



URBDP 498e URBAN PHOTOGRAPHY

A STUDY OF THE PUBLIC SPACES IN AN URBAN SETTING – SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

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Space Syntax Assignment

Capturing the concept of space syntax, space users, composition and color.

My interpretation: Space syntax theory in part involves a form of a perennial existential dilemma, which influence on human created spaces comes first, the human needs and desires to create particular space(s), or the human response to the created space which goes on to influence human behavior and spaces that will be created in the future?

One progression that gives rise to space is that humans create spatial environments in response to the circumstances in which they find themselves. Their spatial plans are based on needs that have become obvious to them as a result of the activities of daily living that they are engaged in – work, recreation, reproduction, and assorted forms of habitation or co-habitation. The spaces created may also be the actualization of the human desire to validate one's existence through the construction of physical monuments to oneself. These sorts of spaces are monuments of validation that are of varying forms and sizes, in varying contexts and places, the manifestations of the human edifice complex. They too can influence human behavior, as reminders of some human past or achievement.

Social circumstances and mores influence the size and shape of urban spaces, however, those imperatives change over time. Spaces are created to serve utilitarian and/or aesthetic needs, those in the near future and even those envisioned in the far future. Existing spaces are based on the needs and wishes of the past present, and the assumptions from then about what the future needs or wishes of the original space creators or others known and unknown to them might be. On this basis however unexpected responses by present occupiers of spaces may invalidate or augment the assumptions underlying spaces, and thus previous spaces may have to be altered or eliminated in order to give way to the current social circumstances that have emerged.

The pictures in this album are testament to the people that have created Seattle's urban spaces and the present lives of the people that live, work, and navigate those spaces.

“The City as One Thing”. Bill Hillier and Laura Vaughan

Photo Assignment #1

1-3 Photos

Conscious/unconscious spaces, space users, public spaces



This sculpture is called *Waiting for the Interurban*, it is in the Fremont area. I'm presuming this person is also waiting for something, as the location is not one that you would normally stop at and read; it is an island in the intersection and people generally are crossing it to get from one side of the street to the other. It was a unique picture in that someone would be in the same scale as the statues, and be wearing clothes that made him appear to be an extension of the sculpture, and he is static just like the statues are.



This a photo taken Downtown. While these ladies were all together, the scaffolding forced them to walk single file down the sidewalk, but having to make that arrangement as they traversed the space seemed to me to accentuate their age - how they are each a little bit stooped, and the way they were shuffling up the street, and to have a group of people unconsciously arranging themselves in this relatively orderly visual picture of themselves, that seemed unique.

Field Trip # 3 – Urban Architecture



While waiting at the Seafair Torchlight Parade viewing stands for the parade to start I was struck by the lighting on the buildings and the color of the sky how it was reflected on the buildings windows, and the buildings nearby seemed to have the same color as the bands in the building next to them

Extra Credit Photo Assignment – Long Shutter-time Night Photography

Over the past two nights I went out and worked on this assignment. I wasn't able to get my son-in-law's SLR camera for this so I ended up using my camera. The longest the shutter can stay open on this camera is 40 seconds, and it only has two *f* stops, a small aperture opening of *f*3.5 and one at *f*9. Shooting this way I can also adjust the ISO setting and the focus.

The first night I worked on light trails. Based on what I read I located myself in an area that was darker so that the main focus would be on the roadway in front of the area and the light that was being given off by the street lights, signage and lighting on surrounding property, and the lights from the vehicles that were driving by.

It was a little late at night so traffic was a little light.

While I was out I tried a range of settings, opening and closing the aperture of the camera, changing *f* stops, changing the ISO, and trying out different lengths of time for the exposure. The results were medium – I didn't have my tripod with me so I found out how even a little movement makes interesting light trail marks in the photograph from the standstill light sources.

The second night I went to two different parks that overlook the city. I started a little earlier because I had read that earlier in the evening offered better opportunities to photograph the sky, to get more traffic. The very first picture I shot I had the aperture wide open and the maximum exposure time. Shock! The resulting picture made it look like it was daylight out.

After that I experimented with varying the exposure time, combinations of that with changing the *f*-stops; I pretty much left the ISO at 100 or at auto, I couldn't tell any difference with that adjustment.

One thing I noticed is that there is a challenge between the light from the traffic and the light from the surrounding buildings. The buildings look fine, but then where the roadway is there is a big swath of light that I kind of think takes the focus away from the picture overall and concentrates the viewer's eye at the swath of light.

One other interesting composition technique I could see that you could use is that you could allow the surrounding terrain frame the portions of the city that you are taking pictures of. This was more obvious with the second park, it had trees in the foreground that were unlit so they kind of acting like a silhouette surrounding the city farther in the distance.

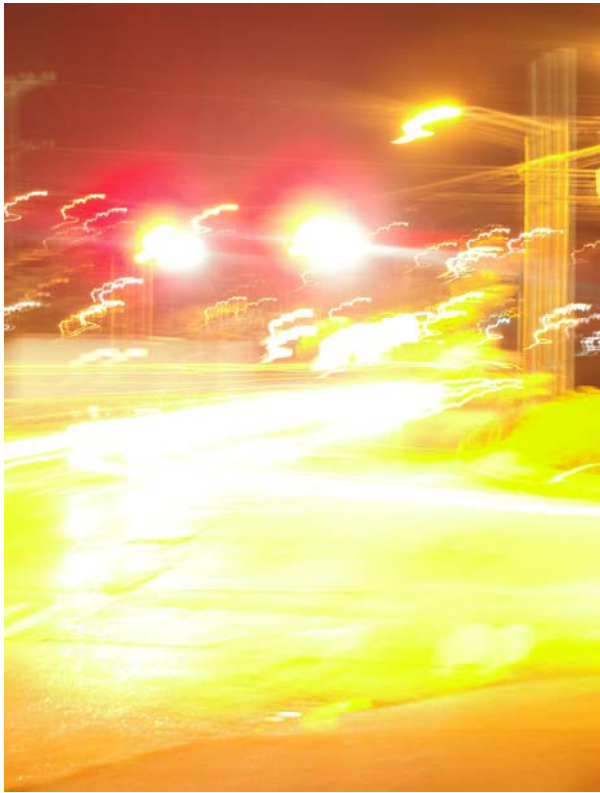
Some representative photos are next, starting with the first one I took at each site, and then followup ones, then the photos that I thought were best of the series. The last night photo is out over Elliott Bay, and the light trail in it is a ferry. I can see again it would be nice to have a camera where you could get better light trails.

For the longer shot that you wanted for the assignment, it would be a challenge to one, have the longer exposure time and then adjust your *f*-stops so that all the elements of the picture would turn out.

One last thing, for roadway shots I don't think shooting where there are signal lights is particularly good either, as I think they overwhelm the picture in the end.



First picture, followed by several samples of shots I took, and final one at intersection that I thought was the “best”, it had three vehicle light trails going in different directions.





Final shot of first night.



First shot on second night, followed by corrected shot – adjusted exposure time.









Second night, second location, looking out from Highland Drive Park.



Elliott Bay and Ferry going across it.

The next section is a study of my version of the urban life in Seattle, what I see life in part is like in Seattle.

My concentration in my degree program is urban affairs, so it is appropriate for me to start with the City Hall.

I visit City Hall fairly often, and what always strikes me about the building is that there are very few people in evidence at it. The way it was designed all the City workers are closeted behind locked doors, there are several reception areas, also set up like security points with typically only one person at the station.

It was not hard to take pictures of the internal areas without people in them, because that's pretty much how the public areas are – no City workers in them and little to no public in them either.

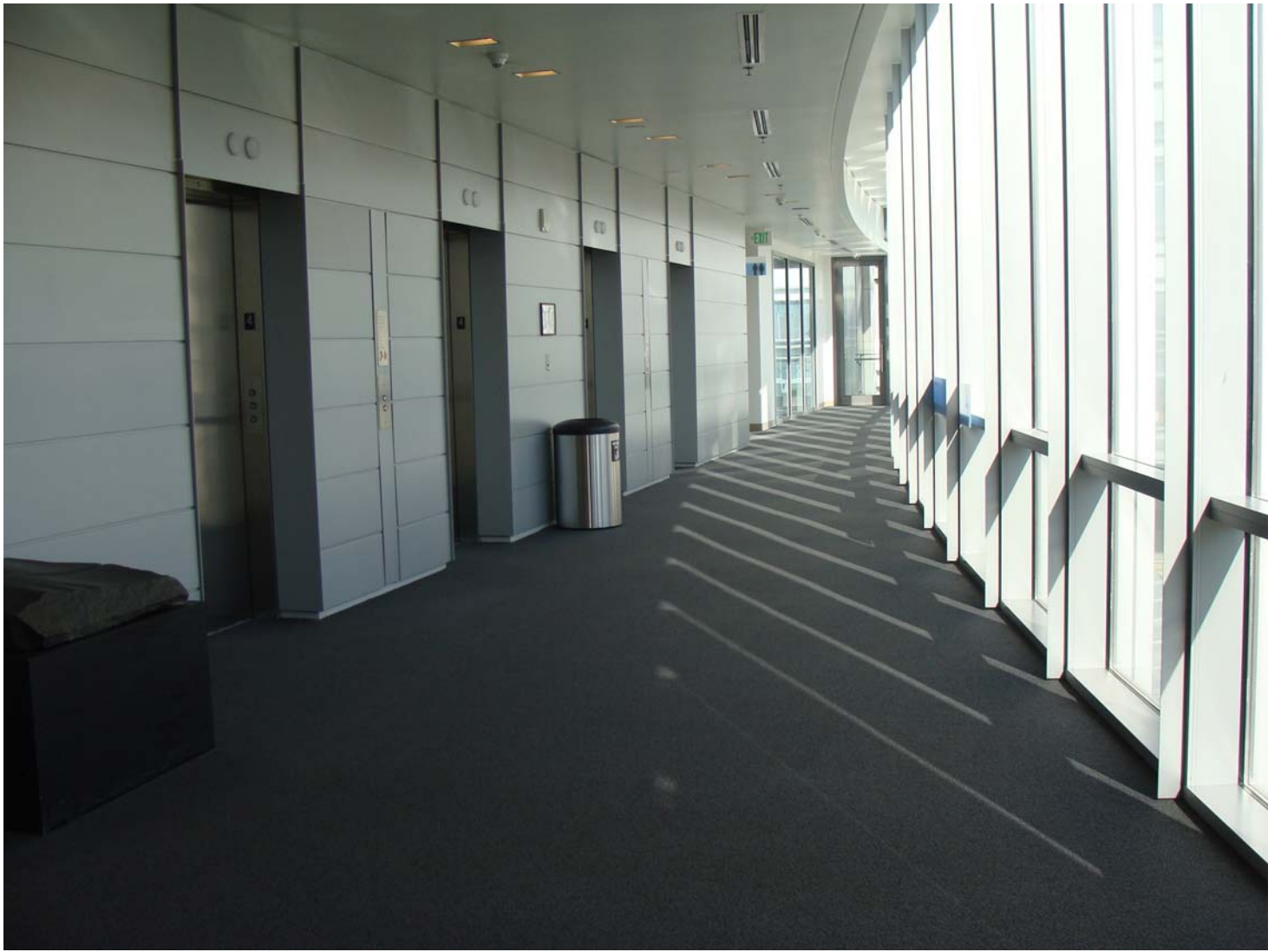
Entry Way to City Hall:





City Attorney's floor

This is another interesting aspect, of City Hall, each of the hallways to the floors is facing to the south, and on sunny days the light streams in making interesting patterns on the floors.

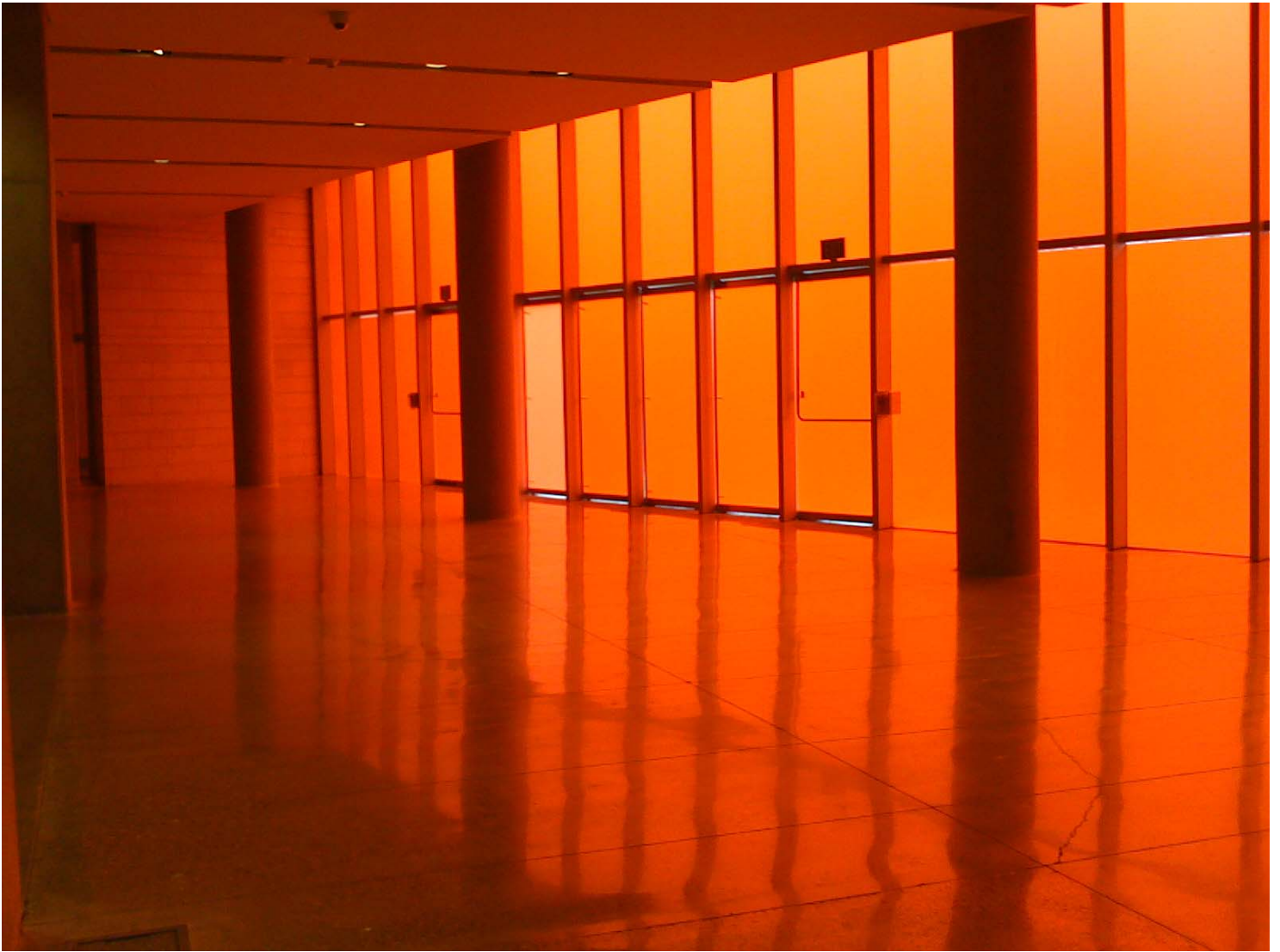




Mayor's Floor.



Main Floor of lobby area – of note, at the end of the hall and to the left is the city's citizen service bureau – I think that says it all about how this public building works, it is public unfriendly, never intended to be really a gathering place – it is uninviting.



This is another public space on the first floor of City Hall, a cavernous area that has absolutely nothing in it. The panels can open to the out of doors – but that seldom happens.



An interesting shot from the seventh floor of City Hall of its open space; again empty.

Next in the life of the city is its political life in the open public spaces - outdoors



This image is from the same place as the one above, the sculpture “Waiting for the Interurban”. This is another use of public space, a protest – the note reads “I couldn’t afford the toll on the bridge to the North Pole. (Maybe I’ll try the tunnel)” The bridge is the 520 Bridge which is supposed to be tolled, and the tunnel is the deep bored tunnel to be built underneath Downtown. The irony is “Santa” has come to town and in trying to get around he is stymied in his travels by tolls. At least that’s what I think was meant. This was of interest to me because of my long time association fighting the deep bored tunnel project, and it is kind of odd.



This is the mayor and his bodyguard. A political statement of sorts.



A rally at Westlake Center.



And standing by user of a different kind occupying the public space.

Walking or driving ⁱⁿ through the city you're likely to find all sorts of different public spaces. I focus on the public space that is poor to terrible condition, much of it under the direct control of the City, spaces it should be either maintaining or exercising its regulatory authority to keep the spaces in good repair. Unfortunately it is not difficult to find such spaces.



I noticed another student had a similar shot, however the one they did had all the garbage picked up. More likely than not these public spaces tend to look like this as opposed to all cleaned up.

The following photos speak for themselves – this is the reality of much of Seattle’s common, public areas:















GARDEN
STATUE
SALE
50% OFF
EVERYTHING!!
SAUSHOLE
MAINA
BALLARD

SALE
2609-34

SALE
EVERYTHING!!



RENT

GIRDEN SATUE 50% OFF

CAPTAINS OF THE SEA

State Farm
The Auto Insurance
With State Farm









This is what living in a public space looks like in Seattle:

















This is what broken dreams look like for people that live on the streets of Seattle



This series is a sample of what working in Seattle’s public spaces looks like:



Port of Seattle



Fishermans Terminal



Pier 91



Downtown



Belltown



Capitol Hill

No less of a public space are the retail outlets in Seattle

Many of those locations provide interesting public space photo opportunities.



QFC - Ballard



QFC – University Village



QFC – University Village

Another aspect of urban life are interesting public space symmetries, as seen at this cemetery at Discovery Park;



As seen at this road construction project underneath the Spokane Street Freeway.



No public urban space is complete without its intriguing and interesting people:





Schoolchildren going home from school.





Two girls, unrelated but dressed and looking very much alike at Barnes and Noble.



The End

Note: All photos are unaltered, in their original form. They are from my collection of photographs that I take on an ongoing basis around Seattle.