



ARH 410 Studio 7: Tectonics and Structure
Spring 2019 | Karen Seong / Simon McKenzie (OS) / Eric Reeder (OL)

ACTIVATED IDENTITIES ACTIVATED SPACES

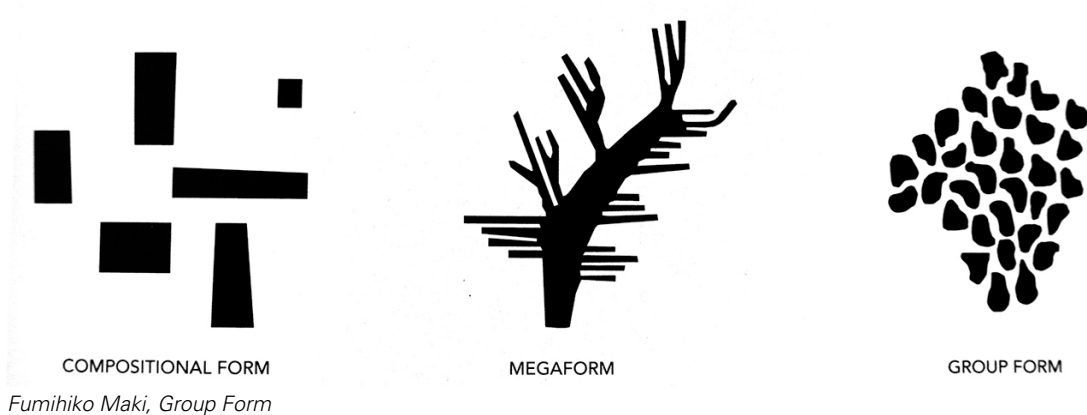
This semester, we will explore how the way we construct our identities can lead to new interpretations of urban experiences, unusual program relationships, and radically different ways to inhabit space.

Establishing a well-reasoned definition of identity will be our first task. We will use as a starting point the distinctions made among “labor, work, and action” in Hannah Arendt’s seminal text The Human Condition to think more deeply about identity.¹

Current debate on immigration and the refugee crises is based on an assumption that the identity is static and that the process of redefining one’s identity as an immigrant does not add value to the larger society. We counter this assumption and hypothesize that identity is fluid and that this process of transition is invaluable to the continual affirmation of the group identity.

We will also explore the architectural potential in expanding and inhabiting boundaries and buffer zones as a way to humanize urban banality. Fumihiko Maki’s “Group Form”² and Sou Fujimoto’s “Weak Architecture”³ will serve as precedents for aggregating human-scaled spatial volumes and for inverting interiority and exteriority.

“WEAK ARCHITECTURE” & “GROUP FORM”



Group Form is an approach to urban planning that Fumihiko Maki proposed in 1960 to accommodate the increased rate at which the urban environment was changing. It is based on an observation of historical development pattern of towns predating the automobile era that Maki proposed as a “new” spatial language. He cites as advantageous the adaptability and flexibility of Group Form organization in which changes can be made at the unit level while preserving the underlying organizational logic.

¹ Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press, 2nd Edition, 2013). First published in 1958.

² Maki, Fumihiko. *Investigations in Collective Form*, Washington University School of Architecture, St Louis, 1964

³ Fujimoto, Sou. *Primitive Future*, LIXIL Publishing, 2008



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Kayakoy, Turkey, Gregory Pappas



Japanese Linear Village



Sou Fujimoto defines Weak Architecture as being created “from the relationships between each of the parts” rather than from “an overall order.”⁴ The resulting “uncertainty or disorder” will be mined as a productive ground within which we will search for new ways of defining boundary conditions.⁵

Weak Architecture is a term that has been discussed for some time. Michael Hays concludes his chapter on this topic with the following words. “This is the strength of weakness; that strength which is art and architecture are capable of producing precisely when they adopt a posture that is not aggressive and dominating, but tangential and weak.”⁶

Our objective is to search for adaptable, flexible, soft formal languages that lead to new ways of humanizing spaces found in the edges, gaps, and in-between spaces. In contrast to the typical sequence of starting with the largest allowed volume on the given site and subdividing into smaller volumes, we will shift our attention to the smallest possible unit of space to be aggregated. We will be looking for opportunities to invert interior and exterior, blend mass and void, superimpose program activities, expand and flatten spatial depths. Through these spatial explorations, spaces for identity-defining activities will be given architectural expressions.



Sou Fujimoto, House Vision 2 Exhibition, 2016



Kazuyo Sejima, Okurayama Apt, Yokohama, 2008

⁴ Fujimoto, Sou. *Primitive Future*, LIXIL Publishing, 2008

⁵ Ibid.

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SITE



Google Map

The site is at the corner of Valencia St and Mc Coppin St just south of Market St in San Francisco. The current scale of the urban fabric at the site is quite problematic. The proximity to the US-101 and the changes in urban density proposed by the SF Planning Department makes this particular parcel out of date and therefore rich in potential. Our first task is a critical analysis of the scale and pattern of the urban fabric. We will be exploring ways to intervene in a fragmented urban context to arrive at an architectural proposal that addresses the issues of scale.

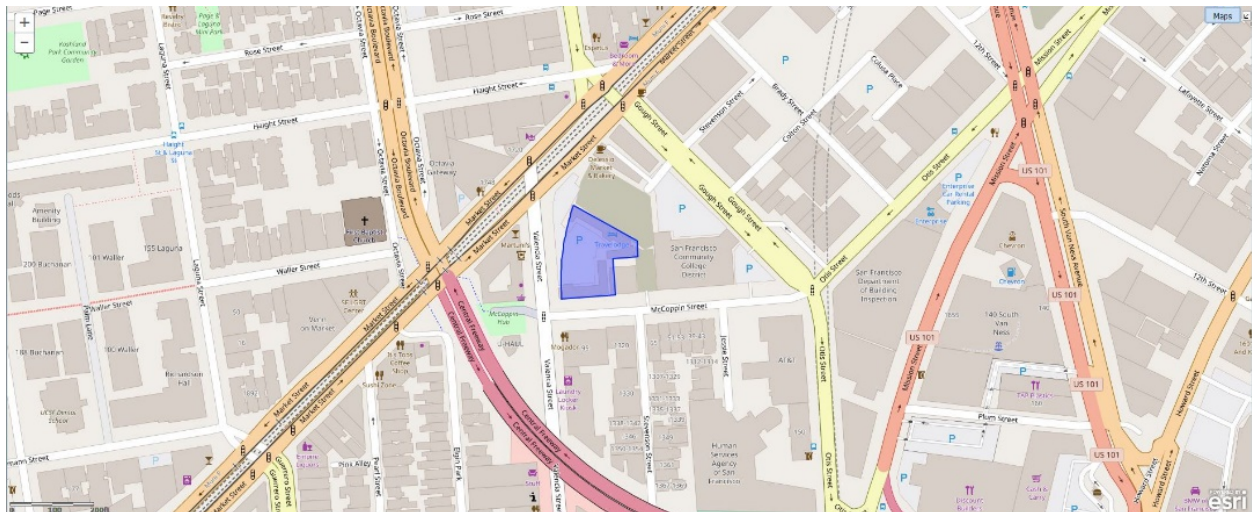


Market St and Valencia St, SF. Google Map.



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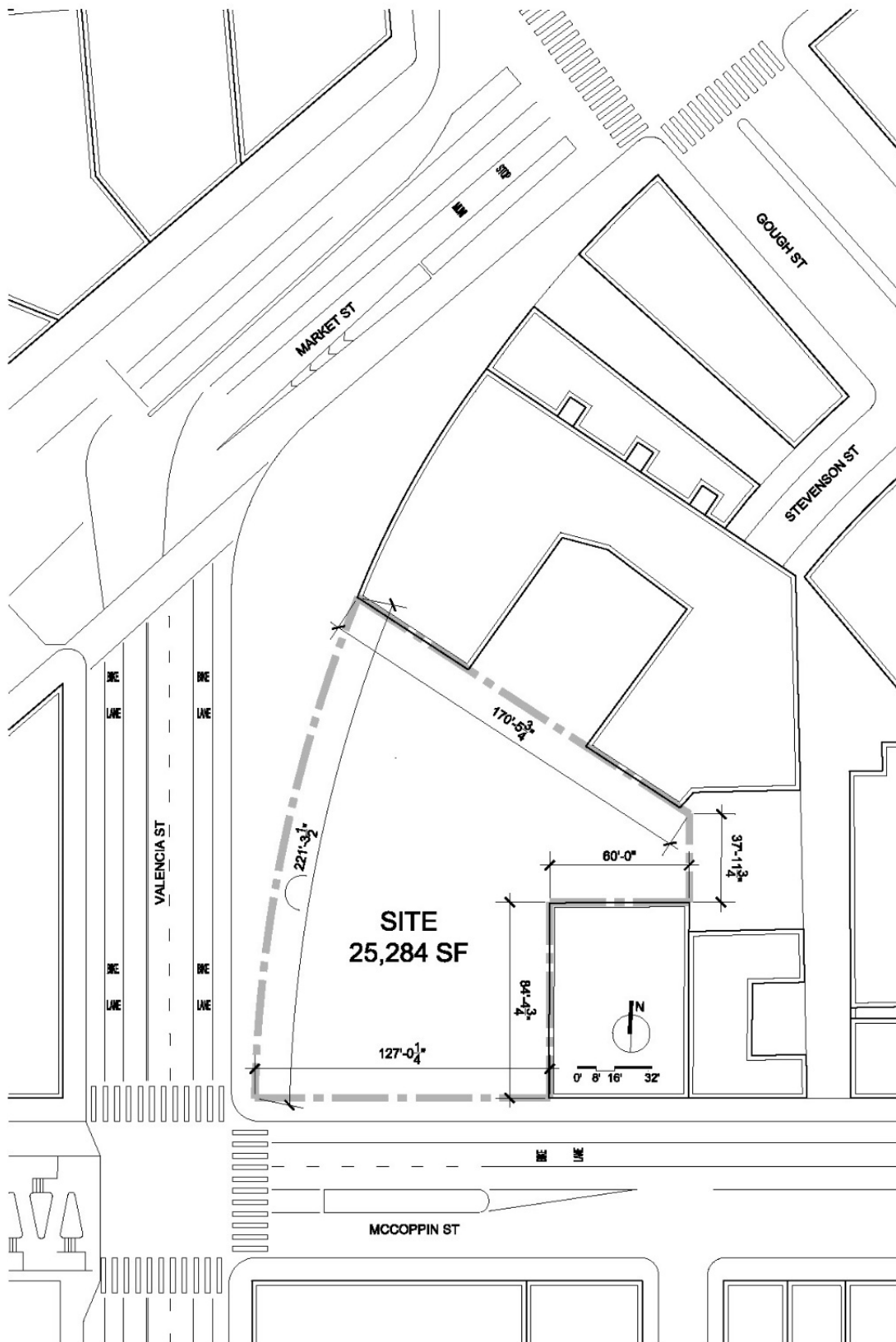
The site has the size in footprint and visibility in location to become an urban node. The prevalent method of organizing building volumes on a given site is to begin with a maximum allowed volume prescribed by the SF Planning Code and then to subdivide into smaller parts that correspond to program. We will challenge this approach and begin with a much smaller unit of space at a human scale to be aggregated to define a different kind of urban node. This reverse approach is intended to open up possibilities for alternative ways of defining urban edges at an atomized scale of urban fabric and spatial volumes.



SF Planning Department



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