LUDGATE CIRCUS
ST. PAUL'S AS PROSPECT

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Architecture

Approved

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my wife
For her faithful support and understanding through the "extra" years.

To my children,
For growing up in a college town while Dad matriculated.

To our parents, grandparents of our children,
For unwavering support throughout the project.

To my committee members
For just plain putting up with me for so long.

To the Creator of all things, including Architecture and Architects,
For being.
ABSTRACT

Why does a London smog heavy with the dark smell of diesel on a drizzly gray afternoon bring a keen sense of deja vu, a spasm of Anglophilia, to one who grew up in the Pacific Northwest of the United States? Perhaps it is the similar climate. Perhaps The City is perceived as "achieved" rather than "provided". Perhaps the durable materials of The City act as an "Affirmation of Confidence". Perhaps it cannot be put into words. It is the "genius loci" of The City that has drawn me to invest my time on a thesis there. The nearby great works of old become "prospects" for this design. The historical precedents emit rhythms of order, clues to design.

THE THESIS:

To search for an urban form in an historical setting.

THE VEHICLE:

The Ludgate Press Center Student Competition
London, England
INTRODUCTION

THE BRIEF:
At the busy intersection in the City of London, known as Ludgate Circus, exists one of the last sites left to be rebuilt after the bombing of World War Two. The site, roughly 100 meters long and 40 meters wide, is bisected by a north–south railroad viaduct. Its northern property line is bounded by the road known as Ludgate Hill, which is a part of the ceremonial route used by royalty and dignitaries, connecting with the Strand and Fleet Street.

The site is surrounded mostly by five–story Victorian–type buildings. Of architectural interest are St. Bride’s Church to the west, St. Martin’s to the north, and St. Paul’s to the east, all designed by Sir Christopher Wren.

The building is to be initially used as a Press Center for international financial journalists. Support uses include spaces which could accommodate a conference center, a sports club, wine and coffee bars and shops.

Since my undergraduate education focused on designing buildings according to the 20th century pattern of ‘relative sizes and relationship of spaces’, I decided to explore instead the more phenomenological side of architecture.

Therefore this exploration used 'Goals and Intentions' and 'Words of Guidance' as follows:

GOALS AND INTENTIONS:
SEARCH FOR FORM BY:
* Exploring the historical and present context (context as inspiration).
  > St. Paul’s as Prospect
  > Press Center to be a quiet and strong building in an architecturally noisy neighborhood.
  > Working with a discovered order:
    * Tripartite spatial segregation
    * Edges and pathways influenced by medieval and existing 'order' or 'grid'.
  * Making an "understandable" building.
    > Occupant knows where he is — where he is going — how to get there.
    * Circulation diagrams
    * Interior courtyard and stair as 'director'.
  > By not being "unnecessarily complicated". Two quotes from Professor Kilper:
    * "The best parts are the simple ones."
    * "The direct, straightforward ones are best."
* Exploring structure and materials.
  > The making of the building
* Exploring geometries of major historical buildings near the site.

WORDS OF GUIDANCE:
MATERIALS
Proper use — Small palette
STRUCTURE
A generator of form — Expressed not hidden — Structure vs. Infill
CONTEXT
To 'Fit' the 'Street' — Massing — St. Paul’s as Prospect — Pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
LIGHT
Natural light, a light of mood — Quantity — Quality — Control
SPACE
Hierarchy of spaces — Interior/Exterior — Served/Servant
ORDER
Discovering an order inherent in the site and in The City — Three axes — Tripartite spaces
GEOMETRY
As a tool — London past and present — existing site geometries
PROSPECT

"With the issue of the prospect, although it is closely related to architecture, we leave the subject 'building' as an independent subject of design and set out to think about public space. It has already been hinted at that the obligation of every building is to be integrated into its specific urban tissue. A special problem in this context is presented by the 'prospect'.

Let us take the common case that a street or a square is to be terminated by a building — our building. This termination is not to be treated as an accident; the facade of the building concerned has to react to this specific situation. While the street as such is a symbol of infinity, its termination communicates the fact that a destination has been reached. This destination, the facade of our building must respond to this event, must catch the eye; only then will the building make sense and be integrated into the urban context. If we are committed to our responsibility for urban space, we have to respect its laws. That we have regard to the effect of prospects has nothing to do with the deliberate monumentalization of buildings, but with rendering respect to the urban texture.

A prospect at the end of the street target, and thereby symbolically shortens the way to the destination. By taking into consideration the effect our facade has on the rules of the place where we people think about our building in the has landed in their town by accident. This destination, the facade of our building must respond to this event, must catch the eye; only then will the building make sense and be integrated into the urban context. If we are committed to our responsibility for urban space, we have to respect its laws. That we have regard to the effect of prospects has nothing to do with the deliberate monumentalization of buildings, but with rendering respect to the urban texture.

GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS

During a panel discussion on the current state of architecture at this year's AIA national convention in Orlando, New York Times critic Paul Goldberger observed that architects are designing too many "foreground buildings," and he rightly suggested that our cities have suffered for it. Many architects, afraid of being criticized (or ignored) by the press for producing boring architecture and encouraged by developers seeking a highly marketable design statement, engage in a visual shouting match, at times extolling a thin "contextual" veneer of some arbitrarily chosen historical mode to justify overscaled, poorly planned, or esthetically dissonant work. Cities bent on maintaining a secure property—tax base contribute to this increasingly cacophonous state of affairs by allowing developers to shoehorn larger and larger structures into smaller and smaller sites. What municipal officials preoccupied with the bottom line too often forget is that any city's most valuable physical asset is its urban fabric — the network of streets lined with sympathetically scaled background buildings. And what would—be virtuoso architects frequently overlook is the subtle, yet lasting, satisfaction that can come with applying the unwritten rules of common sense. "

From
ARCHITECTURAL RECORD November 1987
By
Paul M. Sachner
HISTORICAL CLUES

EARLY IRON AGE
- Post and beam shelter
- Rectangle – Circle

ROMAN TIMES
- Roads – met at site
- Walls
  - Town
    - Disciplined construction
    - Building Walls
    - Masonry
  - Form
    - Basilica plan at St. Bride
    - Columns with capitals
    - The Arch
  - Floor mosaic patterns

NORMAN TIMES
- Nearby St. Bart’s
- Heavy walls and columns

MIDDLE AGES
- The city wall on this site!
- The gate at Ludgate.
- Relief statuary on the gate

WRENS ERA
- Old St. Paul’s
- Fire of 1666
- Wren’s plan for town
- New St. Paul’s

NINETEENTH CENTURY
- Victorian development
- Bridge viaduct built
- See woodcut (this page)
- by Gustave Dore*.

"Vast as is the world below the bridge, there is vaster still on high, and when trains are passing, the steam from the engine will throw the dome of St. Paul's into the clouds....A commingling of earth and some far off mysterious palace.”

Milton
The devastation of World War II opened the door for St. Paul’s to become the ‘Prospect’ from street level that it had been from viewpoints more distant or aerial.

The opportunity of rebuilding the immediate urban environment into a cityscape paying homage to the cathedral was missed in the 1940s as it was in the last half of the seventeenth century after the fire of 1666.

My thesis design tries to address St. Paul’s as Prospect by being a strong servant. This press center respects its powerful neighbor by paying attention to direct views; roof heights; visual corridors; historical massing and materials; axial predispositions; and the like.

Wren would have liked to have seen his masterpiece as a jewel in the center of a Renaissance garden.

"Actually this is now very much as Wren intended us to see St. Paul's."

From PUNCH magazine 1941
ABOUT THE DRAWINGS

This thesis was not only an exploration of Architectural Design but also an exploration of computer-aided design and drafting. The following pages exhibit the 'Ludgate Press Center' building in three different media:

1) Autocad drawings plotted directly on thesis paper, 2) Photographs of Autocad drawings plotted on vellum at a larger scale, & 3) Photographs of hand-drawn plans and sketches.

Some drawings are repeated in different media and are exhibited as follows:

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ABOUT THE DRAGON

Whence cometh yon dragon, this mystical beast?
Upon the wings of a dream.

You will see his bones upon the walls and towers.
Only time has kept him from becoming architecture.

ABOUT THE FOLLOWING DRAWINGS

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SELECTED QUOTES

"Nothing exists without a good plan." LeCorbusier 1923

"To study and/or intellectualize Architecture is to try to be rational about the irrational." Founder of Archigram

"No finite point has any meaning unless it has an infinite reference point." J. Paul Sarte

"This is forthrightly a brick structure." Eero Saarinen 1962

"The institutions are the houses of the inspirations." Louis Kahn

"Space is a dynamic entity, a medium flowing through a building between floor and roof planes." Mies

"Great architecture is always a unity and cannot be explained or dissected into parts. Only historians dare formularize its expressive power." Pietro Belluschi

"...a building should not be slave to its program, twisting and turning to accommodate our every movement and wish — squirming to please, as it were — but rather should be formed according to innate principles of order, structure, shelter...." Michael Benedikt

"Any third-rate engineer or researcher can increase complexity; but it takes a certain flair of real insight to make things simple again." E. F. Schumacher

"The revolution of modern architecture has failed." Rob Krier

"Form is not simply function, but a conceived order; thus a being..." Louis Kahn

CONCLUSION

Consider those greatest events ever in Architecture
When God created: Light
Space
Materials
Order
Structure
Geometry
Man.
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