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Honors thesis

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Abstract

RE LEARNING Urban Manufacturing Detroit

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by

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This thesis deal with the theme of the reuse of abandoned building to reintroduce the production within the post-industrial cities of the american Rust Belt and becomes an active part int he urban transformation of the mixed-use environment.

The cities of the north and mid-west, between the mid-1800s and early twentieth century, represent the development of the United States from nation based on agriculture to economic and industrial power. Many cities became industrial icons, like Detroit and Pittsburgh. At the end of the 40s, America concentrated 68% of the manufacturing employment in the more industrial areas and more than 90% of the value generated. After the 1929 crisis there are two decader of production for the WWII but between the end of the 40s and the 80s the cities of the Mid-West have been transformed from a driving force to an urban problem. The many many causes, from mass sub-urbanization of the middle class, zoning and globalization.

One of the most representative cities of the effects of de-industrialization is Detroit, once the nerve center of mass automotive production and technological development. Since the 1950s, Detroit has seen a unique urban and social decline, in numbers, among the cities of the Mid-West, which has led to fighting, crime and abandonment. Throughout the urban area thousand of buildings, houses, schools, production facilities and skyscrapers have been abandoned in half a century. The population, mainly the upper middle class, moves to the suburbs leaves the city to the poorest citizen and to the second generation migrant that has been trapped in the middle of the decline. Detroit in the middle of the century has lost 64% of the population stabilizing itself in the last years to just under 700,000 inhabitants.

In recent decades a movement of DIY producers (Do It Yourself), also called Makers, is developing in American cities, which is imposing on urban manufacturing, creating new jobs and new opportunities for cities, especially for those that need "Low Skill" occupation. These new activities are revitalizing the entire "Rust Belt", through innovation, services, digital technologies and production. In Detroit this movement is active and present, there are already several spaces offered to "Makers", like Ponyride, Mt. Elliott Makerspace and TechShop.

The aim of the thesis is the design of a space to offer for the development of ideas and construction. The spaces are housed in the former post office of the city in the Corktown district next to the famous Michigan Central Station, designed in 1933 by Albert Kahn,

famous for being the Detroit Architect. The district of Corktown is the oldest in the city, and is experiencing a renaissance; in its spaces are starting various activities, from restaurant business to bicycle repair. The building was abandoned in 1987 after a fire, the recovery project sees the creation of a central space, from the basement to the roof, to allow light to reach all four floors. All the functions present open onto this space, heavy production, the maker school in the basement, the artisan spaces, the gallery in the first floor and the creative spaces of the two upper floors. From the basement there is a corridor that connects the building with the center of the urban park created on the tracks of the disused US-Canada railway. The 6,500 square meters of the roof were used to make the intervention economically viable, creating 15 patio houses, divided by the central void but connected by bridges. The frame job of all the houses gives each of them a private outdoor space, in addition to the common area exclusive to all the houses. The result is a vertical and social factory that is an integral part of the neighborhood.



View of the building from the urban park



View of the internal space



View of the creative spaces

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