Building Memory

the project and the process

by Beatrix Hutton
Author’s Note

This project is designed to give you (the audience) a chance to participate. All aspects of the project, including this book, will include questions and activities for you to do. Please feel free to write in this book and even on the walls when instructed. I had so much fun doing this project; I wanted to make sure to give people a chance to make marks of their own. So, please don’t hold back!
My Story

What would push a normal student with than interest in architecture to start (virtually) scribbling all over the walls?
This project developed after spending too much time in an ugly building.

All buildings have little quirks. East Duke has no male bathrooms. Smith Warehouse’s walls don’t extend all the way to the ceiling. But when it comes to Biddle, it is not quirky, it is just mind-numbingly dull.

Now, don’t get me wrong. The central lobby on the bottom floor is nice. I have spent many a day gazing absentmindedly at the flowing water or up at the round skylights, but that offers little respite for the long hours spend in the windowless, colorless practice rooms or walking around the long subterranean hallways.

The contrast between the nature of the activity in the building and the architecture grated my nerves. The music department is small but vibrant. Famous artists and aspiring musicians alike live, work and produce in Biddle. Yet this building confines rather than encouraging creative activity. The long dull colorless hallways, the fluorescent lighting, the pockmarked ceiling tiles, seem more at home in an office building than a music building.
Every time I enter this building, I’m filled with alternating feelings of affection and frustration.

This is such an exciting and interesting space. The expertise of the teachers, the focused attention music students receive, the amount of love people have for their instruments, playing day after day, but why does it have to look and feel so much like a dungeon?

There is so much creative energy, so much inspiration, so much innovation in this building, but the building gives no sign of it. How many memories are held in these walls?

The frustration mounted. I spent many of my art history classes looking at beautiful, complicated, and odd buildings and the prospect of spending another hour in one of these blank, lifeless practice rooms.

I’d dream of running down the halls with a paintbrush in my hand forcing the blank walls to speak.
I began to take photographs, walking through Biddle and taking pictures lying on the ground, crouching at odd angles, trying to see if I could begin to see this building in new way. I began to scribble on these photographs, trying to recapture lost memories, feelings, daydreams and bring them to the light.
Experimentionation

Reconstructing Biddle
I experimented with the light and transparency, creating virtual sculptures to beautify, confound, and complicate.
I experimented with line, scribbling music notes on the walls.
I made plans for silkscreens prints that would blur the lines between dream and reality.
Interested in seeing more of this series?

Scan this qr-code to see the full series with commentary by the author.

If you don’t have a scanning app, there’s another chance to get the link to the website later.
I made over forty of these interventions, redefining the spaces as I saw fit.

Making a few a week over a semester, I worked out all my frustrations, projected my dreams, memories and imaginings onto the walls.

After a while, I wanted to push the designs a step further. I turned to tactile methods to make a mark.

Stencils

A Way to Make a Quick Impression
So....what’s a stencil exactly?

A stencil is a thin sheet of paper, poster board, or some other materials with a design or letters cut into it. If you apply paint, marker, crayons or some other pigment through the holes in a stencil, you can transfer an image to an underlying surface. Stencils are useful; because you can use them over and over again, play with different colors, different orientations, and feel free to experiment.

Let me show you what I mean.
Let’s make a stencil!

Before you get started...

You will need an **exacto knife** or some sort of tool that will allow you to cut out shapes without starting from the edge.

Typical scissors will not work.

If you are under sixteen, please check with a parent first before you use an exacto knife, box cutter, or anything like that.

Even if you are older than sixteen, please be careful when using an exacto knife. If this is your first or fiftieth time using one, please just make sure to go slow and carefully.

**Take your time!** Your stencil will look better, you will be able to use it more times before making a new one, and the chance that you make a mistake will diminish.

If you make a mistake, don’t worry! See if you can work it into your design. Sometimes mistakes end up being the most interesting part. If not, you can always make a new stencil.
This is a stencil  (at least it will be soon)

Now, cut out the yellow areas, color in the holes you just cut with a crayon, marker, or colored pencil and then turn the page!
Make sure to not leave any drawings or anything important on the back!

It will get cut up
What do you think?

Make sure to hold your page flat when you color. That will preserve the clarity of the forms.
In this project, I took my virtual dreams and reimagined them for the real world. Drawing on the same themes, I designed a series of stencils. My first experiments, the altered photographs, consisted of many layers, playing with transparency, line, and space. For this part of the project, I limited myself to a single stencil for each image, essentially flattening each form to a single layer.
The purpose of this component of the project was to rework virtual interventions to take a more accessible and tangible form. Unlike virtual worlds that require tools like Adobe Illustrator or other tools, anyone can make a stencil if they have some poster board, an exacto knife, and a little patience. I wanted the audience to consider the space they live in and what changes they would make if they could. What better way than to allow people to physically change and alter a space than through experimenting with stencils?

Did you know that stencils can’t have fully inset circles? or any shape completely inside another? These floating shapes will not transfer.

Each medium has a very different visual impact. Do you prefer one over the other?
Can you match the stencil with its altered image?
I made a new series of stencils to represent different aspects of the Duke experience that people could actually use. Each stencil represents a different part of campus. Combined with a series of letter stencils, this allowed people to paint a picture of their idea of Duke’s past, present, and future onto the walls of the exhibit.

The Second Series: Duke’s Past, Present, and Future
What about you? When you think about Duke’s past, what pops up in your head?
How about Duke’s present?
What will Duke’s future will look like?

just take a guess! also feel free to draw
Enough talk!

It’s time to design a stencil of your own!
Designing a Stencil

If you have cut out areas that go out to the edge, you need to create a border to keep the stencil together.

This simple and stark design consists of intersecting rays, but with no floating pieces.

<---see this black line? the one that runs on along-side the white ray?

This black line makes sure that when you cut out the white areas, you don’t end up with floating black pieces.

What I learnt from making stencils for this project

1. Keep it simple. Be aware that you have to cut out each piece individually, so do your hands a favor.
2. Be careful of free-floating pieces. Do not design a shape with other shapes completely inside it. For example, if you look at the fountain stencil, none of the white circles are actually complete circles. All pieces need to be anchored to something, either the edge or other pieces.
3. If the lines are too thin, they can be hard to color in. Also small details will get lost. Strong shapes and stark lines work much better in this medium.
4. When you design a stencil, before you start cutting, label the areas to cut. This will make things easier in the long run and also to identify and remove any free-floating pieces.
Not sure where to start?

Here are some ideas to get you started!

You can always design a stencil that will function as your signature (a tag), this could be your first name, or a symbol that resonates with you, or your initials.

You could make a stencil of an object that means something to you, for example, if you play soccer, you could design a stencil that looks like a soccer ball or the shape of a person kicking in a goal.

You could do a portrait or simple silhouette. Look online and you can find many interesting stencil designs.

The artist Banksy, Keith Haring, and Shepard Fairey are just a few interesting street artists. Look at their stuff for some great ideas for graphic and striking stencil designs.

These are just ideas to get you started, but don’t feel limited to these topics. This is your place to experiment!
Use the space below to design your stencil.
Remember to not put anything important on the back of your stencil!
Try out your stencil below!
Feel free to cut out your stencil and use it where you like; in a journal, on the blank pages on the back of this book, it’s up to you.
Capturing Memory

Now that you’ve made your own stencils, here are some ways to make your own (virtual) mark on the buildings that shape you.
The final product

This project began with me. In the virtual world, I found I had the freedom to do what I wanted. I began filling photographs of Biddle with my own marks, carelessly and arrogantly making changes as I saw fit. Covering the walls with my opinions, my memories, and my “sculptures”.

As I continued through this process, I began to think about the lost memories, feelings and frustrations of countless students in these walls. This project stopped being about me, and the project evolved to focus on collecting and capturing fragments of memory from past communities associated with buildings.

I wanted to give everyone the chance to remember and capture those lost memories; capturing their words on the walls, or the sound of their voice talking about an image, their face as they scribble across the picture.

As I graduate this year, I can’t capture all the moments of excitement, frustration, and pain in my own experience, let alone other peoples as well. But in that process, the selective parceling of memory, I hope to encourage my audience to stop and think about how their experiences and these buildings have shaped their growth and identity.
Interested in seeing more altered photographs of Biddle?

Want to share your own opinions on my artworks and how you would change this space? Please go to the voicethread website and comment! You will also have the chance to learn more about the alterations themselves, the thought behind each work, and my motivations.

Check it all out here!

https://voicethread.com/share/5423458/
Reimagining Duke
A Community Project

I created a slideshow of images around Duke. I have not altered these images. This is where you come in. I want you to take a minute and look through these images and find spaces that you respond to. Comment with your stories. You can record audio, type in a message, or even scribble on the image. Let's bring back some of those memories we lost and write them on the walls!

Make your mark here!

https://voicethread.com/share/5423434/
Thank you!

I hope you enjoyed this and I can’t wait to see what you come up with.

I would love to see what your stencils look like. If you are active on twitter, tweet me @beatrixhttn with images of your stencils and your artwork!

Use these next few pages as you like, make some more stencils, play with the stencils you have, or just write out your own thoughts. It’s for you to use!
Did you have a chance to use the stencils in the exhibit?

please pick your favorite stencil and put your mark here

if you didn’t get the chance, you can make your own and stamp here
About the Author

As an artist, I am fascinated by space and materiality. My process consists of experimenting with value, space, and working in multiple layers. I will try anything once, but I primarily sculpt, print, draw, stencil and collage. I dabble in Photoshop but Adobe Illustrator will remain my first and true love when I work in the virtual realm. I am an art historian as well as an artist and love to champion outsider art forms, artists, and art experiences that break away tradition. As an artist, teacher, historian, and idealist, I want to deconstruct the idea that art is exclusive and can only be appreciated by a certain type of person. I think that we all can find some kind of art or creative work that speaks to us, whether it is painting, street art, graphic design, architecture, printmaking, or performing for an audience, if we look hard enough. This senior capstone project “Building Memory” was my own attempt to bring together my many interests in architecture, street art, and interactive exhibits into a single project. I hope to continue to work in the future to build projects that allow people to experience a new kind of art, an art that is (ideally) accessible, fun and engages people experienced with looking at art and newcomers as well to think and question their own assumptions. Easier said than done, but I’ll keep trying!