

ARCH 384: Competition Elective Essay

Introduction

Creativity can't exist in a vacuum. Any new creation is made up of bits and pieces of the typological instances that came before it. During this creative process, Sean and I were constantly inspired by various typologies in nearly every aspect and stage of design. Typological inspiration often occurred openly and directly, but occasionally occurred without our knowing about it until after the project was finished.

The largest components of the project have direct typological precedents: kitchens, dining rooms, and educational facilities. From these broad types we found many smaller types as sources of inspiration. We appropriated several of the ideas we came across to help us in putting physical form to the symbolic ideas we had about what the project should mean. Perhaps the most notable among these appropriated ideas are: a space-making open balcony, materiality expressing a philosophy, kitchens acting as stages, and a daily/nightly change in visual emphasis from within to without the building.

ArchMedium's Paris Market Lab Competition

"The cooking world has become more and more sophisticated and the new techniques and styles have taken the culinary standards to a whole new level. [...] investigation and research have become key to understand[ing] the present and future of gastronomy. [...]"

"We could say that historically [...] Paris was and still is one of the world's greatest capitals when it comes to gastronomy. [...]"

"However, [...] it's no longer enough to have the best product, you also need to sell it well. Paris has become very aware of that fact, and they know that in order to maintain their status as the best cooks in the world they need to keep renewing themselves to stay ahead of the increasing number of competitors."

from ArchMedium's introduction to the PMKTL conceptⁱ

ArchMedium's competition proposal is to create the Market Lab—"where [the] kitchen is taken to a new level; not only in the way that dishes are prepared but also in the way the clients interact with it." It is not only a fine-dining restaurant at night, but also a cooking school during the day—"and it wants to be nothing less than one of the best in the world in both categories."

According to their stipulation, the Market Lab will not accept reservations or have a fixed menu. They propose a first-come first-served policy, and a "surprising, always changing, degustation menu" to be determined by master chefs and executed by students, nightly.ⁱ

Program and Site

The site is located in the heart of Paris, mere steps away from le Marché Saint-Germain, a covered and colonnaded fresh food market. The approximate area of the program provided by ArchMedium is 3310m². Because of limited space on the site (476m²) and an imposed maximum number of storeys, it was clear that multi-use spaces would be necessary to appropriately fulfill the requirements of both programs.

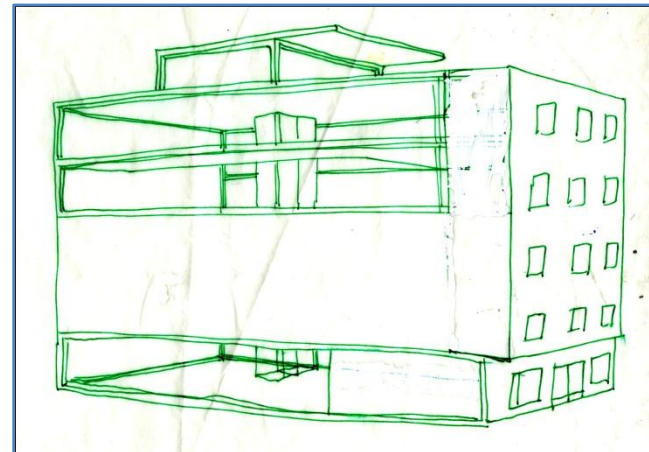
A decision was made early on to remain sensitive to the historical location of the site. The contest guidelines stated specifically that the existing building has no particular historical significance, but because we noticed that it is currently located directly next to its twin (see figure 1), we decided to maintain a reference to that mirror-like relationship (even though we ultimately decided to re-build from scratch, as seen in figure 2).

Philosophy

Sean and I were intrigued by the concepts presented in the project outline and felt that the PMKTL had a lot of potential. Having recently learned about modernist cuisine, we decided to incorporate the ideologies of that movement into our work: rebellion against blind adherence to rules of the past as well as exploration of heretofore unknown horizons with the help of science.ⁱⁱ We also wanted to express the nocturnal/diurnal natures of the two complimentary programs, and we chose to do it by shifting the direction of visual focus towards the interior of the building at night (creating a sort of beacon) and towards the exterior during the day (creating a sort of watchtower).



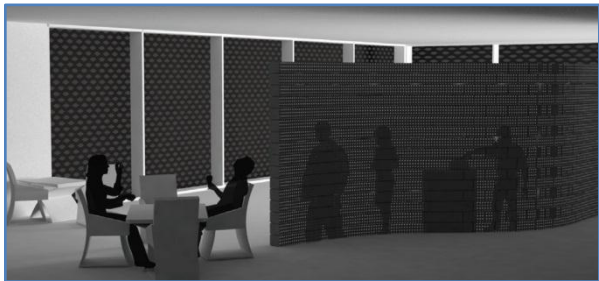
1 The existing building on our site on the left; its twin on the right (source: maps.google.com)



2 An initial proposal for window configuration behind the façade



3 Guy Hollaway's cantilevered dining balcony
(source: www.guyhollaway.co.uk)



4 LiTriCon partition

In typical restaurants, the kitchen is entirely separate from the dining and hidden from the line of sight of patrons. In our PMKTL, the **kitchens are open** and clearly visible to diners wherever possible. This is a concept that we borrowed from the HyPar Pavilion in New York (Diller Scofidio + Renfro).^{vii} On PMKTL's fourth floor, the kitchen is quite small and not clearly visible to all patrons, so the action is spread out by means of "staging" areas within the dining space, where chefs can bring nearly-finished dishes to add dramatic finishing touches—flambés and the like—to the delight of diners.

Only one specific culinary school was used as inspiration: the George Brown College Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts in Toronto (Kearns Mancini Architects). It is a building very much like the essential PMKTL concept, in that the students not only learn

Typologies

In preparation for design, much research was conducted, especially on the typology of the restaurant. One of the restaurants we used as a precedent was the Rocksalt Restaurant and Bar (Guy Hollaway Architects). This project, in Folkstone Harbour, England, offered us the idea of an open, **cantilevered balcony**ⁱⁱⁱ surrounding the dining space (figure 3), giving us more available square metreage on upper levels without increasing the building's footprint.

Another restaurant inspiration to us was Cornerstone by Studio Ramoprino in Beijing. This restaurant displays a strong sense of **materiality** which creates a specific ambience and serves as a reference to both the past and the present within the site.^{iv} We also aimed to use significant materiality in our project—primarily to refer to the modernist cuisine philosophy. We designed a partition (see figure 4)—amongst other things—to be made from LiTraCon (translucent concrete)^v. The parallels between the innovation that went into creating a unique product like LiTraCon and the innovation that occurs in the PMKTL kitchen were something that we wanted to emphasise.

There is a restaurant in Jinhua City, China, called Restaurant 13 (Johan De Wachter Architects). It is characterised by two unique features which inspired us: a typology of "watching and being watched" and a distinct designation between dining areas (the areas are classified as various speeds, between "vending" and "lounging").^{vi} Our dining areas aren't defined by their speed, but they do all have a unique layout and a unique character, so when patrons drop in more than once, they'll be treated to not only different cuisine but an entirely different dining locale.



5 George Brown College Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts
(source: www.kmai.com/proj-gbc.html)

there, but also have the opportunity to cook for the public.^{viii} The building offers the sidewalk a view into four double-height kitchens, putting the student chefs on display to passersby (figure 5). In our Paris Market Lab, the kitchen and the dining areas are both on display to passersby through our mesh façade. Because of the nature of light and the façade, passersby can see inside at night (potentially drawing them in to join the other patrons, as in figure 6) and during the day, students can easily see out and enjoy the Paris-scape. This **highlighting of an existing dichotomy by way of a mesh façade** is also a feature of Ten Arquitectos's HotelAmericano, where the mesh façade is quite opaque to the day but starts to really pop at night to match the vibrant nightclub scene in the area (figures 7 and 8).^{ix}

Conclusion

In my opinion, our concept for the Paris Market Lab was quite original and exceedingly appropriate to the specific given parameters for the competition. Even so, it is clear that when the project whole is analysed as separate components, that it is really just an amalgamation of borrowed thoughts, like anything else.

End Notes/Bibliography

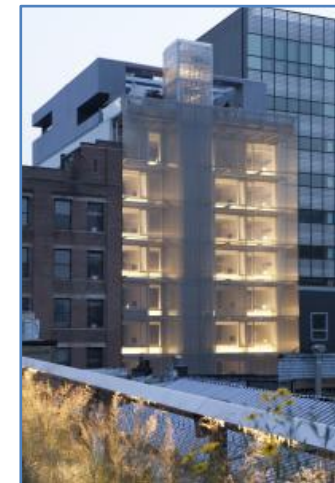
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6 PMKTL scrim-façade; as a night-time beacon



7 (source: www.archhis.com/bldg/?bl=15367)



8 (source: trendsideas.com/Article16224/NewZealand/HospitalityDesign)