Communion Composed: Fostering Unity Through a Nourished Architecture

David Acevedo

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COMMUNION COMPOSED

FOSTERING UNITY THROUGH A NOURISHED ARCHITECTURE
Advisory Group: Power Transposition aka Power To the People

Advisors: Sekou Cooke and Nina Sharifi
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THEESIS CLAIM

This thesis looks to utilize food and its inherent social properties as a medium in which architecture can have greater agency in the unification of people, more specifically, distraught communities. Guatemala, a pillar of Central American culture, will be the chosen zone of exploration where such a collaboration can be implemented at a ceremonial scale, utilizing techniques and methods found in ecologically efficient urban food production, intimate domestic food consumption, and marrying them to methods of engaging ceremonial food preparation to create a new edible landscape of socially sustaining architecture.

This contention was born from a desire to challenge architecture to better serve the communities and people in which it inhabits in what today is a more diverse, although fragmented, cultural society. In order for architecture to begin mending these fragmentations it needs to more deeply and comprehensively engage in the unique culture and context in which it is placed, a not so easy feat for architecture to do alone. Therefore, it is through the integration of architecture and another facet of societal culture that is as strong, or perhaps stronger in terms of its ties to history, religion, and life, that of food, that can allow architecture to better function as a social tool for communities.

The marriage of food with architecture brings with it the social properties that food naturally instills by being a necessity for both the sustainment of life and the sustainment of culture. Food and the act of dining inherently recreates that primeval sense of sharing which in turn activates social, economic, and cohesive social networks. The act of breaking bread with your neighbor can begin to suppress qualities of isolation, closure, and marginality that plagues many communities and cultures today. The properties derived from the triad of food cultivation, preparation, and consumption can act as a catalyst for the redistribution of architecture back into the service of the people and to itself; an architecture that is living and humanized and not only promotes, but produces a healthy cultural and natural environment.
CONTEXTUAL RESEARCH

INITIAL RESEARCH CONSISTED OF A DEEP DIVE INTO LITERARY WORKS OF VARIOUS MEDIUMS (ARTICLES, BOOKS, WEBSITES, ETC.) THAT WOULD PROVIDE A BROAD SCOPE OF FOOD AND ITS ROLE IN SOCIETY FROM A HISTORICAL, RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL, AND ECONOMIC SENSE.

TOPICS OF STUDY RANGE FROM:

THE HISTORICAL ACT OF FEAST AS A MEANS OF PEACE BETWEEN WARING PARTIES

THE KITCHEN’S TRANSITION INTO A SOCIAL SPACE

SOCIAL DINING AS A SYMBOL OF WEALTH OR IN OTHER Instances AS A MEANS OF EDUCATING PARTICIPANTS ON CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

AMONG MANY OTHER TOPICS THAT ALL PROVIDED A BASE IN WHICH TO BEGIN FORMULATING A STANCE ON FOODS ROLE IN THE AGENCY OF ARCHITECTURE.
FOOD SYSTEM SCALES

URBAN

CEREMONIAL

DOMESTIC

GLOBAL
SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH

Looking into specific examples of food systems at three different levels of scale - Domestic - Ceremonial - Urban - the notion of spatiality and user experience was drawn and examined in order to better understand how to begin implementing food systems that function in union with architecture.

Some elements of note include:

- Programatic communal hubs that reside within or beneath food interventions
- Avenues of urban agriculture that channel movement of the user/worker
- The table as one cohesive unit that forms spatiality through its elongated arrangement
- Informal vs. formal instances of dining
LAWS OF SCALES

“ECOLOGICALLY EFFICIENT URBAN PRODUCTION”

1. NATURAL GROWN PRODUCE - URBAN OR RURAL AGRICULTURE RUN BY THE COMMUNITY WITH CONSIDERATION OF SOIL AND LAND USE

2. A DIGITAL BASED PRESENCE FOR BOTH THE GREATER MANAGEMENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF PRODUCE AS WELL AS FOR INFORMATION OF ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTION

3. A DESIGNED SYSTEM THAT ALLOWS FOR EASE OF MOBILITY AND HARVEST FOR EFFICIENT PRODUCTION AND TRANSPORTATION OF PRODUCE

“ENGAGING CEREMONIAL PRODUCTION”

1. INTEGRATE A SYSTEM THAT PROMOTES PROPER/HEALTHY NUTRITION, JOB OPPORTUNITIES, AND ULTIMATELY SOCIAL COLLABORATION

2. GO BEYOND JUST A PLACE FOR EATING AND COOKING - PLACEMAKING WHERE INDIVIDUALS BECOME CO-PRODUCERS, RATHER THAN JUST CONSUMERS, OF AN ENVIRONMENT

3. DRIVEN BY THE SUSTAINMENT OF LIFE AND CULTURE - SLOW FOOD MOVEMENT MENTALITY

“INTIMATE DOMESTIC CONSUPTION”

1. MAKE EATING A SHARED EXPERIENCE WHERE EVERYONE IS PARTICIPATING ON EQUAL TERMS - “IF I EAT, YOU EAT”

2. THE ACT OF COOKING AND EATING ARE SEAMLESSLY INTEGRATED WHERE THE KITCHEN BECOMES A COMMUNITY HUB

3. PRODUCE A COMFORTABLE AND WARMHEARTED ENVIRONMENT
AN EXPLORATORY PROCESS

This thesis revolves around the notion of an architecture that is reactive to its context and culture and responds accordingly through both food and architecture (a marriage of mediums that hopefully produces an architecture that has greater agency in the livelihoods its involved with).

Therefore it was important to situate the exploration in a specific place that could benefit from greater mediation between opposing peoples, a process which began through the exploration of putting a table in various contexts throughout the world and seeing what instances and relations the table can highlight and create through its placement.

Different context offered different obstacles and situations in which the table could function and ultimately tackled ranging from issues of:

- Tourist vs. Resident
- Wealthy vs. Poor
- Race vs. Race
- Accessible vs Inaccessible
A CULTURE AND A CONTEXT

THE CHOSEN AREA OF EXPLORATION WAS GUATEMALA CITY

GUATEMALA CITY POSES A MULTITUDE OF INTERESTING FEATURES THAT ALLOWED IT TO BECOME THE FAVORED SITE FOR AN INITIAL INTERVENTION.

HISTORICALLY THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN EMPHASIS ON THE NOTION OF SHARING FOOD WHETHER IT BE WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS, OR STRANGERS, A BEHAVIOR THAT STEMMED FROM GUATEMALA’S DEEP ROOTED MAYAN CULTURE AND THE REMNANTS OF WHICH THAT CULTURE REMAINS IN GUATEMALAN DAILY LIFE TODAY.

IN TERMS OF LIFE TODAY, GUATEMALA ALSO HAS ITS FAIR SHARE OF PROBLEMS WITHIN THE LIVELIHOODS OF ITS PEOPLE BOASTING ONE OF THE MOST UNEQUAL WEALTH DISTRIBUTION IN THE WORLD.

THERE IS ALSO DEEP ROOTED PREJUDICE BETWEEN NON-INDIGENOUS AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE WHICH HAS ONLY STRENGTHENED THE INEQUALITY IN GUATEMALAN SOCIETY TODAY. SUCH DISPARITIES CAN BE EASILY SEEN FROM AN URBAN FRAMEWORK LEVEL DUE TO GUATEMALA’S SEPARATION INTO ZONES WHICH EACH BOAST ITS OWN CHARACTER, SOME BEING IN GREATER DESOLATION THAN OTHERS.

THE OPPORTUNITY TO BEGIN EXPLORING HOW ARCHITECTURE AND FOOD CAN BEGIN MENDING ASPECTS OF THESE DISPARITIES THROUGH COMMUNION IS WHAT Drove ME TO CHOOSE GUATEMALA AS MY SITE OF INTERVENTION.
A TALE OF TWO SITES

LA LIMONADA

12TH AVENUE + NATIONAL STADIUM

ZONE 1: HISTORICAL CITY CENTER
ZONE 5: GOVERNMENT/AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT
ZONE 16: WASHITLU COMMUNITY

STADIUM CAPACITY: 36,000
USE: EVENTS, CONCERTS, NATIONAL FOOTBALL GAMES

ZONE 6

LA LIMONADA

PUENTE BELICE

"JESUS OF GOOD HOPE" SETTLEMENT
MORE THAN 300 FAMILIES LIVE IN CRamped CONDITIONS
MORE THAN 20% LACK ACCESS TO POTABLE WATER
CONSIDERED ILLEGAL LAND INVADERS
FORMED AROUND A CHURCH

EDGE OF ZONE 6
CLOSED OFF TO TOURISTS, MURDER RATES ARE INCREASING
The project has two phases which allows it to respond to the lives and needs of the users.

Typically market days in Guatemala are Tuesday and Fridays with Sundays being another day of larger gathering due to high levels of religious activity and celebration.

Therefore the project can transform according to days of the week where there are allocated work days and then there are festival days.

Festival days - Users assemble vibrant temporary roofing that signifies when the project becomes a larger space for communal gathering that centers around the table and the kitchen and the acts of food preparation and consumption.

Work days - Secondary programs which respond to greater community needs and areas of agriculture that foster the act of food cultivation are of more focus.
This thesis looks to utilize food and its inherent social properties as a medium in which architecture can have greater agency in the unification of people, more specifically, distraught communities. Guatemala, a pillar of Central American culture, will be the chosen zone of exploration where such a collaboration can be implemented at a ceremonial scale, utilizing techniques and methods found in ecologically efficient urban food production, intimate domestic food consumption, and marrying them to methods of engaging ceremonial food preparation to create a new edible landscape of socially sustaining architecture.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY