A MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE
IN NEW YALETOWN,
VANCOUVER

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis project, a Museum of Contemporary Architecture in Vancouver, offers solutions to architectural design problems resulting from the placement of an institutional use, the museum, within the social and physical framework of the city. The emphasis of this project is to integrate two polar opposites. On one hand resides the bureaucratic elite of a cultural institution: the curatorial machinery of contemporary architecture. On the other hand are the contradictory forces of the city: the wandering of the diverse population through the site, the intrusion of other uses within the body of the building, and the shifting of museum uses onto adjacent noninstitutional structures.

The method of research has been through a three month iterative process of reading, drawing and modelling, following consultation with the thesis committee. Represented here is the third version of the project, in it's most resolved form. For a record of the thesis preparation, please see the design study, directed by Professor Sherry McKay, held in the Architecture Reading Room.

The conclusions of this thesis project resulted from aggressive reworkings. First, the uses of the building were interrogated and then condensed into their simplest form. This involved deleting most of the traditional museum functions. Libraries and bookstores, meeting rooms and cafes and staff offices were transplanted offsite or given away to other businesses. This allowed a new underground film room and night club to intrude in the basement, and an estranged office and residence to hover over the small exhibition spaces. Second, the massing of these uses needed separate identities. Finally, out of a desire for an open urban expression, the building mass was reduced further to introduce empty floors between uses, and a two meter setback between the building and the next structure on the block. Light and air, infiltrating these interstitial spaces of the design, emanated towards the street. A concrete structure holds this composition together, with steel struts bracing against earthquake forces. A double row of street trees filter the resultant vision, layering the building in the urban context.

The subject of this thesis was prompted by a comment by Thom Mayne's during his visit to UBC in 1993. Mr. Mayne felt that the traditional scope of contemporary architecture could be improved, especially when contrasted to the breadth of issues in the fine arts.

This project helped me to investigate the architectural possibilities of institutional expression in the urban core.
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