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2005 09 06

Triangle House Part 1



Strolling by the empty triangle lot with my 3 year old, week after week. I'm at home raising a child while my friends and classmates are becoming architects in the city. When I meet them I wonder if I'm capable of adult or even relevant architectural conversation. I was one of them once, but something happened. After graduating in architecture from Waterloo University, I worked as a construction labourer, a carpenter, a lumber sales clerk and freelanced for various architects but could not settle in one place.

I remember two key anecdotes which coincided with this point in my life and architectural journey which helped me begin to understand where I might began to imagine which one of the millions of things I could do with this 1000 square foot triangle of

Think Toronto

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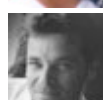
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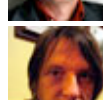
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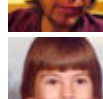
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land that nobody wanted in the heart of downtown Toronto.

The first anecdote was from aboriginal spirituality that said within a few 'moments' of where you live is the land's capacity to nurture and sustain ones own health [physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health]. The other anecdote comes from the movie Cotton Club. Lawrence Fishburne plays a small successful Black Gangster in early 1900's New York. His response to a question asking him to account for his success despite his race and history in the New York underworld was to turn the question around and ask of the inquisitor, "Where do you dance?"

The answer to my design discontent lay in a change of perspective as to where and what 'successful' architecture / design was. In other words, even as a stay-at-home dad, even though I did not come from privilege, nor was I a member or soon to be member of the design intelligencia, I did have opportunity and worthiness around me to produce good design, I just needed to adjust my way of 'seeing'. That is to say, to adjust my place of 'dance'; that is the 'where' of good architecture; and to adjust the way I 'danced'; that is the process of making good architecture, in order to find my own expression in it.

1292 College Street is, arguably, the smallest triangular building lot in the city of Toronto. Over the next few weeks I'll be 'retro-journaling' as I leaf through my many tiny sketch books of that period. It is a period spent designing from the margins of time, of knowledge and of circumstance (read no money). I Designed from children's centres, from swimming pools, 'activity gyms', nap times, from late nights in order to discover and manifest a small house I referred to as "simple dignity", which of course refers to my own search for dignity and worth in an architectural culture driven by the status quo.

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