Building as Witness:
An architectural study of scratches and memory
Santiago Mosso
Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE
Approved by

PAUL EMMONS
Chairman

JAAN HOLT
Committee member

MARCIA FEUERSTEIN
Committee member
THE THREE PARTS OF MIND: MEMORY-IMAGINATION-RATIONALITY = THREE PARTS OF ARCHITECTURE?

A fire station is a building where not too many things happen. But the few that do are either too forgettable or too memorable. This thesis tries to achieve time, innovation and realism. There's a redundancy in this building, in people's actions that makes it memorable.

This building is the evidence of my way of thinking architecture. It reflects my memory as student and architect. It shows an undeniable background. It's questioning why buildings don't endure in time, why they are disposable objects. I'm trying to find reasons to make a building respectful, socially involved with its surroundings.

The project is a midsize fire station. It answers to an actual necessity to relocate the existing fire station on Prince St. [Alexandria, VA] giving more space for firefighters and better access for two trucks. The new site is an existing parking lot that crosses a whole block from South Washington St. to South Columbus St. between Wilkes St. and Wolfe St. This site gave me the possibility to create a building where trucks can access and leave it without turning or maneuvering too much.
FOREWORD

This thesis project is a different way to think about architecture for me. Since the beginning I felt this project as a real building: The reflection of its personality, its redundancy in time and consequently its memory. I always worked on as a living entity. This process took me to many places and a range of new questions, that eventually I'll answer to myself. But mostly I feel it helped me to understand new aspects of architecture, unknown aspects for me until now, which I couldn't have discovered without help of the following people: Cecilia de la Vega, Andres Martinez, Ariadna Belmonte, Nestor Cerami, Laura Croce, Chris Cabacar, Ed Patrick, Osvaldo Mosso, Clara Ros and Macarena Mosso.

And to my committee Paul Emmons, Jaan Holt and Marcia Feuerstein, which I recognize not only as good professors, but also as a great influence in my work and a unique piece in this endeavor.
INTRODUCTION

Not long ago, I had a dream. It was about me being a building, witnessing people, chatting, fighting, walking, resting, and living. But because I was a building I didn’t have the faculty of verbal expression, so I wasn’t able to express what I saw, what I had to say about a series of events. After I woke up from that dream I started thinking about the meaning of it. Why did I see this building as a living entity? Is the building witnessing our actions? Is it some sort of animal is that coexists with us? Did (they) get affected by surrounding context? But my question is if buildings can react to or express human motion, testify to their actions, movement, behavior, then is there any way to facilitate or reinforce this act of witnessing by the building.
SCRATCHES – Photo Documentation

How a building is supposed to talk to us was one of the things that I want to investigate. This research began with a series of pictures of surfaces affected by human motion. The next four pages are pictures of Washington – Alexandria Architecture Center building. This exercise helped me to reveal to myself what this building is saying of students, faculty, etc. These scratches reflect the building’s soul.
SCRATCHES are the record of an action
What is the SURFACE telling us?
A SCRATCH is an indexical sign.
It's indicating, transmitting, giving us information.
Imagination is, in general, the power or process of producing mental images and ideas. The term is technically used in psychology for the process of reviving in the mind percepts of objects formerly given in sense perception. Since this use of the term conflicts with that of ordinary language, some psychologists have preferred to describe this process as "imaging" or "imagery" or to speak of it as "reproductive" as opposed to "productive" or "constructive" imagination. Imagined images are seen with the "mind's eye": One hypothesis for the evolution of human imagination is that it allowed conscious beings to solve problems (and hence increase an individual's fitness) by use of mental simulation. The common use of the term is for the process of forming in the mind new images which have not been previously experienced, or at least only partially or in different combinations. Fairy tales and fiction generally are the result of this process of combination. A form of verisimilitude often invoked in fantasy and science-fiction invites readers to pretend such stories are true by referring to imaginary antecedents such as fictional books or years that do not exist apart from an imaginary world.

Imagination plays an important role in architecture. It represents the starting point of the project, the first step of a future manifestation. It's when the architect plays the role of the seer, the diviner, the blind witness. And it becomes a mutual process of designing and witnessing this design, this future manifestation. The architect is the creator; he/she enjoys and suffers the process of gestation, where building is the living entity that we have to "take care" of, until it's born.

Then the building design becomes a living entity, and like any creator, the architect has problems to let it go and accept the reality that the building has its own life ahead. Architects become witnesses of this gestation. They accept or deny different hypotheses about the building. They are the ones who know the truth and they know how to prove it. Sketches become the evidence of the first manifestation of creation. Design drawings are evidence of this gestation and also evidence of this desire. Building becomes the consequence of the acts, the result, and the manifestation foreseen by the seer.

From the first moment that buildings start interacting with human beings, they get affected by our actions. The process of recording actions starts, where architecture becomes the limit for those actions. And it is when evidence appears in the building. And then, as a consequence of this, the building has started to grow up, by showing these past actions. And also an imminent memory is revealed, by recalling these events. Architect no more is the witness, now the building acquires that condition.

Users of the building spill onto building not via only or through actions, but via emotions and thoughts in its spaces. Architecture becomes the manifestation and link between generations in this process of witnessing and telling about these events. Archetypical elements play the role of holding the evidence and showing it to us. Flow determines the presence of the architectural element and later this element translates the past event. A good example is "Gualala Cemetery" by Enric Miralles. The cemetery, although visually stunning, has more to offer to one walking through the site; by the same token, the space is demarcated by one's movement around it, rather than by the architecture upon it. The tectonics of the place, plus the display of elements on the site, reveal the human presence. Lives that don't exist anymore are represented by forgotten elements on the site.

Weathering plays a second character in the building. Materials such as concrete and stone merge to reflect an expression of this memory; a tectonic reaction is expected through the years, where natural agents will shape this space. And memory will appear in the building not only through the design but by its aging.
Do you recall the name of the student who sat behind you in the second grade? Who was your favorite grade-school teacher? Most of us have great difficulty with questions like these. Are these memories gone forever? Or are they still stored somewhere in our brain, waiting only for the right stimulus to return once again with all their original clarity?

Over the years, many theories of memory have come in and out of vogue. Scientists once thought our memories functioned like the Library of Congress, with its hundreds of thousands of books. If we wished to get in touch with an event or a person from our past, all we had to do was think back to the appropriate time and date and retrieve the right memory, like selecting a dusty volume from rarely consulted shelves. Today we have abandoned metaphors that call for shelves in the brain. How does memory work? Why do we forget? After years of research, neuroscientists working on the human brain may be very close to answering these questions and, in the process, finally revealing the secrets of memory.

Memory can be contaminated by questions containing hidden suggestions such as, “Did the yellow car run the red light?” when there was no red light, but a stop sign instead. In a court of law, if the witness or legal counsel fails to correct the questioner, this discrepancy between a red light and a stop sign can later be entered into evidence and used to impugn the witness’s credibility.

-Fragment from “The Brain” by Richard Restak, MD.-

Memory of buildings can be contaminated too. When a building suffers a renovation or addition, generally, clues are tempted to be erased or changed. Evidence is covered by new materials, surfaces are fixed, old brick walls are covered with brand new gypsum, and plaster is added to old ceilings and painted later. This failure of cooperation and camouflage doesn’t help to recall what happened before. Are we able to refresh its memory in the same way that the gangster forces his captive to remember the truth? We have to keep in mind that to “refresh” people’s memory by threat or stress can also lead to false memories. If we force the building to say what happened before we may affect the original intention of the building. And end up with a supposed truth of it, a mere speculation of what the building is or was.

Buildings are created for different reasons. Buildings always try to achieve a specific character given by human beings. But sometimes buildings reveal their own character, sometimes they become an icon of an era, a physical reference of an event. And through the passage of time they could end up being this memorable object and forget from what they were supposed to be in a first instance. Sometimes society associates buildings with bad memories, and they forget what it was for. There are buildings that because of different atrocities made by human beings in it, can’t be use again. They keep recalling these past actions, and it’s almost impossible for people to use them again. An example of this could be any building used to torture Jews during World War II by the Nazis, like concentration camps, old factories, etc. The building becomes scene and witness all in one. It provides the space for actions, records them and then recalls them later.

By only going through its spaces, you can understand previous on past actions. And memory becomes a key active element in these places. Evidence is shown on walls, floors, ceilings, furniture and even air and light in the building. “Memory provides a schema for the present and predicators the future” [Cedric Price – Re: CP by Cedric Price].

I have a picture of myself at age of twelve on the occasion of receiving my first bicycle. Although I remember this as one of the happiest days of my childhood, I can’t summon up the feelings I had at the time. To do so, it would probably be necessary to see the bike once again, perhaps even sit on it, or somehow re-create as many of the sensory aspects of that occasion as possible.

“For reasons we don’t understand, the emotions involved are often far less accessible to our memories than the images we have stored for events in our past” [Dr. Mishkin – The Brain by Richard Restak].

It is likely that differences exist in people’s abilities to re-experience their emotional memories. Creativity may depend on a heightened ability to “get in touch” with the emotions and not just images of the past. The flip side of this ability may involve painful, haunting memories that can’t be forgotten despite strongest efforts.

In everyday life, memories are also formed in relation to emotionally upsetting events. Can you recall where you were when President Kennedy was shot, or when the Twin Towers were attacked? Most of the people can recall what they were doing when they heard this type of news. These “flashbulb” memories, as they are called, are sharply etched within our minds because they involve a sudden upheaval of powerful emotions: shock, pity, disbelief, outrage. There is obviously a powerful link here between emotions and memory. If emotions are muted, memories are less powerful and less enduring. We remember best those events that had an emotional impact on us, unless, of course, the events were too upsetting.

In architecture this happens more or less the same. We have a vivid image of some buildings, either because they are questionable or not. We remember them, and carry them in our memory. Also, we can recall perfectly a building that impressed us when we were there. The emotion that we had generated by the architecture brings memorable pictures of the place. And every time that we design something, somehow, represent something influenced by this architecture background that we have. We don’t know exactly how it occurs, but no one can deny that it happens. How often do we think that our ideas are really original and then we realize that someone else did it before us? Memory influences our designs, we recall emotions trough our designs.

“Memory really pervades all that we do, what we are, our personalities, how we interact with other people, how we drive, how we perform simple motor acts and complicated intellectual acts, and so on. We don’t think of them as specific memories, because we don’t remember precisely where we acquired this information. Nevertheless, that knowledge guides our performance. It guides our behavior and pervades everything we do” [Dr. Cohen, The Brain by Richard Restak].

Architecture can also be commemorative. Where a society needs the presence of a common identity, the monuments become a place to find it. They represent this (almost instantaneous) connection with the past. Their function is to create a stage to start remembering a past event. The building is a physical representation of a collective memory and it becomes a bridge for the mind to recreate memorable events.

Collective memory is a term coined by Maurice Halbwachs, separating the notion from the individual memory. The collective memory is shared, passed on and also constructed by the group, or modern society.

The collective memory of a nation is represented in the memorials. Public memory is enshrined in memorials from the newly opened Holocaust memorial in Berlin to the Vietnam Veteran’s memorial in Washington DC. Whatever a nation chooses to commit to physical, or more significantly what not to memorialize is an indicator of the collective memory.
Rationality

In philosophy, the word rationality has been used to describe numerous religious and philosophical theories, especially those concerned with truth, reason, and knowledge. Persons believing in a non-material conception of the self such as the mind or soul understand rationality to be a key feature separating humans from animals. Continental rationalism is a school in which rationality and reason are the key methods by which we obtain knowledge, in opposition to empiricism which states that knowledge is obtained primarily via the senses.

When we learn architecture we get knowledge assisting to classes and studying, this is related to a more rational way to learn. But by drawing and designing buildings we don’t only rationalize about the issue in the design. We also use our senses. Senses help us to determine an approach in the design in the same way that reasoning does.

Although architecture combines both sides of rationality, doesn’t mean that architects use both. It depends on the person how this is balance. But we can say that reasoning is a more conscious state than the empirical way of obtained knowledge.
Building and wax tablet

A wax tablet (tabula) is a tablet made of wood and covered with a layer of wax. It was used as a reusable and portable writing surface in the ancient Greek and Roman world. Writing was performed with a pointed instrument, a stylus. A straight-edged implement would be used in a razor-like fashion to re-smoothen the surface, before next use. Something similar happens with marks and buildings. Marks are there, but can be relatively erased. One example will be when an old rail road is paved in order to have a new street for the car. The passage that used to exist there for the train is vanished, cover by some new technology. And for next generations is impossible to perceive this old existence. They can research and get to know about the existence of this railroad, but they will never experience a mark, a left over from a passed event.

"...The city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of hand, written in the corners of the streets, the greetings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls..." (Cities & Memory 3, Chapter II – Invisible Cities by Italo Calvino).

Should buildings be understood and created as wax tablets? A building becomes this object where motion and constant flow and actions scratch it surfaces, leaving these evidences. This analogy by Aristotle comes quite close to the contemporary neuroscientist’s ideas: The function of memory does depend to a great extent on the state of the brain. “Some men in the presence of considerable stimulus have no memory owing to disease or age, just as if a stimulus or a seal were impressed on flowing water. With them the design makes no impression because they are worn down like old walls in buildings, or because of the hardness of that which is to receive the impression. For this reason the very young and the old have poor memories; they are in a state of flux, the young because of their growth, the old their decay. For a similar reason good memories; the former are moister than they should be, and the latter harder; with the former, the picture has no permanence; with the latter, it makes no impression,” wrote Aristotle. This gives a character to the building that can be read and understood. It is almost a dialogue with the building, where it has something to show us that we have to reveal and bring a conclusion about it.

I think these scratches become a symbolic and indexical sign at the same time. Because they are showing an event and they represent this soul of the building. These scratches are, analogically, what we as people get through time; the experience, knowledge and sometimes wisdom. Scratches are the representation of those moments that we remember, experiences that changed us. But the only difference between a building and us is that the building can show it. For us it’s only a state of mind, something that shapes our personality. Buildings expose them, and if you are willing to read them they are going to reveal something else, something livable about the place that the building can’t say by verbal expression.
Looking and Seeing

Erich Fromm has written that before one can create, one must first develop the ability to see, so that one can then respond. Seeing is a conscious act that implies being aware of something, discovering it and analyzing it. To look at something, on the other hand, is to allow one’s gaze to pass over it without regarding it. Architectural work has to be seen; just looking at it is not enough. That is why, if we are to achieve a more objective interpretation of the work – by definition a collective task – the first step must be to get closer to it; see it, rather than wrap it in myth.
Building scratches, leaving scraps

When we are working on a wax tablet there is no need to inscribe very deeply in the wax; it doesn’t make it significantly easier to read, and it makes it much harder to erase. You can write quite small and still have readable text. As you write, the stylus will collect curls of wax; wipe them off from time to time in a corner of the writing surface. These scraps will be useful later when you erase the tablet.

The actions that occur on a building leave scratches. Marks can be caused directly or indirectly; intentionally or unintentionally.

Some marks are caused by erosion, for example when a chair scratches a floor because someone moved it without lifting it. Another example is when the mark is caused by something that we are wearing, like a pair of shoes with a rubber sole, which leaves a graze on a surface floor.

When we like to decorate the space with some artifact and need to nail it on the wall. The mark is intentional and is easy to read, even if it’s because we find the nail or because there’s a hole in the wall we understand the pass action or intention. The mark or intention becomes a clue. Its evidence is revealed to us by the building.

Another situation is when a mark is caused unintentionally or in an indirectly way. When we walk through space or wander into it, we use the space that is delimited by the walls, floor and roof or ceiling. Furniture and other fixed artifacts can create a condition in space that limits human motion. Even if we use a corridor or “x” space in the same way everyday, we really don’t move through it exactly the same every time. This creates a trench or path that is a common factor of many walks trough daily. The mark becomes an unforeseen-random consequence, where the intention of the action is unlinked with the clue, but it still is a readable action. This redundancy through time is what gives life to the building.

Italo Calvino wrote in “Cities & Signs 2 (Invisible Cities)” that memory is redundant, it repeats signs so that the city can begin to exist.

It’s like trying to draw the same line over and over again. Even if you use a ruler it’s not going to be the same line, it’s going to be quite similar but not the same. Computers can do this, because they don’t deal with a real surface like paper. Line and surface become completely ephemeral and ethereal elements, they have no real presence. That’s why I think is possible to invent the typical process that we as students do. We usually sketch by hand and then jump into the computer to draw “final” drawings. I think the experience of bringing ideas into the vastness space of the computer could be really helpful as a “kick off” for the design. In someway, an ethereal characteristic of the computer makes me think that those are related with the first phase of the imagination of the design. But let’s go back to the idea of scratches.

When we write on a wax tablet there is an intention of creating a mark. The stylus becomes the element for the intention, which scratches the wax in order to express a thought and leave evidence that something occurred. There’s also a small scale of erosion. This erosion is microscopic, too small to be seen by the unaided eye. This mark is a symbolic sign, where we interpret something different [text or a drawing] than the mark. The mark becomes a detachable object.

When we draw on paper there’s also an intention to create something. A mark or cut is presented on the paper and creates this expression of a shadowy thought. Erosion occurs on the paper and pencil. The thought appears through the friction of two elements, orchestrated by hand, and ultimately the brain. A trace is left on the paper. Each part of our mind plays its role in the production of this trace.

Paper becomes the “scene of the crime” and drawings the evidence, that turn into a detachable object for our imagination to run through.
Weathering and Erosion

Weathering involves two processes that often work in concert to decompose rocks. Both processes occur in place. No movement is involved in weathering. Chemical weathering involves a chemical change in at least some of the minerals within a rock. Mechanical weathering involves physically breaking rocks into fragments without changing the chemical make-up of the minerals within it. It's important to keep in mind that weathering is a surface or near-surface process. As you know, metamorphism also produces chemical changes in rocks, but metamorphic chemical changes occur at depth where either the temperature and/or pressure are significantly higher than conditions found on the Earth’s surface.

As soon as a rock particle (loosened by one of the two weathering processes) moves, we call it erosion or mass wasting. Mass wasting is simply movement down slope due to gravity. Rock falls, slumps, and debris flows are all examples of mass wasting. We call it erosion if the rock particle is moved by some flowing agent such as air, water or ice.

So, here it is: if a particle is loosened, chemically or mechanically, but stays put, call it weathering. Once the particle starts moving, call it erosion.

As we know buildings engage both phenomena. Chemical weathering can be found in a range of surfaces. In London is very common that buildings get affected by acid rain. These acid solutions can have catastrophic effects on limestone building stones because limestone is soluble in acid and acid rain can cause them to dissolve or crumble and to lose their ornamental features.

Physical weathering of building stones occurs by any mechanism which generates physical stresses within the stone. The growth of salt crystals or ice crystals in pore spaces or in cracks can cause the stone to fracture. Extremes of temperature may also have the same effect.

Erosion can be caused by natural elements. But, like I said before, it’s caused also by persons. Mass wasting is the approach that I used to generate my research models, where mass is carved, affected by another element. What would happen if instead of have a mass wasting I have a mass casted. Mass opens to generate space. The scratch is the space. It adopts a new scale, a bigger scale. Space becomes the clue and the scene at the same time. “place” or room it’s generated by subtraction for humans to be with in it. Person becomes a particle in space that starts moving, like erosion. The phenomenon is having place for procession/progression [ramp, fire pole] and corners for ceremonies/events.

The same it’s that is supposed to happen with architectural elements. They are supposed to give place to the action and also give place to other elements like pipes, fire poles, vehicles, etc.

Even if I create this, there’s a missing attitude in the design process. Something related to the emotion of the space. There’s a celebration in some spaces that is necessary, like holy places in general: there’s the place where you have this nostalgic motion related to a determined faith.

Italo Calvino wrote in “Cities and Eyes 2” [Invisible Cities] that you can find encrusted at the foot of the walls the ill-humor of the day before just following every day the same stretches of street in Zemrude city.

I think this emotional factor is what it’s going to last in people’s memory, even if building turns into ruins.

He also wrote in “Trading cities 4” [Invisible Cities] that in Ersilia city the inhabitants stretch strings from corners of the houses, white or black or gray or black-and-white according to whether they mark a relationship of blood, of trade, authority, agency.

When the strings become so numerous that you can no longer pass among them, the inhabitants leave; the houses are dismantled; only the strings and their supports remain.

Ersilia’s refugees look at the labyrinth of taut strings and poles that rise in the plain. That is still the city of Ersilia, and they are nothing.

When traveling in the territory of Ersilia, you come upon the ruins of the abandoned cities, without the walls which do not last, without the bones of the dead which the wind rolls away; spider-webs of intricate relationships seeking a form.
Light

We know Earth is in constant movement. It’s changing its position constantly in reference to the Sun, as a consequence, light changes. But for some reason we tend to forget that and we feel light as an ephemeral element that change all the time. And we forget that we are moving, not light.

Light is everywhere. We are embraced by it. We give meaning to it, and also we try to shape it. Light influences our actions, mood, beliefs, even we adapt time to match light hours.

Light is an element that, in order to be seen needs the presence of a body. That body works as a boundary, filter or media, where light takes place even hitting the surface, trespass within it or running through it (sparks of dust in the air).

Light brings life to an opaque body. Opaque bodies don’t reveal their presence without light. They need the presence of it, in order to show their qualities. Light embraces this body and brings with it the enigmatic presence that reveals the hidden qualities of the body, like texture, reflection and movement.

Light reveals its physical presence through shadows or, we can say, through its obstruction.

We don’t only see shadows but we also read them. We understand that shadows signify, because they are at once and inseparably sensory phenomena and cultural constructs. We can look at them, through them or into them.

Shadow can be related to darkness in some cultures. Shadow can be mystery (see Giorgio de Chirico paintings), the body rises out of darkness, into the realms of light. But shadow also could mean shelter or weather protection.

In Japanese culture, shadow has an important place; it is the intermediary zone between light and darkness. Just before the sun sets, or just after, there is a moment when light and darkness merge and all is enveloped in dim shadow. This type of shadow is a repudiation of the dualistic shadow that is made when light is blocked.

Tadao Ando says that there is a loss of sense of the depth and richness of darkness. He also says: “as we grow unaware of darkness, we forget spatial reverberations and the subtle patterns created by light and shade”.

I believe is important to create a dialogue with materials that supports this phenomenon. Materials can serve to produce light, homogeneous surfaces, where they can express not only its nature but employ it to establish the single intent of the space. “When light is drawn into it, cool, tranquil space surrounded by a clearly finished architectural element is liberated to become a soft, transparent area transcending materials. It becomes a living space that is one with the people inhabiting it. The actual walls cease to exist, and the body of the beholder is aware only of the surrounding space” [Tadao Ando].

The building is also witness of the passage of time through its shadows. The building is a sundial. It becomes an object of reference for society, a symbiosis is established between society and building, in the same way as light and shadows: where one can not exist without the presence of the other. Light witnesses the passage of time through its opposite, shadow. Shadow exists as the obstruction of light. Society witnesses the building’s presence and the building witnesses theirs. A symbiosis is always there, the issue is to find it. And that’s what the design is supposed to achieve.
Site

The site is located in Old Town, Alexandria, VA.
DOCUMENTATION
When I started thinking about what kind of building I can find to demonstrate these thoughts, different types came to my mind. But I liked the idea of designing a type of building where actions in it will have some uniqueness, where the flow of characters and elements would create an identifiable pattern of marks.
A fire station achieves most of these ideas: its mood as building, the change of mood of the firefighters, its image in the urban context and collective memory as consequence, all this was discover through the process of design it.
This fire station is for eight fire fighters plus four volunteers and two trucks. But that’s not what this project is about. Although is about people, my major question was about the future of the building in order to understand its memory, evidence, eventually life.
There are different elements in the building that help in this act of witnessing. One of them is carved surfaces. The idea of giving space to something else by the subtraction of a mass helped me to create fixed elements, like shelves, tables, showers, etc. This creates elements that will be one thing with the building, a permanent mark. If someone will try to change a room, turn it into something else there will be always a mark of this past event.

Same idea was applied to floors; they create this record of the action. For example the door of the bathrooms, its movement is represented in the floor.
The building is made out of concrete, wood and steel. The decision of the materials came from the necessity of having a building that will endure in time. Not only because a fire station needs to be an enduring building, but because it needs to show its memory through its evidence. The building itself is the scene of the “crime”, witness, and evidence of events.
Concrete as material keeps record of how it’s been build. Walls reveal its way of construction. Marks of the formwork showed in its surface tell us about time in construction. They become part of this history of the building, of its character. Buildings transmit feelings through tectonics, particularly this talks about extreme experiences and reflect what this people are and what they do.
RAMP+FIRE POLE

This element/device was the first element that came into the design. I found a good way to reflect what the building is. The space becomes the limit for the action. It tells what to do, when to run where to stop and when you have to go down to meet the trucks.

Because of its particular aspect and function it makes it memorable. After I achieved this element for the design, unconsciously I approach the building in a different way. I started designing it in parts, never as a whole. I tried to define each space and shape according to what is happening there. Eventually the building ends up being this multi-piece whole. It started showing some monstrosity qualities.
SHOWER FOR THE TRUCKS

Trucks are the other character of this building besides people. There are two recognizable scales in the building: the truck and the firefighter are who determine those scales.

On the ground level trucks have three different phases to go through. When they come from the fire they go into the building accessing from South Columbus St. Trucks and equipment get washed. Every ash and toxic particle is removed. And trucks are moved to the next phase, the courtyard (section 4-4) in order to get dry.

After that they get moved to the third phase (section 5-5), where all the equipment is put in place to leave again the fire station towards a new fire.
CONCLUSION

After thinking how to conclude this thoughts and thesis I realized that it's difficult for me to elaborate a conclusion on this topic at this phase of my life. Why? Well, this thesis brought more questions, more things to investigate to prove to myself. Although I can say that I get to witness this building from a different perspective while I was putting these words together. While I was designing this building I focused in the future, in what it would happen to it if its function change. With that in mind I decided causes that it will take me close to supposed consequences.

Now I get to presence what is done. And feel that are things that I would change, redefine. I feel know that non architecture is eternal. It depends on its own experience, on the gestures of existence.

"As a temple is remade over and again, in different ways, this continually degrading architecture is reconstructed in Memory, encountered in the ruins, in the richness of a fresco miraculously preserved underground, poised for rediscovery under the poisons of the air.

No innovation ever abandons ancient reason.
There is no such thing as innovation.
There is a rediscovery of innocence, a capturing of the State of Grace, so that it is not lost from Memory". (Alvaro Siza)
BIBLIOGRAPHY
- Memory, History, Forgetting by Paul Ricoeur
- Matter and Memory by Bergson.
- Poetics of Space by Gaston Bachelard.
- The art of memory by Frances A. Yates.
- The book of memory by Carruthers.
- Such places as memory by Hejduk.
- Invisible Cities by Italo Calvino.
- Architecture and Shadow - Journal of the Graduate School of Fine Arts - University of Pennsylvania.
- Re-CP by Cedric Price.
- Art: 21 - Art in the Twenty First Century
- The Brain by Richard Restak, M.D.
- On Collective memory by Halbwachs, Maurice.
VITA

2003  Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo. Universidad de Mendoza.