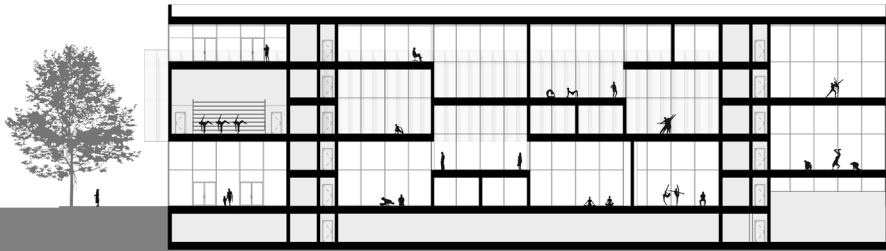
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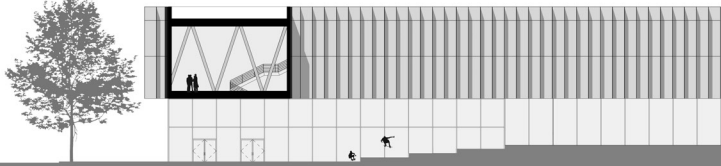
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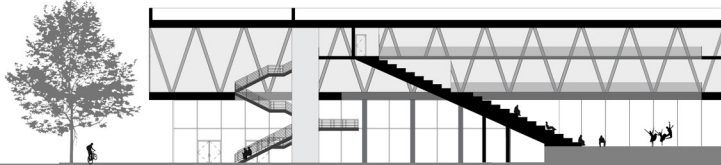
Level 5



Section A-A
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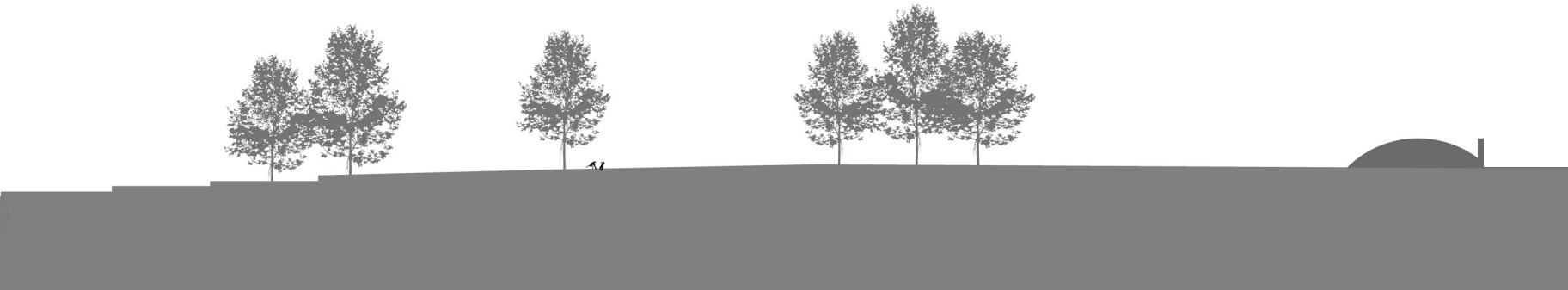
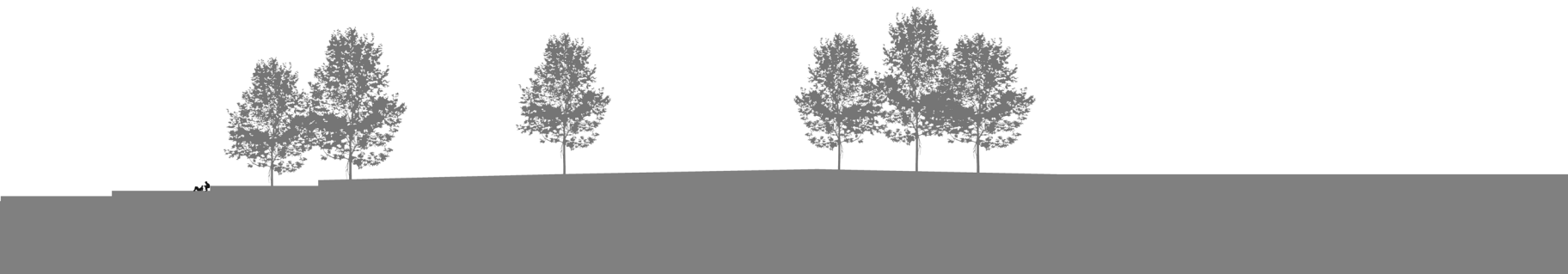
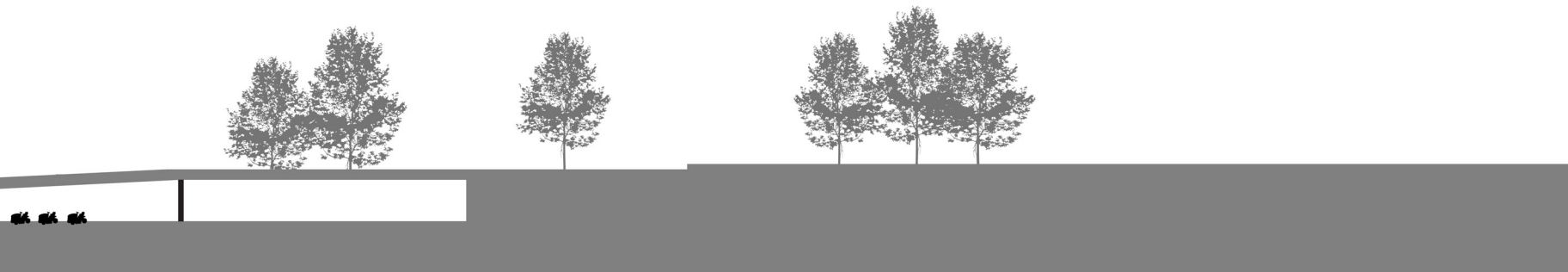


Section B-B
1" = 64' - 0"



Section C-C
1" = 64' - 0"

Figure 36: Sections



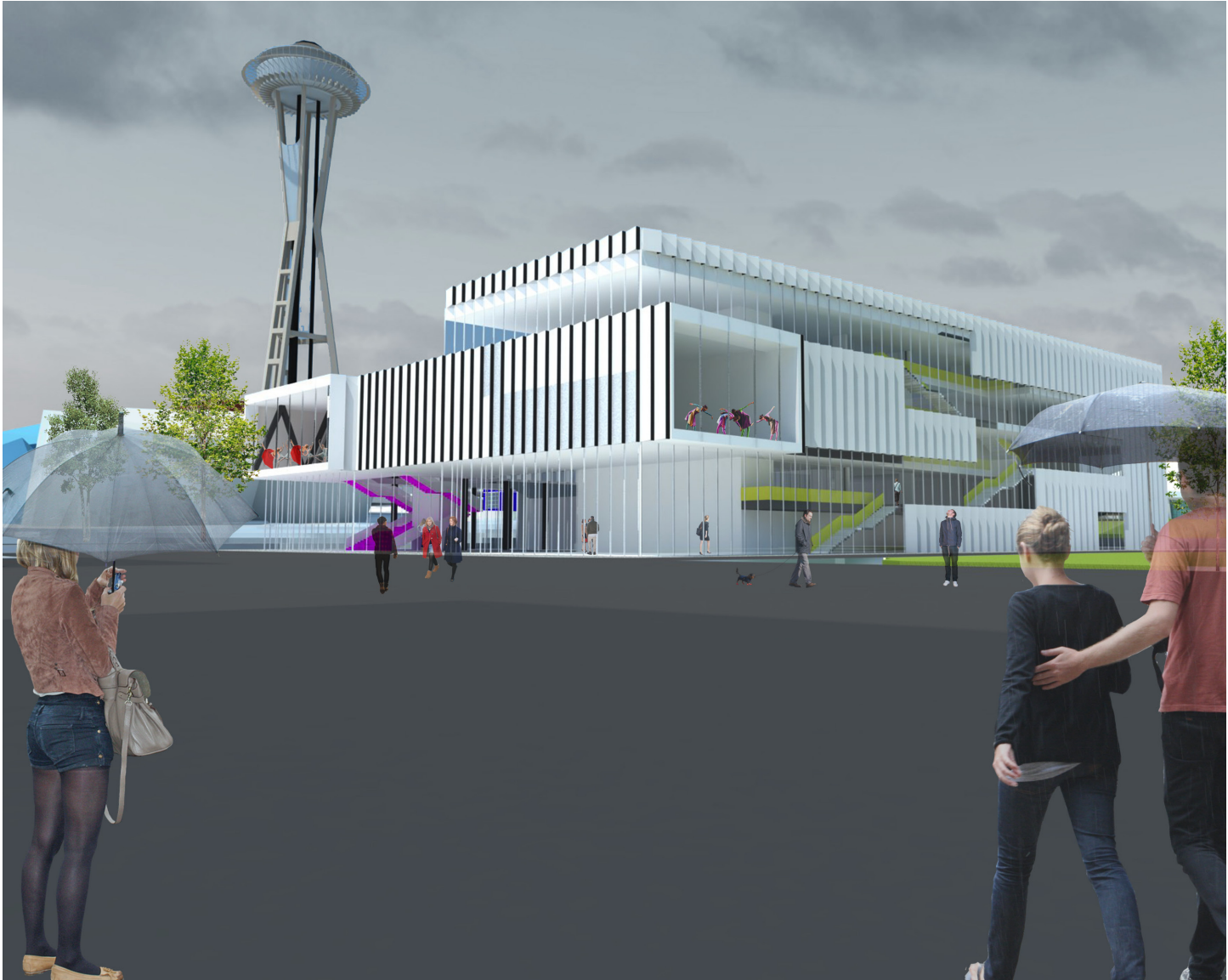


Figure 37: Exterior view from Fifth Avenue. The north facade is composed to reveal the circulation within the studio bar, and to frame the black-box studio theater.



Figure 38: Theater Lobby from Fifth Avenue. A large stair doubles as seating for performances in the lobby or for people watching.



Figure 39: A system of sliding panels can be moved so that performances can spill out onto the adjacent plaza. Benches on the plaza serve both as seating as well as stage pieces.





Figure 40: The amphitheater at night. A LED screen on the east facade plays movies in the park, or broadcasts performances happening inside the theater to a larger audience. The curtain-like facade frames views into the east facing studios.



Figure 41: The south facade of the studio bar is a double glazed system that enables pedestrians to view classes and activities in the studios.



Figure 42: Viewing lounges and extra corridor space provides room for stretching, warming up, and even rehearsing between classes.



Figure 43: Lounges overlook the double height studio spaces, enabling other dancers, parents, and visitors to watch rehearsals.



Conclusion



Performing Space: Conclusion

The design project proposed in this thesis embodies the idea that the boundaries between formal performance and everyday, informal movement, performer and audience, and open public and enclosed institutional space can be blurred. This thesis endeavors to create a new typology of performance space that in its porosity and flexibility is especially well suited to the needs of contemporary dance. Contemporary dance is rarely meant to be viewed through the traditional proscenium stage frame. Providing a stage that can be viewed from all sides, and multiple levels, enriches the experience of the choreography and the dancing bodies.

Seattle Center can be seen as an urban stage, enriched by a wealth of daily performances. This thesis proposes site and building strategies that will support formal and informal performances, without separating the two. Movable and transparent walls physically and visually connect the internal rehearsal and performance spaces of the Center for Contemporary Dance with those of the surrounding amphitheater and plaza. Unlike studios that are closed off from public view, the visibility

of activities within the building contributes to the life of the surrounding public spaces. Similarly, the everyday activities of the site can be engaged and used as inspiration for the artists in residence at the Center for Contemporary Dance.

The Center for Contemporary Dance pushes the boundaries between performer and audience, in a way that supports the evolution of contemporary dance as a democratic, accessible, and avant-garde art form. The exploration of bodies, space, and performance ultimately led to a design where bodies can create space, and where the space itself is not overly proscriptive of how that space is used. Dancers, audiences, and pedestrians engage with and activate the public space of the city. While the space of the Center for Contemporary Dance *can* act a container for dancing bodies, its larger role is to provide a space for unconstrained movement. Blurring the boundaries between public space and performance space opens up a wealth of possibilities for the continued evolution of Contemporary Dance as an art form.



Appendices, Bibliography, and Image Sources



Appendix I: Program

400 Seat Theater		
Stage (56'x48')		2688 square feet
Seating		2250 square feet
Catwalks	2@	1600 square feet each
Light Booth		168 square feet
Theater Lobbies and Event Space		
Main Lobby and Box Office		5460 square feet
Upper Lobby		1600 square feet
Gallery		1800 square feet
Third Level Lobby		900 square feet
Restrooms		1092 square feet
School Lobby		
Reception		2740 square feet
Studios for Company and Student Use		
2 @ 68 ft x 40 ft		2742 square feet each
3 @ 52 ft x 31 ft		1612 square feet each
2 @ 46 ft x 35 ft		1632 square feet each
1 @ 50 ft x 30 ft		1500 square feet
Black Box Studio/Theater (68 ft x 40 ft)		2740 square feet
Media Library		2740 square feet

Dressing Rooms	
Upper Level Women's	800 square feet
Upper Level Men's	700 square feet
Lower Level Girls'	800 square feet
Lower Level Boys'	800 square feet
Viewing Lounges	
Upper Level and Company	1500 square feet
Lower Level / Children's	1600 square feet
Administration	
Conference Rooms	850 square feet
Director's Offices	850 square feet
Open Office	1600 square feet
Admin Lounge / Kitchen	400 square feet
Scenery Shop	2740 square feet
Mechanical	6000 square feet
Storage	4000 square feet
Circulation (includes studio overlooks)	11,800 square feet
Habitable Roof	12,000 square feet

Appendix II:

Public Space and Performance Space Precedents

The Transformable Theater

Total Theatre

Walter Gropius

Dee and Charles Wyly Theater

Dallas, TX

OMA and REX

Prada Transformer

Seoul, South Korea

OMA

Practitioners of the theater arts began experimenting with new modes of theatrical production in the early 20th century. Like their contemporaries in modern dance, they too sought alternatives to the traditional proscenium theater. The stage workshop at the Bauhaus explored a variety of forms that these alternative theaters might take. In 1927 Gropius was asked by director Erwin Piscator to develop a theater with the potential to immerse the audience in the dramatic action of the stage. Gropius, with collaborators Carl Fieger and Stefan Sebök, designed a theater clad in

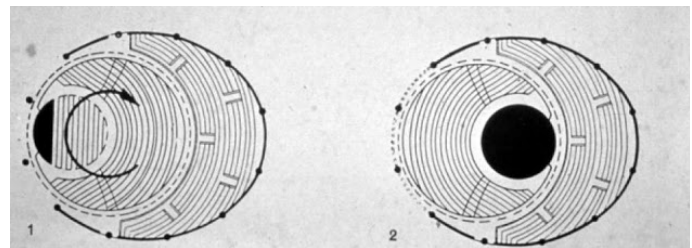
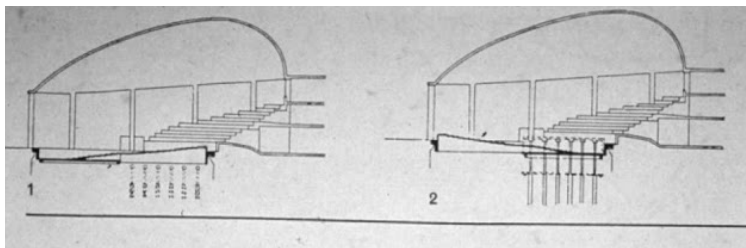
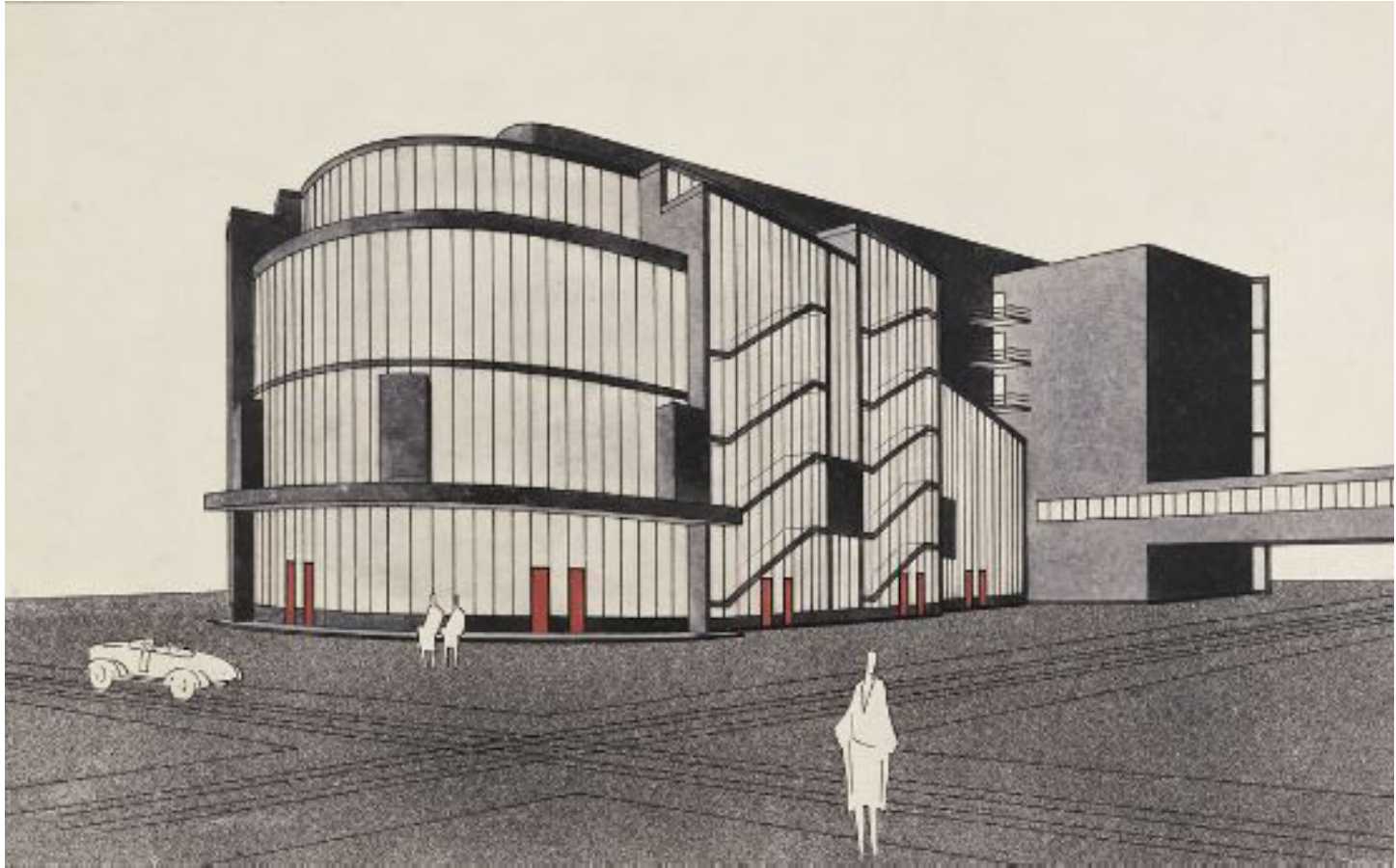


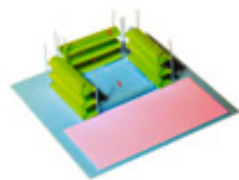
Figure 44: Totales Theater, Walter Gropius

“The director can change the location and the form of the room subjecting the audience, at his will, to the dynamics of his imagination. The goal of this total theater is to overwhelm the audience.” -Walter Gropius

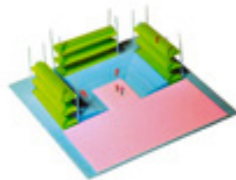
steel and glass—a machine for theater (figure 44).

The elliptical interior of the theater was meant to be entirely transformable. The stage could be elevated, rotated, or sunk to yield a variety of configurations. Gropius designed the perimeter walls to house projection screens and set pieces, thus minimizing the boundary between audience and performer. The configuration of the theater would be entirely up to the director, who could “dismantle all of the wall and ceiling surfaces of the building around the audience and transform them into moving scenes with film like character.”¹ Gropius envisioned a theater where the director could “change the location and the form of the room subjecting the audience, at his will, to the dynamics of his imagination. The goal of this total theater is to overwhelm the audience.”³ The theater is designed to house cinema, arena, proscenium, and theater in the round performances.

The Dee and Charles Wyly Theater, designed by OMA and REX, embodies many of the same concepts and devices as Gropius’s unbuilt theater (figure 45). Located in Dallas, Texas, The Wyly Theater of 2009, can be set in a variety of configurations to house everything from theatrical productions to car shows. Like the Total Theater, the seating and stage configurations of the Wyly are determined by theater directors and event planners. In addition, the ground floor walls are operable, enabling activities to spill out into the surrounding plaza. The supporting elements, such as dressing rooms, rehearsal space, and administrative offices,



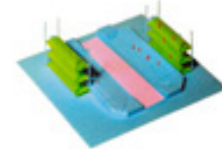
Proscenium



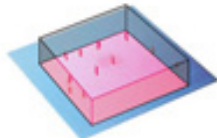
Thrust



Arena



Traverse



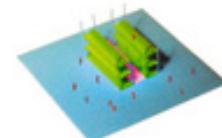
Studio Theater



Flat Floor



Bipolar



Sandwich

Figure 45: Wylly Theater, OMA/Rex

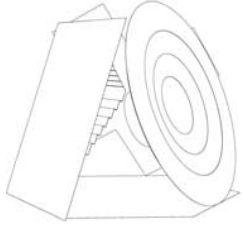
are stacked above and below the theater; the main lobby is sunk below the main performance space, and the support and rehearsal spaces are stacked above forming an 80,000 square foot structure.

The Prada Transformer, designed by OMA's Rem Koolhaas, is a smaller scale version of the flexible performance space. The Transformer, currently located in South Korea, is a four-sided structure that can house a variety of uses, depending on which of the four sides is being used as the base (figure 46). Cranes are needed to place the structure in different positions, with each side serving as the platform housing fashion shows, a cinema, a gallery for art exhibitions, and event space. The steel structure, which appears to have been shrink-wrapped with translucent fabric, stays in one position for a period of time, before being moved and set on another side to accommodate the next use.² As a result, it is less flexible than the Wyly, despite its smaller size.

Performing Arts and Public Space

Lincoln Center, Alice Tully Hall, and the School of American Ballet
New York, NY
Diller Scofidio + Renfro and FXFOWLE

For many critics New York's Lincoln Center embodies some of the



WAIST DOWN



ART EXHIBITION



CINEMA



ART EXHIBITION



Figure 46: Prada Transformer, OMA



Figure 47: Lincoln Center Hypar Pavilion, DS+R



Figure 48: Alice Tully Hall, DS+R

same urban design issues seen at the Seattle Center: this “mega-block” assembly of institutions rests on an elevated pedestal disconnected from the street and surrounding public space.⁴ Recent renovations by Diller Scofidio + Renfro endeavored to address the connectivity of the site while respecting the historic architecture of the space. The architect’s proposal included interventions to the overall planning of the complex, including grading and signage changes to the central and north plazas located between Lincoln Center’s institutional buildings (figure 47), and to individual buildings, such as a controversial restructuring of Julliard’s Alice Tully Hall and renovations of the School of American Ballet. One of the most dramatic changes moved drop-off traffic to a subterranean level, enabling the public space of the center above to more fluidly connect to the lower elevation of Columbus Avenue.

Diller Scofidio + Renfro’s efforts appears to prioritize sight over movement. This prioritization of vision is evident at Alice Tully Hall, where a corner of the sidewalk lifts to become seating with a view into the theater’s lobby (figures 48 and 49). The new, more transparent façade showcases activities within the building, especially those of a studio overlooking Broadway, where the double height windows become a proscenium frame for the dance classes within.

The two studios that Diller Scofidio + Renfro added to the School of American Ballet’s existing space, continue the theme of visual connectivity.



Figure 49: Seating outside Alice Tully Hall, DS+R

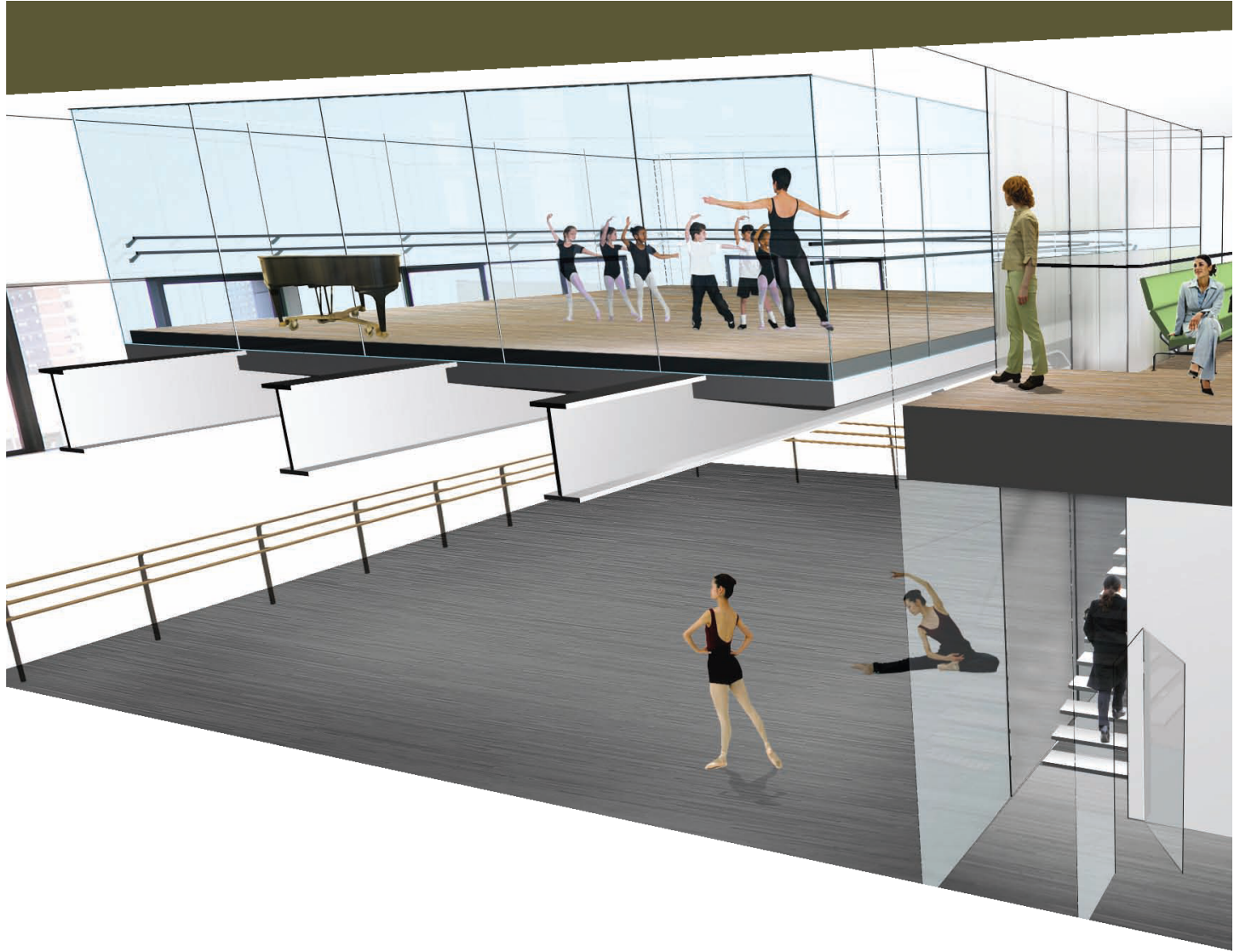


Figure 50: ABT Studios, DS+R

Here, the architects suspended a new “mezzanine” level within two of the existing double height studios.⁵ The new 34’x40’ studios are inset five feet within the existing studio spaces, to take advantage of available light, without diminishing the amount of light available to the studio below. The glass boxes can change from transparent to translucent depending on the desired amount of privacy. When the glazing is transparent, onlookers can view the classes in the upper and lower studios simultaneously (figure 50).

Precedents for Schools of Contemporary Dance

Laban Dance Center

London, England
Herzog De Meuron

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater / Joan Weil Center for Dance

New York, NY
Lu & Bibliowicz Architects

At 88,297 sq. ft., the Laban Dance Center, completed in 2003, is the largest center for dance in the world.⁶ Architects Herzog De Meuron intended the building to be open to the general public, not just the dancers training at the facility.⁷ The thirteen studios are on display to the public, so that even



Figure 51: Laban Dance Centre, Herzog de Meuron

rehearsals are performances. The architects kept the height of the building to two levels, in an effort to promote communication between the various programmatic elements.⁸ Translucent and transparent walls contribute to a sense of semi-public space, separated but visible from the public areas of the building.

The interior of the building was conceived by the architects to be a “cityscape,” containing a 300-seat theater, café, library, production facilities, and studios.⁹ In this “village” corridors become streets and alcoves become public squares (figure 52).¹⁰ The street here is truly internal, and while meant to be public, is demarcated by entrances and exits. However, critics have noted that the Laban Center is more successful than most iterations of this over-tried concept as a “place of social encounter and display”.¹¹

Color, done in collaboration with artist Michael Craig-Martin, is used to create a rhythm both inside and on the exterior of the building. Some elements within the building, such as spiral stairs and curving handrails, make literal reference to the kinds of movement taking place inside the studios and theater.¹² Handrails throughout the building double as ballet barres for stretching and warming up, generating activity along the internal streetscape of corridors.

The 80,000 sq. ft. Alvin Ailey / Joan Weil Center for Dance is wrapped with a transparent glass façade, exposing the frenetic activity



Figure 52: Laban Dance Centre Interior, Herzog de Meuron

of the school to an informal city audience. Sited along 10th Avenue at 55th Street, the school's studios can be viewed from a distance along both streets. The double height studios alternate with single height floors that house administration and service facilities. The notable exception to the enhanced visibility between public space and the rehearsal spaces is the rehearsal studios for the Alvin Ailey Company. These studios are on higher floors, and are thus more difficult to view, so that the works in progress will be a surprise when viewed by a paying audience. The architects placed several studios at street level, where full-length windows enable pedestrians to see the classes in progress up close; some of the neighborhood residents even grab food from a nearby food cart and watch the "show" from benches provided for this very purpose¹³ (figure 53). Students and instructors do have the option of closing the curtains, and the however as one student aptly observed, "Dance is not supposed to be shut up in a room all by itself."¹⁴



Figure 53: Joan Weil Center For Dance, Lu & Bibliowicz Architects

Endnotes

¹ Gilbert Lupfer and Paul Sigel, Walter Gropius: The Promoter of a New Form (Koln: Taschen, 2004), 60.

² David Basulto, "Prada Transformer, Position 1: Fashion Exhibition," 10 May 2009, ArchDaily, Accessed 18 Mar 2013, <http://www.archdaily.com/21727>.

³ Lupfer and Sigel, 60.

⁴ Nicolai Ouroussoff, "The Greening of Lincoln Center," New York Times, 20 May 2010, accessed via http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/21/arts/design/21lincoln.html?_r=2.

⁵ School of American Ballet, "Dancing on Air: School of American Ballet," 2006, pdf accessed via <http://www.sab.org/userimages/Newstudios.pdf>.

⁶ Herzog de Meuron website, Laban Dance Center, <http://www.herzogdemeuron.com/index/projects/complete-works/151-175/160-laban-dance-centre.html>.

⁷ Jonathan Glancey, "Give us A Swirl," The Guardian, 27 January 2003, accessed via <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2003/jan/27/architecture.artsfeatures>.

⁸ Jacques Herzog and Jean-François Chevrier, "Herzog & De Meuron 2002-2006," Croquis 449 (2006): 82.

⁹ Herzog de Meuron website.

¹⁰ Rowan Moore, "Dance's Decorated Shed: the New Laban Centre Provides a Vibrant Update for Some Ideas Long Out of Fashion," Metropolis 22.10 (2003): 184.

¹¹ Rowan Moore, 187.

¹² Jonathan Glancey.

¹³ Anthony Ramirez, "For the Best View of This Performance, Stake Out a Sidewalk Spot", New York Times, 10 June 2007, accessed via http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/10/nyregion/10dance.html?_r=1.

¹⁴ Anthony Ramirez.

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Figure 34: Author's diagram.

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Figure 36: Sections, author.

Figure 37: Author's rendering.

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