Over the course of nine weeks the Cheng 281 studio has been designing a theater/community center for Alberta St. in Portland, Or. The Alberta Community is very vibrant and diverse that within the past few years has undergone an amazing transformation from being a run-down neighborhood to being a bustling new community that supports the arts and has a variety of new shops, cafes, etc. The program for our building consisted of having a theater that housed between 130-150 people, two classrooms, a lobby with room for a cafe, offices for a director and 4 staff members, a ticket office, restrooms, a storage room, and an electrical and mechanical room. All on a 50 by 100 lot.

We also had to take into consideration things like organization, performers will need a backstage area (one of my classrooms could have served that purpose), egress, and daylighting. Through all this designing we had two mid-term reviews, and a couple of other study projects, all culminating in a final review. For me this has been a rewarding studio as I have grown as a designer learning a lot of new information.

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#1 - Threshold

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Objective: A theater and community center for the Alberta Community.
Problem Statement: To design a threshold of thickened rhythmic space, that representative of an important transition in your life. Success depends on the creativity in translating an abstract idea or experience into a concrete architectural piece.

The transition that I chose was moving from Seattle to Eugene for the first time, which involves the leaving behind of one part of my life for the start of a new one. Out of my three exploratory models I chose the one that included a set of doors progressively getting smaller representing Seattle fading in the distance and Eugene, my new life, getting closer. The two other exploratory models were different in the fact they included a more defined area supporting a path that ended in almost like a diving board to a less defined area. The product did turn out well especially in regards to the lighting of it and the rhythm of the doors or passageways, which was described as the window box effect. It was also good that instead of the path being straight on all the way through, it was angled a bit at the end. There was another element in the back (It is the thing sticking up towards the top of the picture.) that in the end did not really work with the rest of the spaces created and did not go with the theme. It was described as almost confusing. Personally I was happy with the final product but find it interesting that out of all my sketch models I picked the last I made and most different from the rest to elaborate on.
First coming into the daylight study I wanted to incorporate different textures that would filter the light in a number of ways depending on the amount of light. In the beginning I just had the windows with the different opacities, but to diffuse the light more a screen was added on the front of the lightbox.

For the second model instead of just a random order of windows that were disorienting and awkward, as in the first one, I filled the entire front with a set of ordered windows. I was still using the different opacities for each of the windows too, ranging in material from sanded Plexiglas to a clear over-head transparency piece. On the screen the slits were narrower to filter the light even more. I also added color to make it more dramatic. The inspiration for the pink came from when I saw the musical Chicago a while back, as our studio professor suggested we have a performance in mind while we make it. I think if a window such as this were to be added to a theater the clear windows or a less vibrant color might be appropriate.
Objective: The first of two mid-term review pin-ups. The design studios pinned-up our preliminary work featuring basic plans, color-coded models, and our light boxes. In our pin-up we were reviewed by a professor as well as two other students.

At the review I brought three sketch models. The best of my first three, my second revised one and then a third one revised for the pin-up. The biggest difference from the first to the second is the fact that I moved all gardens up from the first floor to become roof gardens. Also the classrooms were moved from the top of the theater down to the 1st and 2nd floor in front of the theater near the street, and the theater had been moved to the right side of the site. The service room and corridors are still present on the ground floor towards the back. My final model is a representation of the first basic plans I have developed. The changes from the 2nd to the 3rd revised model involve the classrooms being moved to the left side. Bathrooms are now on the 1st floor and second floor and the theater is expanded. The garden was also moved over part of the theater.

As of now I do like the plan’s organization and the idea of the main atrium and the rooms branching off from them. I did get a lot of good feedback from my reviewers as well, such as open up my atrium again by moving my garden over the classrooms, adjusting my elevator, and creating better thresholds into the garden. The reviewer also helped me with my circulation and gave me an idea for my structure, such as creating columns in double height atrium.

Color Codes
Red- Stage
Green- Garden
Yellow- Lobby and Circulation
Orange- House
Blue- Offices and Classrooms
Grey- Services
Objective: For our second mid-term review we were required to bring a facade, further revised plans, and a model at 1/8" scale. At the review each person was reviewed by either one or two people in groups of three.

Overall my second mid-term review went well. The best thing I produced for this review was my facade which I did in Sketch-up. All three reviewers had positive comments on it. I probably received the most feedback on that the best idea I probably got to improve it was to add windows in the bottom left corner of the building where my prop construction area is.

Along with my facade I also produced a second set of plans which I think were a bit of improvement upon my first set from the first midterm review. There was a big improvement in the sense that the bays had a better spacing and things were a bit more symmetrical. Two reviewers thought the symmetry was good, while one thought it might not be so necessary. They all thought I could open up the first floor of the lobby more.

The model while the reviewers did not really look at it. It showed physically how the spaces were taking shape.
Objective: The final review featured our finished project of our nine-week venture into designing a theater for Alberta Street in Portland, OR. We were required to have a series of drawings as well as two models. At the final each person was reviewed by three people; a combined team of two and then a single reviewer.

My final review overall went well. I got great feedback on both what I did well and what I still could have improved on further. They did compliment me on my lobby and my use of light in it, especially the skylights that created a wash of light across the walls. My first two reviewers also said that my theater and building organization was working well too. All my reviewers commented on the fact though that I had a bathroom on the first along the street, which is not probably the best place for it. One reviewer suggests switching it with the offices on the second floor, where as one reviewer added the switching the cafe and bathroom might be more appropriate so that one of the more public places the cafe was along the street. Also one reviewer commented on the fact that my facade could use more work. She said it was a good start but that I needed to develop my windows that currently just looked like they were punched out. And instead of having a bunch of tiny windows create bigger windows.
Final Review

Daylighting Model of Lobby

1/8” model

Perspective of Lobby and Classroom

Perspective of Offices

Perspective of Garden on the 2nd floor