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Memory + Architecture | The Act of Forgetting

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MEMORY + ARCHITECTURE

THE ACT OF FORGETTING

MARIEL MORA LLORENS

THESIS ADVISOR: KYLE MILLER
This thesis proposes the activation and repurposing of buildings associated with traumatic memories as a means of studying the ways in which architecture embodies memories and aids in the process of forgetting. Architecture and the built environment are linked to the creation and recollection of memories because they trigger four of the senses that are related to memory.

To forget is an active, not passive endeavor. Conscious forgetting is not an act of erasing memories, but transforming them by removing the emotional responses that are produced by our recollection of these memories. Like memories in our brains, buildings that have been recognized as sites of traumatic events are held back in an endless cycle of recollection and repression of memories.

Opposed to demolition, this thesis explores the historic, material and structural value of sites of traumatic memory. Specifically, this thesis proposes the activation and repurposing of the Genbaku Dome and The Peace Memorial Park.

This thesis proposes to retroactively redesign the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park as an episodic overlapping of architectural and infrastructural interventions that represent the stages of acknowledgement, grief, remembrance and conscious forgetting. Rather than proposing a monumental or static memorial, the project takes an evolving/transformative approach to sites of memories, influenced by methods of temporality and ritual in traditional Japanese architecture.

In the redesign of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, episodic overlapping of architectural and infrastructural interventions occurs over a period of 50 years. Each episode occurs within a 10-year period and is characterized by the addition and overlapping of specific formal interventions that challenge the ways in which the users inhabit the city. These five interventions are carving, bridging, framing, enclosing and programing. They work at different scales within a 500-meter radius of the hypocenter of the atomic bomb.
01. Japan + Memory

02. Architecture + Trauma

03. Architecture + Memory

04. Episode 1: Unveil

05. Episode 2: Traverse

06. Episode 3: Contemplate

07. Episode 4: Inhabit
Japan + Memory

The creation and recollection of memories
Japan: History + Architecture

ASUKA PERIOD (538-710)
The arrival of Buddhism from China set forth significant social, political and artistic transformations. Shinto had been the native religion for many centuries.

NARA PERIOD (710-794)
Elements of Buddhism were incorporated into Shintoism and the design of many Temples. Agricultural society centered on the worship of natural elements.

HEIAN PERIOD (794-1185)
Period of stability, considered to be the peak of Japanese imperial court. Capital moved to modern day Kyoto. Return to local styles of architecture in temples, palaces and dwellings.

KAMAKURA PERIOD (1185-1333)
Period after Genpei War. The war led to the destruction of many traditional buildings in Nara and Kyoto. Technological advances in building methods as a response to nature requirements such as earthquakes resistant and shelter against heavy rainfall.

MURIOMACHI PERIOD (1336-1573)
Period after Genpei War. The war led to the destruction of many traditional buildings in Nara and Kyoto. Technological advances in building methods as a response to nature requirements such as earthquakes resistant and shelter against heavy rainfall.

MOMOYAMA PERIOD (1568-1603)
Period of unification after civil war. Rebuilding of castles as a symbol of political stability.

EDO PERIOD (1603-1868)
Rise of the Tokugawa shogunate. Period of relative peace and political unity. Shogun took control of the country. The emperor lost power and became a symbolic, religious figure. A process of militarization of Japan occurred along with a division of class system. Prohibited contact with the west. Bakufu Code: ceremonial set of guidelines to live by based on nostalgic views of feudal Japan. Development of pleasure houses as a way to escape from social norms.

MEIJI PERIOD (1868-1912)
End of Tokugawa Shogunate. The Meiji Restoration restored power of the emperor and opened trade with the west. Militarization process under the emperor Meiji. Bakufu Code: ceremonial set of guidelines to live by based on nostalgic views of feudal Japan. Development of pleasure houses as a way to escape from social norms.
Hiroshima: Militarization + Post War Era

EDO PERIOD  
(1603-1868)

MEIJI PERIOD  
(1868-1912)

TAISHO PERIOD  
(1912-1926)

SHOWA PERIOD  
(1926-1989)

HEISEI PERIOD  
(1989-PRESENT)

1800

1900

1926

1945

1989

2000

EDO PERIOD  
(1603-1868)

MEIJI PERIOD  
(1868-1912)

TAISHO PERIOD  
(1912-1926)

SHOWA PERIOD  
(1926-1989)

HEISEI PERIOD  
(1989-PRESENT)

1800

1900

1926

1945

1989

2000

Sanjo Railway

Hiroshima Prefectural Exhibition Hall

Colonial Architecture

Bunriha Modern Architects Organization

World War I

World War II

American Occupation

Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park

Metabolism

Lost Decade
Hiroshima: Prewar Buildings

NIPPON EXPRESS DESHIO WAREHOUSE
Distance from Hypocenter: 2,670M
Year Built: 1913
Original Use: clothes depot for military uniforms
Material: brick
Significance during the War: temporary aid station
Current Use: Storage / Hiroshima University Dorms

HIROSHIMA TEISHA HOSPITAL
Distance from Hypocenter: 1,370M
Year Built: 1935
Original Use: Teisha Clinic
Material: reinforced concrete
Significance during the War: one of two hospitals within the hypocenter that remained active after the bomb
Current Use: Teishin Hospital / Post Office

CHUGOKU REGIONAL MILITARY HEADQUARTERS
Distance from Hypocenter: 1,370M
Year Built: 1935
Original Use: Teisha Clinic
Material: reinforced concrete
Significance during the War: one of two hospitals within the hypocenter that remained active after the bomb
Current Use: Teishin Hospital / Post Office

FUKUYAMA DEPARTMENT STORE
Distance from Hypocenter: 710M
Year Built: 1938
Original Use: Taishoya Kimono Shop
Material: reinforced concrete and glass
Significance during the War: Temporary infectious-disease hospital
Current Use: Fukuyama Department Store

FUKUROMACHI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Distance from Hypocenter: 410M
Year Built: 1928
Original Use: Honkawa Elementary School
Material: reinforced concrete
Significance during the War:
Current Use: Museum / School
HONKAWA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Distance from Hypocenter: 410M
Year Built: 1928
Original Use: Honkawa Elementary School
Material: reinforced concrete
Significance during the War:
Current Use: Museum / School

BANK OF JAPAN HIROSHIMA BRANCH
Distance from Hypocenter: 380M
Year Built: 1936
Original Use: Bank of Japan
Material: reinforced concrete and glass
Significance during the War: Resumed operations 2 days after the Bomb
Current Use: Cultural Center

IMPERIAL BANK HIROSHIMA BRANCH
Distance from Hypocenter: 360M
Year Built:
Original Use: Imperial Bank
Material: reinforced concrete
Significance during the War: Temporary operations begun after the bomb
Current Use: Anderson Bakery / Restaurant

FUEL HALL
Distance from Hypocenter: 170M
Year Built: 1929
Original Use: Taishoya Kimono Shop
Material: reinforced concrete and glass
Significance during the War: Hiroshima Prefecture Fuel Rationing Union
Current Use: Peace Memorial Park Rest House

GENBAKU DOME
Distance from Hypocenter: 160M
Year Built: 1915 - Jan Letzel
Original Use: products exhibition hall
Material: concrete, brick, steel and glass
Significance during the War: closest building to ground zero
Current Use: Hiroshima Peace Memorial
A-Bomb: Radius of Impact

- Light damage: fallout, radiation, disease
- Moderate damage: 27% people killed, incombustible 37% people wounded
- Severe damage: 84% people killed instantly, 13% people wounded
- Complete destruction: 100% people killed instantly
Hiroshima + The Collective Memory
Victims of The Atomic Bomb

1st GENERATION: HIBAKUSHA

- Survivors of the Atomic Bomb, living within the city of Hiroshima
- Born before August 6, 1945

2nd GENERATION:

- Born during the reconstruction of the city of Hiroshima

3rd GENERATION:

- Born after the reconstruction of the city of Hiroshima

4th GENERATION:

- No direct contact to the 1st generation, the Hibakusha

VISITORS / TOURISM

- Dark Tourism, Black Tourism, Grief Tourism
Architecture + Trauma
Forgetting as an Active Endeavor

Forgetting

The apparent loss or modification of information already encoded and stored in an individual's long term memory. It is a spontaneous or gradual process in which old memories are unable to be recalled from memory storage.

"To forget is an active, not a passive, endeavor."

- Dr. Clarissa Pinkoles Estes
This thesis proposes a gradual process of modification of buildings and landscapes as an act of conscious forgetting. These modifications relate to the different stages of forgetting: acknowledgement, remembrance, and transformation of memories.
Form of Absence
The Observer + The Observed
Narrative Form

- Surviving Buildings
- Sites of Memory
- Primary Monument Axis
- Proposed Axis
The conceptual strategy of narrative form proposes an urban intervention, a pilgrimage to the Genbaku dome. It proposes a new axis that defines spaces between the different zones of impact of the atomic bomb. This intervention is focused on creating spaces of reflection and remembrance for the first and second generation of survivors of the atomic bomb. The axis are defined by buildings that survived the atomic bomb and served as temporary relief stations and places of memory during the reconstruction of the city of Hiroshima.
This intervention acknowledges that the survivors of the atomic bomb were outside the hypocenter therefore their places of memory are scattered around the city. The survivors remember the direction of the physical impact from the hypocenter. Framing devises are used to mark the axis and buildings of memory. By decentralizing the space of remembrance, the visitors are able to experience the process of acknowledgement in remembrance in a subtler and individual way. This is a strategy to contrast the constant over memorialization of sites of memory as methods of commercialization.
Architecture + Memory

The Act of Forgetting
The Process of Forgetting

- **TRAUMATIC EVENT**
  - emotions/encoding
  - storing of memories and their emotional reaction in the brain

- **MEMORIES**
  - short term
  - episodic
  - recollection and repression of memories as a result of retrieval ques
  - long term
  - explicit
  - implicit
  - sensory
  - semantic

- **encoding**
  - storing of memories and their emotional reaction in the brain
PROCESS OF FORGETTING

FORGETTING

recollection

repression

acknowledgement

of emotional
impacting

erasing of emotional impact

remembrance

of memories

transformation as a coping mechanism
Rethinking the Memorial Site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Episode</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>EPISODE 1</td>
<td>UNIVEIL Carving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>EPISODE 2</td>
<td>TRAVERSE Bridging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>EPISODE 3</td>
<td>CONTEMPLATE Framing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>EPISODE 4</td>
<td>INHABIT Inhabiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025</td>
<td>EPISODE 5</td>
<td>TRANSCEND Reprogram</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Proposed Interventions: 2015
Pre War Site: 1940
Episode 1: Unveil

to remove covering from, to expose, to reveal, to present, to display, to allow for public view in a public ceremony, to remove layer and expose what is underneath, to bring to light, to acknowledge and confront, to carve out.
Episode 2: Traverse

to go over or travel across  to move  to pass through  to lie or extend across  to move to and fro over or along  to ascend descend or cross  to travel  to pass over  to wander to peregrinate to walk to bridge
Episode 1 - 1985
Episode 3: Contemplate

to look thoughtfully for a long time  to view  to regard  to examine
to observe  to stare at  to gaze at  to think about  to reflect  to
ponder  to think profoundly at length and meditate  to study
thoughtfully in order  to change, transform, rethink, reinterpret
Episode 4: Inhabit

to bring together into a group collection or place for a purpose
to occupy a space over time  to congregate  to concentrate  to
incorporate  to draw together  to unite  to assemble to inhabit