REVIVE

ABANDONED

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2016-2017 Architecture Thesis
Isle of the Dead, Arnold Böcklin, 1880
“Architecture has been defined in terms of one activity, and that activity is adding to the world. A few years ago I realized the profession was as if lobotomized – it was stuck conceiving of itself only in terms of adding things and not in terms of taking away or erasing things. The same intelligence for adding ought to also deal with its debris.”

- Rem Koolhaas, 1996
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THESIS STATEMENT
Revive Abandoned

Architecture is never a blank slate, it should not be destroyed every time to accommodate every changes, it’s about recognizing the significance in what exists and preserve the part that is beloved by its occupants. Consider architecture development as a cultural inherit monument that could carry information through generations of people, this thesis is trying to seek the morphology as the architectural manifestation and catalyze for the revitalization of abandoned culture and social life in micro-rayon compounds inside third-tier and fourth-tier city in China due to the decreasing and aging of population as well as longing of life quality.

It pushes the boundary of how modern architecture could accommodate with old structure and seeks the possibility of the space formation within existing infrastructure. It explores the potential of transforming separate architectural units into a comprehensive complex- a new leisure-cultural based commune on an existing abandoned residential area which provides an institutional framework and architectural type that advocates the new leisure mode based on individual entrepreneurship and integrated leisure service to bring the reserved and beloved memories of spirit and society back to life in a new form of expression.
Street view of Shengli Oil Worker Sanitorium
INTRODUCTION
Plan Voisin for Paris, Le Corbusier, 1925
HISTORY

With rapid growth of population and urbanization of cities in past century, architecture has always be seen as a tool to provide living shelter for human, as the boundary to define public and private, as form to divide interior and exterior. Especially in 1960s, when most communist regimes exercised a form of centrally controlled development and simplified methods of construction outlined in the Soviet. The communist planning resulted in the virtually identical city blocks being erected across many nations. Soviet-style cities are often traced to Modernist ideas in architecture such as those of Le Corbusier and his plans for Paris. The housing developments generally feature tower blocks in park-like settings, standardized and mass-produced using structural insulated panels within a short period of time to solve the problem of needs for housing with the rapid growth of population.

The development of urban planning in China (PRC) demonstrates a unique communist approach with Chinese characteristics. It started after communist takeover in the early 1950s. Lots of identical social compounds were erected during that time in many cities, they build walls around them to protect themselves for safety. All residents live inside each compound are working for certain organization. They work and live together and their children grow up together, they have interaction with each other closer than ever.
We love order and minimalism in buildings. New, freshly planned, pristine and perfect are great attributes for new structures, yet we also find ourselves drawn to things that aren’t so flawless. Recycled, repurposed, previously loved, salvaged, which have our memories stored inside.
With the need for better housing conditions people are keeping moving out of these social compound to new homes with larger square meters. While sales of housing are soaring in Beijing and various methods has been taken to make it possible for denser living conditions. However, sales in the second-, third-, and fourth-tier cities with majority of population are falling 26 percent. China is facing a demographic crunch. The new generation is much smaller than the generation that has two or three flats for “investment”. While there is a strong cultural preference for new homes, not existing units, the leftover building blocks are never able to be sold out if they have other choices. It has generated vast amount of “ghost” abandoned areas in small cities in China.

Due to strong fluidity and non-directionality immigration, the culture bound between people are weakened. High technology and vehicles has set the boundaries for frequent face to face interaction. Culture heritage is dying away. Aged people are getting lonely and starts to miss the life they used to have surrounded by various culture elements. Inhabitants starts to be aware of the need for the city to grow in terms of quality, rather than in square meters. They have entered into another stage where architecture is not only limited to provide the condition for living, but also act as the carrier of culture and provide the quality of leisure life. It carry information from generation to generation and accommodate itself to the innovation of lifestyle.
Photos by: Yuxuan Wu
RESULT & SOLUTIONS

As an endeavor to revive the cultural and community, the thesis proposes an immersed Cultural Social Park - a new leisure-cultural based commune - for Chinese abandoned social compound in small cities. It provides an institutional framework and architectural type that advocates the new leisure-working mode based on individual entrepreneurship and leisure service production.

The park exploits the abandoned site elastic, challenges the preconceived division between private and public, emphasizes the benefits of collective, facilitate the base for culture inherit, spatializes working and leisure programs for social interaction, advocates individual entrepreneurship, invents sustainable construction system integrated with the existing relic, aggregates individuals into a collective leisure “commune”, and finally seeks a new morphology as the architectural manifestation and catalyst for it.
PRECEDENT
DECONSTRUCTION

“Urban park for the 21st century” developed a complex program of cultural and entertainment facilities. La Villette could be conceived of as one of the largest buildings ever constructed — a discontinuous building but a single structure nevertheless, overlapping the site’s existing features and articulating new activities. It proposes a social and cultural park with activities that include workshops, gymnasium and bath facilities, playgrounds, exhibitions, concerts, science experiments, games and competitions, in addition to the Museum of Science and Technology and the City of Music on the site.

The purpose to displace the traditional opposition between program and architecture, and to deconstruct architecture by dismantling its conventions, by using concepts derived from both architecture and from elsewhere - from cinema, literary criticism and other disciplines.
Site division, Rem Koolhaas

Apply activities from vertical to horizontal
NONE STOP

No-Stop City, Archizoom, Italy, 1971
In 1971, the Italian architectural group Archizoom published a project entitled “No-Stop City. Residential Parkings. Climatic Universal System.” This ironic, conceptual project calls for covering the entire surface of the earth with a single, unending, one-level interior in which a uniform, artificial, warm climate would be created. People would go around in the nude, naturally, and throughout this endless interior everything that in one way or another is met with in life would be scattered uniformly: beds, rivers, dining tables, trees, chairs, rocks, bananas, grand pianos. In this way, every person would be able to go to any point in the interior and freely use the bed or banana to be found there. Movement, though, would essentially not be necessary, since the beds, bananas, and unclothed people at one point differ in no way from the beds, bananas, and unclothed people at any other point.
“Boundary Hotel Elevator” is a commission to produce an artwork to appear floor to ceiling, all 4 sides of the elevator vestibule at the new ‘Boundary Hotel’ situated on Boundary Street in London. The artwork was devised around a grid of boundary walls. Each walled segment is about 170mm square. The idea is each journey in the elevator would give the visitor a chance to study a new scene in the artwork. A geometric toile de jouy of sorts. The conversion of the Victorian warehouse building on Boundary Street, into a boutique hotel, was a joint venture between Sir Terence Conran, Lady Conran and Peter Prescott & Partners. The hotel opened in January 2009.
Boundary Hotel Elevator Artwork, Adam Simpson
DIVERSITY

Floriade 2022 Proposal, OMA
Floriade 2022 Program, OMA
The project was based on a model of brotherhood: identical cubic pavilions hugged the perimeter of the site to leave a large public area in the middle where crowds could gather to celebrate the future; the pavilions were placed close together “hand in hand”.
Exposition Universelle, OMA, Paris, 1982
PROJECT
CONTEXT

Project:
Immersed Cultural Social Park

Program:
Leisure-working Recreation area

Site:
Yantai, Shandong, China

Natural Context:
Close to transportation center
Hillside with sea view

Urban/Constructed Context:
Existing building blocks built in 1960s
Old residential area of the Shengli Oil Worker Sanitorium

People:
Temporary residents either young workers or old retired
Mostly abandoned with no inhabitants

Industrial/Craft/Material Context:
Concrete & Brick & Stone
CITY OF YANTAI, SHANDONG, CHINA

PREFECTURE LEVEL CITY
POPULATION: 6,968,202
SIZE: 13,739KM²
DENSITY: 510/KM²

World Map, Site Location
City Development

Before 1930

1960

1990

2016
Social Commune Occupation (area with the same condition)

Starts in 1960s first, along the coast, on the edge of the old city center
Transportation Location

Figure - Ground

in relationship to other social commune and surroundings
My hometown is chosen to test and explore my thesis, it is the social compound of sanatorium built in 1960s which belongs to Victory Oil field. It is a place to serve the oil workers’ vacation and healthy relaxation. It already have the function of hospital, and hotels for oil workers accommodation is around the compound. Permanent residents here are staffs who works for the sanatorium with their family. I lived there since I was born for 18 years before I went to college. In 2008, the sanatorium built a new high rising area for its staffs. The old residential area has been abandoned for 8 years since then. People still own the property in the old area, but they don’t have the authority to sell them. Only 30% of the apartment here is rented out but most are empty. People who already moved to the high rises still have their regular wander around their old abandoned community every day and miss the time they was experiencing before as high-rises have a hard time to bond those relationship with their neighbors.

The sanatorium is trying to develop this area to serve the oil workers vacation purpose since they used to take workers out for leisure. Residents also would like their previous homes to be something that could serve their social and leisure time that they could spend with their neighbors and friends. The project is proposing a leisure complex to serve these people.
In Mark Wigley’s article “The Architectural Brain”, our internal nerves are continuous with those of computers. This idea that our electronic networks are extensions of the human body is an idea that Marshall McLuhan originally argued as one of the consequences of our electronic connection to globalized networks of communication. McLuhan asserts we have lost the boundary of our body and that our bodies have been expanded to size of the planet. Wigley takes McLuhan’s argument and applies it to architecture. Modern architecture is horizontal; modern cities are parallel to processing machines. Buildings have always been understood as vertical, however their network is positioned as flat, much like a circuit board.

In Aaron Betsy’s article in Art Forum International he argues that examining architecture after the past decades of computerized design, we should recognize that we are at a point where architecture “is falling apart into engineering, art and the pursuit of monumental forms meant to express the spirit of our times”.

STRATEGY PHILOSOPHY
Information through circuits.
Components transform information.
Functions by layers.
Hardware is in service for software to apply
Electronically augmented space* is challenging architects to rethink their traditional practice since the notion of virtual layers of contextual information will overlay the built space. Previous to electronically augmented space, it was not necessary to take into account the various layers. However, as our space becomes more and more like a circuit board it necessary to reassess how we design and create space. “Essentially, space has become a social product. Our lives do not happen in our space, the space itself is our lives - Mark Wigley”. The city has transformed into a “network of nodes and pathways through which we circulate lie data packets”

Looking back into the electronic world, functions are realized through different combinations of the calculation from simple elements aggregated as simple logic. Although one hardware circuit board could realize hundreds of software packets processing into it and realize different functions, the basic elements are always the same. The strategy is applied to architecture as seeing the space as a simple social product where the space itself is created to be the culture and life routine for certain type of activities. They are small, basic and simple, but have the potential to form complex logic to realize more complicated needs for further usage.

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*Augmented space is a physical space, which is “data dense”. Every point contains various information which is being delivered to it from elsewhere
My hypothesis is that the coming of the space of flows is blurring the meaningful relationship between architecture and society. Because the spatial manifestation of the dominant interests takes place around the world, and across cultures, the uprooting of experience, history, and specific culture as the background of meaning is leading to the generalization of ahistorical, acultural architecture ... The more that societies try to recover their identity beyond the global logic of uncontrolled power of flows, the more they need an architecture that exposes their own reality, without faking beauty from a transhistorical spatial repertoire.

—Manuel Castells
Space formation based on activity
Concept Development

Circulation  Division  Function  Program
Relax Zone

There is an existing abandoned lake in this area. By taking use of the lake, possible programs including fishing, boating and picnic facilities, this zone provides relaxation function integrated with the Hot Spring resources detected on site to build a immersed SPA center.
Healthy Zone

By taking advantage of the detected Hot Spring underground, regarding to the great need of healthy lifestyle, this zone is providing traditional way of exercising space such as Taichi Ground and lifted bicycle lane to encourage group and individual exercise for aged people. It also provide the space for the practice of traditional Chinese treatment such as acupuncture and medicine training.
Play Zone

Existing Kindergarten area with constructed infrastructure. Provide open space for children in a traditional way to play with nature. Also Majiang/Go play center for the heritage of traditions.
Street Food

Easiest accessible zone close to the existing road. Also act as natural transition zone between “play” and “working” area. Architecture to accommodate variety of street food carts that could serve the whole area. This zone could be commercialized to make profit as well.
FLEE MARKET/ STREET FOOD

DRIVEIN FOOD MARKET

AGGREGATED TRADITIONAL CHINESE STREET FOOD

OPERABLE WALLS
BLURRED BOUNDARY BETWEEN INSIDE AND OUTSIDE
Art Zone

Peking Opera interest center and art studios to accommodate traditional art lovers. This zone act as the cultural heritage that preserves Chinese art culture.
Peking Opera Theater

Traditional Style
Interior

Modern Exterior
Immerse Theater Inside

Amphitheater

Theater on Water
Watershow

Preserved Culture with New Form/Expression
Working Zone

Close to the existing working area of the compound and could act as an add-on space that could share with the surrounding neighborhood. Provide library and rent-out working offices for aged people to do individual business.
LIBRARY/ART STUDIO/STUDY ROOM

INDIVIDUAL HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO GET TOGETHER.

AGGREGATED STUDIO GALLERY

OPERABLE STUDIO
EXPERIENCE
Through the section experience of transition between zones.
PROCESS
Moments on site that are loved by the residences in this area are collected as references which will be kept or transformed in the new design.

The area grid is very common and repetitive in most part of China, with exactly same interior and exterior experience in the whole area.
Site analysis- Collective elements
Design strategy
There are several strategies to transform the homogenous area. First is to destroy the grid, only the structural elements are kept in all the buildings on the ground floor, making all the ground floor totally open and easy to move through any direction. Material/plants from the compound people likes are brought into the design to make each area unique. Besides keeping the existing sycamore trees. New plants are invited vertically (magnolia, cherry, bamboo, grass) different materiality that is added onto the buildings are invited horizontally. All added elements are easy to move and change to accommodate further development. So each area is unique but also have the relationship and clue with others to help direct through the area. Water and landscape design is waving through the area, helping to make the whole area more vivid and blur the boundary of old street grid. Function depends on the existing resource and a survey of people’s need in the area. A hot spring center around a founded hot spring resource here. A play center for children around an existing kindergarten. Food/cinema/theater in the area close by the highway which could be easily shared by the city. Middle part is relax area for multi-activities. Three buildings in the most private part on this site is kept to be residential/ family hotel.
Inside this area, all old existing buildings are transformed into different individuals, with unique interior and exterior experience. Central pavillon is adding a different street level to the area and also indicating the direction from the entrance to the big lake. On the tour through the site, there are different moments appears in the rendering.
North Side
TOUR PERSPECTIVE
Street Sectional Perspective
Isle of the Life, Arnold Böcklin, 1888