

2009 Rotch Preliminary Competition

an Operable Storefront & Canopy in Downtown Crossing

Architectural strategies for enhancing community and promoting cultural exchange

The problem is to design a temporary operable storefront, a canopy system for shade and rain protection serving as a model for development and transition of infill sites. The purpose is to provide an active pedestrian street front and promote community activity through the design of a public facade.

Overview

Many “public” spaces are owned by private commercial enterprises, creating an interesting space situated between commerce and civic functions. These privatized public spaces are the shopping malls, retail outlets, hotels, restaurants, bars and theaters that are used everyday. Given this wide spread condition, what is the role of a quasi-public building? How can architecture serve such a diverse community? The competition brief examines the relationship between the street front, shelter, and the larger urban fabric.

In the private and non-profit sector, many designers and owners have taken the initiative to promote and preserve cultural identities, the humanities and design through architecture. Karsten Harries describes this shift to the ethical function of architecture where architecture has a responsibility to community and its ethical function is also political.¹ Harries further argues that in order to reach a common ground of serving the community we would have to free ourselves from the formalistic approach and formal variations in the production of architecture. This problem links to the basic elements in the art of building and focuses on archetypes- how a wall and roof can affect the psychology, spirit of an urban environment and become a spatial catalyst for creating community. Through the design of the facade and canopy, we invite you to propose new economic and spatial models that generate income, promote diversity, and provide a center for cultural and educational exchange.



Crossroads for a Crossing

The identity of the Downtown Crossing Boston Neighborhood District has been known as “a crossroads for a crossing²” where users of different economic, religious, racial, ethnic, ability, sexual and gender identities converge. Situated between Boston Common and the Financial District, the Downtown Crossing is Boston’s historic shopping destination where sections of Washington Street are closed to vehicular traffic and pedestrian are free to roam around department stores, restaurants, clubs, jewelry stores, music stores, street vendors, bookstores and ESL schools to name a few.

1 Harries, Karsten. [The Ethical Function of Architecture](#). The MIT Press. Cambridge, MA. 2000.

2 As titled, [Downcrossing: A Crossroad for a Crossing](#), in the executive summary of the identity and branding strategy for Boston’s Downtown Crossing published in May 2008 by the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

The active public space has since deteriorated with Filene's Basement closing in 2007 and other storefront areas closing making way for high end luxury condos and brand-name retailers preparing for the area. What was once an active public space where one can find bargain outlets and eclectic stores is reacting to difficult economic pressures and ongoing gentrification.

Looking towards the future, this proposal seeks a sustainable model for quasi-public space that establishes how one may maintain public activity when development projects are in transition. Transition spaces can be seen in forms of vacant parking lots, vertical surfaces or development structures found around the city with projects yet to be realized. For this specific competition, you are asked to work on an infill commercial parcel at 5 West Street in Downtown Crossing currently being occupied by Brattle Book Shop Inc (see attached site map). The site currently operates as a bookstore in the daytime, where pedestrians can openly purchase used books contained in outdoors carts and shelves at affordable prices ranging as low as \$1.00. The lot is then transformed to accommodate parking for a fee at night. The proposed project site is a public-private initiative between the City of Boston and the Brattle Book Shop to promote continued activity in Downtown Crossing.



Public Programs

Currently located at 9 West Street, Boston's most famous old bookshop founded in 1825, Brattle Book Shop contains maps, postcards, rare, antiquarian and used books. Over 250,000 books are distributed vertically throughout three floors. Conceived as a public/private joint venture, the proposal located at 5 West Street has to sustain the temporal program of book selling in the morning and parking structure at night.

The problem is to design a temporary operable storefront, a canopy system for shade and rain protection for the Brattle Annex Book Shop. The success of this program is based on the district differences of daytime and nighttime use. The bookstore will continue to operate by day and valet parking for the local nighttime entertainment venues will operate in the late evening hours. This maximization of daily use allows for economic sustainability. The design challenge is to enhance this quasi-public space with cultural and architectural richness, serving as a model for transitional sites. There should be careful attention to constructability, innovative use of new materials and relative economy of means in each proposal.



Operable Storefront Facade & Canopy must accommodate the following program:

Unconditioned/unheated Space:

- Operable Storefront with a Viewing/Display area.
- Sunshade/Rain Canopy to cover at least the parking area or more based on design strategy.
- New Organization and Shelving System for the existing bookstore collection. The collection is currently housed in mobile book storage units that are closed and secured in the evening. The bookshelf serves as a security mechanism as well as protects the collection from the elements. Minimum of 1,200 linear feet of shelving required.
- Parking (night program only) 8 car minimum. Assume Valet service for nearby restaurants, theater and nightclubs, so cars may be stacked, packed or otherwise organized in a logical manner. Underground parking is not possible.

Conditioned/heated Spaces:

- Classroom and Community Lounge for educational workshops, poetry readings, book signings or general community meetings. 1,000 sf.
- Book-binding Workshop. 600 sf.
- Search Booth and Point of Sale (Computer Terminal, DVD Station, Sound/Digital System). 120 sf.
- Digital Display to project Historical Information, Community Announcements. Size to be determined by designer as appropriate.
- 2 Accessible Bathrooms. ADA standards apply.

Site Parameters & Restrictions: 1730 SQFT Lot Size; 3-6 Stories Tall.

Additional Program may be added to support overall design intention or enhance the 24 hr activity of the site.



Topics to explore but not limited to:

- On Façade Constructions:* Solid Wall Construction, Walls with Skeletal Structure, Curtain Walls, Unit-System Façade (pre-fabrication vs. custom fabrication), Collector Facades, Double Facades (skin facades), Integrated Façade Envelopes.

- On Materials and Technology:* Technology Transfer, nano coatings, adhesive materials technology, smart materials, free-form facades, modular construction, composite building materials, computer technology.

- On Energy Harvesting:* Wind Turbines, Hydronic Solar Cells, PhotoVoltaic Cells, Geothermal Heating/Cooling, Daylighting Systems.

Representational strategies and submission requirements

Quasi-Public Architecture

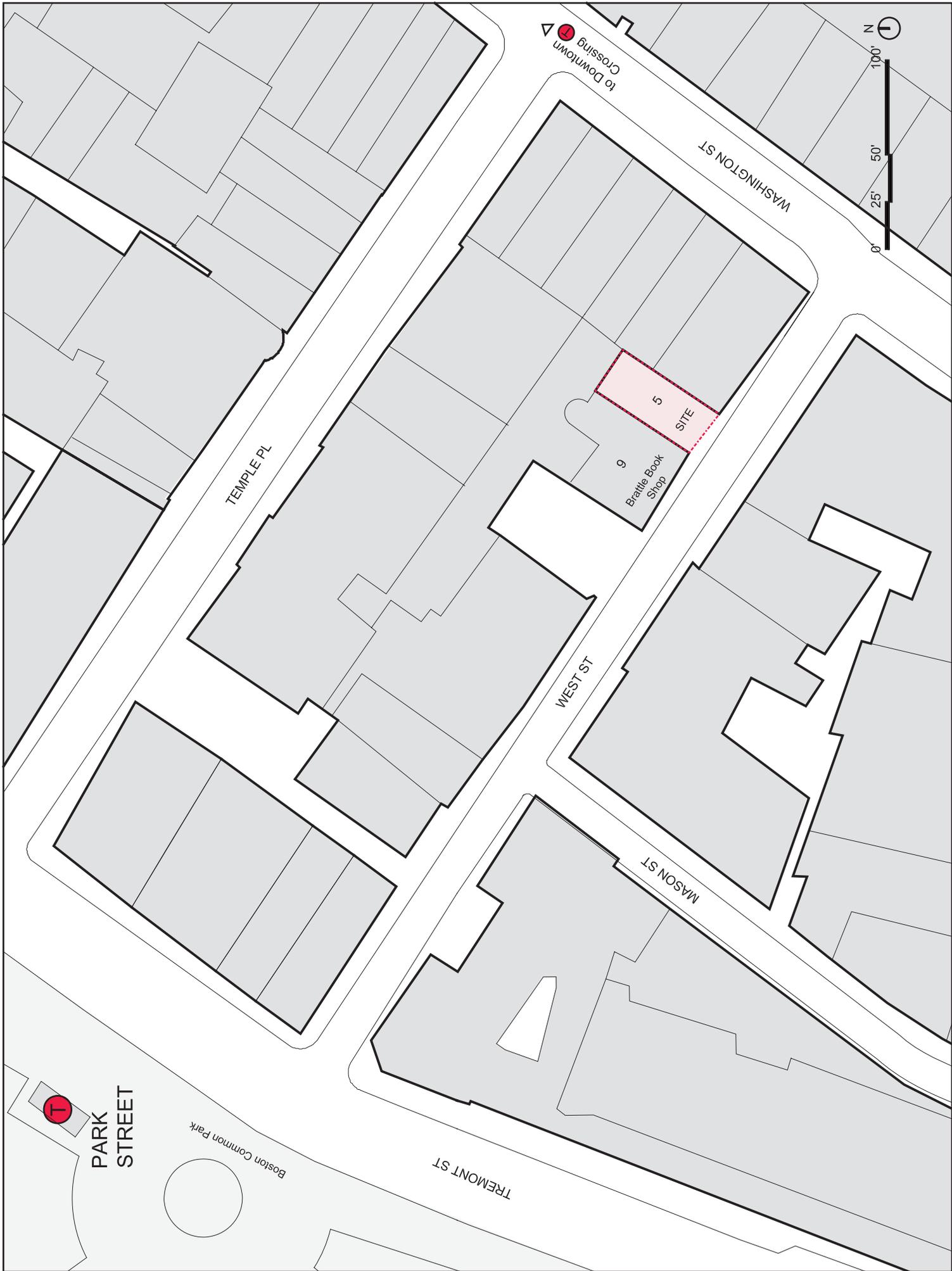
Through the elements of architecture-façade and canopy- one can begin to see an interface between community programs and urban public spaces. Develop in detail the operable storefront and canopy project that houses the bookseller retail space, book-binding workshop, and communal spaces for Downtown Crossing. In addition, create diagrams and notations that clearly represent the urban design strategy.

Requirements

Two 24 x 30 vertical format boards containing:

- 300 Word explanation of design intentions.
- Location plan or aerial 3-D View
- Diagrams and notations of strategy. At least three shall demonstrate:
 - a) Your overall attitude about the street front.
 - b) The overall spatial circulation sequence.
 - c) Clarity of the relationship between program and elements of construction.
- Detailed Plans all levels including roof plan at a scale of $3/16"=1'-0"$.
- Building Sections
- Street Facade Elevation
- 3-D representation including at least one eye-level perspective
- 3-D representation of Canopy Structure
- Any photographic documentation that supports the proposal (photographs of physical models)





to Downtown Crossing

WASHINGTON ST

TEMPLE PL

Brattle Book Shopp

5

SITE

9

WEST ST

MASON ST

TREMONT ST

Boston Common Park

PARK STREET



Please note that the boards must be flat- no pop-up projections or mounted models are permitted

The Rotch Committee reserves the right to use any boards or individual images on the boards for publication

Criteria for Evaluation

- The clarity and content of your design ideas about the street front, it's public image as expressed in your architectural representations.
- The sophistication, intelligence, sensibility and innovation of the design proposal.
- The resolution of a complex program into a small site.
- The quality of the presentation including diagrams, orthographic architectural drawings, three-dimensional renderings and graphic layout.

References

Drawings, planning initiatives, zoning, research and publication materials for the site can be found on the website for the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

Maps & Aerials

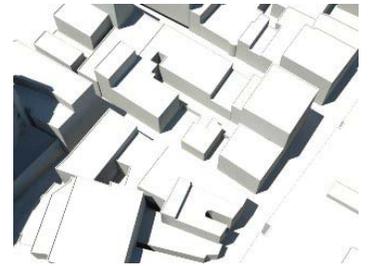
Site Address: 5 WEST ST, Boston, MA, 02111

<http://www.mapjunction.com/bra/>

<http://www.cityofboston.gov/bra/pdf/maps/southstation.pdf>

<http://www.cityofboston.gov/bra/pdf/maps/southstation.pdf>

http://www.cityofboston.gov/bra/pdf/ZoningCode/Maps/1A_Midtown.pdf



2-Dimensional & 3-Dimensional Models in DXF, AutoDesk VIZ 2005(6/7), Max9(2008), 3DS, AutoCAD 2000 .DWG and Google Earth KML(KMZ) formats

http://www.cityofboston.gov/bra/BRA_3D_Models/Index.html

For 2D: CAD Layers can be found under [Building footprints, Streets, City blocks](#)

For 3D: Download file under [4. Downtown Building](#)

Publications

http://140.241.251.212/downtowncrossing/executive%20summary/BRA_ExecutiveSummary.pdf

<http://www.cityofboston.gov/bra/pdf/PlanningPublications/Downtown%20Crossing%20Signage%20Regulations.pdf>

<http://www.cityofboston.gov/BRA/pdf/PlanningPublications/Downtown%20Crossing-Vital%20Heart%20of%20Downtown%20Boston.pdf>

Downtown Crossing Association web site

<http://downtowncrossing.org/>

Bibliography

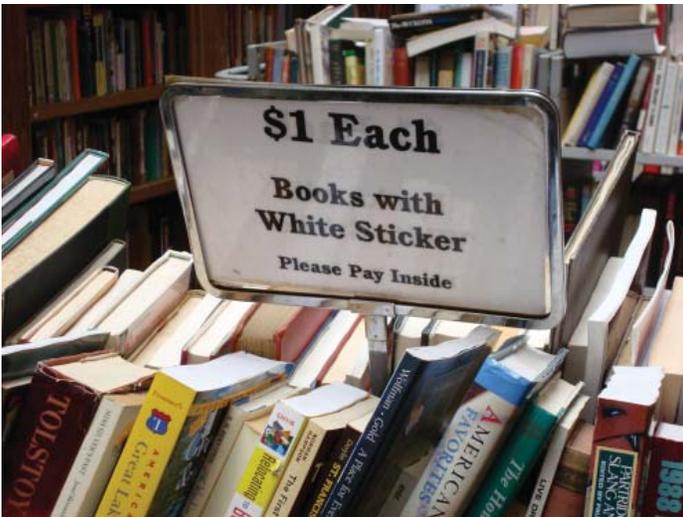
Bell, Bryan. Good Deeds, Good Design: Community Service through Architecture, Princeton Architectural Press; 1 edition, 2003

Harries, Karsten. The Ethical Function of Architecture. The MIT Press. Cambridge, MA. 2000.

Knaack, Ulrich. Klein, Tillmann. Bilow, Marcel. Auer, Thomas. Facades: Principles of Construction. Birkhäuser Basel; 1 edition. 2007

Moussavi, Fashid and Kubo, Michael. The Function of Ornament. Actar Publishing, 2006.

Ouroussoff, Nicolai. "David Adjaye; Pursuing Public Space in a Time of Private Interest." The New York Times [New York] July 31, 2007: Art & Design Section, Architecture Review.



Submission Instructions

Note to all Competitors

To ensure anonymity, each competitor will choose an abstract graphic symbol and place it:

- On the face of each submitted board.
- On the Statement of Sole Authorship with the name of the competitor clearly printed, which you place in the sealed envelope and fasten to the back of one board.
- On the face of a sealed envelope securely fastened to the back of one board.

Note to In-State Competitors

Entries must be received by **10:00 AM***, **Monday, February 2nd 2009** at:

**The Rotch Scholarship
c/o Boston Society of Architects
Fourth Floor
52 Broad Street
Boston, MA 02109**

*Please note that the BSA does not open until 9:00 AM Monday, February 2, 2009.

Note to Out-of-State Competitors

Your proposal must be mailed or shipped no later than **10:00 AM, Monday, February 2nd 2009** to:

**The Rotch Scholarship
c/o Boston Society of Architects
Fourth Floor
52 Broad Street
Boston, MA 02109**

Notify your monitor that you have completed and mailed your proposal by 10:00 AM, Monday, February 2, 2009.

All boards must be received by 4:00 PM, Tuesday, February 3rd, 2009.

Statement of Sole Authorship

I hereby assure the Rotch Committee that I am the sole author of my submission for the 2009 Rotch Competition. I have not received criticism, suggestions or help of any sort other than through the use of books and other published literature.

Signed _____

Print Name _____

Symbol _____

Note to all Competitors:

The above statement of sole authorship shall be placed in the sealed envelope pasted on the back of the board. Your symbol must appear on the envelope as well as on the face of your submission boards.