

hi , welcome . this is transtension .

[rotating diagram]

before we dive in , i would like to start with a quote and a few definitions , namely of 'thesis' , 'theory' , and 'architecture' , given that this is , after all , an architectural thesis of an architectural theory . in this way , we can move forward operating under [at least a few of] the same shared pretenses .

[truncated sherwood quote]

'it is doubtful if architecture can ever be the means to social deliverance - the problem is one of national attitudes and policies.' from the intro to roger sherwood's modern housing prototypes of 1978 .

the quote comes from a pivotal moment when i decided to dedicate myself to architecture fully , about halfway through undergrad when we were working on a housing project . this quote has stuck in my head verbatim ever since i read it ; i found it deeply unsettling at the time and have developed myself and my beliefs qua architecture in relation to it ever since .

[etymologies]

and the three etymologies that i think ground the entirety of transtension qua today's presentation :

thesis , from the proto.indo.european 'dhe-' : to make a mental impression on or to make a pretense of , and later from the latin/greek 'thesis': literally a placing or setting down ; a position or situation .

theory , from the greek 'theōria' : contemplation , speculation , viewing to the late latin 'theōria' : mental scheme or conception

and architecture , from the latin/greek 'arche.tekton' : chief // master builder . but taking this one step back to its proto.indo.european roots , we find that 'tekton' is derived from 'teks-' : to weave or fabricate . so , a master builder , or a master weaver , or a master fabricator .

as such , this thesis , or perhaps simply this presentation , can be thought of as the setting down of a situation , or the placing of a mental impression of a position , for contemplation , viewing , and speculation , by a 'master' builder , weaver , or fabricator . except that i am not a master , though perhaps i am a builder and a fabricator and a weaver , at least in a metaphorical sense .

[digital diagram]

rather than walk through each aspect of transtension linearly as re.presented in the hand out in your hands and on your laps , i'm going to float through a few aspects that stand out among the sea of branches that comprise transtension up to this point .

[definitions i]

but first , one more preface regarding the nature of transtension . transtension is a theory/methodology of architecture predicated on sincerity , Love , and subjectivity . it is positioned and/or placed in opposition and/or relation to 'the bottom line' , that which has eviscerated contemporary society of all Love and sincerity , i.e. efficiency , Capital , and objectivity .

so , you may be wondering why , or how , transtension is predicated upon Love .

[etymologies ii]

well , when i was writing more seriously through the thesis and synthesizing the aims and aspirations last semester , while simultaneously trying to excise and distance myself from all pretenses regarding what a thesis was supposed to be , i 'solidified' the notion that transtension was both a theory and a methodology , a way of thinking and a way of being , predicated on Love first and foremost , while i was working through Vitruvius' '*firmitas , utilitas , venustas*' . whereas *venustas* was later amended to *amoenitas* so as to more accurately capture delightful , pleasant , and lovely as compared to the erotic , attractive , and arousing connotations of *venustas* , transtension amended *amoenitas* to *caritas* so as to more accurately capture the agapic , charitable , self.ish/self.less notion of Love so as to escape the phenomenological and subsequently elitist connotations of *amoenitas*.

given this amendment , Love [in the context of transtension] can be understood as an awareness and acceptance of others as well as the self , and thus God , in a reciprocal , recursive , re.iterative sub- , un- , conscious and active way . there is also sincerity [as opposed to efficiency] , which is to operate without pretense to the best of one's ability , and subjectivity [as opposed to objectivity] , the centrality of one's own experience in relation to the de.centralized subjectivity of others , but further how this relation shapes our effervescent and ephemeral notions of 'objectivity' which we cling adhere and defer to as something greater than yet external to ourselves .

so , how does this relate to architecture ?

[pruitt igoe demo]

well , when i first came here , i thought i knew that my thesis was going to be the design of a city for a single person , situated within a pre.existing city so as to encapsulate the insular and isolating nature of this existence . i also knew that i wanted the site to be pruitt igoe , having watched the pruitt igoe myth our first semester here and being struck by what i then would have described as not only the inadequacy , but irrelevance of architecture in society .

for those that are not familiar , the Pruitt-Igoe complex was a modernist housing project comprised of 33 11-story buildings totalling 2,870 units capable of sheltering roughly 10,000 people . it lasted only a little over 20 years , from 1954 to 1976 , before being demolished for what the government referred to as 'blighted conditions'. It is infamous in architectural discourse for being referred to by Charles Jencks as 'the death of modernism'. But of course , the failure of the project has nothing to do with architecture , and is really only exemplary of the way this country feels about black people [which is to say they objectify them , they treat them as lesser than , as 'the other' to an extreme extent . Pruitt Igoe was a segregated complex at a point when segregation was supposed to be outlawed , there were hard and cut rules in place which removed fathers from the home [a condition that still propagates systemically to this day through malicious incarceration tactics and a genuine conspiracy to romanticize and capitalize specific aspects of black culture , namely music and sports , which focus on the body

rather than the mind , on the aggrandization of drugs and money and sex and self-segregation and hatred rather than Love] . there were even human experiments conducted at Pruitt Igoe wherein literal biological weapons were deployed across the complex to simulate the effects of chemical warfare , which further contextualizes the ‘blighted conditions’ , but at this point i must digress]

Synchronistically , when i revisited the quote at the beginning of this semester , i read the next two lines :

[sherwood quote]

'... Ironically, the dramatic, explosive demolition of the housing slabs in St. Louis happened to buildings which the inhabitants found well designed in some respects but which could not survive an extremely hostile socioeconomic environment.' and further, 'If the Pruitt-Igoe slabs had been built on the outskirts of almost any European city, they probably would have provided useful and acceptable housing.'

this is where i will briefly argue for both the necessity and intrinsicality of Love qua architecture .

[visual abstract]

architecture is entirely superfluous to one of the only necessary aspects of this existence - that of shelter [the other being food] . i say superfluous because all architecture does is do more than the necessary qua shelter - it dresses it up , aggrandizes it , puts it on a pedestal , instrumentalizes , codifies , and beauracratizes it . while some may find this ironic , i find it quite fitting . you see , shelter is inherently paradoxical ; it requires a ‘both , and’ rather than an ‘either , or’ . the whole point of shelter is to protect and separate us from nature , while simultaneously being comprised of and intimately connected and connecting us with nature . in that same vein , Architecture appropriates the necessity of shelter so as to house our superfluities . and similarly still , Love itself requires a ‘both , and’ rather than an ‘either , or’ way of not only thinking , but being . and i’m showing the visual version of the abstract here which gets at core of what architecture shelters , that being inter- , trans- , and sub- subjectivity .

at this point i can't help but bring up a quote from adorno's aesthetic theory :

[adorno quote]

‘Art respects the masses, by confronting them as that which they could be, rather than conforming to them in their degraded state.’

and yes , i would argue that architecture is an art.form more.so than a science , and if it is to continue on in any sub.stantial form , we should only further allow it to push us in artistic directions . art also encompasses everything extra about this existence , similar to architecture's shelter of it .

[v E c + ls42]

this understanding of the discipline , as well as the belief that Love is the only thing there is and the only thing that matters , is really what led to the 'research' transtension ended up requiring of me ; i made devices of (inter, trans, sub).subjectivity for one , two , and three people . the device for one , the variable-edged coin , is basically just a totem from inception which i relied on to remind me of what i forgot when.ever i wondered what.ever the point had been in the first place . love seats for 2 fingers were devices i created when i didn't feel like doing anything else , and the easiest way to share with others that which i was aiming for but had trouble verbalizing .

[acp43 initial dia]

and a conversation peace for 3 is basically a mirrored tripod which allows one to experience an infinite regression , or make eye.contact with two people at once .

[acp43 progress photos]

i refined this tripod over the first half of this year so i could carry it with me ,

[deployment map]

then drove it halfway around the country to 24 of the lower 48 , setting it up 34 times in urban suburban rural and remote environments , talking to whoever came up , initially wanting to discuss architecture outside of this bubble we call school , or ‘the

discipline' , and ending up simply attempting to understand the other in earnest .

[two deploys]

in retrospect , i feel as though the primary aim of the structure was to offer shelter from the pace of contemporary american life , a momentary reprieve from being the cog in a machine , a point of stasis in space and time .

[34 deploys]

Hhwever , in addition to documenting each deploy of acp43 , i was also documenting what transtension refers to as 'american developmental architecture' ,

[9 categories]

with the aim being to better assess the state of the 'american built environment' . i used a modified dslr camera which shoots in infrared , which just means that it cuts out wavelengths of light less than 720 nm . this results in 'rendered' images which allow for a more 'objective' comparison of isolated conditions across time and space .

[towards a homogenized architecture]

i left this trip with a reminder that american architecture has been homogenized , and the re.inforced belief that architecture itself is subject to the ins and out.flows of capital , with the only thing really resonating for me being how people relate , respond to , and occupy space in relation to the forms we build.

[composite diagram]

moving across , through , and beyond , throughout the entirety of the process of transtension thus.far , i've been running several loops , recursions , cycles , circles , and iterations , constantly re.generating and re.presenting the structure and 'organization' of transtension , which sometimes resulted in 'dead ends' and other times generated inflection points which , in a way acted catalytically , similar to nasa's method of 'gravity assisting' satelllites by using the momentum of a planet's orbital pull so as to slow down or speed up payloads in space .

particularly , proto.thesis and ephemera operate in this way as they more or less reflect what i spend my 'free' time doing , which is drawing and writing [and playing the guitar] , and thus were continuous out.lets , literally ways out , of dead.ends and back into the thesis .

[40 ADA o4 gif]

40 ADA o4 was specifically important in this regard as a way out of my prejudiced version of an architectural thesis and in.to the action and existence-based processes of transtension . perhaps of note here is that i completed these 40 drawings over a series of 40 nights , and they collapse into this 7 second animation , which i find morbidly amusing in the sense that over a hundred hours of my life can be condensed into this cute little gif where the only truly transfixing aspect is the rotation of the box , which only compounds the morbid amusement because our entire built environment is more or less made up of boxes or at least abstractions implications and [partial] instantiations of boxes , and i only focused on stairs and liminalites when constructing these , yet they still fade into the background .

following my summer travels and 'research' i really wasn't quite sure what to make of what i had been through thus far . i returned to the sherwood quote and revised it to :

[amended sherwood quote]

'it is doubtless if architecture will ever be the means to social deliverance . this is a cold and dark world , and architecture is a dead discipline . there will always be light at the end of the tunnel , but i feel as though this one is caving in .'

in other words , i wasn't feeling 'optimistic' . nothing felt important , everything felt irrelevant .

so , i returned to proto.thesis ,

[r40r^4*]

relying on the fictitious character of 'the architect' , the one who travels through space and time and points and lines liberating architectures of 'the bottom line' . miraculously , he chose to

liberate some buildings in my home town on a stroad called route 40 , which are represented here as situated in this site model . in a way , these were ways of ‘productively procrastinating , working transtensively without any pressure , circling around dead ends until the only way out that presented itself was through .

at the same time as i was channeling ‘the architect’ ,

[nga gif]

i was also studying the site of Pruitt igoe , particularly in relation to the latest adjacent development , a \$1.7b national geospatial intelligence agency constructed by the united states airforce literally across the street to the north , which razed an entire city block in order to make space for itself . i find this to be a particularly cruel bit of irony since the notion of a tabula rasa is a markedly modernist concept , and Pruitt Igoe is , after all , referred to as the death of modernism .

as such , i refused a building and focused on negating architecture as the design and construction of buildings .

[9 3rd things]

instead , i started working on 9 3rd things , interventions which amend typical mundane urban[e] elements by providing space for those who have none , who were otherwise disregarded by the majority of society as ‘the other’ , as objects . i guess the main motivation for this stems from a few people i sat down with over the summer who were homeless, or ‘drifters’ , but usually intentionally so , in that they refused to conform to the standards of society , of becoming a cog in this damned machine . i guess i designed these for those people .

[conceptual collage]

in a way , these were siteless ways in.to the Pruitt igoe project, but also scaled up , more ‘architectural’ evolutions of the research devices . they place one in relation to the other , creating an inter.subjective experience with architecture as the medium , or ‘third thing’ .

as a result , i grew even less interested in designing a building on the site , even though in all honesty the community was asking for one .

[tiny homes]

you see , in the midst of the pandemic , the city of st. louis rejected a community request for an \$880,000 safe haven in the southeastern corner of the former pruit-igoe site , offering instead only \$600,000 which was then put towards the placement of 50 'tiny homes' [really modified backyard sheds] on a former rv lot . however , it still really didn't feel right designing a building for a community and conditions that were so foreign to me .

[17 rfps]

so instead , i worked back through the photos i had taken of the pruit-igoe site and the surrounding area , thinking through 9 psp , proposed site processes , which , when reordered , could act as a potential timeline of development for the site , as well as 17 rfps , rote fragmental photoshops , which really acted as additional ways in.to the site and its surroundings as subjects of their own by reorganizing the present so as to project in.to the future .

through these recursive loops and transtensive processes , i was finally able to bring myself to design a building , perhaps even against my will [f you believe in that sort of thing] . a reposal , the act of placing something , especially confidence or trust , in some.one or thing . this was partially an reposal to the community's request for a safe haven , partially an reposal to architecture as a dead or at least dying discipline , and partially an offering to myself as a way to lay doubt and fear to rest . the forested area remains untouched , but the undeveloped 4.2 acre parcel in the northwest corner is bought by a billionaire who miraculously grew a conscience and donated a \$74m building, 66,666 square feet in size .

[site plan]

it's important to note that i designed this building for myself , to spend my last few weeks in studio with my classmates , because it's my favorite place to be and that's what i love to do ; even if i imagine/hope it to be a sincere and honest offering to the community , its roots can still be traced back to my first semester here when i

said i was going to design a city for a single person . for this reason i can't tell if it's the most self.ish or self.less thing i could have done .

[analog diagram]

at this point , i want to return to the notion of transtension itself , while stating that the pruit igoe project does not exist as a culminatory or final aspect of this thesis , simply another wave in the sea that is ' ' .

just last night i was making loveseats , i still plan on deploying acp43 after i leave this place , and i still have intentions to practice getting the 9 third things built and developing new typologies in order to offer space to those who have none ; in other words, i have no intention of giving up on architecture .

[definition of architecture]

in closing , i would also like to offer transtension's definition of architecture as simply 'the relation between opposites' , which is to say neither mind nor matter , neither form nor space , but something else entirely, aka 'the third thing' insofar as it allows for the 'simultaneous synthesis and discretization of disparities' . these both stem from architecture's only utility , that of reminding us of what we have forgotten , that it is not 'either , or' , simply 'both , and' .

and finally , one more revision of the sherwood quote :

[final sherwood quote]

'it is doubtless if architecture will ever be the means to social deliverance . the problem is one not only of national attitudes and policies , but of the other . and rather than the means , architecture can be a light in the dark along the way ; the way through the other , to the self , to the other , through the social , as a constant and perpetual state of delivering , rather than any sort of final 'deliverance' .'

thank you