

25 December 1998

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Greetings:

Thank you for choosing, or possibly being chosen for my studio proposal for the Spring Semester, 1999. Due to circumstances beyond my control, I will not be in Boston for our first scheduled meeting. However, I wish to meet with you in studio, as described in the schedule included in this package, at 1:00 on Friday 15 Jan 1999 to review course materials. You should bring with you at this time the text that you will be reading.

For those who do not know who I am, I will be the one in studio wearing a brown cap.

I am looking forward to what should prove to be a very exciting semester.

Very truly,

Marc J Neveu

Allow me to begin by telling a story...

...A professor of sculpture, a worshiper of purity in drawing, after passing many years in Rome could do nothing less than model statues of highest acclaim. He rendered himself even more celebrated with several essays that reflected his refined taste. At the moment in which he could have made his great fortune, he was distracted by a most violent passion for a woman. He believed that she could serve him as the most perfect model. Unable to possess his muse, the artist killed her.

The Sovereign, considering the singular merits of this subject, as a fervid promoter of the arts, reflected at length the punishment to assign him for this most heinous crime. One of his Ministers thought up a truly novel sentence. The Minister reminded his majesty that he possessed an island in the West Indies, inhabited by *Caramogi* (grotesque and deformed men and women). To confine one (such as the sculptor) with such passion for perfection in figures would be the greatest punishment. Finding oneself in the middle of the most abominable objects would be the equivalent of death. This suggestion accepted, the sculptor was sent to his miserable destiny.

Scarcely having descended from the ship and onto the island, he came upon a group of dwarfs. There were several with large legs, while others were bent out of shape. Some women were ornamented with a head similar to their belly and some had breasts more ample than their heads. There were hunchbacks and exorbitant bellies. If at first he was sensitive to this vision, we can imagine day after day, the ever-increasing desperation to see a regular body.

Being the sole man of proportion attracted the inhabitants, in particular the women. At the height of his delirium, the wife of his custodian spied the artist through the openings in the gate and found the artist even more beautiful when undressed. In this guise she fell in love with him. Possessing the keys to his door, she allowed herself into the room from the rear. First giving any sort of excuse, she declared her passion for him. Fat and constantly dripping with sweat, she smelt so bad that when she would approach, the artist would gasp for breath. She had a large nose and such an enormous mouth that three men could kiss it without disturbing each other. Her hands were longer than her arms, her feet greater than her legs, and she was completely missing a neck. Breathing for this woman was like pestiferous winds, her voice a baritone, her tender tears a river...

The sculptor could not escape her. He could not mistreat nor accuse her without great risk to himself. Having reached his limits in this oppression of spirit, and thinking of nothing but the dark beauty which was the cause of his misadventure, he decided to take his own life. The sculptor was fearful that by force of seeing ugly eyes, deformed physiognomies and ridiculous statures, his memory of beauty would be annulled. Lost was the elegance of the Apollo of Belvedere, the Venus of the Medici, the Hermaphrodite of Borghese, the Peto and Arva of Piombino...

Oh, yes, he exclaimed, I feel the idea of beauty abandon me; these specters erase it day by day. But then, at the moment of his most intimate pain, he raised his eyes and observed the face of a young girl. Monstrous - yet, what was this? He saw the fine eyebrow of oriental taste, only slightly curved. Almost revived, the sculptor thought to himself, could I rejoice while still at the centre of deformity? He quickly asked the girl to remain where she was so that he might draw that eyebrow, but of course not the eyes.

After several days, glancing at yet another monster, he recognized another heel, which was bony in its upper part: this he could not find more beautiful.

In the hope of forming an archetype of beauty, which he had in mind for man and woman, he had searched with passion and found gold in the dung. He could then on many occasions create from these scattered parts, which were each in itself beautiful, thus making a total and perfect harmony...

the Library as an artifice for discovery of meaning.

The proposal is for a Library, of less than 30,000 sq.ft. The site is to be located in the symbolic center of Newton Massachusetts, across from the existing Neo-Georgian City Hall, and the culmination of the Olmstead designed, Emerald Necklace. A small brook moves north from the parc, through the site, and into the Newton Town Cemetery, which forms the southern border to the site.

What are we to make of Libraries today? Is a library simply a container for an archaic method of storing information? Does it still hold a special status within our culture? How to we interpret this status today, and historically? Can we approach the problem simply as a 'typology in crisis'?

How do we discuss a relationship between a reader and an author? Between architect and client? What makes a library different from a bookstore? From a museum?

The goal of this studio is to flesh out an approach to making, through an understanding of metaphor as a way of thinking, specifically within the context of a library.

Program

Children's Collection	50,000 volumes
Reference	16,000 volumes
Fiction	65,000 volumes
Paperback Fiction	20,000 volumes
Current Collection	4,500 volumes
News and Periodicals	11,000 current/bound
Non-Fiction	247,000 volumes
Young Adult	800 volumes
Special Collection	12,500 volumes
Audio/Visual	33,000 records, tapes, videos, cds
Gallery Space	300-500 sq.ft.
Auditorium	100 seats
Meeting Spaces	Large : 600 sq.ft. Small : 300 sq.ft.
Entrance / Lobby	250 sq.ft.
Staff Offices	4 @ 200 sq.ft. 1 @ 400 sq.ft. (group)
Non-Print Resources	200 sq.ft.
Information Centre	300-500 sq.ft.
Catalogue Area	300 sq.ft.
Children's Area	2000 sq.ft.
Reference Room	1100 sq.ft.
Mechanical Space	as necessary
Toilet Rooms	as necessary

The above represents only a preliminary program. The Directors of the Library, an extremely enlightened group of individuals, understand the importance of a dialogue between themselves and you, the architect. As such, you should feel free to shape and mold the program so as to represent issues that arise during the design search. However, this is not to be understood as an open invitation for you to hand down your will to the people of Newton. The Directors are particularly interested in the social and cultural role that they feel the Library must play within the community of Newton. This is revealed by their site selection. They are undecided, however, of the impact that recent technologies may place upon the *experience* of the Library.

Schedule

- 11 January** classes begin, selection of studio projects
distribution of introduction, program, and schedule
please review the program and then place it securely back within the envelope from which it came
review schedule, please check for major conflicts with other classes if any do exist, please inform me as soon as possible
- we begin with a series of small projects aimed at the revealing of some sort of ground to place further discussions
- Project One**
Students should begin reading the author that has been assigned to you. The entire text should be read by 20 Jan.
- 13 January** introduction, and review of course material in person
- 15 January** discussion of authors and text
- 20 January** **Project Two**
Each student is asked to create a room in which you may read your particular author (listed on the front of this envelope).
The presentations should be done in pencil on Strathmore paper, and represent your best drawing ability. The room should be developed according to your specific interpretation of the author and book. The drawings should demonstrate your understanding of the questions raised in the previous discussions.
due 27 Jan
- 27 January** **Project Three**
Based on the previous discussions, it should now be clear that a library is not simply a receptacle of information. What else might it be? Students should attempt to answer these questions through the medium of collage. Instructions shall be discussed individually.
- Each student will attempt to flesh out the following questions:
What might the experience of a Library be?
What is the relationship between an author and a reader?
What is the social function of the library?
- 3 February** individual site models are required by this time
as a modern day *oecist*, you should have visited the site, at least once by now, collecting site information:
topography, direction of the winds, the flight of certain birds, discussed the entrails of the sacrificial animal with the most respected *haruspex*, etc...
the program should now be reviewed again, allowing the first three assignments to inform your decisions
- 3 March** **Review**
imaginative possibilities of the function of a library shall be discussed
representation requirements shall be discussed individually, though intentions towards structure, M/E, lighting, and materials should be developed by this time.
- 31 March** a refined project should be prepared by now, taking into account comments from the previous review
full scale details shall be fabricated in models and drawings
- 14 April** final boards and models should be organized, allowing for thoughtful presentation of projects

relax, go for a walk
- 21 April** Final Review, congratulations.