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This problem asked students to translate a transformative personal experience into an architectural threshold.

The threshold design symbolizes a time in my life when I stopped following a proscribed path and began to follow one that I laid out for myself. After high school I went straight to college as was expected. But while I followed the path that others had defined for me I felt increasingly constricted and lost. This is represented in the stairwell whose corridor gets narrower as the elevation increases. When I made the surprising decision to drop out of school and pursue an alternate course I suddenly felt liberated of outside pressure but I also found myself at the edge of the unknown; at the top of the structure, in the light and air. At the edge.
ALBINA HISTORY

EARLY ALBINA HISTORY

NE Alberta St. is located within the historic Albina district which has been a part of Portland since it was incorporated along with East Portland in 1891. Albina had a short history as one of several independent river towns competing with the city of Portland.

The city of Albina was incorporated in 1887. It was located on land that was part of the Clackamas tribe and later was owned by J.L. Loring and Joseph Delay who obtained the land through the Oregon Donation Land Act. They sold to William Winter Page who gave the area its name after both his wife and daughter who were each named Albina (Al-bean-a). In 1872 Page sold to Edwin Russell and George Williams after whom two of the main arteries in Albina are named.

Population growth was slow and Albina focused on its railroad yards at the waterfront. In 1887 East Side growth boomed because of bridge and streetcar construction. Albina’s population rose from 143 in 1880 to 3000 in 1888 to nearly 6000 in 1891. Ease of transportation to Portland’s downtown enabled this population growth.

By 1900 Albina had taken its shape with three main areas, riverside industrial land, the central commercial area along streetcar lines, and surrounding residential areas.
The area has traditionally been a destination for immigrants. There were distinctive neighborhoods where Germans, Scandinavians, Poles, and Russians lived in tight knit communities.

During World War II, Portland saw an increase in population, mostly due to work available in the Kaiser Shipyards. In this time the small black population increased 400% causing racial tension in the majority white city. The one place that was open to African American newcomers was the federal housing in Vanport. Vanport was built as temporary housing to house shipyard workers but continued to be occupied after the war. In May 1948 a massive flood destroyed the area and permanently displaced its largely African American population. Albina, which was already home to the majority of Portland’s black citizens was the primary destination for the Vanport refugees. This was no accident. Portland has had a history of active segregation. Albina, though overwhelmingly white was designated as the city’s “black area.” This designation has shaped the history of the area ever since.
In creating this project, we were asked to envision a performance that would take place in the space that we would illuminate, this would serve as the inspiration in creating our light boxes.

The song I chose is a dreamy and passionate rock song, “Oh” by the Breeders. It is a dramatic song that elicits strong emotion. This guided me in my choice of lighting scheme. Raked light creates a strong contrast between light and dark which adds to the drama of a space. Additionally, the layers of paper trap light in different ways depending on the location of the light source.

The top image is the first light box. I imagined a cool material such as concrete as the back wall. To add drama to the light, the wall would be textured which would create areas on the seemingly flat surface upon which light would be more or less intense.

I kept this basic scheme in the final model but chose to coat the back wall with crumpled paper which would create even more contrast with the light. I also introduced holes to the light screen which add a small amount of direct light into the space which contrasts the raked light.

The manner in which I approached the light box project allows for the same space to be read in different ways depending on the lighting conditions. Ideally, a space that one occupies on a regular basis will be continually interesting. Light is a powerful tool in making that happen.
First Pinup

This is the first version of my design for a combined theater and classroom space on NE Alberta St. in Portland, OR. The program calls for a Performance Hall, Youth Clubroom, Children's Room, Staff Office, Director's Office, Lobby with Cafe Seating, Cafe Kitchen, Restrooms, Storage, Mechanical Room, and a Garden Space.

The performance hall and its location are the drivers behind the other program elements. The building is a theater first and classroom space second. Aesthetic considerations are to be decided with the purpose of making the performance hall as well designed as possible.

The performance hall serves as the focal point for activity in the building. Connected to the house is the private world of backstage and shop areas. The lobby serves as the circulation hub for both public and private sections of the building. The upper floor is a semi-private space of classrooms that will be used by the public but cannot be classified as fully public since attendees of theatrical events will not use them.
MIDTERM PINUP

The project for a theater on NE Alberta St. continues with further improvements on the general design and increased detail articulation. In preparing for the midproject review, I spent a lot of time on creating an attractive facade for the building. I also worked on resolving some of the issues on the second floor in regard to the placement of classrooms and greenspace. What resulted is a kind of courtyard that the classrooms face.

The main detail of the facade is the large screen which keeps the lobby free from direct sunlight. The site is south facing which makes solar protection of primary concern. The screen continues on to create a kind of wall for the garden courtyard space.

At this stage I began working in Sketchup, a 3d modeling program. I learned as I went which hindered my short term performance to a certain extent. However, the benefits were great as I was able to test my design ideas out with walkthroughs and keyframe perspectives. I did the majority of design work by hand and then added to it in the computer. The result is a design that is better thought out than I have previously been able achieve.
FINAL PROJECT

The final version of the Alberta theater takes elements from all previous projects and combines them to create a whole building design.

The light box idea was transformed into a daylighting model. I used the model to learn about how light would interact with the space in my design. I incorporated the diffuse lighting from my light boxes but in a more subdued manner.

I continued my exploration with Sketchup to give the lobby, a primary space, more and richer detail.

I made the final layout using both hand and computer drawings. I scanned the hand drawings and added color in Adobe Photoshop before including them in the final layout which I made using Adobe Illustrator.

Throughout the process of this design I learned the power that a computer gives in design. But I may have been too reliant on my computer toward the end of the project. My design would have benefitted from more exploration with traditional media. My final project was more austere than I had intended and this is a direct result of my choice in media. In the future, I will continue to use the computer but I must remember to keep drawing and modeling.
The Alberta St. Theater and School of Vaudevillian Arts is located in the heart of a vibrant neighborhood. The building is designed to be a dynamic cultural hub, offering a rich mix of theatrical performances, arts education, and community engagement. The theater space is open and welcoming, designed to foster a sense of inclusivity and creativity. The building's design integrates sustainable principles, with features such as solar panels and recycled materials, making it an exemplar of responsible architectural practice. The Alberta St. Theater presents a unique opportunity for the local community to come together, celebrate the arts, and cultivate a vibrant cultural landscape.