PERCEPTUAL SHIFT
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Project One: Temporary Library

'There is not such a cradle of democracy upon the earth as the Free Public Library, this republic of
letters, where neither rank, office, nor wealth receives the slightest consideration.'
- Andrew Carnegie

'Perhaps no place in any community is so totally democratic as the town library. The only entrance
requirement is interest.'
- Lady Bird Johnson

'Information is the currency of democracy.'
- Thomas Jefferson

In this project, students are asked to question the existing model of the Library. The
studio should become a laboratory of investigation through which to analyze, challenge
and critique this existing paradigm. The initial objective of the project is for
students to personally redefine the meaning of library in our society in order to
create a library engaged with and expressive of
our current culture.

'I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library.'
-Jorge Luis Borges

'We may sit in our library and yet be in all quarters of the earth.'
-John Lubbock

The library as an institution facilitates private access in a truly public place. The
seeking of knowledge is often a private act, the relationship between an individual
and book is sacred. As one reads, one is at once within the realm of the book and the
place of the library; reading allows for this spatial coexistence, the conflation of
imaginative thought and conscious reality. Space collapses in the simultaneity of
places; you are at once physically here and mentally there. This spatial configuration
reflects the spatial conditions of our cultural context.

Work will begin with development of personal theories regarding both program and
context, and the nature of the library as a facilitator of the relationship between
the individual and society.

'….Architecture is intrinsically bound up with the fundamental need for shelter, but that shelter has
both physical and metaphysical implications. The physical aspect requires that architecture be
constructed, be a material reality. This situates architecture inescapably as a condition of
presence. But as shelter also exists in the mind as an idea, in its metaphysical state architecture
is a conceptual reflection of physical presence, an "absence" in a material sense. From this
perspective, what was earlier described as a traditional architectural history founded on dominant
vectors of truth can also be seen as an ideological effort to screen architecture's intrinsic absence
behind an emphasis on its physic. It could be said that this screening is a sign of the endurance of
anthropocentrism's privileging of presence and centeredness, even beyond its own crisis.

Precisely because shelter always manifests presence in construction, it will tend to stabilize and in
so doing ultimately lend itself to institutionalization. Any act of building will necessarily be an
act of presencing. But, as stated earlier, the conceptual act of architecture is the critique,
transformation, and creation of institutions. Thus architecture can be considered, paradoxically,
contradictory to building, to its institutionalizing presence. As such, architecture cannot be except
as it continuously distances itself from its own boundaries; it is always in the process of becoming,
of changing, while it is also always establishing, institutionalizing. It has the potential to be
simultaneously a creation and critique of the institution it builds. This is what might be termed the
challenge of dislocation for the architect and for architecture.

As every dislocation of presence also requires, to some extent, its reaffirmation, any activity that
would entirely abandon the terms of both the metaphysic and the physic would not be involved in the
activity of dislocation but of destruction, for dislocation is enabled only by the play of absence
against presence, by the work on and within the contradictory terms of the discourse. This condition
is particularly significant in architecture as opposed to, for example, the discourses of philosophy,
because in the latter the presence of the material, language, can be made to disappear into signs
characterized by their transparency, a type of absence in language. Because of the unavoidable
imperative of presence in architecture, it risks entering into a stabilizing metaphysic where, for
example, scale and form succumb to an authoritative center. Hence architecture is an activity that is
highly resistant to dislocation and decentering. This is the paradox of architecture.

- Peter Eisenman, Misreading Peter Eisenman