Re purposing The Machine: Rethinking Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon in Social Media and Juvenile Detention
The one thing that all children in Juvenile detention facilities have in common is that somewhere along the line they were let down. It may have been a parent, a teacher, a sibling, or a friend, but the bottom line is someone somewhere let them down. There are an infinite amount of scenarios that tell their story: maybe someone led them down the wrong path with drugs and alcohol; maybe someone whom they trusted molested them and through that act, they have issues trusting anyone; maybe they just don’t know what it feels like to be unconditionally loved. Those people that let them down are everything that have grounded that child with society and once the bars close there is a disconnect with the youth and the world. Not only has that child lost their connection with society, but they have also lost their connection with life. The only way for that youth to be heard again is if that youth has a voice.

For a voice to be heard there must be a person to hear, a place to be heard, and a device/method for your message to be heard. The Greek’s designed forums and amphitheaters to amplify their voices to the crowds, Gutenberg design the printing press to spread the written voice to the masses and, Alexander Graham bell designed the telephone to talk across the country. In this day and age, the internet and social media allows a voice to travel to the whole planet instantly. Through social media, at risk youths can be heard and can reconnect and rehabilitate with not only those close to them, but they can also form a network to share their stores with those with common, past, presents, and futures. Through the network these youths tell can educate and support other at risk youth and prevent them from being let down the same way they were. To apply the idea of prevention and rehabilitation through social media and architecture, you must define the requirements needed for a voice to be heard and the architectural response.
In the article “A syntactic study of control in restrictive settings: innovations in isovist methods” Frieda D Peatross studies a series of convalescence homes and juvenile detention facilities in hopes of giving a numeric value to the functionality of the control spaces held within in accordance to spatial syntax theory. Peatross goes about this method by splitting the users of the space into two groups, the controller group and the detainee group. Peatross then becomes an observer inside the facilities and observes the users and analyzes the probabilistic spatial patterning to reconcile what causes the spaces to have a higher or lower probability of creating normalizing behavior. Through her own parameters, Peatross comes to the conclusion that the detainees have a higher probability of demonstrating normalizing behavior if there is a higher ratio of other moving and sitting detainees as opposed to controllers in their field of view. Furthermore, Peatross also goes on to say the higher the probability of normalizing behavior.

Comparatively, Peatross’s and Marcuse’s respective articles are about emotions generated by the spatial environment. In Marcuse’s article, he elaborates on the effects of the emotions generated by the walls and barriers themselves while Peatross writes about the field of view created by the spaces created by those walls and barriers. To further compare the two articles, both articles are about emotions created by an established hierarchy that are created by the built environment. It is shocking what the simple arrangement of walls can do to the psyche of a person that causes them to no longer be in control of their environment and how quickly normal behavior can be dashed away due to the ratio of people in ones field of view. I believe that both of these articles combined together can offer a few methods on how to create spaces of confinement that are more humane to those detained inside. For example, the ability to be observed without being observed through the use of materials and line of sight can offer an acceptable answer to the needs of the controllers and the detainees. Furthermore, the programing of the spaces can greatly affect the caustic probability of normalizing behavior by evening the playing field of observed and observer. In closing, I am very pleased I read both of these articles due to their insight on the effects of emotion and experience of the built environment but I believe that there is something that Peatross’s article was lacking that I would like to do more research into. All of her observations were those that were inside the built environment. I would like to know how detainees are affected by having people outside the built environment in their field of view. In regards to our site, this question may help or harm those inside.

I was just Following Orders

In “From Child to Captive: Constructing Captivity in a Juvenile Institution” Christopher Bickel writes about the atrocities that he witnessed while a mentor and then later a grad student at Rosy Meadows Juvenile Detention Facility. From the day a child steps into a juvenile detention facility, by definition of the very people that are there to watch over him/her they are by “policy” an untrustworthy sociopath. This view is stemmed by the training that the guards are required to go through to become a juvenile detention guard. I will be very honest: this particular article was very hard to read. My heart goes out to all of the lost childhoods and permanently smeared lives due to what I see as a completed and utter break down of the system. I feel at a loss, because no matter what I design for a juvenile detention center, it may be sullied by a corrupt predator class of people that go into a job knowing that hurting children is just another day at the job. What can a designer do? My immediate response is that you can design environments that allow the workers to not feel as much tension or different areas they may decompress so that they may not take it out on the children. This doesn’t work if the guards are brought into the environment already with the preconceived notion that they are surrounded by treacherous youth. Another idea is there could be some sort of adaptable environment that the youth could control themselves that holds the guards accountable: possible a visible tally of offences or color changes in the same way that a mood ring works that visibly shows the guards or possibly an independent third party about the tension level in the facility. These methods only protect those that have already been a victim, how do you prevent any inappropriate act from happening in the first place? To answer that question you have to delve into the mind of the guard. I think a pretty easy answer would be the guard does what he does for money and/or power. He or she provides a service that entails hurting youth as a day to day operating procedure. It takes a certain type of person to do that but it may be learned or easily tolerated if their pay or possibly their respect is on the line. I immediately think of the Nuremberg trials. Thousands of soldiers told others and themselves that they were only following orders. What made them do it? The same reasons that German soldiers took the lives of people in the concentration camps may very well be the same reasons that juvenile correction guards are taking the childhoods away from this lost youth. It’s a shame that looking at the holocaust may be a way to protect our youth in America.

As architects, walls to us could be seen as simply typing “L” ENTER and inputting a unit of measurement and hitting ENTER again. In Marcuse’s article, “Walls of Fear and Walls of Support” Marcuse warns us of the pitfalls and consequences of establishing a wall. Once a wall is up it sets up parameters, accusations and the relationship of the individuals and groups of people that are on their respective sides of the wall. Factors such as size, material, and history are among many factors that go into the perception of not only your experiences on your side of the wall but also of what your perception is of the experiences of those on the other side of the wall. With the notion of this delicate balance in mind, I am very apprehensive of putting a dividing line into the site that has been assigned to us in this summer’s design studio. The site for the Juvenile Detention Facility that has been given is Touch of Nature in Makanda, Illinois. Touch of Nature was established in 1952 by SIUC as the first University Affiliated camping program in the United States for people with physical and/or cognitive disabilities and for the past 61 years, the camp has been run homogenously with this mission statement. The camp and this program has been proven to help children in need and one would assume that we could utilize the grounds and program to suit the needs of the children that would be housed there in a juvenile detention facility. The question that arises for me right away is, how are those walls going to affect the current program? I am very worried that if the Juvenile facility is not placed on the site correctly and the walls don’t convey the right message to the children on the outside, then we will sully a place that has been such a positive thing for over 60 years? Are we being a bad neighbor by just existing on the site and taking away resources from those already in need? How much space is needed to rehabilitate a child? And how is that rehabilitation affected when you put a dividing line down the middle of it? Is this site choice ethical?

Group 1 synopsis

Group 1 consists of John Svast, Tyler Cain, Nick Mosher, and Kristopher Teubel. Through the course of the summer thus far, the class has researched many different subjects related to juvenile justice. Along with research subjects shared by the rest of the class, Group 1 specifically has researched subjects pertaining to the juvenile justice system in the United States as well as the rest of the world. We have compiled our individual ideas and research findings in chronological order as a cohesive group.

The first exposures we had to the subject of juvenile justice were the articles we shared as a class and the articles we found individually. The analysis of the roles and identities of walls was an interesting opportunity for the class to take a more metaphysical view toward the creation of space. Many of the group members recognize that the role the walls in a juvenile detention center should lend themselves to a feeling of normalcy. The idea that a detention center’s role and the role of its staff to rehabilitate and not punish the detainees is of utmost importance. Many of the youths finding themselves in the juvenile justice system have been abused and are in great need for compassion and understanding. The use and expression of the walls in a less harsh manner can serve as a crucial method in progressing a less demeaning and more respectful place for rehabilitation.

Another noteworthy research article that illustrates this idea was “From Child to Captive: Constructing Captivity in a Juvenile Institution” by Christopher Bickel. The members of group 1 see this as an enlightening article that shows the lack of empathy by detention center guards toward the juvenile detainees. This leads one to wonder how the architecture of a facility can promote certain actions and feelings of its inhabitants. The duty of an architect is to promote the well being and safety of those who use their designs. This principle can seem more important for juvenile detention since it is understood that many of the buildings users are there because they are prone to have psychological problems. What can we as a group and as a class do to promote a happier and more functional environment for the detained youths?

When the class began to research subjects directly pertaining to juvenile detention, group 1 was assigned to research international juvenile detention methods. As a whole, we investigated the history of architecture and juvenile detention, the positive example of Switzerland’s juvenile justice system versus Saudi Arabia’s abysmal system, and the relation of population and juvenile detention rates. We learned that, despite America’s high incarceration rates, we serve as an example to many other countries and their juvenile detention policies. Among the numerous findings the group established in our presentation, Nick commented upon the great disparity between China’s low juvenile incarceration rates contrary to their very high population and The United State’s lower population and higher incarceration rates. Kris illustrated the demeaning methods and conditions found in many Saudi Arabian detention centers. Through this assignment, and his research into the history of juvenile detention architecture, John feels as though the placement of our project would be better in a more urban environment to imbue a stronger connection to the local community. Tyler researched and taught us about how well a juvenile justice system can operate. Specifically in Switzerland, social emphasis on family morals and moral accounting of youths lead many to avoid the justice system all together. As a whole, the class, as well as group 1, learned about the shortcomings of juvenile justice around the world and how one may be able to improve upon the situation.
After visiting a juvenile detention center in Kansas City and a preparatory school for mentally challenged children in Carbondale, each group was tasked with interpreting and modifying a detention center program. As we found through analysis, the program lent itself to creating two distinct halves of the building. The secure and unsecured ends of the facility allow ease of use and safety for the detainees, staff, and visitors alike. We created a program similar to the other groups in the respect that the lobby acted as a central hub on the unsecured side of the facility and the core common space acted as the hub of the secure side. As a group, we contemplated the necessary adjacencies between spaces to allow different types of users fulfill their necessary roles. Through this analysis, we were made aware of the inherent characteristics and responsibilities of the individual spaces themselves. The health clinic has its own very specific needs that are in stark contrast to the needs of the family resource center or visitor’s lobby.

We also evaluated the roles of the facilities users. Security, support staff, and administration have their own unique needs. The support staff needs access to all the spaces in the facility for cleaning. Administration staff requires the easiest possible access to the secure and unsecured sides of the building to do their work properly. The juveniles need to be detained effectively while still being respected by the facility and its staff. While working on the evaluation of the facility program, we were reminded that there is much more to manipulate and maintain than the different zones of security. A properly designed juvenile detention center allows the staff and detainees safety and security through more than well placed doors and sallyports.

The most recent project we worked together on is the site analysis. The group was tasked with analyzing the different elements of the Touch of Nature site located outside of Makanda, IL. The site is approximately 3100 acres of deep woods and lakeside areas. We looked at the existing electrical infrastructure, topography, local weather patterns, local wildlife along with other various aspects. This specific assignment had an interesting twist for group 1 since John believes that Touch of Nature is not the best site for our juvenile detention center. He believes that a more urban area, perhaps near 710 Bookstore in Carbondale or even in St. Louis, would be a more acceptable site because of closer proximity to the local community and thus stronger community support for the detainees.

The programming assignment was invaluable at getting us to look deeply into the specific spaces we may be using and how they should be placed and used to promote a positive change in the youths of the facility. Lastly, we analyzed the site on which we are to put our facility. The existing infrastructure and topography, wildlife and way finding can all be manipulated to create a juvenile detention center that could really change lives for the better. Certainly, each member of group 1 has done their part in research and analysis with the goal in mind that, when finished, it must work toward the creation of a facility that takes our local youths in at their most vulnerable and doesn’t exploit that vulnerability, but shows them their true potential as a happy and productive member of society.
What I Learned

Research:

The first and foremost topic that hit me while doing research is that in the grand scheme of things, the reason that there are children in a juvenile detention facility is because the system has failed them. Somewhere and somehow that child slipped through the cracks and became a ward of the state due to ineffective parenting and/or school system, drug use, hanging out with the wrong crowd, or a combination of these things. So to me, punishing a child because we failed them is disgusting and unacceptable.

The second topic that arises is the idea of normalcy. How do you watch without someone knowing they are being watched? How do you place them somewhere without them knowing they have been placed there? The idea of normalcy seems to be an impossible task but it also seems to be the only difference between adult facilities and juvenile facilities and for this reason, designing for normalcy is the most precious I should carry into the semester.

This research has been the seed for my design thesis of rehabilitation and education thru community and forum in hopes that it will give the youth a voice that may not have been an option before.

International Studies:

Of the entire research anthology that I did, I was the most unhappy with this. I was very excited that I was chosen to take part in the international aspect of the research but, I was very disheartened when I came to the conclusion that America is decades ahead of anyone else in all regards of detention, adult and juvenile. Excepted northern Europe, most of the world uses America as a precedent when it comes to detention design. Since everything was leading to this conclusion, I redirected my efforts into the history of incarnation which has roots in the UK.

This may not have made the professor happy with the route I was going but it gave me a base with which to make my design decisions. By looking at the past, it is evident that the location of our site may be incorrect due to archaic decisions made during the middle ages that have been carried over the centuries.
Program Analysis:

Our group program was heavily influenced by the fact that ¾ of our group visited the Johnson County facility in Olathe, Kansas. As in the Johnson county facility, our program uses the lobby and the core each as a hub that radiates to other spaces. The biggest difficulty we had was getting the control support to follow that same logic. Our solution was to further break down the control support into 3 other hubs: the maintenance suite, dock suite, and the laundry suite.

This portion of the analysis is where I further pushed away from the site chosen by the professor and looked into the 710 block in downtown Carbondale. In addition to program that our group came up with, I added an additional public forum hub that was accessed off of visitation. Also, I added retail to the block that was independent to the facility and also a community space.

Site Analysis:

I am slightly worried that I went into this portion of the anthology set on the notion that I was completely detached from choosing Touch of Nature as my site. I do wonder if I had visited the site before I did my research if I would have come to a different conclusion. Doing the research first has change the way I visited the site and I question my objectiveness. I only asked questions that were in line with my thesis and not open. On the other hand, due to my analysis, I have proof that in accordance to my thesis I have chosen a better site. Was it the best site? I’m not sure: according to my thesis an even better site may be closer to the St. Louis area. But, if designed correctly this site may be better because of its proximity to Southern Illinois University. I still have a half a semester to figure that out.

Bottom line, the site I have chosen is better in accordance with my thesis then Touch of Nature. But that doesn’t leave touch of Nature Out of the question. I believe that Touch of nature has a possibility of being a secure camp that may be accessed by all those in the juvenile system as a means of rehabilitation. Touch of Nature has an amazing track record of having effective rehabilitative programs but not as an onsite living facility. I would like to design to its strengths as such and possibly “if time permits” design a secure site that follows public forum and community on a smaller program scale.
When towns were being created, the town center was established and then a bull would plow a ditch around the perimeter of the town to mark where the town walls were. Once the bull was done, he was sacrificed to the gods as an offering to the purity of the line. To cross the line was punishable by death, because to cross the line was an insult to the gods and everything that was pure inside the walls. Everything outside the wall was deemed unpure. The sick were put in hospitals outside the gates, and the dead were buried outside the gates. Prisons on the other hand were given a special place inside the gates. Prisoners were neither inside or out the walls. They were in a limbo where torture was practiced often and the tattered bodies of the prisoners were hung outside to warn others what happens to those that aren’t as pure as what is held inside the walls.

This is the reason why so often prisons are at the edges of towns. The unclean don’t belong near the pure and clean.

Is this really what we think of our inmates?... Is this what we really think of the children in juvenile detention facilities?

History of Incarceration
Site Analysis

- Commercial
- Residential
- Church

Transportation Near Site
- S. Illinois Avenue
- Mill St.
- S. University Avenue

Carbondale, Illinois
Diller and Scofidio’s eye beam museum is an excellent example of two incompatible programs that are seamlessly interwoven together to provide connections that are not part of the everyday.

On one side (Blue) Scientists/Production takes place and on the other (Orange) is the Museum where patrons/Presentation takes place. The Red in between are the designed locations that interaction between the two users takes place.
Jeremy Bentham designed the Panopticon in the late 18th century as a cheap and effective way to watch as many inmates with the least amount of guards possible. The core of the building housed the guards and not a place of worship which was common at the time. This angered some people because the implication of his decision put man at the center of importance and not God. By placing one guard at the center of a ring of cells, the guard watches all by the inmate can only see one. Because the inmate can’t tell if the guard is watching, it is in fact the inmates imagination that keeps him in line and not the guard.

The Panopticon came under great fire in 1977 when Michel Foucault lambasted the design as an abomination.
INTERROTRON

The Interrotron is a device used to film interviews made famous by Academy Award winning documentarian Errol Morris. The device works by using two cameras. One films the interviewer that is hard wired to a heads up display in front of the camera lens of the interviewee.

This is important because, the look of a human face humanizes the camera and puts the person being interviewed at ease.
EYEBEAM MUSEUM DESIGN INTEGRATION

CONNECTION

JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITY

CONNECTION

CHILDREN MUSEUM
PANOPTICON DESIGN INTEGRATION

By breaking the Interrortron into parts, the original design can be retooled into an effective space that can help connect the youth with the community and the world via social media.

The core of the design is now the community as the base. The inmate space has been shifted to the center and now the youth are able to have maximum connection.
USER DIAGRAM

- Secure Youth Entry
- Package Delivery to Kitchen
- Visitor Car Pick Up and Exit
- Visitor to Forum Space
- Secure Youth Fire Exit
- Visitor to Museum Lobby

SECTION A-A

SECTION B-B

WEST ELEVATION