



*Truth in theatre is
always on the move.*

*Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (1968)*

I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.
Tennessee Williams, *Glass Menagerie* (1944)

STUDIO THEATRE

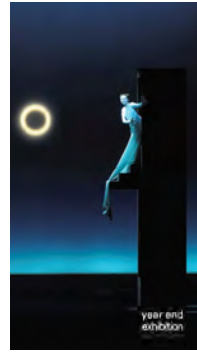


Architecture and theatre have much in common. Both are arts of **situational transformation**, involving playful interaction of people, place, props, narrative events, circumstantial contingencies, atmospheric effects, and meaningful intertwinings of reality and artistic illusion.

Both architecture and theatre have **revelatory powers**, being capable of disclosing profound truths. *Studio Theatre* explored the many performative and revelatory agencies of architecture at diverse scales. We began by making **desktop theatres**, with each student transforming their own studio space into a miniature theatre for **immersive architectural play**. Students incorporated improvisatory explorations with careful research on exemplary theatre precedents, theatrical devices, stage designers and directors. Basic design equipment – like measuring, modeling, drawing and displaying devices – became protagonists and staging mechanisms for imagined plots. Students became inventors and directors, actors and audience. The shared studio environment (with its diurnal activities & rhythms) provided the transformative meta-theatrical milieu. Work grew from the hypothesis that the architecture studio acts much like a theatre, where life is meaningfully reimagined & rehearsed, where desirable narratives are choreographed & performed, and where human situations are dramatically constructed & construed.

Students took a fall field trip to **New York City**, which involved several amazing backstage tours, conversations with theatre architects, stage managers and set designers, and visits to inspiring sites of urban drama, ranging from subtle to spectacular. Upon return, students designed **pop-up festival theaters** – *in the city, of the city, and for the city*. Students selected sites in Winnipeg's east Exchange District, with its rich history of performance, ranging from opera, traditional drama, vaudeville and ballet, to fringe festivals, street performance and political protest. Temporary theatres became staging grounds for developing comprehensive building programs and more permanent **performing arts centers**, designed over the winter term.

Throughout the year, students responded critically and creatively to feedback from theatre and architectural professionals, as well as to their own dramatic desires for architectural play. Design processes involved reinterpreting **theatrical devices as agents of architectural transformation**. For instance, in Madison's project, theatrical curtains and scrim became building fabrics and translucent walls in an urban ballet. In Abel's scheme, rolling stage platforms, *deus ex machina* and fly-spaces became kinetic civic infrastructure for the next generation of cultural transformers. In Kara's design, backstage passages and operations took front stage. In Claire's project, prosceniums became inhabitable thresholds for creative metamorphosis and collaborative exchange, and neglected alleyways became vital laboratory theatres. In Matt's design, raked-stages became public plazas for mixed-media projections and

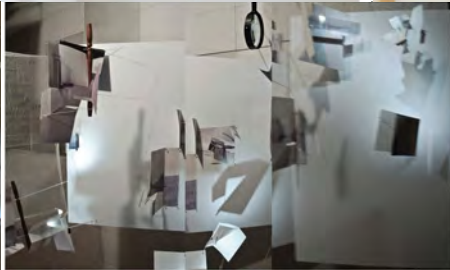
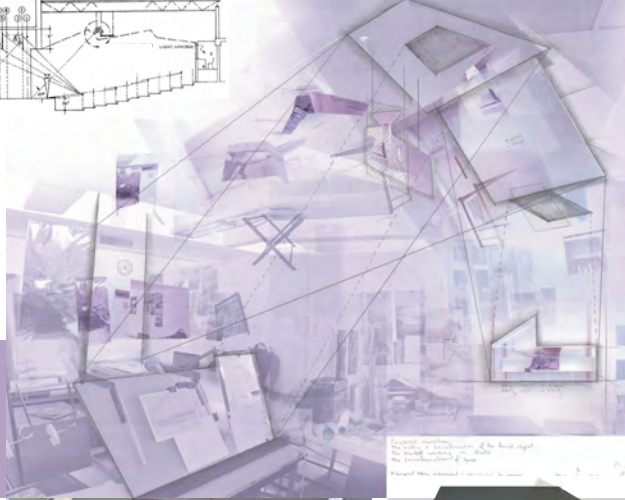
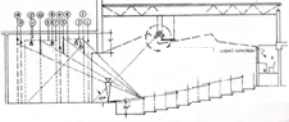


urban celebration. In Luxia's work, trap doors and cycloramas became a synthetic cosmos of riverfront theatres, galleries, and promenades.

Theatre, like architecture, can be both minimal and magnificent. British director Peter Brook is famous for a minimal (and democratic) approach to dramatic space: a simple carpet is enough to delimit the field of action where willing spectators **suspend disbelief** in emerging stories. Likewise, minimal staging was integral to the earliest Greek theatres, where a hillside overlooking a level ground was enough to conjure a play, captivate an audience, and cultivate democratic exchange. But there is something splendid also in the elaborate settings that celebrate the collective agency of a theatrically engaged audience. Whether within the stone bowl of the Theatre of Dionysus, the wooden 'O' of Shakespeare's Globe, the opulent balconies of Garnier's Paris Opera, or the slick factories of Nouvel's Guthrie Theatre, the theatre's **enveloping space of attention** is a dramatic representation of human society.

The institution of the theatre takes its name from *theatron* (a place for seeing), which gathers people into an intimate and briefly ordered assembly for collective contemplation of edifying and agonizing sights. Of all stage machines, the auditorium itself performs the theatre's most social and symbolic function. *Studio Theatre* aimed to explore all scales and schemas of architectural theatricality, from desktop spaces of **personal and sensual imagination**, to more cosmic scales of **civic memory** and **collective wonder**.

CLAIRE SPEARMAN — Desktop Theatre: Proscenium studies *mise en abyme*: framing and reframing interactive spaces of creative production and reception via dramatic reinterpretation of found objects and *in situ* play with materials, models, reflections, audience participation, actor attunements, the drafting table's potential as raked stage, and the studio's overhead fly-space.



CLAIRE SPEARMAN — Pop-up Theatre: Exploring urban, material and theatrical transformation, these site-specific stages are designed at intersections along a back alley of the theatre district. Each temporary stage frames and dramatizes a storied episode from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*.



Arethusa



Myrrha



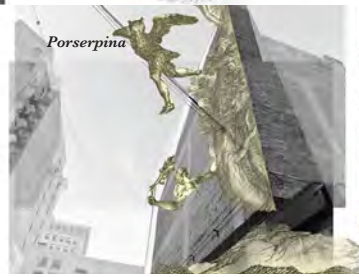
Actacon



Erysichthon



Arachne



Porserpina

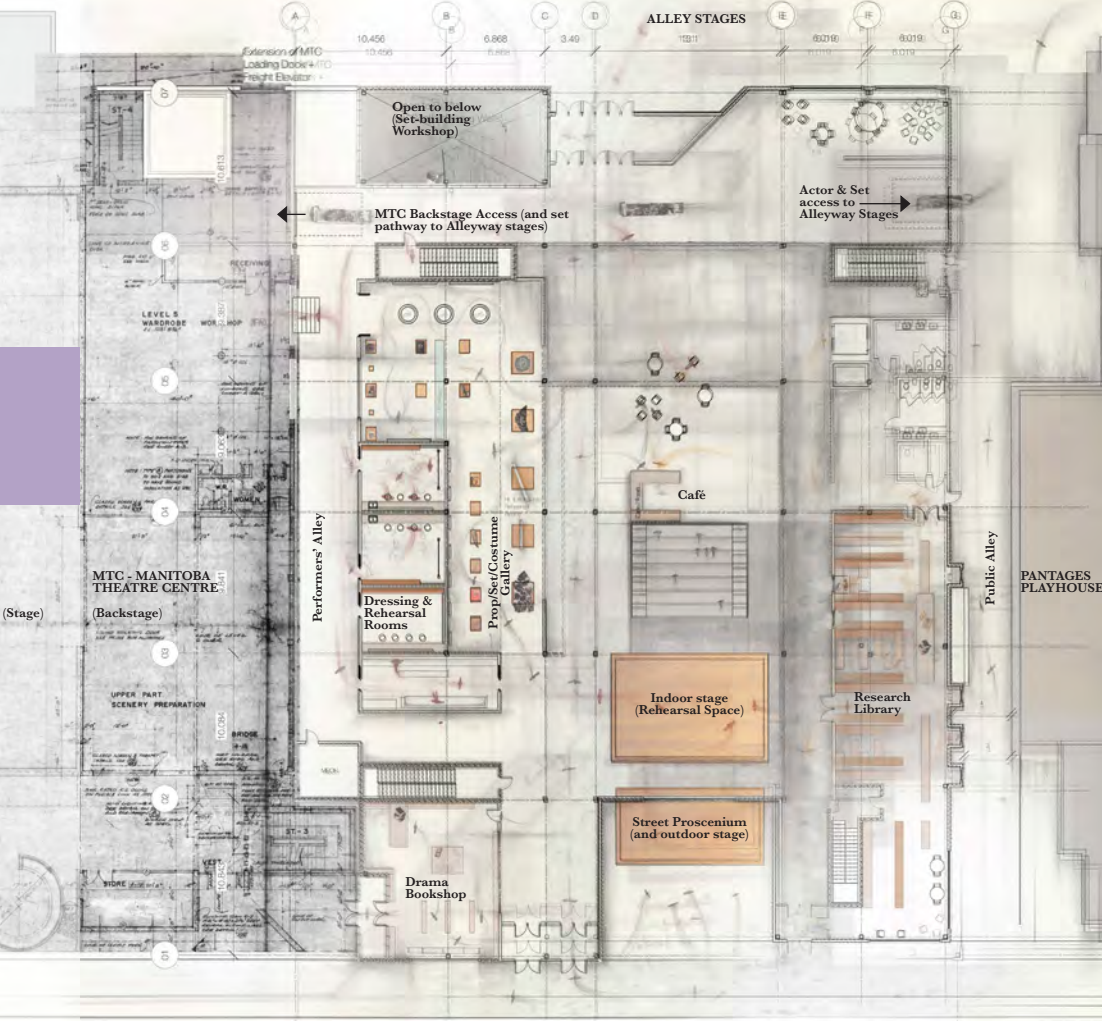


Peletus & Thetis

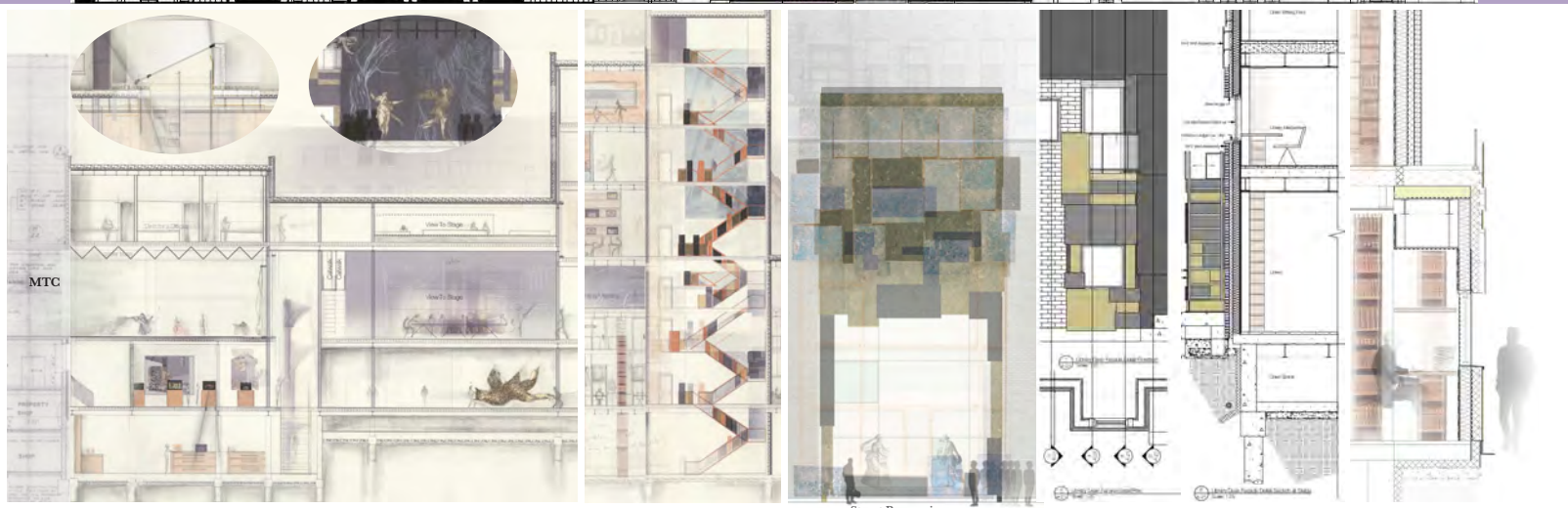


Echo & Narcissus

CLAIRE SPEARMAN — *Metamorphosis Drama Factory* (final project): Located next to the pop-up alleyway stages, in an empty lot between the 1914 Pantages Playhouse and the 1970 Manitoba Theatre Centre, this performance space accommodates and represents diverse modes of creative transformation integral to dramatic production: collaborative research, writing, set design, choreography and rehearsal.

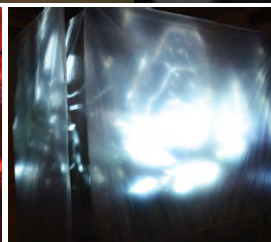
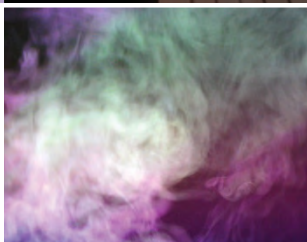
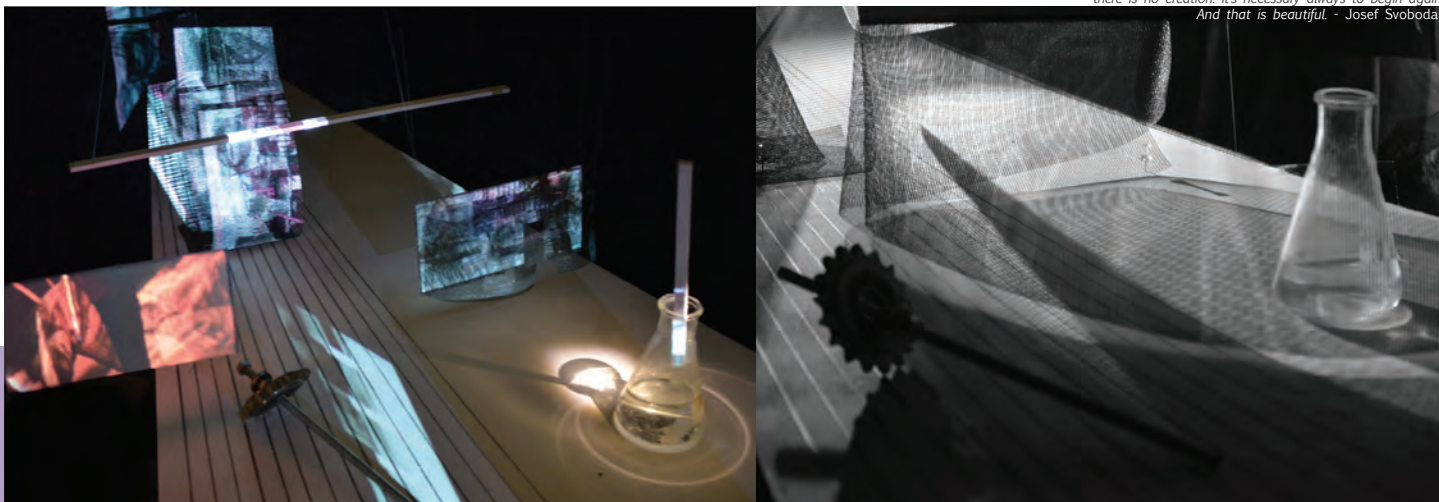


CLAIRE SPEARMAN – Metamorphosis Drama Factory: The design process and program follow primary protagonists: Actor, Writer, Director, Set Designer & Audience. Spatial and narrative overlaps in the design cultivate collaborative creation. This Drama Factory serves all existing main stages in the area and the Fringe Festival.



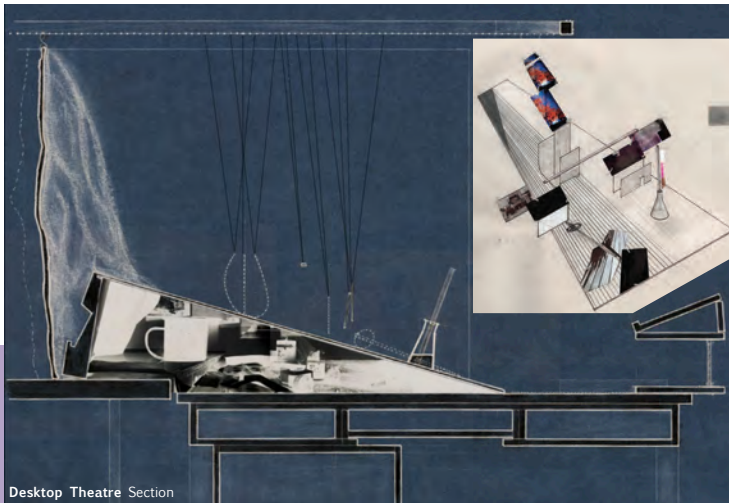
MATT RAJFUR — **Desktop Theatre:** Studies of light, shadow, sound, scrims, framed perspectives & ethereal projections (on found and transformed materials), informed by playful analysis of scenic work by Josef Svoboda, Adolphe Appia and various contemporary multi-media video and installation artists.

*Without an unending search for the secret of creativity,
there is no creation. It's necessary always to begin again.
And that is beautiful.* - Josef Svoboda

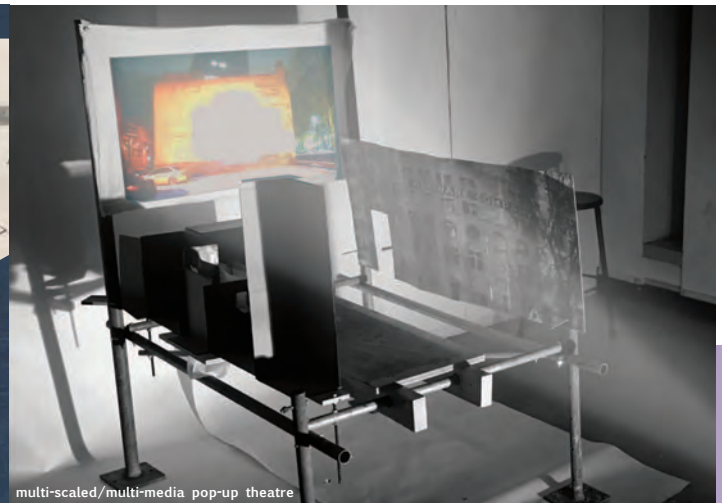


Projections *in situ* (East Exchange District) - pop-up theatre prelude.

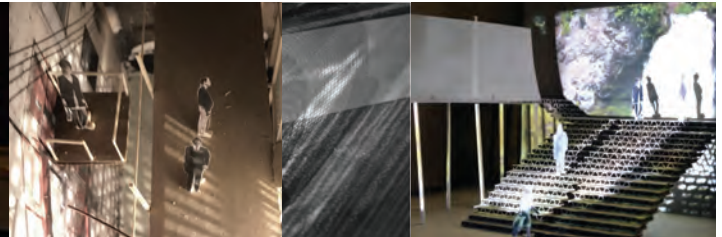
MATT RAJFUR — Pop-up Theatre: From desktop scrims to city screens and building walls, this (re)found and (re)framed theatre recasts Winnipeg's urban fabric as underground and behind-the-scenes agents of transformation. The design provides (and appropriates) infrastructure for (re)activating the surfaces of parking lots, fire escapes, scaffolding and warehouse walls as open multi-media forums of regenerative social exchange.



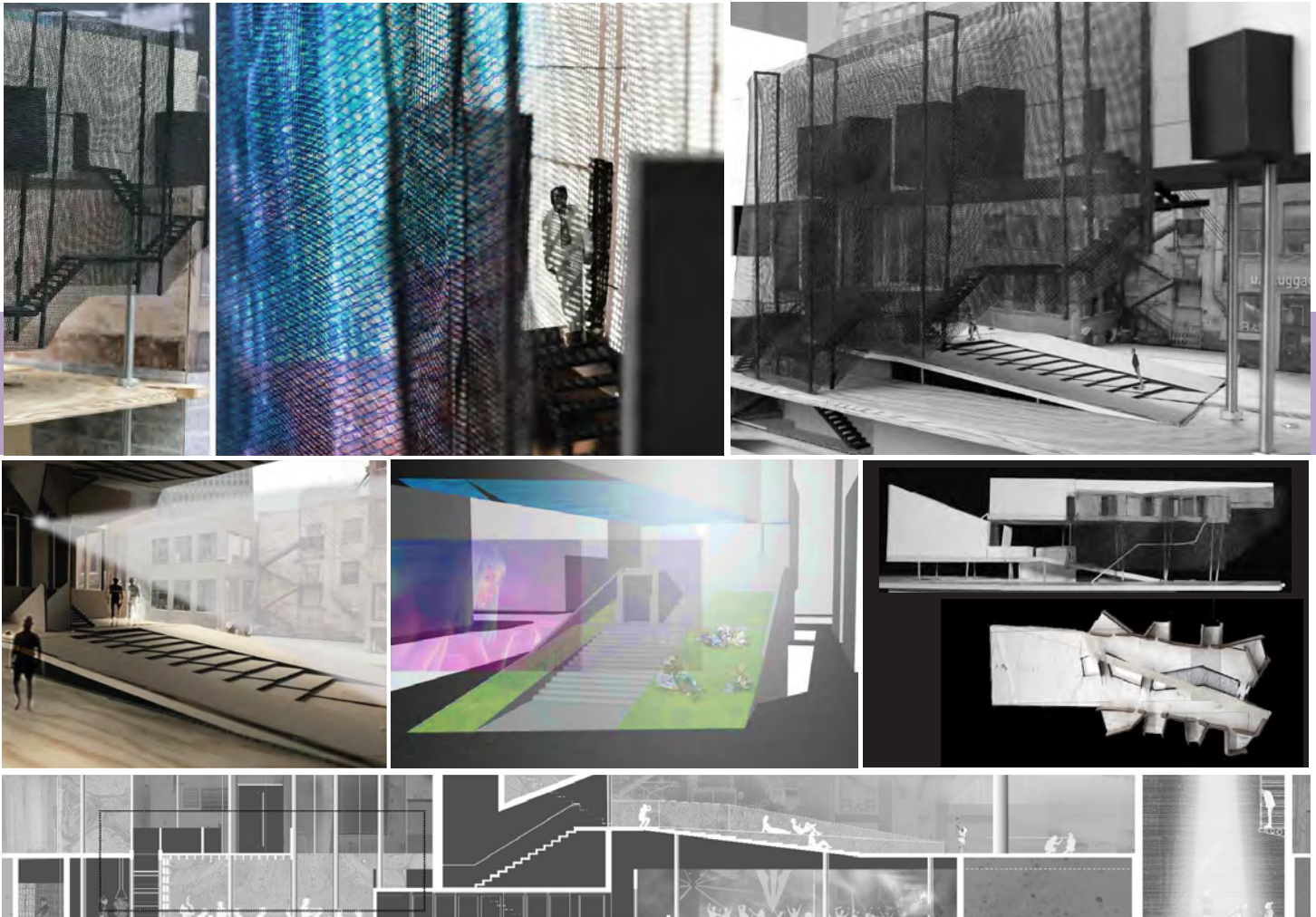
Desktop Theatre Section



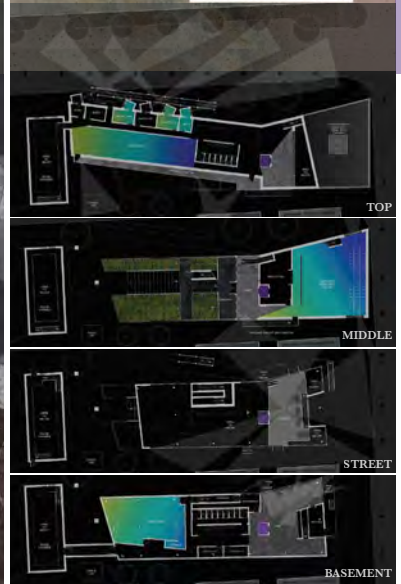
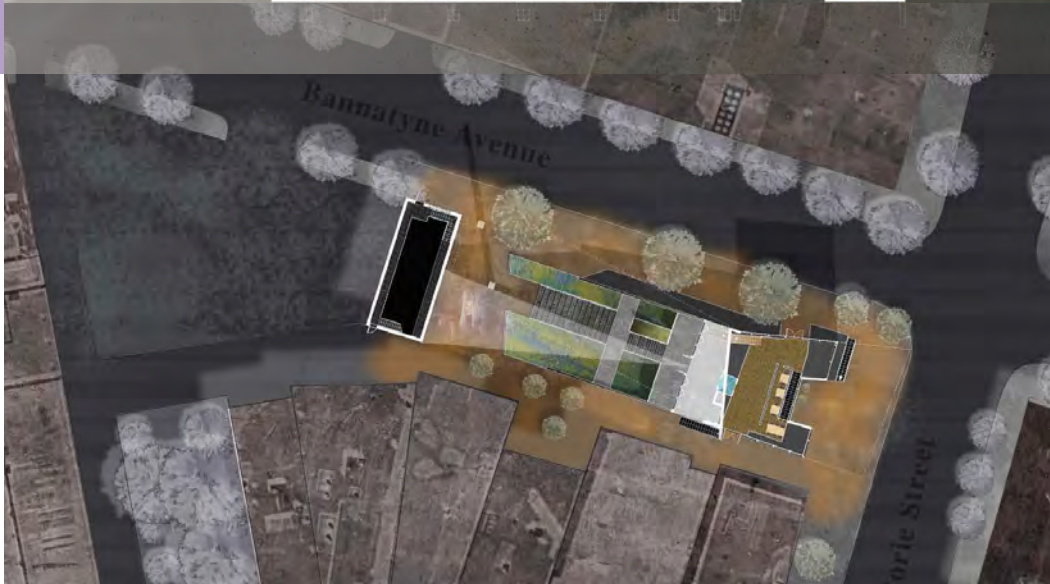
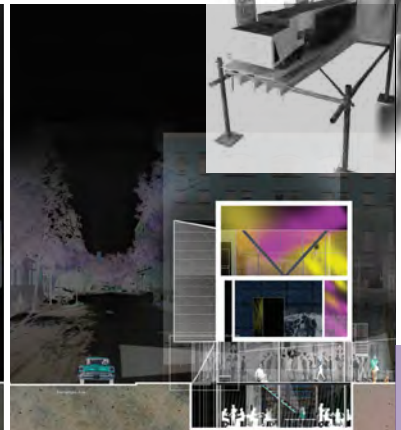
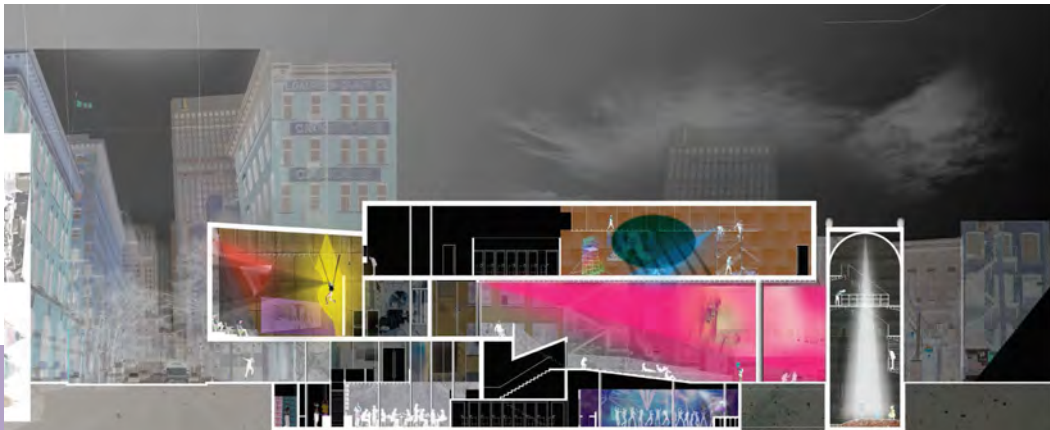
multi-scaled/multi-media pop-up theatre



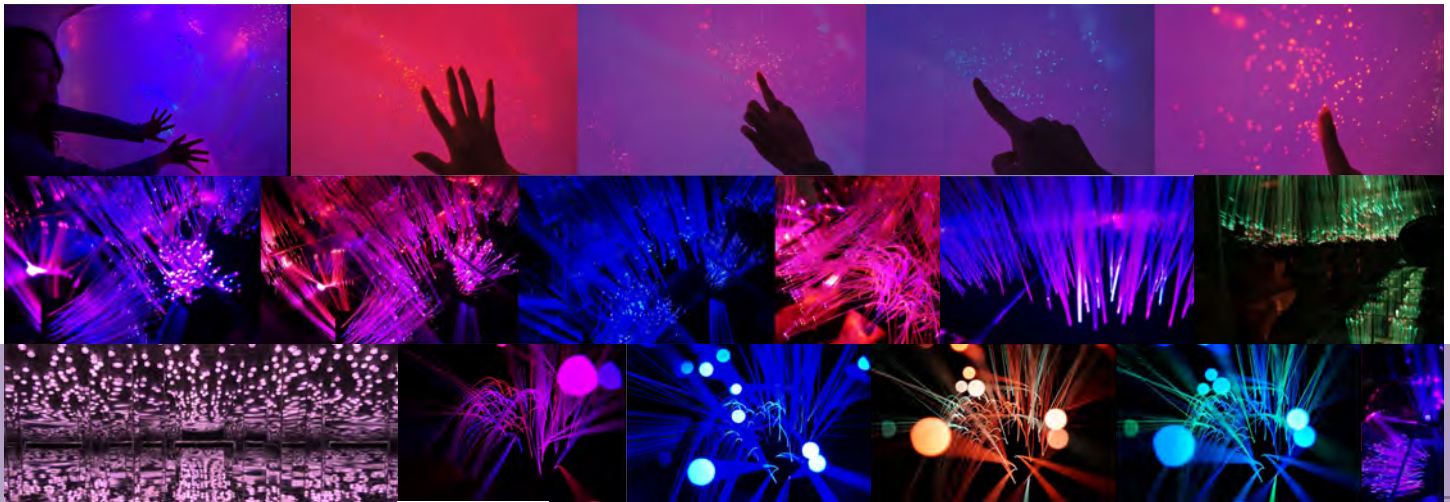
MATT RAJFUR — *Backstage City: Topsy-Turvy Art Garden, Pub and Plaza* (final project): An open raked courtyard garden is the centre of this performing arts facility for multi-media artists, collaborators, spectators, and pedestrians. Backstage City is designed for everyday street life intersecting with creative production and reception.



MATT RAJFUR — Backstage City: The upper cantilever bridge caps the courtyard, providing spaces for mixed-media makers, whose private studios become public spectacles hovering above the street; while the basement reveals a light-filled café and conceals a grotto-like disco with secret passages to an abandoned building turned chamber for sound and light projections. The street levels hold an intimate mezzanine pub for creative conversations; a dramatic black box theatre projecting over the sidewalk for rehearsal and performance; and park/plaza/catwalk infrastructure for mediating daily dramas of work & play.



LUXIA YANG — Desktop Theatre: Inspired by the multi-sensorial "infinity rooms" of Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama – together with experimental studies of trap-doors, theatrical trickery, stage illusions, lighting, and atmospheric effects – this Desktop and Pop-up Theatre enabled immersive synesthetic experience, mixing individuals and groups with lively materials, elements and phenomena.



LUXIA YANG — Pier 70: Action Waterfront (final project): Sited at the edge of Winnipeg's theatre district, where the historic (and neglected) Alexander Docks meet a bend in the Red River, this comprehensive proposal – for indoor-outdoor theatres, conference centres, social landscaping, and art galleries – brings intense focus and restorative calm to turbulent senses of the city. Congratulations to Luxia for this award-winning entry to the *On the Docks International Design Competition*. **Action Waterfront** earned the Community Prize.

