



YONGE + DUNDAS

location
program
architect
completed

intersection of Yonge and Dundas Streets, downtown Toronto, Canada
0.4 ha public space + 270 car public parking lot (underground)
Brown and Storey Architects
December 2002

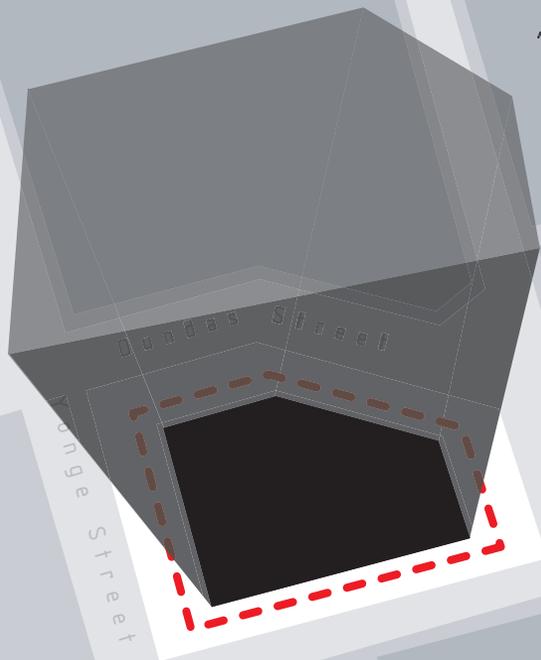
The Square is heavily geared towards the summer activities. During the winter months, only the perimeter of the Square is used - there is no reason for anyone to enter the space. People thread through it quickly or avoid it all together. A condition is created in which the emptiness of the space itself is deterring; there is no need for other physical or imagined barriers. Additionally, the distribution of urban elements (like benches, planters, and other program elements) even more decreases the opportunity for meaningful actions and interactions to develop within the Square.



"The Square will be an exciting venue for special events and attractions, and place for casual enjoyment."

B+SA

5



At times the Square does become the "exciting venue for special events" that it was intended to be. However, in winter it becomes a void in the city fabric that, in addition to not lending itself for much activity, becomes a void making passers-by avoid it and choose their paths around the Square.

One of the reasons for this emptiness is the lack of the proposed surrounding buildings – like the AMC movie theatres (see image 6) – that would generate activity in this space. Nevertheless, a crucial problem of the Square is not only in the non-existent structures around it, but can also be found within the bounds of this created void.

The Square does not have programming – or a chance for programming – within it. All activity happens in the periphery. Consequently, there is a need for a change in the organization strategy; a need for enriching the experience of the Square.



summer 5

3



dundas 'times' square 6
unbuilt

4

The centre of the Dundas Square is a void; a field with no pointers and cues as to what activities could take place there. At times voids are interesting purely because of this lack of organization. However, as the past winters have indicated, instead of using the opportunity of emptiness to create something of unprecedented value and energy, the space remains unused.

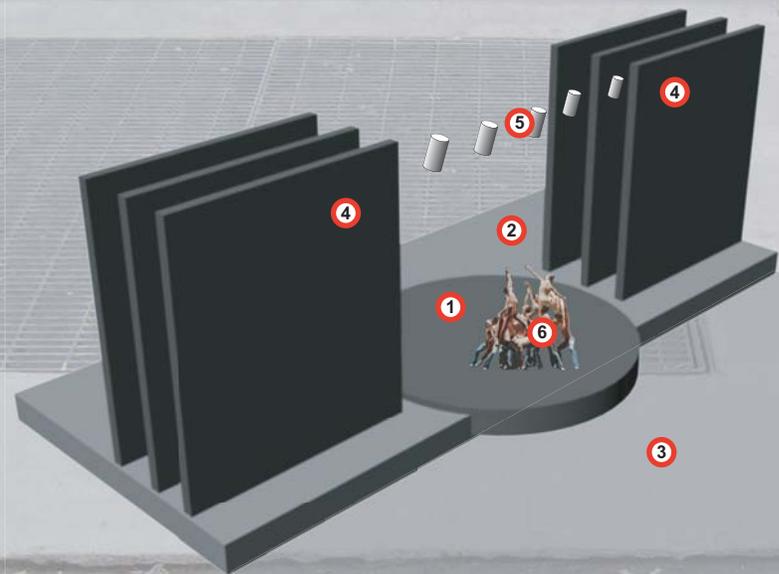
An alternative to a void, is organized space. There certainly are multiple levels to organization one being the very strict and limited order of a bank lineup and the other being slightly less rigid organizational pattern of a tennis court. Both of these systems provide sets of rules for interactions within the given spaces.



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8

- 1 stage
- 2 backstage
- 3 audience
- 4 curtains
- 5 lights
- 6 performers

The goal of the project is to address the void that is the Dundas Square. The proposal does not deal with definite and specific solutions as to what shape the intervention will take. Instead, the project lays out parameters and sets conditions for a myriad of possible scenarios that could develop in this space. The attempt is made not to dictate what people are to do – or, alternatively, what they are not to do – in the given space, but, instead to provide a framework within which a number of activities and their combinations can occur.

The most relevant precedent for the re-development of the Square comes from the world of theatre. The stage serves as a perfect framework for activating a public square. In addition to the obvious elements like curtains, stage itself, lights, and sound systems, the most important aspect of a stage is that it serves as a framework for diverse sets of activities.

From performance to entertainment, from sports activities, to political ones – with the help of a stage, the Square is developed to accept activities that are thrown at it. The currently existing stage is static; it does not respond to the site conditions that require an active participation of the people.

varied stage positions

- 1 flat streetscape
- 2 elevated platform
- 3 multiple smaller elevated platforms
- 4 slope
- 5 centre elevated terrain
- 6 varied terrain
- 7 display cases / partitions
- 8 sloped display cases / partitions
- 9 sloped varied terrain

1

3

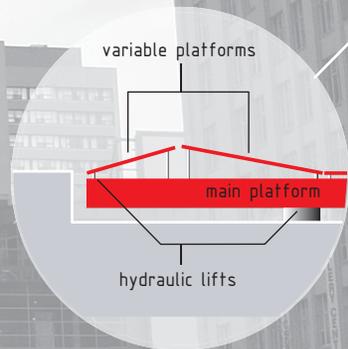
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The proposed design creates a space that, through its versatility, caters to a variety of programs both in the summer and in the winter. With the help of a changing terrain, it can accommodate countless activities like performances, exhibitions, group gatherings. Additionally, even without activities, the 'stage' itself provides a spectacle that can be programmed and observed to provide a point of interest within the city, thus turning the space from a void into a functional and entertaining part of the surrounding city fabric.

IMAGE SOURCES

(all other material is created by the author)

- 1 <http://earth.google.com/>
- 2 <http://www.boldts.net/TorH.shtml>
- 3 <http://www.boldts.net/TorH.shtml>
- 4 <http://www.mswansonart.com/metropolis.jpg>
- 5 <http://www.brownaandstorey.com/projects/DundasSquare/DS.htm>
- 6 <http://anna.kournikova.free.fr/a63.jpg>
- 7 <http://www.ensky.com/stockphoto/photos/00040.jpg>
- 8 http://www.icmtalent.com/musperf/images/sba_200.jpg
- 9 <http://dubster.co.uk/snowboard/Snowboard2.jpg>
- 10 <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/mcdb1/faculty/ujakob/lab/images/outings16.jpg>
- 11 http://www.aerodrome.at/onstage_pictures/670_HotchPotch_foto3.jpg