

ATELIER SEATTLE:

Engaging Immigrants in the Design, Production and Exchange of Ethnic Clothing

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CHAPTER 1: *Introduction*

Seattle is recognized as one of the most culturally diverse cities in the United States. It has become a destination for many people who have left their native countries—either willfully or in duress—in search of a new life. According to the U.S. Census (2000), more than 17 percent of Seattle’s population was born abroad. Since the late nineteenth century, Seattle has been a center of Asian immigration to the United States, with much of its foreign-born population originating from China, Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines (Chin, 2001). However, recent waves of migration from Eastern Africa, Central America, Southeast Asia and even the Middle East have further contributed to its rich ethnic landscape (See Table 1).

The Chinatown-International District [C-ID] was once a self-contained enclave where nearly all of Seattle’s immigrant and refugee population lived and worked. Due to various social and economic pressures, however, much of this population has relocated to other parts of the city. Several immigrant communities have moved to the more suburban neighborhoods to the south of the C-ID (Abramson, Manzo, & Hou, 2007). Still, the Chinatown-International District remains the hub of immigrant culture and commerce in Seattle. Several social service organizations, based in and around the C-ID, provide assistance to immigrants and refugees by helping them overcome personal, structural and financial barriers. Although these organizations offer needed resources, few are concerned with the maintenance and cultivation of material culture.

TOP COUNTRIES OF BIRTH FOR SEATTLE’S FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION, 2000

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number</i>
Philippines	12,361
Vietnam	11,305
China	11,239
Mexico	7,902
Korea	4,432
Japan	3,250
Ethiopia	2,777
Germany	2,567
United Kingdom	2,565
Cambodia	1,968
Laos	1,885
India	1,416
Thailand	1,411
Russia	1,199
TOTAL of above countries	65,977
TOTAL from all countries	94,952

TABLE 1: Seattle’s Foreign-born Population, U.S. Census 2000, File Summary 3.

This thesis will focus on the cultural significance of clothing, arguably the most telling material artifact. Clothing communicates personal and cultural identity through combinations and permutations of its key characteristics: fabric, texture, color, pattern, volume, silhouette, and occasion (Davis, 1994). In Western society, clothing’s communicative role is relatively ambiguous and ambivalent. For many of Seattle’s immigrants and refugees, on the other hand, clothing can communicate explicit messages regarding ethnic background, religious beliefs, social status, and so on. In many cases, the symbols and meanings woven into a particular piece of clothing—however literal or figurative—play a decidedly more important role than its utilitarian function.

Although many C-ID businesses cater to immigrant and refugee populations, they seldom supply clothing of cultural significance. More than half of Seattle’s immigrant-owned businesses are devoted to retail, the majority of which are food-related (City of Seattle & Nakano Associates, 2004). Consequently, there are few resources for these populations to acquire clothing specific to their respective countries of origin. In addition to being difficult to obtain in Seattle, few immigrants have the means to import or produce ethnic clothing. This inaccessibility forces many to adopt Western styles that lack relative cultural significance. While the adaptation of certain aspects of Western attire is expected, the neglect of significant cultural attributes can result in homogeneity which threatens the welfare and vitality of the city.

By increasing the availability of cultural artifacts, specifically clothing,

immigrants can preserve important customs and traditions. Accordingly, this thesis proposes a multicultural center located in the C-ID—which operates in conjunction with Goodwill and the New York Fashion Academy in Ballard—to engage Seattle’s immigrants and refugees in the production and exchange of ethnic clothing. By participating in the design, production and marketing of clothing, individuals will develop valuable skills which will be useful in their future employment or entrepreneurial endeavors. Consequently, the project will help immigrants and refugees strike an appropriate balance between maintaining their cultural integrity and accessing the city’s social, political, and economic opportunities.



FIGURE 1: Sociocultural Concept Diagram

CHAPTER 2: *Theoretical Framework*

2.1 Literature Review. This chapter presents a theoretical framework for the proposed facility. In order to address issues faced by Seattle’s immigrant and refugee population, it is crucial to understand how immigration has been managed at an administrative and legislative level. The approach taken by many policy makers, planners, and designers has overlooked the multiplicity and dynamism of Seattle’s ethnic landscape. They often fail to comprehend the value of cultural identity and account for its two-dimensional variability. Based on models of immigration outlined by leading social scientists, this chapter suggests an alternative to integrationist [assimilationist] and pluralist perspectives. Pluralistic integration—a strategy that combines certain principles of both assimilationist and pluralist perspectives—provides the best adaptation for immigrants and refugees. Because of its cultural significance and its role in the development of a strong ethnic identity, clothing provides a tool to empower individuals and generate cultural, economic, and social capital.

2.1.2 Immigration: Assimilation vs. Pluralism

The recent increase in Seattle’s immigrant and refugee population has produced an unprecedented level of racial, social and cultural diversity. Although diversity is generally accepted as a normative good, the same presents a variety of challenges for both immigrants and their host communities. How have Seattle’s policy makers, planners, and designers responded to the increases in these populations? How have they addressed issues that arise from multiculturalism?

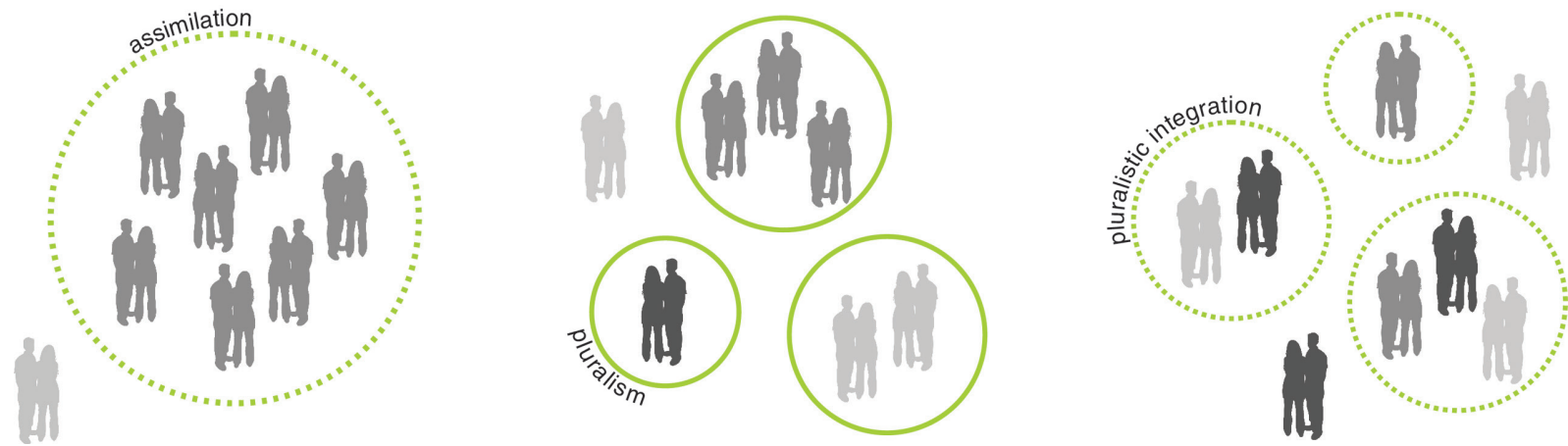
Immigration policy in Seattle has been largely based on two opposing paradigms: assimilation and pluralism. Both perspectives emerged within the last century and still characterize the main sides of the debate (Martin & Midgley, 2006). Assimilationists believe that American society is composed of equal individuals and seek to impose American values and traditions onto the minority culture. They attempt to negotiate diversity by altogether eliminating ethnic boundaries. This approach is symbolized by the ‘melting pot’ metaphor. In contrast, the pluralist approach seeks to preserve cultural awareness by maintaining ethnic boundaries. Pluralists view a multicultural community as a ‘salad bowl,’ a community of equal groups, each with distinctive characteristics (Martin & Midgley).

Although both viewpoints remain at the forefront of the discussion, they fail to adequately approximate the reality of immigrants. Both the assimilationist and pluralist viewpoints are idealistic and rather absurd when taken to their logical extremes (Martin & Midgley, 2006). Assimilation overlooks the importance and persistence of one’s cultural heritage and often results in homogeneity. A pluralist perspective, on the other hand, leads to ethnocentrism and cultural isolation because it “undermines the individual’s freedom to choose their loyalties for themselves” (Martin & Midgley, p. 36). Assimilation and pluralism are both problematic, as neither acknowledges the processes of change that occur between immigrants and their host communities.

2.1.4 Pluralistic Integration and the Cultural Kaleidoscope

How can policy makers, planners, and designers account for the dynamism

FIGURE 2: Immigration Policy in the United States



of Seattle’s immigrant and refugee population? Is there an approach that would better accommodate its diversity and variability? In his book entitled *Send These to Me: Immigrants in Urban America*, John Higham (1993) suggests an alternative strategy termed pluralistic integration. As its name suggests, pluralistic integration is a sort of hybrid of the integrationist [assimilationist] and pluralist viewpoints. It recognizes both integration and ethnic cohesion as worthy goals but does not claim bias to one theory over the other. According to Higham, “pluralistic integration will not eliminate ethnic boundaries. But neither will it maintain them intact. It will uphold the validity of a common culture, to which all individuals have access, while sustaining the efforts of minorities to preserve and enhance their own integrity” (p.244). This perspective is an appropriate alternative to the widely-accepted assimilationist and pluralist viewpoints. It recognizes the dynamic nature of multicultural communities and accounts for two important variables: movement and change (See Figure 2).

Lawrence Fuchs (1990), a highly-regarded scholar of immigration, used the term “kaleidoscope” to emphasize the multi-faceted, layered and dynamic landscape of ethnic communities (See Figure 3). In *The American Kaleidoscope: Race, Ethnicity, and the Civic Culture*, Fuchs rejects the various metaphors traditionally used to describe cultural plurality. He explains:

“No metaphor can capture completely the complexity of ethnic dynamics in the U. S. ‘Melting pot’ ignores the persistence and reconfiguration of ethnicity over the generations. ‘Mosaic,’ is too static a metaphor; it fails to take into account the easy penetration of many ethnic boundaries. Nor is ‘salad bowl’ appropriate; the ingredients of a salad bowl are mixed but do not change. ‘Symphony,’ implies near perfect harmony, but fails to take into

account the variety and range of ethnic conflict in the United States. The most accurately descriptive metaphor, the one that best explains the dynamics of ethnicity, is ‘kaleidoscope.’ American ethnicity is kaleidoscopic, i.e., ‘complex and varied, changing form, pattern, color . . . continually shifting from one set of relations to another; rapidly changing.’ When a kaleidoscope is in motion, the parts give the appearance of rapid change and extensive variety in color and shape and in their interrelationships. The viewer sees an endless variety of variegated patterns, just as takes place on the American ethnic landscape” (p. 276).

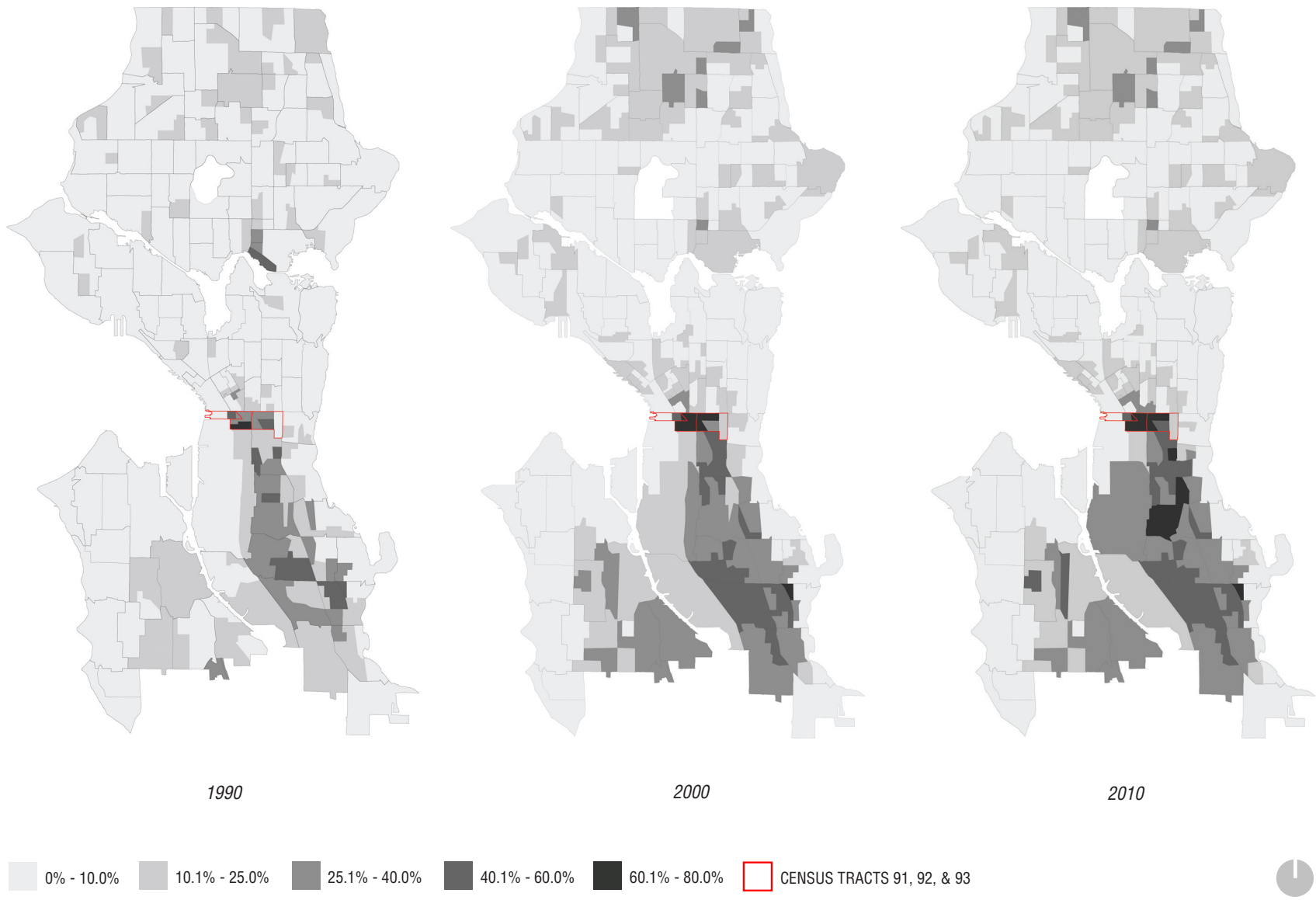
Fuchs’ metaphor aptly illustrates the dynamics of Seattle’s immigrant and refugee communities (See Figure 3). They are more fluid and heterogeneous than ever before and can no longer be conceived of as static enclaves enclosed within clear, identifiable boundaries (Abramson et al., 2007). Seattle’s Immigrant communities continue to grow, transform, and relocate. In the past two decades, these communities have changed dramatically, doubling in population and extending to include people from more than 70 countries (<http://www.census.gov/>). While the C-ID has retained its identity as a Pan-Asian community, it remains in a state of perpetual flux, becoming more and more dynamic and variegated.

Viewed in conjunction with the pluralistic integration model, the kaleidoscope metaphor can be used as a tool to better understand and conceptualize the dynamics of the C-ID. It can help policy makers, planners and designers better serve this community and its inhabitants. In a study published in 2007, Abramson et al. confirm the validity of



FIGURE 3: *Enclave* by Estudio Teddy Cruz

FIGURE 4: Seattle's Dynamic Ethnic Landscape



the kaleidoscope metaphor and substantiate its application to the C-ID. Through a series of workshops organized by Inter*Im, Abramson et al. concluded that “the idea of hearts, or cores, and spines was more important than boundaries. Place identification took the form of strings of landmarks that intersected rather than competed for the same area” (p. 352). In other words, the C-ID is best understood as a network or “space of flows” (Krase, 2002).

2.1.5 Cultural Identity

As immigrants seek to incorporate themselves into the life of their new city, they are faced with an overwhelming number of obstacles. In addition

to language barriers, racial discrimination, unfamiliar cultures, and hostile labor markets, immigrants must address the cultural confusion that often results from being lost in transition (Hanley, Ruble, & Garland, 2008). This confusion leads to a hyper-awareness of cultural difference and a need to clarify one’s cultural identity (Taylor & Osborne, 2010). How can immigrants overcome these obstacles and successfully integrate into their newly adopted communities? Does the process of acculturation require the adoption of one culture in lieu of the other? Or can immigrants become a part of the host community and simultaneously maintain a positive sense of ethnic identity?

Cultural identity is an important aspect of one’s overall identity. It refers to an individual orientation that arises from intercultural living. “It is more than simply the group category or label one chooses; rather it involves a sense of belonging to one or more cultural groups and the feelings associated with group membership” (Phinney, Berry, Vedder, & Liebkind, 2006, p. 75). For immigrants, cultural identity includes both ethnic identity and national identity (Berry, 2006) (See Figure 5). Ethnic identity is made up of characteristics that an individual shares with other members of an ethnic group. These may include shared history, values, behaviors, language, goals, and personality traits (Taylor, 2002). National identity, on the other hand, refers to one’s sense of belonging to the larger society. Both ethnic and national identities are subject to change over time and across generations (Phinney, 2003). They are two dimensions of cultural identity that vary independently; that is, each identity can be strong and secure or weak and underdeveloped (Phinney, et al.). This two-dimensional model

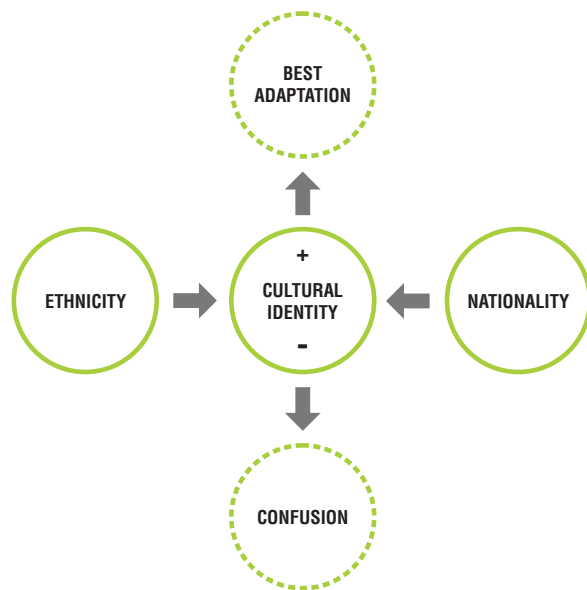
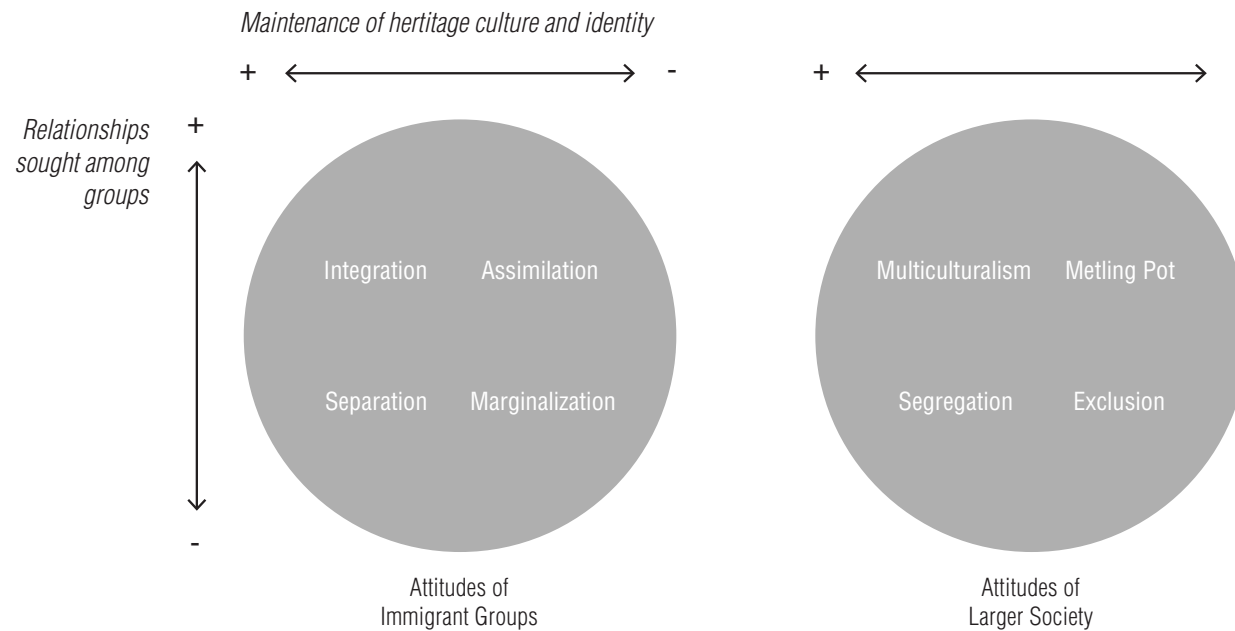


FIGURE 5: Cultural Identity

FIGURE 6: Acculturation Attitudes



adds to complexity but allows for the accommodation of several important variables.

The development of a clear cultural identity is crucial for immigrants and refugees living in multicultural communities such as Seattle's C-ID. Cultural identity can be thought of as an aspect of the acculturation process that focuses on immigrants' sense of self (Phinney et al., 2006). Within the last several decades, a large body of research has established the importance of cultural identity clarity. In a series of studies performed in 2001, researchers found that the combination of strong ethnic identity

and strong national identity promotes the best adaptation (Phinney, et al., 2001). Other studies suggest that cultural identity clarity is positively associated with feelings about oneself and psychological well-being (Phinney et al., 2006). While its effect on adolescents is especially salient, the development of a strong cultural identity is important for all first and second-generation immigrants regardless of age.

The acculturation attitudes of both immigrants and their host communities contribute to the development of cultural identity (Phinney et al., 2006). The resulting paradigm can be understood as a multi-dimensional matrix

that accounts for the attitudes and relationships sought by both groups (See Figure 6). When the host society accommodates ethnic diversity and eliminates assimilation pressures, immigrants are more likely to develop strong ethnic and national identities (Phinney et al., 2001). Host communities must seek to provide an atmosphere that enables immigrants to retain their culture of origin while adapting to the new culture. This type of environment promotes heterogeneity and enables immigrant and refugee communities to thrive.



FIGURE 7: Identity & Dress

2.1.6 *A Hermeneutics of Dress*

“It goes without saying that dress—which cannot be reduced to its protective or ornamental function—is a privileged semiological field: one could say that the *signifying function* [italics added] of dress makes it a total social object” (Barthes, p. 11, 2006).

Identity is expressed externally through material culture. Because of its vast pervasiveness, clothing is often considered the most significant external indicator of cultural identity (Davis, 1994). It communicates through symbolisms attached to its expressive elements: fabric, texture, color, pattern, volume, silhouette, and so on. Combinations and permutations of these elements make up a kind of code, or system of signs, which conveys complex cultural meanings (Eco, 1976). In other words, through dress individuals communicate messages about their identity, thereby situating themselves symbolically in some structured universe of status claims and cultural attachments (Barthes, 1983).

Social and cultural identities are rarely the stable amalgams they are understood to be. They are constantly changing and evolving, reflected as transformations in dress forms (Corrigan, 2008). Moreover, the presence of change—no matter the rate at which it occurs—is what distinguishes fashion from mere clothes (Eicher, Evenson, & Lutz, 2008). The term fashion is often associated with such cultural phenomena as materialism, celebrity and consumerism; however, it is not solely limited to upscale retail establishments and the runways of New York, Milan, and Paris. Nor does it exist exclusively in the collective consciousness of the upper classes. Rather, fashion is ubiquitous—absent only from tribal or classless societies. Sociologist Georg Simmel (1957) writes, “fashion represents nothing more than one of the many forms of life by the aid of which we seek to combine in uniform spheres of activity the tendency towards social equalization with the desire for individual differentiation” (p. 543).

That clothing communicates symbolically—through its apparent vagaries—an infinite number of messages about the wearer, suggests yet another layer of complexity. It is well beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze every variation and subtlety in the significance of dress. Instead, the objective is to identify the importance of clothing and its role in the acculturation process by providing relevant examples from different immigrant and refugee groups living in Seattle.

As previously stated, much of Seattle’s foreign-born population originates from China, Japan, Vietnam and other parts of Asia. Due to the constant and varied pressures of the globalization process, Western dress has become



FIGURE 8: The C-ID Summer Festival



FIGURE 9: 1930s Chinese *Qipao*

commonplace in many of these countries. It has, in large part, replaced traditional dress for everyday wear (Eicher et al., 2008). Nevertheless, people maintain dress forms of their cultural origins for special occasions. For many Asian cultures, ethnic dress has become associated with life course rituals, holiday celebrations and local community events (See Figure 8). This is evidenced by the use of traditional garments such as the Chinese *qipao*, Japanese *Kimono* and Vietnamese *ao dai* on formal occasions (Eicher et al.).

Due to changes in political leadership, China has seen a number of transformations in national dress standards. The Mao suit, for example, was worn by both men and women regardless of physique or personality type during Chairman Mao's reign. As China has undergone social reform, however, dress restrictions have been relaxed and the Mao suit abandoned (Eicher et al., 2008). The *qipao* also called the *cheung sam* (See Figure 9), which originated during the Manchu dynasty in the seventeenth century, has also disappeared from contemporary dress practices with the exception of special ceremonies, holidays and festivals (Steele & Major, 1999). Although no longer worn on a daily basis, the Chinese maintain a cultural aesthetic of dress originating from garments such as the *qipao*. The predilection for smooth, lustrous fabrics such as silk, for example, can be understood as relating to China's long history in the silk trade. Other elements such as intricate embroidery, mandarin collars, and the use of bold color are prevalent in Chinese dress. For the Chinese, cultural identity is reflected in the subtleties and nuances of contemporary dress practice (Eicher et al.).

In parts of Asia, some youth relish their global connections by adopting Western styles of dress. However, they adapt them in a way that reflects their cultural heritage. This is demonstrated by the street fashion scene in Tokyo's Harajuku and Shibuya districts. Subcultures such as the Ganguros, Mambas, and Lolitas have created an entirely new fashion aesthetic. While the individual parts of a look are borrowed from Western clothing styles, they are combined and juxtaposed in a way that is specific to a particular group. The resulting ensemble, which may be outrageous, radical and extraordinary, visually expresses the shared values, attitudes and norms that bind these groups together (Kawamura, 2006).

The “meaning” of dress can vary tremendously depending upon the wearer, the occasion, and the place. This apparent shift in clothing's significance can be understood in terms of its context-dependency (Davis, 1994). When removed from its original context, the meaning of a particular piece of clothing is altered. Oftentimes its signifying function is intensified, communicating certain messages about the wearer in a more concrete manner. Traditional Indian dress forms such as the *pagri*, *kurta*, *salwar kameez*, and *sari*, for example, take on modified—albeit somewhat diluted—meanings in Western society (Pendergast, S., Pendergast, T., Hermsen, & Gale, 2004).

Worn by women in India and other parts of South Asia, the *sari* (See Figure 10) is an unstitched dress-like garment with a clear communicative role (Alkazi, 1983). In its original context, the sari can signify any number of messages depending upon the way it is wrapped or draped. It can reflect



FIGURE 10: Indian *Sari*



FIGURE 11: Women wearing the *hijab*

the wearer's caste status [the Indian concept of social stratification], region of origin, or religious relationship to a specific deity (Eicher et al., 2008). In Western society, the *sari* is viewed primarily as a symbol of the wearer's ethnicity. As a result, its more complex meanings are often overlooked. Despite its misinterpretation, many members of the Indian diaspora who have settled in Seattle choose to wear traditional clothing as a reflection of their heritage.

Recent migration from North Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East has resulted in a significant increase in Seattle's Muslim population. One of the most recognizable [and controversial] pieces of clothing worn by Muslim immigrants is the Islamic veil (Sanders, 2003). The veil is not limited to one variety; rather, it has several variations—*abaya*, *burka*, *chador*, *hijab*, and *nikab*—each with different meanings (Eicher et al., 2008). In Seattle, the most common variety is the *hijab*. The word *hijab* (See Figure 11) refers to the styles in which Muslim women use large pieces of cloth to cover their hair, neck and shoulders while leaving the entire face open (Shirazi, 2001). Although many Westerners view the veil as an obvious sign of oppression, it has come to represent the opposite for many Islamic women. Significations of the veil vary dramatically. Some are straightforward while others are ambiguous. In all cases, however, the veil indicates the wearer's religious devotion—an important aspect of identity (Saroglou, Lamkaddem, Van, & Buxant, 2009).

2.1.7 *Clothing in Seattle*

Despite its large immigrant and refugee population, Seattle has few

resources for obtaining ethnic clothing. Many of the retail establishments that provide such clothing [particularly those in the University District] cater to cultural tourists, effectively alienating the very people for whom the clothing was originally intended. There are several fabric stores [Stitches, Nancy's Sewing Basket, and online retailer Aiko's Asian Fabric] that stock ethnic textiles, but few immigrants have the financial means or proper equipment to produce the clothing themselves.

Although Seattle is rarely thought of as a fashionable city [plaid shirts and hiking boots usually come to mind], there is a relatively large portion of the population that is interested in clothing and fashion. This is evidenced by increasing number of fashion schools and other institutions that offer fashion design and marketing programs. The Art Institute of Seattle, New York Fashion Academy in Ballard, and International Academy of Design & Technology, for example, have seen increased enrollment numbers. Although few immigrants and refugees have had the opportunity to attend these schools, many of these institutions are open to the possibility of an outreach program involving that population.

2.2 Precedent Analysis. This thesis proposes a multicultural, hybrid typology consisting of three elements: education, production and exchange. Accordingly, the precedents analyzed in the development of the project are reflected in some portion of the program or social agenda. Taking cues from the Inner-City Arts and the Fab Lab organizations, this project seeks to empower marginalized individuals and affect social change. Unlike other hybrid typologies such as the modernist utopia and

the constructivist social condenser, the project does not aim to influence behavior. Rather, it seeks to make resources available to an often overlooked and underappreciated population. The exchange [marketplace] component of the program was influenced by indoor and outdoor marketplaces including East London's Petticoat Lane and several speculative projects from a 2010 design competition.

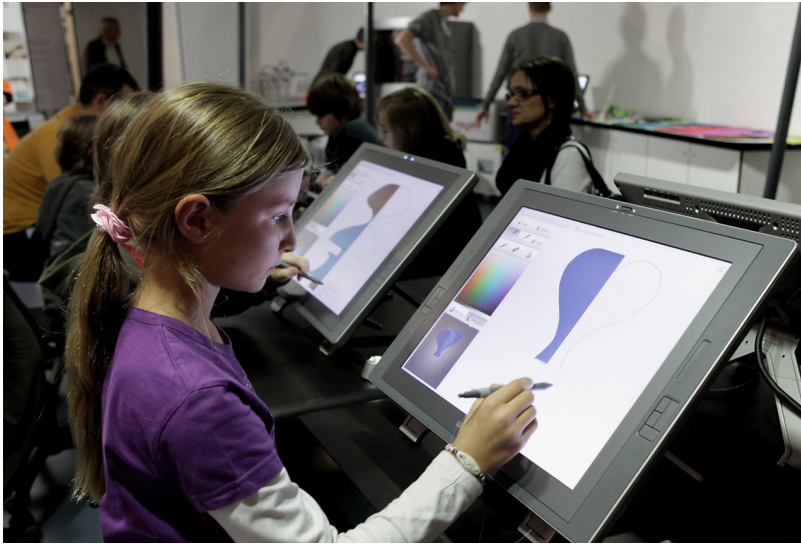
2.2.1 *Small Scale, Big Change*

A recent exhibit at New York's Museum of Modern Art showcased eleven so-called "new architectures of social engagement" (Lepik, 2010). The objective of the exhibit was to present small scale architecture that is both socially conscious and aesthetically appealing. Among the politically-



FIGURE 12: Case Study: Inner-City Arts

FIGURE 13: Case Study: Fab Lab



charged designs was a community center by Michael Maltzan Architecture called Inner-City Arts (See Figure 12). Located in downtown Los Angeles' skid row, Inner-City Arts serves over 30,000 urban youth by providing access to art services and facilities. Underprivileged youth, who would otherwise not have access to the arts, are given an opportunity to study and experience artistic media such as painting, ceramics, sculpture, drama and animation (Lepik). Through the production of material culture—in this case art—the Inner-City Arts project aims to empower individuals of a marginalized urban community.

2.2.2 Fab Lab Organization

Fab Lab is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing digital fabrication tools and facilities to the general public (See Figure 13). It was originally developed as an outreach project at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1998, but has since spread to include facilities in 21 countries (<http://fab.cba.mit.edu>). The primary objective of the Fab Lab organization is to give individuals access to cutting-edge manufacturing equipment, so they can make products that are generally perceived as being limited to corporate-scale fabrication (Lassiter& Djalali, 2008). By localizing production, Fab Lab effectively promotes craftsmanship and neutralizes mass production. Although there is not a Fab Lab factory in Seattle, several small businesses, such as Capitol Hill's Metrix Create: Space, are providing fabrication tools and facilities to the public.

2.2.3 Public Markets

A major portion of the program is devoted to exchange including both retail

and wholesale markets. Accordingly, the structure, spatial composition and potential social interaction of different market types were studied. East London's Petticoat Lane, for example, is a street market that offers a wide variety of ethnic clothing, shoes, and accessories. It is a daily market which acts as an agent of social interaction in a dynamic multicultural community. Despite its informal atmosphere, certain "market Laws" guide the ethics of trade in the marketplace (Tangeries, 2008).

M_ART, an international design competition that took place last year, focused on redefining the concept of the "market" as a commercial space, reinforcing the value of handwork and promoting direct contact between the artist/craftsman and the client. Proposals varied from real-life interventions to purely speculative designs. Many of the projects addressed the marketplace as a dynamic urban space. One such proposal located in Budapest (See Figure 14) was designed as a "highly adaptable market structure" that would adjust to changes in the city's demographic and economy (Kiss-Gal, Z., Kiss-Gal, G., Mango, & Peter, 2010).

2.3 Conclusion. Assimilationist and pluralist strategies overlook the dynamism of both immigrant communities and their host societies. The pluralistic integration model, in contrast, allows for both movement and change. It cultivates an atmosphere of inclusion—one that accommodates ethnic diversity and eliminates assimilation pressures. A strategy of this sort allows immigrants to maintain the customs and traditions of their homeland and successfully integrate into American society.

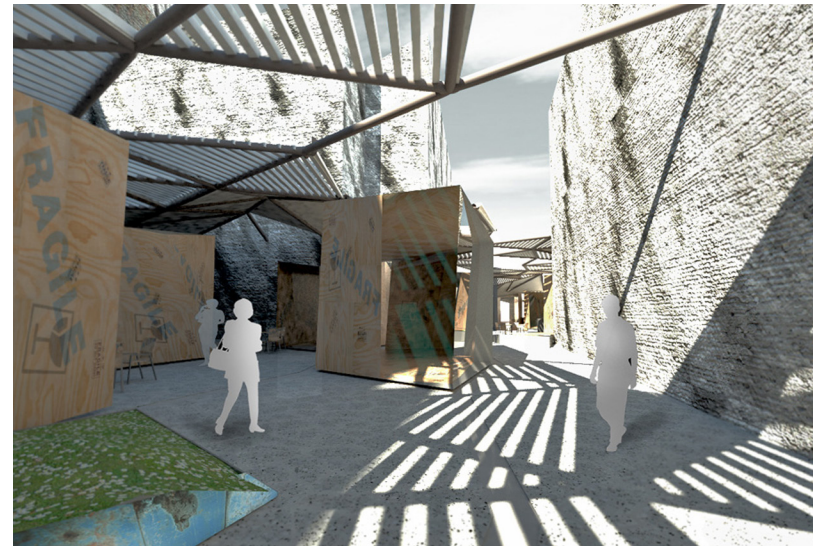


FIGURE 14: Case Study: M_Art Competition Entry

In addition to the problems that arise from migrating to a foreign land, immigrants must also deal with the confusion that arises from cultural insecurity. As a result, they must negotiate cultural difference and evolve their cultural identity [a fusion of ethnic and national identity]. Despite differences in political theory, social scientists agree that the development of a clear cultural identity is crucial for immigrants and refugees living in multicultural communities such as the C-ID. The realization of a pluralistic integration model enables immigrants to strike an appropriate balance between maintaining cultural integrity and integrating in to their newly adopted community.

Clothing—an important cultural artifact—visually communicates messages regarding cultural identity. It plays an important role in the development of a positive sense of identity, particularly to those who find themselves on the outskirts of mainstream society. Although several immigrant groups have adopted Western clothing styles, they maintain the dress forms of their cultural origins for special ceremonies, holiday celebrations and local community events. In other words, members of a particular ethnic group are joined together by cultural similarities expressed externally through dress.

CHAPTER 3: *Methodology*

3.1 Project Goals. The previous chapter established the significance of dress and its role in the development of a strong cultural identity. Due to the homogenizing pressures of assimilation, however, many immigrants have been forced to abandon traditional styles in favor of Western dress forms. The identity of many first and second-generation immigrants is at risk of being lost in translation. Accordingly, this thesis aims to promote the development of a strong cultural identity by engaging individuals in the production and exchange of clothing. Through clothing and dress, immigrants can preserve their cultural heritage and/or develop a new aesthetic that reflects their evolving ethnic and national identities. The project seeks to empower individuals by facilitating the mutual transfer of knowledge and skills acquired from the design and production process. In this regard, clothing provides a common vocabulary giving people from diverse cultural backgrounds the opportunity to engage in a meaningful dialogue.

3.1.2 Site Criteria

To maximize the project's influence, the site must satisfy the following criteria: central location, neutral ground, access to public transportation, proximity to amenities, and sufficient outdoor space (See Table 2).

3.2 Program. The program has been developed as a hybrid of three distinct building typologies: education, production and exhibition. These elements are to be linked by informal community market spaces intended to fuse

SITE REQUIREMENTS

- **CENTRAL LOCATION:** *The site must be located in a place that can be easily accessed by Seattle's diverse immigrant and refugee communities.*
- **NEUTRAL GROUND:** *The site must be located in a place that does not have strong associations to any one group.*
- **ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION:** *Since much of Seattle's immigrant and refugee population lives outside of the C-ID, the site must be near public transportation.*
- **PROXIMITY TO AMENITIES:** *The site should be close to public amenities such as green spaces, marketplaces and restaurants.*
- **OUTDOOR SPACE:** *The site must also be large enough to accommodate an exterior marketplace and allow for growth and change.*

TABLE 2

FIGURE 15: Program Diagram



the seemingly disparate programmatic pieces (See Figure 15). The building will be designed to function much like a collaborative art studio, so as to encourage an open dialogue between patrons. The education spaces will include design studios, career advisement spaces and classrooms that may also function as community flex space. The production spaces are to be situated within the existing structure and include large community workshops consisting of sewing rooms, fabric dyeing and screen printing stations and laundry. The exchange spaces will function much like those of a public market and will include small-scale retail and wholesale spaces as well as informal showrooms. The clothing donation warehouse and recycling center will be run in conjunction with Goodwill Industries. Donated clothing and fabric will be recycled, reused and resold (See Table 3).

3.3 Site Analysis. The Chinatown-International District is a unique

multicultural neighborhood. It has been a center of immigration for much of its history, and is home to the US Immigration Office—Seattle’s equivalent to New York’s Ellis Island. Although the majority of its inhabitants are of Asian descent, the C-ID remains heterogeneous to the highest degree. It is often considered one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the Western United States. Urban theorists such as Jane Jacobs, William Whyte, Lewis Mumford and Kevin Lynch, have argued that diversity of this sort “is one of the most important conditions of a good (vital, well-functioning) human settlement” (Talen, 2005, p. 215). Although much of Seattle’s immigrant population has been dispersed among the neighboring communities, the International District remains the center of immigrant culture and commerce.

3.3.1 History

As one of Seattle’s oldest neighborhoods, the C-ID is rich with history and

culture. It is a multi-ethnic community located on the southern edge of the city's commercial core. The district was officially born in 1910 after the completion of the Jackson Street Regrade (See Figure 16)—a large-scale city project to fill the tide flats that once covered the area (The Wing Luke Asian Museum, 2006). Since then, the C-ID has been a center of Asian immigration to the United States.

The Chinese were among the first foreigners to settle in Seattle (See Figure 17). In the late nineteenth century, labor contractors brought an estimated 15,000 Chinese to the Pacific Northwest to work in the canning, lumber and railroad industries (Chin, 2001). The first Chinese Quarter in Seattle was located in what is now Pioneer Square. Many Chinese established themselves as merchants, and by 1880 the Chinese population had grown to nearly 400 people (Chin). Over the next several decades, the Chinese gradually established new quarters along King and Washington Streets—the core of today's Chinatown. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the Chinese population in the district had increased very little due to anti-Chinese sentiment among Seattleites.

Attracted by its inexpensive housing and storefronts, immigrants from Japan and the Philippines began to settle alongside the Chinese in the C-ID (Chin, 2001). Around the turn of the century, the Japanese community (See Figure 18) established a Nihonmachi or Japantown bordering the new Chinese quarters (Wing Luke Asian Museum, 2006). Migration from the Philippines peaked in the 1920s, and by 1930 the Filipino population had more than tripled. Like their Chinese and Japanese predecessors, the



FIGURE 16: Jackson Street Regrade. <http://db.wingluke.org/images/005/1997.029.009.jpg>



FIGURE 17: <http://db.wingluke.org/images/007/1999.060.212.jpg>



FIGURE 18: <http://db.wingluke.org/images/9066/2000.015.081.jpg>

	<i>Tract 90</i>	<i>Tract 91</i>	<i>Tract 92</i>	<i>Tract 93</i>
Total Asian population	2134	2083	1836	2602
Percent of total population	42%	60%	30%	30%
Chinese and Taiwanese	5%	37%	14%	10%
Percent of Asian population	10%	61%	46%	33%
Filipino	8%	9%	8%	6%
Percent of Asian population	18%	15%	28%	18%
Japanese	11%	3%	1%	9%
Percent of Asian population	27%	6%	3%	30%
Korean	8%	1%	3%	1%
Percent of Asian population	20%	1%	11%	3%
Vietnamese	9%	9%	3%	3%
Percent of Asian population	22%	15%	9%	10%
Other Asian ethnicities	3%	2%	3%	6%

TABLE 3: C-ID Asian Population

Filipinos were heavily employed in the canning and lumber industries. Because the Philippines were U.S. territory, however, residents enjoyed relatively loose restrictions on immigration, which allowed their numbers to rapidly increase (Chin, 2001).

Decades of war, poverty, and famine created a strong wave of migration from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos in the 1970s. Due to their late arrival, the majority of these immigrants settled just north of the Chinatown-International District in an area referred to as Little Saigon (See Figure 18). Today, the Vietnamese are the third most populous Asian sub-group in Seattle behind the Chinese and Filipinos.

3.3.2 Demographics

The C-ID's built environment continues to be shaped by waves of migration. Although its demographic is predominately Asian (See Table 3), the district now includes immigrants from over 25 countries. Ethnicities represented in the C-ID include Asian [56%], African-American [15%], Caucasian [15%], Hispanic [5%], Native American [3%], and other [6%] (US Census Bureau, 2000). The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the percentage of foreign-born persons living in the C-ID has increased to an unprecedented 59% (Allenberg, 2004). Astonishingly, this statistic ignores the children of these immigrants who are often perceived as immigrants despite having been born in the United States. Although the C-ID has traditionally been characterized as having a large elderly [55 and older] population, recent census data indicates an eight percent increase in the number of persons ages 18 to 55 living in the district in the last decade.

The estimated median household income in the year 2000 was very low at \$11,201 per year. In fact, 49.3% of the population lives below the poverty threshold (US Census Bureau).

3.3.3 Zoning

Seattle’s zoning laws designate five different zones within the Chinatown-International District: Commercial 1 [C1], Commercial 2 [C2], Neighborhood Commercial 3 [NC3], International District Mixed [IDM], and International District Residential [IDR] (See Figure 20). The C1, C2 and NC3 zone designations accommodate most uses; however, manufacturing facilities in the NC3 zone are limited to 25,000 square feet. The IDM and IDR zone designations include requirements that involve the maintenance of the district’s historic character. Most uses are acceptable in the IDM zone, outside of hazardous or high-impact uses. The IDR zone, on the other hand, is limited primarily to residential development. All five zone designations are found within the boundaries of the International Special Review District—an overlay zone that has specific goals and objectives. Title 23 of the Seattle Municipal Code (2005) suggests that the International Special Review District was established “to promote, preserve and perpetuate the cultural, economic, historical, and otherwise beneficial qualities of the area, particularly the features derived from its Asian heritage.”

3.3.4 Planning

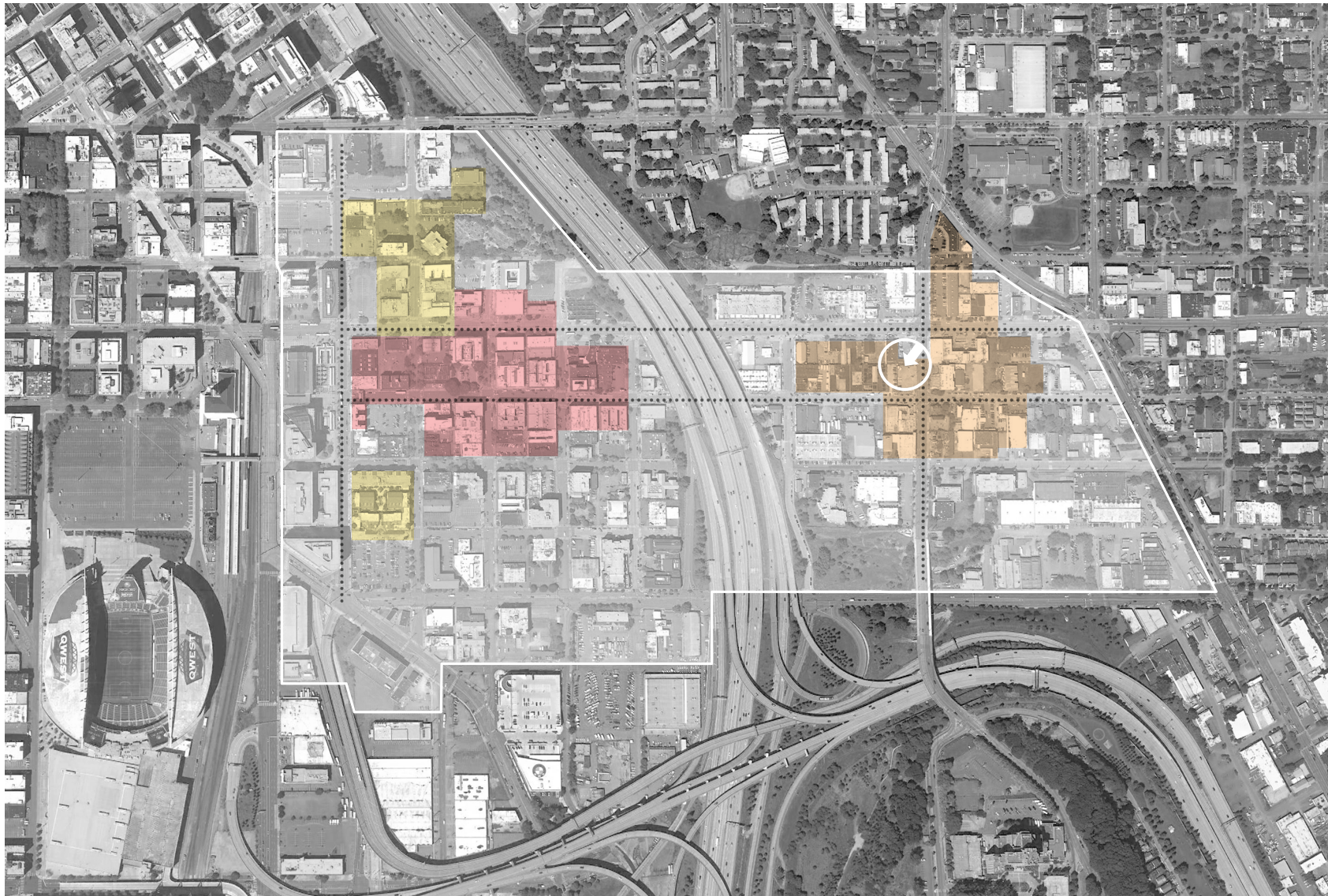
For much of its history, the Chinatown-International District has been left to its own devices without much help from city hall or the rest of Seattle.

SMC 23.66.302: *International Special Review District goals and Objectives*

- Reestablish the District as a stable residential neighborhood with a mixture of housing types;
- Encourage the use of street-level spaces for pedestrian-oriented retail specialty shops with colorful and interesting displays;
- Protect the area and its periphery from the proliferation of parking lots and other automobile-oriented uses;
- Encourage the rehabilitation of existing structures;
- Improve the visual and urban design relationships between existing and future buildings, parking garages, open spaces and public improvements within the International District;
- Exercise a reasonable degree of control over site development and the location of off-street parking and other automobile-oriented uses; and
- Discourage traffic and parking resulting from athletic stadium events and commuters working outside the District.

TABLE 4: Excerpt from title 23 of the Seattle Municipal Code (2005)

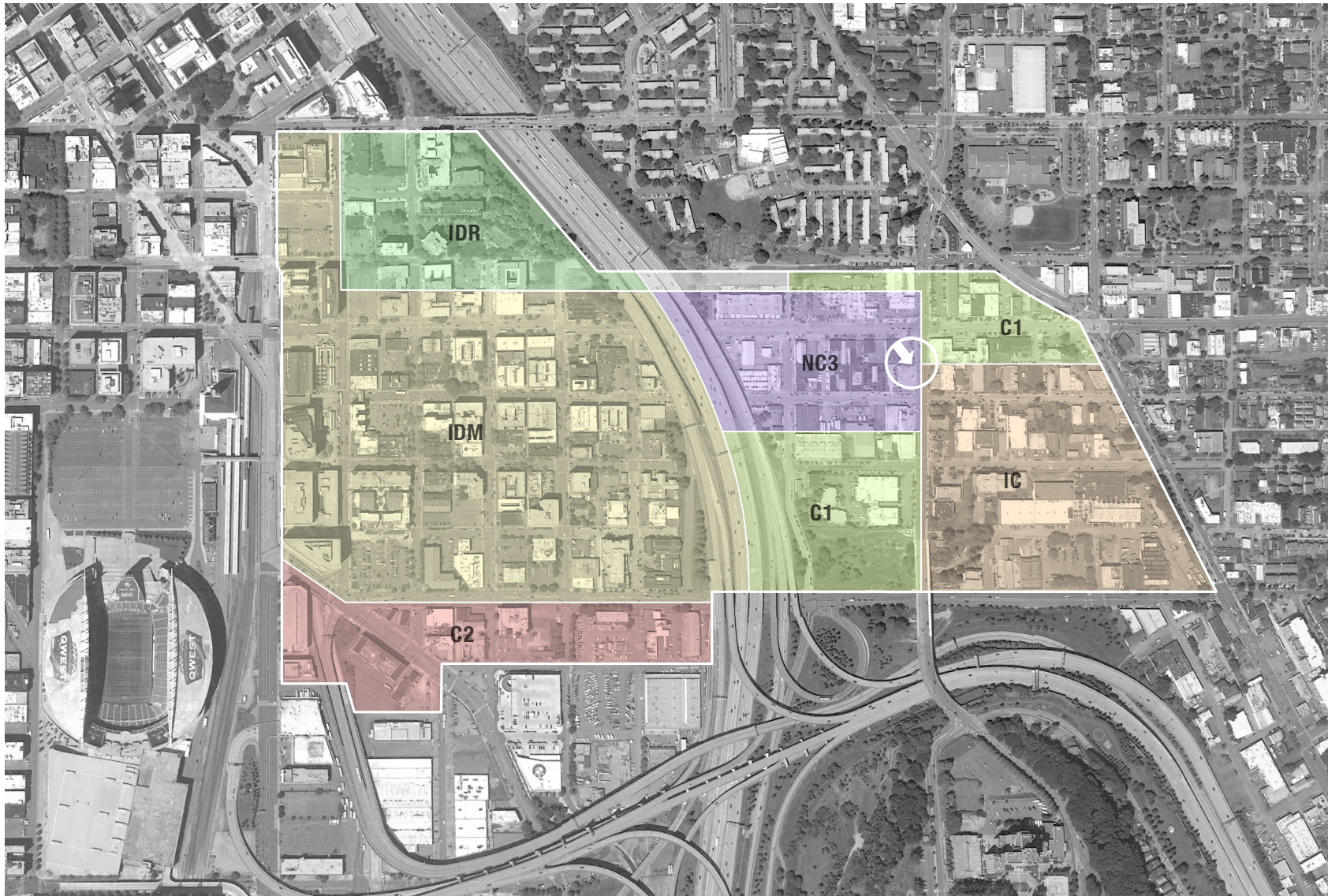
FIGURE 19: C-ID Hearts & Spines



CHINATOWN CORE NIHONMACHI LITTLE SAIGON



FIGURE 20: C-ID Zoning



Several organizations have developed planning strategies, but until recently the city has done little to implement them. The Chinatown/International District Strategic Plan (1998), for example, was developed by Inter*Im Community Development Association in conjunction with City of Seattle Neighborhood Planning Office. Through a series of design workshops and meetings with C-ID business owners and residents, several issues were addressed including cultural and economic vitality, housing, public space, and accessibility. Unfortunately, the plan failed to produce clear urban design guidelines that would enhance the C-ID's built environment (Abramson et al., 2007).

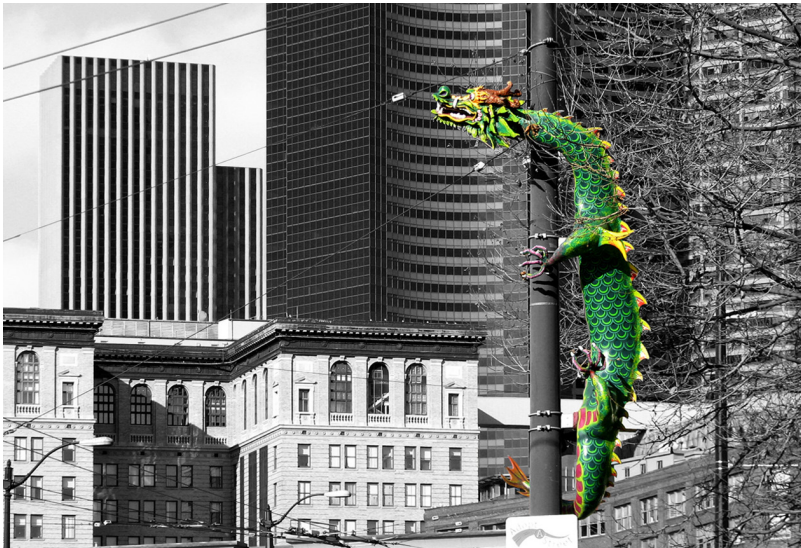


FIGURE 21: Sculpture on Jackson Street. <http://www.flickr.com/>

In 2002 and 2003, additional community design workshops and advisory board meetings were held by Inter*Im to identify and address previously overlooked planning issues. The resulting master plan was entitled *The Chinatown/Japantown/Little Saigon—International District Urban Design Master Plan* (2004) and sought to define the identity of the C-ID and reflect the vitality of its residents (See Figure 21). Five main principles were outlined:

1. The public right-of-way that makes up our streets and sidewalks is an enormous public resource. This space should be beautified for the benefit of the community, which could also help facilitate economic development.
2. Streetscapes and open spaces should facilitate community building – the healthy interaction of people in a neighborhood – which includes incorporating community events in these spaces and getting the community involved in the planning

of these public spaces.

3. Sidewalks and paths should facilitate pedestrian movement within the community, as well as to adjacent neighborhoods. Improvements must enhance the pedestrian environment, which includes exposing commercial activity to the street or on the street (sidewalk).
4. The master plan is only one part of the community planning processes that are on-going and changing as the community grows and transforms. It should provide a vision and a foundation, but should not be the only guiding instrument for streetscape and open space planning. The International Special Review District Guidelines, city codes, city planning, and community opinion should all be taken into account and should affect this change.
5. The community should provide input in the design, construction, and maintenance of new projects. Building the capacity of community organizations and individuals to affect change should be ongoing (p. 5).

In 2007, the City of Seattle published a document entitled *Immigrant and Refugee Report and Action Plan*. It was developed with the help of local consulting firm Emerging Design to identify and address key issues faced by the city's growing immigrant and refugee population. City officials determined that the transparency and accessibility of resources such as acculturation services and city funding needed to be increased significantly. Many immigrants and refugees were simply unaware that

I & R REPORT AND ACTION PLAN : *Desired Outcomes*

- The City will improve its customer service with immigrant and refugees.
- Immigrants and refugees will experience improved knowledge of, and access to, City services and City funding.
- Immigrants and refugees will improve their knowledge of U.S. norms and customs.
- More immigrants and refugees will achieve citizenship and improve their English language skills.
- The City will support the various community-based organizations serving immigrants and refugees, as appropriate, to assure effective service delivery.
- Immigrants and refugees will have more opportunities to engage in the civic process and communicate with senior staff and elected officials (p. 4).

TABLE 5: Excerpt from *I and R Report and Action Plan* (2007)

such resources existed. After a year-long community engagement process, city officials outlined a series of “action steps” to improve the city’s relations with immigrant and refugee communities. The resulting document states that the proper implementation of the plan will produce the outcomes described in Table 6.

While the scope of the plan extends beyond the boundaries of the C-ID, its impact will certainly be felt by the district’s foreign-born population. In addition to the *Immigrant and Refugee Report and Action Plan*, the City recently allocated over \$185,000 to C-ID businesses to stimulate economic development in the district (Tong, 2011).

3.3.5 Building Site

The site is a vacant lot on the corner of King Street and 12th Avenue, near eastern boundary of the International District (See Figure 17). It is only one block from Goodwill Industries’ C-ID facility, which is currently being redeveloped. Although it is near the core of Little Saigon, the area has no real affiliation with one specific ethnicity. Instead, it is located in a place that is easily accessed by Seattle’s scattered immigrant communities, many of which are located further south in Rainier Valley. Additionally, the site is located along an arterial street [12th Avenue] making it easily accessible by public transportation. Much of the site is surrounded by small to mid-scale commercial development. There is a small Asian farmer’s market on the east side of 12th Avenue that could serve the building’s patrons.

Not only is the site in a prime location for a public project of this sort, but it also is large enough to accommodate growth and change. A large portion of the program is dedicated to the marketplace, which is expected to experience growth and change with the perpetually dynamic immigrant and refugee communities. As a result, this kind of morphological urban entity could very easily exist on this site.



FIGURE 22: Site Aerial

CHAPTER 4: *The Design*

How do the concepts outlined in the theoretical framework inform the building design? Because the development of the program was centered on the cultural significance of dress, it is only natural that inspiration for the design be drawn from the world of fashion. Clothing is not only relevant as a cultural artifact, but also as a metaphor for the dynamic nature of the C-ID and its constituents. As suggested previously, the presence of change is what characterizes Seattle's ethnic landscape and what differentiates fashion from mere clothes. This chapter documents the design process and introduces three space-making investigations derived from the construction of clothing.

4.1.1 *Design Intent*

The primary goal of the project is to create a place that facilitates pluralistic integration. Because of its utilitarian function, and more importantly its communicative role, clothing has the potential to be a catalyst for social and cultural exchange. Unlike other institutions offering resources for immigrants and refugees, Atelier Seattle seeks to accommodate a broad range of groups and individuals with the goal of establishing a heterogeneous community of collaboration. As a result, the architecture must promote positive interaction and provide various opportunities for patrons to engage in meaningful dialogue.

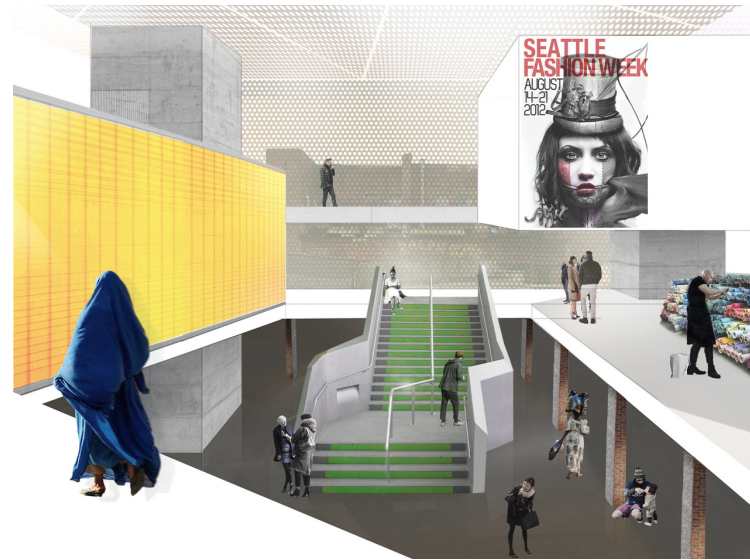
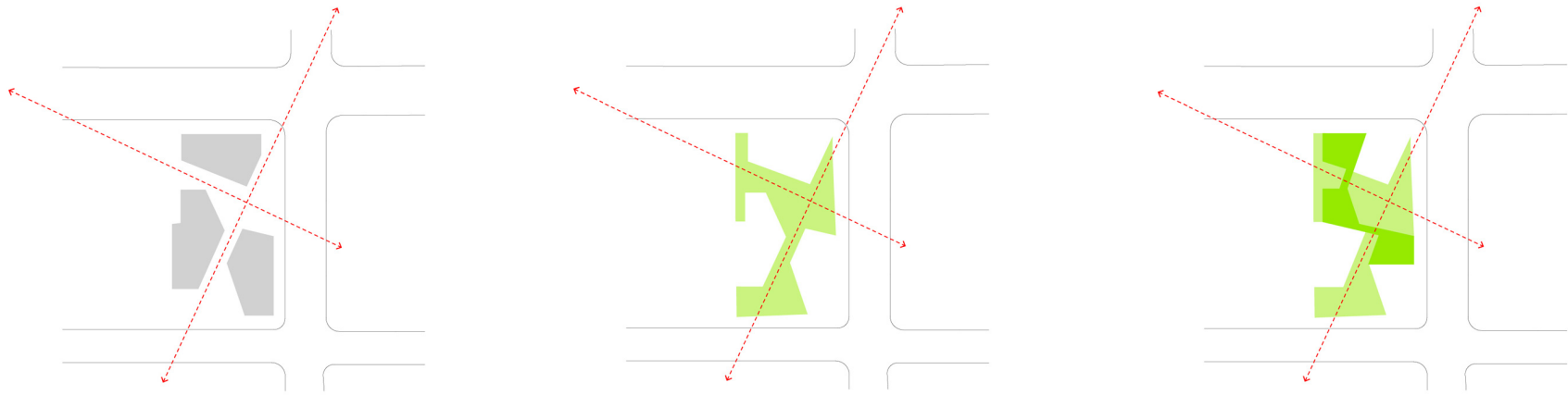


FIGURE 23: Concept Collage



FIGURE 24: Site Concept

FIGURE 25: Morphological Integration



4.1.2 *Morphological Integration*

The design began with an analysis of the immediate site context and its existing potentials. According to C-ID historian Doug Chin:

“This is the community where different groups of immigrants settled, lived, worked and established businesses side by side. This is the area where the East met the West, where Asians collided among themselves and with the outside society” (p. 9).

As suggested in chapter three, the Chinatown-International District is a unique multi-cultural neighborhood. Its diversity is reflected in the character of its built environment which, to a large extent, can be attributed to the many immigrant-owned businesses (See figure 25). Restaurants, retail shops, and marketplaces lining the streets are interwoven to create

the distinctive texture of the C-ID’s urban fabric (See Figure 26). The multi-ethnic markets, many of which are located near the building site, play a particularly significant role in characterizing the district. Adjacent market and retail spaces are connected through the site, defining a sort of void which contains the project’s defining feature, the marketplace (See Figure 24). The urbanistic approach thus facilitates a morphological integration of the neighborhood’s existing potentials.

Activity within the marketplace fluctuates depending upon a number of factors. On certain holidays, and during festivals and other cultural celebrations, the marketplace is expected to function much like Seattle’s Pike Place Market or London’s Petticoat Lane. One or two days a week the building will house a bazaar where its patrons will have the opportunity

FIGURE 26: Mapping of Cultural Institutions

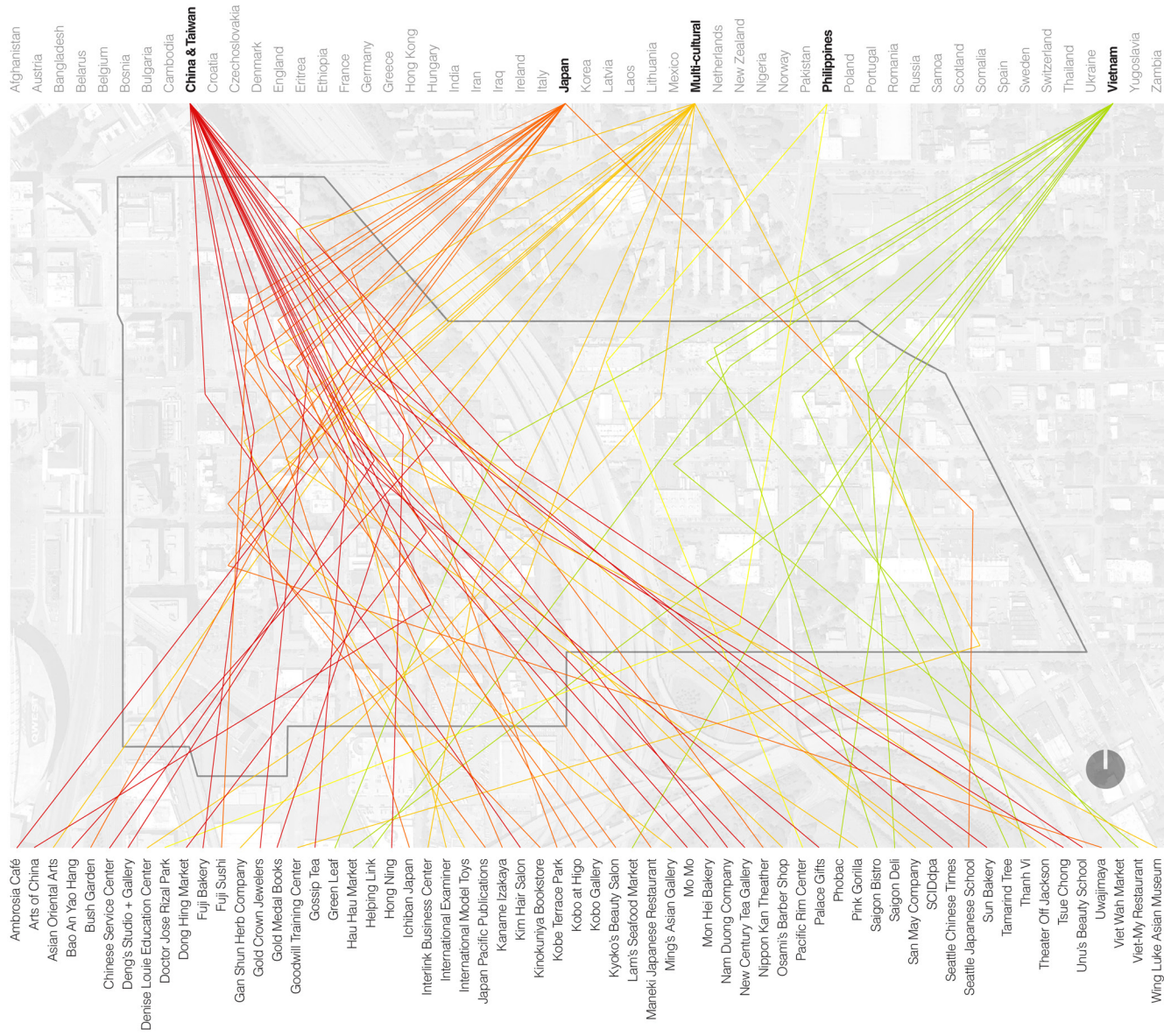
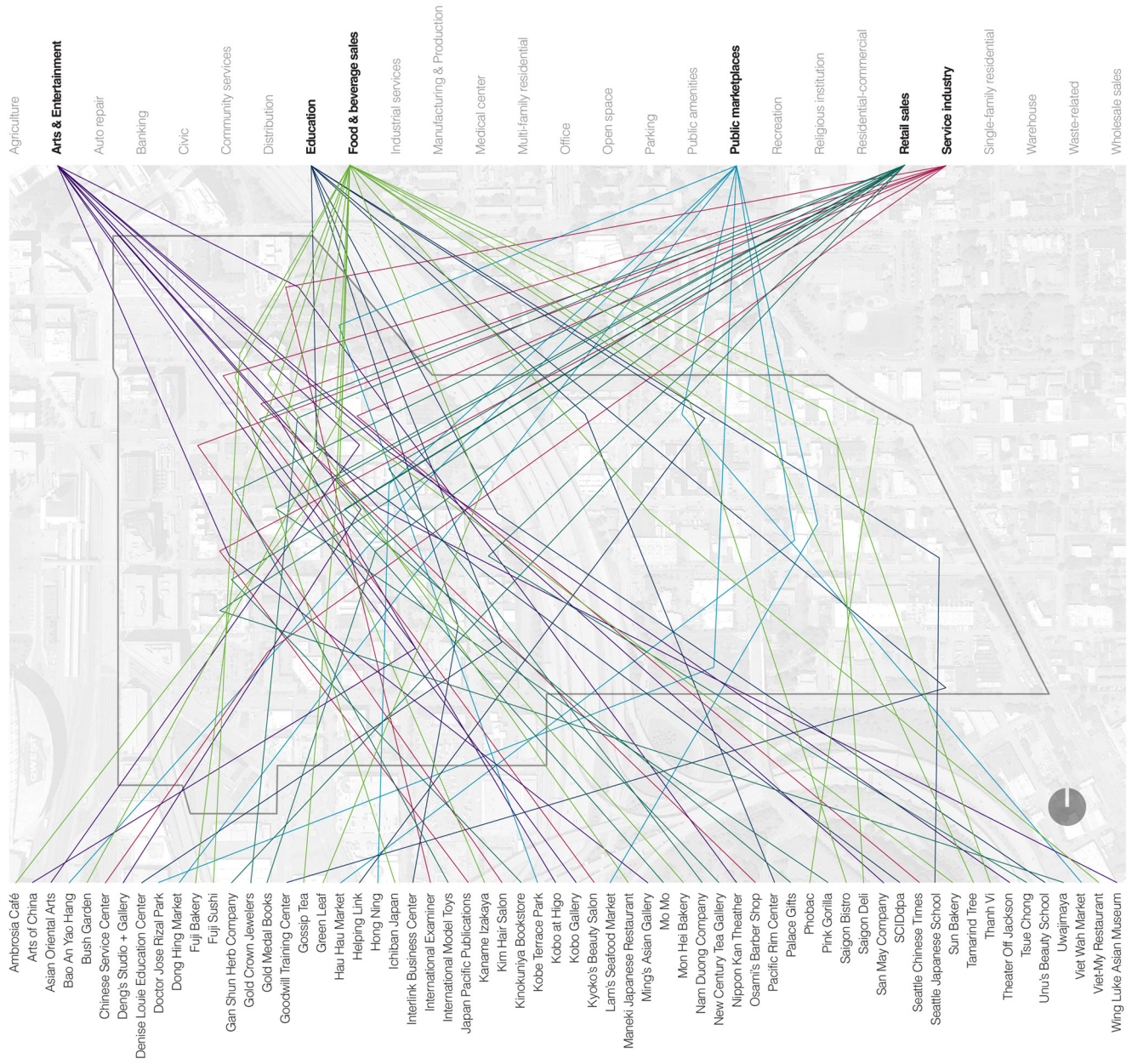


FIGURE 27: Mapping of Program



to sell their wares. On non-market days, although much less busy, the space will still be active with vendors and provide a platform for social and cultural exchange. Because the building also functions as a community resource, it is important that it be accessible at all hours.

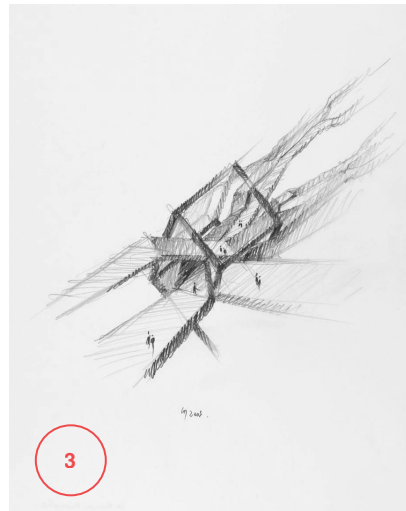
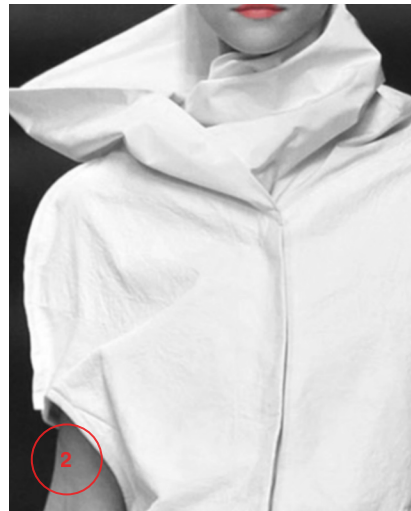
4.1.3 A Conceptual Overview

The design and construction of clothing is very much an architectural endeavor. Although their work is realized in different media, architects and fashion designers utilize similar principles and a common design vocabulary. Form, texture, color, pattern and volume are key elements combined in endless varieties to express design ideas. The following section presents form/space making strategies derived from the construction of clothing and documents their implementation in the project (See Figures

27- 29). Each of these diagrams presents a traditional and contemporary example ...

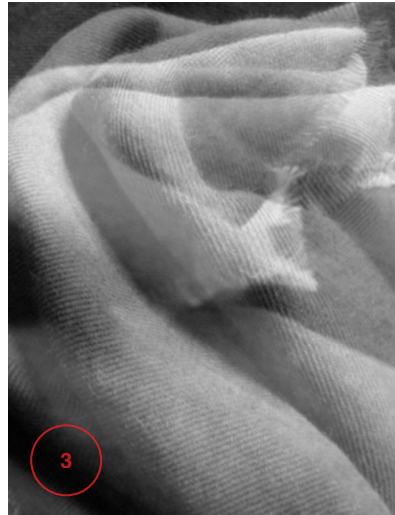
Folding – Over the past few decades, folding as a space-making strategy has been relatively common in architectural practice. It derives primarily from the Deleuzian theory of the fold. Architectural theorist Greg Lynn suggests that folding implies both continuity and multiplicity (Lynn & Carpo, 2004). Walls, floors and ceilings are conceived of as a single surface which diverges into many others. Although an oversimplification of Deleuze’s theory, this idea is still relevant to the project. Rather than folding surfaces, however, the project applies the concept of the fold to volumes of space. The three major programmatic components are conceived of as simple rectilinear volumes, folded and doubled over to create double-

FIGURE 28: Folding



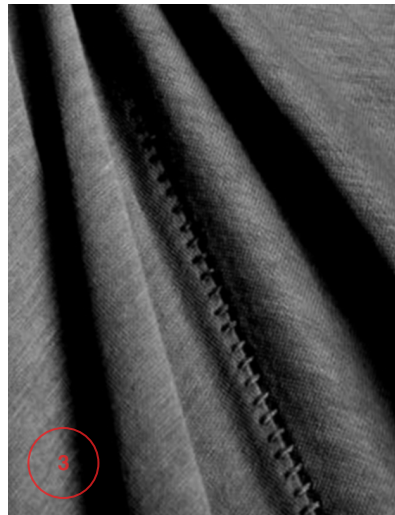
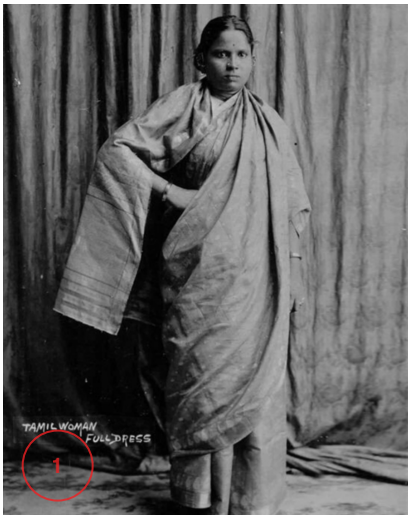
- 1 Japanese *kimono*
- 2 Rick Owens
- 3 Claude Parent & Paul Virillo

FIGURE 29: Layering



- 1 Indian *kurta*
- 2 Ann Demeulemeester
- 3 Layered textiles

FIGURE 30: Draping



- 1 Draped *Sari*
- 2 Damir Doma
- 3 Draped Fabric

high spaces at the point of the fold. The result is a diversity of spaces (See Figure 30).

Layering – Layering appears throughout the project in several ways. First, the programmatic volumes are layered, one on top of the other, and loosely nested together such that each floor is composed of two or more programmatic elements. Like the layers of traditional Indian clothing or of various contemporary fashion designers, the program layers are concealed in certain places and revealed in others. Layering also appears in the building envelope. The façade is composed of a series of layers that vary in materiality and transparency.

Draping – Many traditional garments consist of a sole piece of fabric that is draped over the body. In contemporary fashion design, avant-garde designers such as Yohji Yamamoto and Damir Doma employ this technique to create voluminous silhouettes (See Figure 30). The design of the building skin draws inspiration from both traditional and contemporary clothing. The skin is essentially an abstracted fabric draped over the structure to generate interstitial volumes containing the project’s unifying programmatic element—exchange. Like a woven fabric, the skin is composed of vertical and horizontal members. The vertical elements behave like the warp—the term used in weaving to identify the set of lengthwise threads that are held in tension and located at regular intervals. The weft—defined as the filling thread of a fabric weave—refers to the horizontal members which are pushed and pulled to create openings where necessary (See Figure 31).

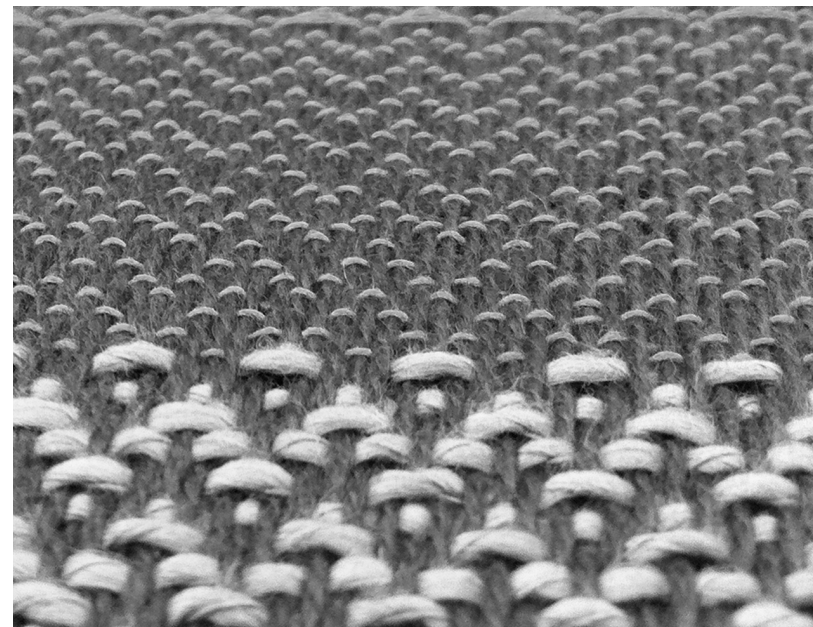


FIGURE 31: Warp and Weft

4.1.2 *The Building Design*

The collage shown in figure 32 was a first attempt at defining important design components and their relationship to one another. The marketplace is clearly shown as an indoor/outdoor space that connects the other programmed spaces—production, education, exhibition, and community spaces. From early on in the design process it was determined that the marketplace or exchange spaces would play a central role in the project. The palette of building materials was left relatively neutral such that the activity occurring in the marketplace and elsewhere in the project would take center stage.

The market was developed as an alleyway through the site which can be accessed from various points including Jackson Street, King Street, and 12th Avenue. This indoor/outdoor space allows patrons to experience all facets of the clothing design process from education to the eventual marketing and merchandising. This gives immigrants and refugees the opportunity to gain valuable knowledge and skills.

The ideas of folding, layering, and draping discussed in the Conceptual Overview were developed from the section in Figure . The folded plane was introduced as a form-making strategy in order to achieve the modulation of levels (See Figure 34). The pushing and pulling of the different levels opens up spaces on the ground level for vendor stalls which are key to the function of the market. From the paper patterns, a series of building models were assembled using the operations outlined above. These models begin to relate the form to the site and suggest a formal language and an

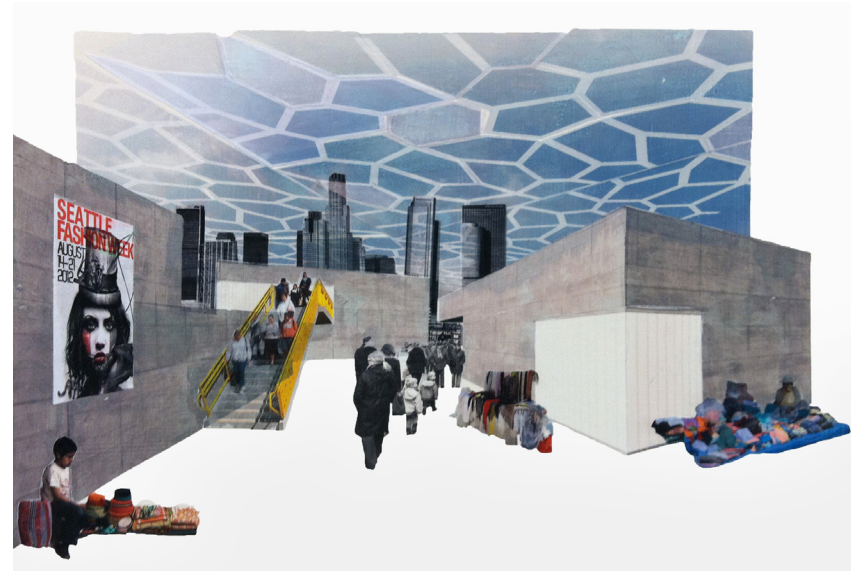


FIGURE 32: Concept Collage

FIGURE 33: Conceptual Section

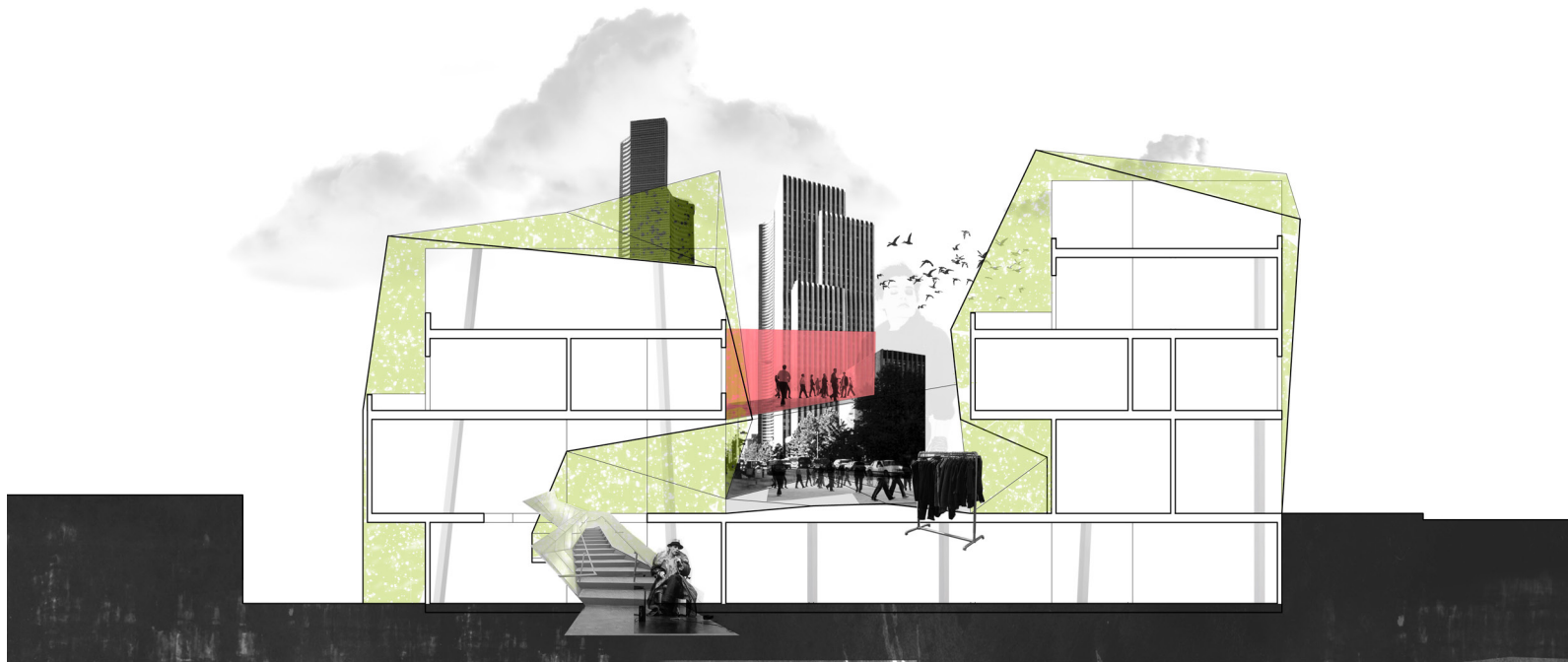
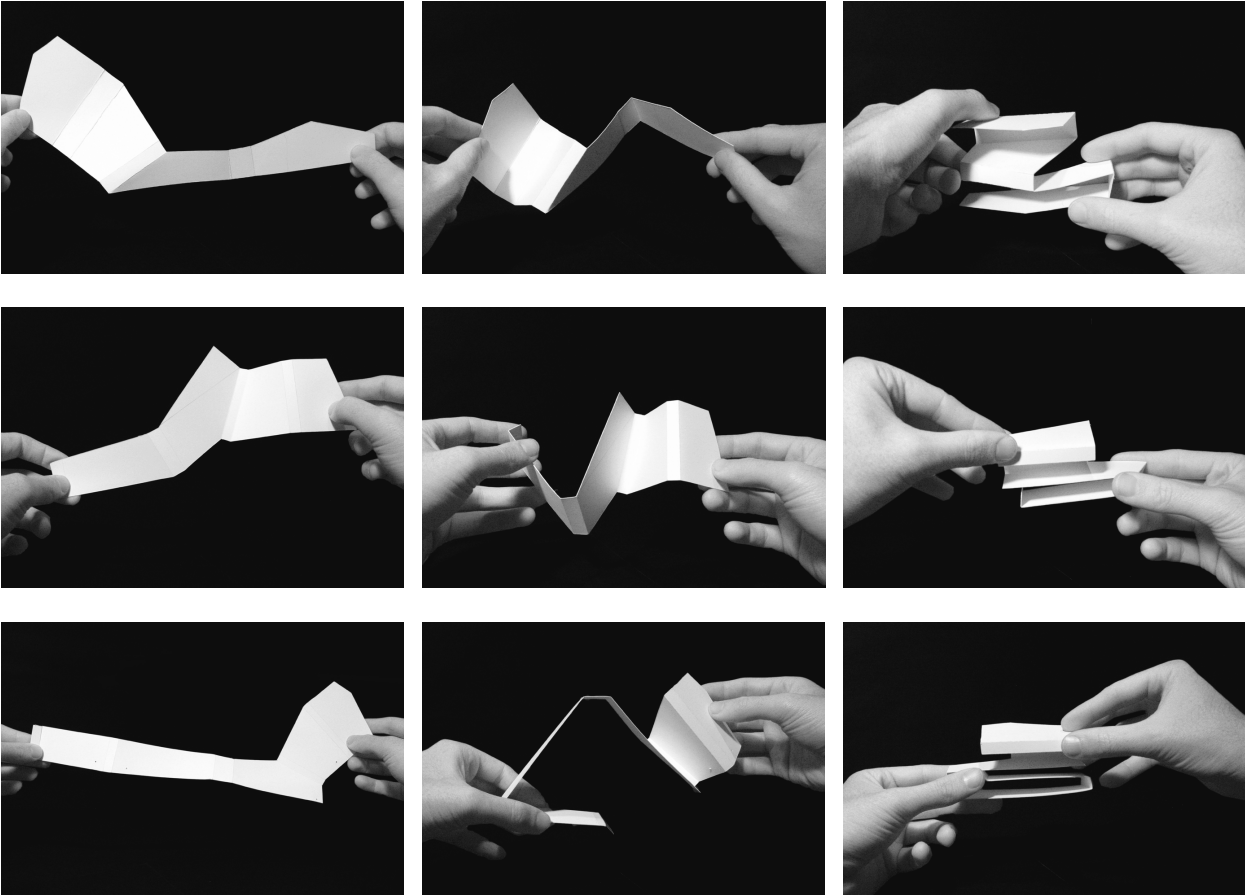


FIGURE 34: Pattern Folding



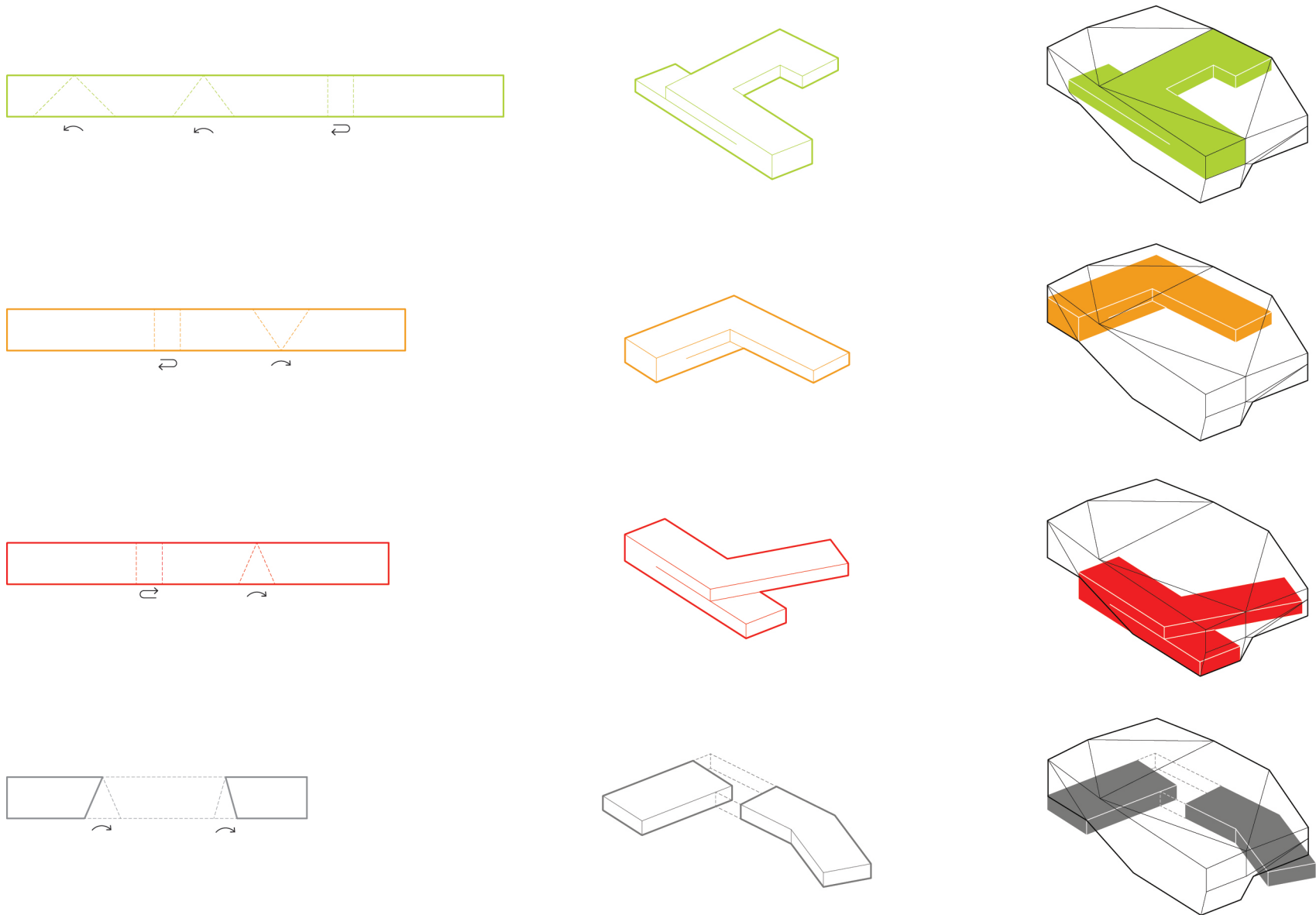
architectural expression (See Figure 35).

As shown in figure the fold was applied to volumes of space instead of two dimensional planes. The folded plane proved problematic when lengths of solid wall inhibited visual and physical connections between different programmatic elements. This new approach allows for better connections between the program peices.



FIGURE 35: Study Models

FIGURE 36: Operations Diagram



4.1.4 Spatial Organization

The organization of the seemingly disparate programmatic elements was based on an analysis of the site and its surrounding context in section. There are three distinct programmatic zones beginning at the basement level and progressing upward. The lowest zone consists primarily of industrial uses and thus includes the design and production spaces in addition to the Goodwill recycle center. The middle zone consists of the first and second levels and is characterized by retail businesses and other commercial uses. The exchange and retail spaces are located in this zone with the majority of the retail storefront facing Jackson Street or 12th Avenue. The uppermost zone is mainly institutional. The building's community and educational programs are located in this zone. Although they are characterized by one typology, zones are not exclusively industrial, commercial, or institutional.

There exists a certain amount of programmatic hybridity that is unique to neighborhoods such as the C-ID.

Not only does the programmatic multiplicity exist in section, but also in plan. The plan is a product of the morphological integration of neighboring marketplaces as discussed previously. The resulting form consists of three distinct zones on the ground level. Each zone has a specific function related to its location on the site. The main entrance/lobby, for example, is located on Twelfth Avenue near a major public transportation stop. The Goodwill Industries recycling center is located off King Street adjacent to the production spaces. The donated clothing will be reworked, redyed or repurposed in the main workshop (See Figure 44). The exhibition space shown in Figure 45 is located on the third level.



FIGURE 37: Spatial Composition

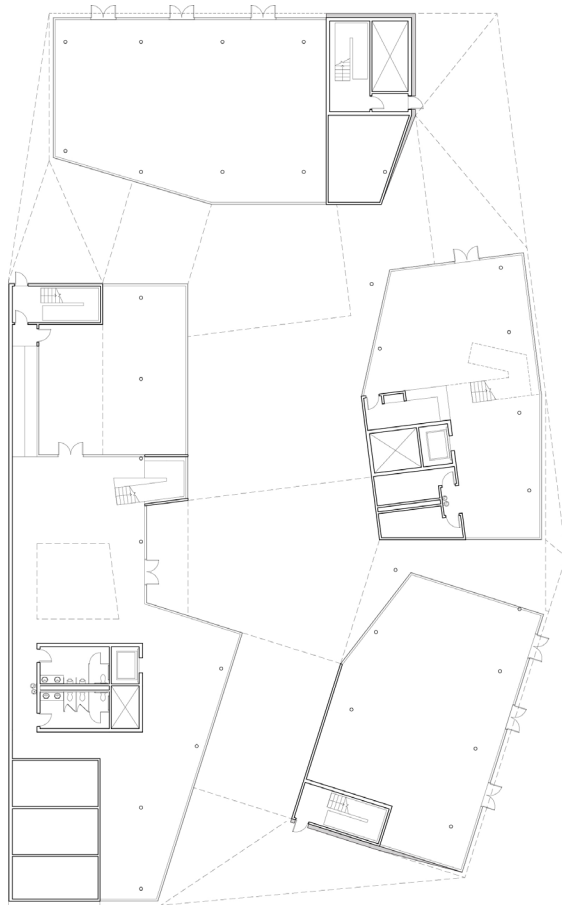


FIGURE 38: Ground Floor plan

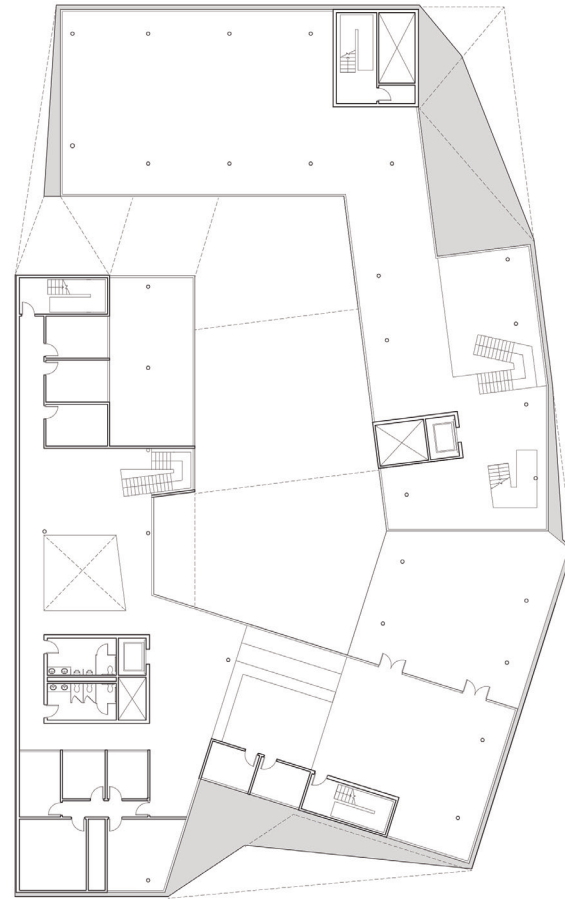


FIGURE 39: Second Floor Plan

FIGURE 40: North Elevation

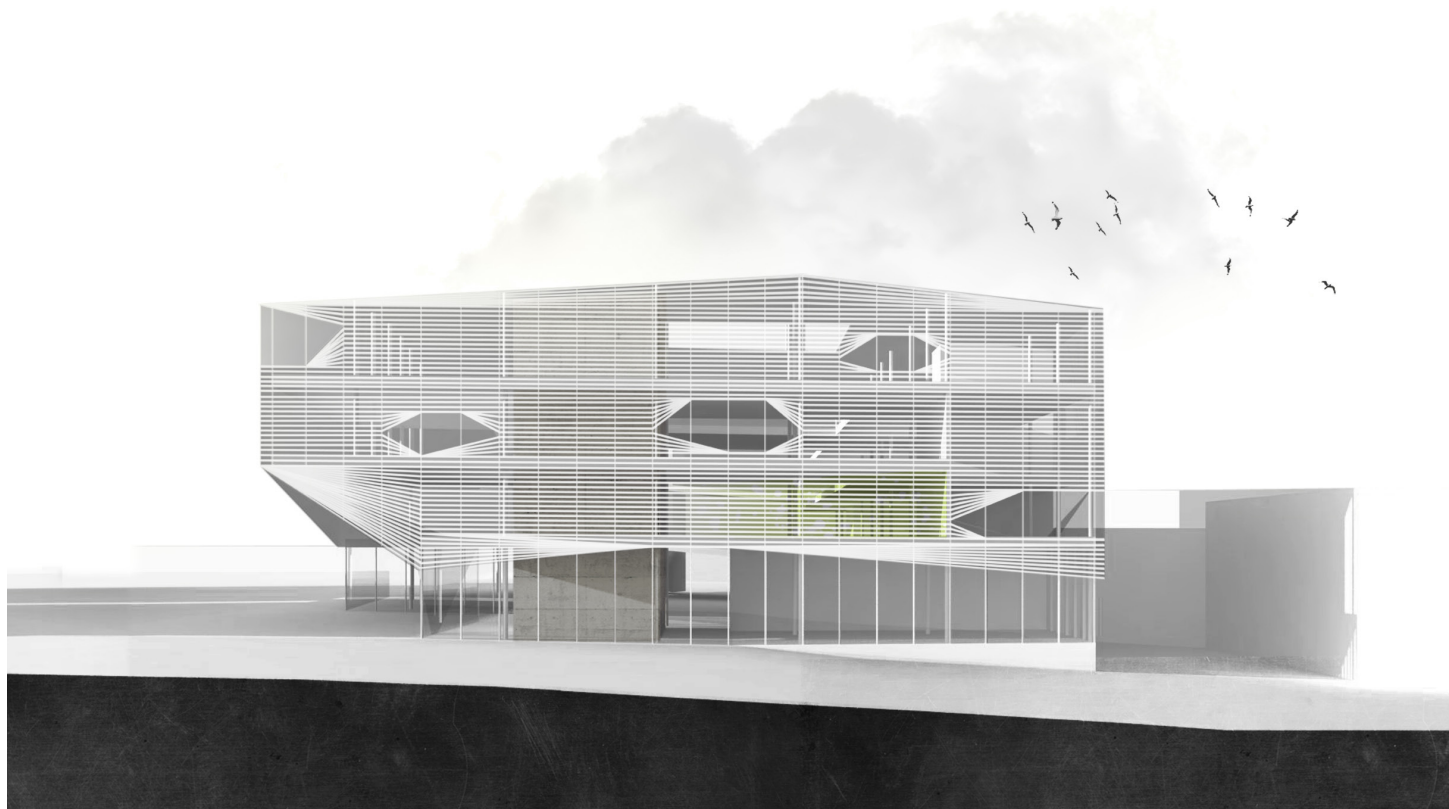


FIGURE 41: East Elevation

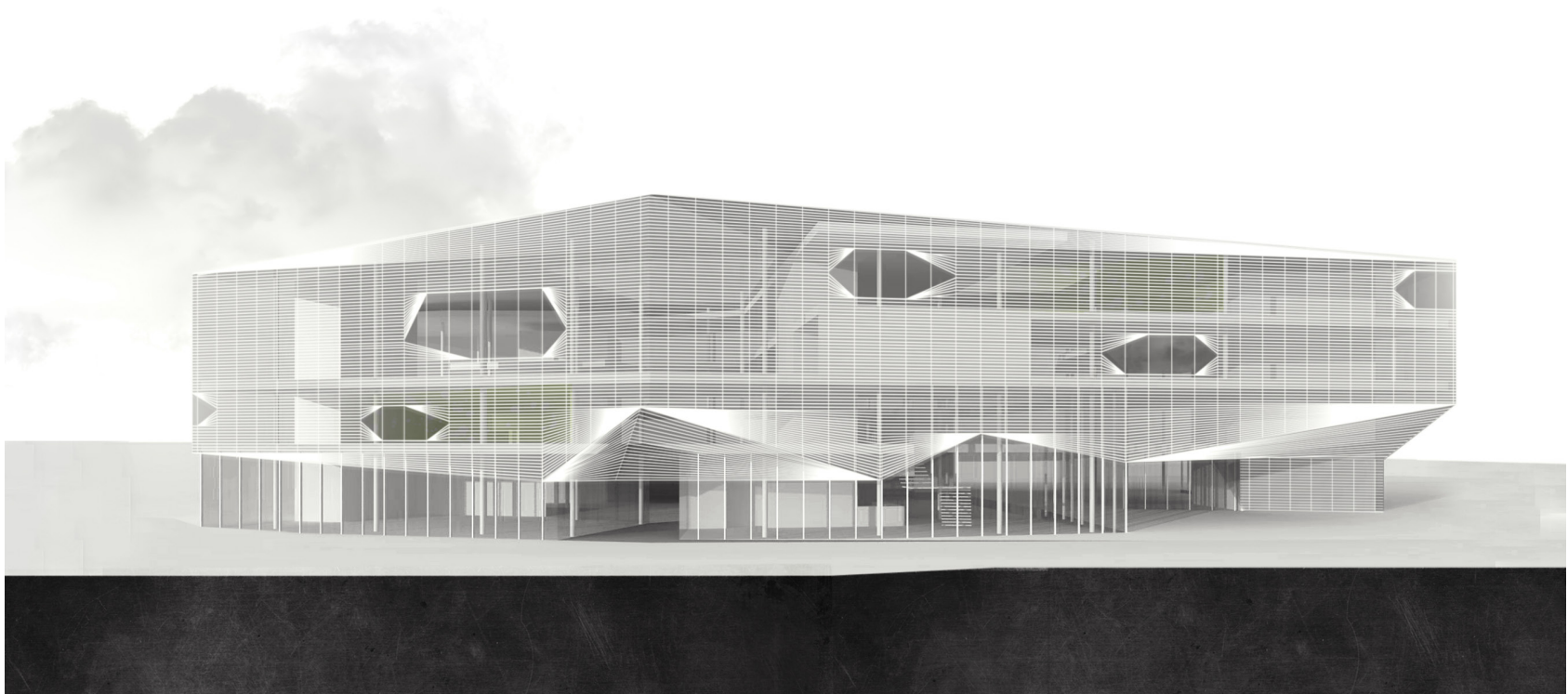




FIGURE 42: View of Lobby



FIGURE 43: View of Studio



FIGURE 44: View of Workshop



FIGURE 45: View of Exhibition Space

FIGURE 46: View of Market



CHAPTER 5: *Conclusion*

The initial goals of this thesis, as laid out in the introduction, are centered around the application of a pluralistic integration model. The accommodation of immigrants is typically addressed only at an organizational level. Atelier Seattle, however, accommodates pluralistic integration organizationally and architecturally. The building is designed so as to facilitate interaction between different ethnic groups and individual users. Boundaries become permeable allowing movement and change to occur thus establishing visual and physical connections between important programmatic spaces.

Fashion is often associated with the exploitation and oppression of migrant workers. This thesis, however, seeks to facilitate a paradigm shift empowering this same group through the mutual transfer of knowledge and skills. The challenge lies in avoiding oversimplification of the complex social issues being addressed or an approach that is too idealistic in nature.

The development of an architectural language derived from the design and construction of clothing presents yet another challenge. It is difficult to avoid overly literal metaphors and therefore reach an appropriate level of abstraction. Yet in so doing, the design achieves architectural and intellectual relevance.

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