Forward

"You have to begin to lose your memory, if only in bits and pieces, to realize that memory is what makes our lives." — Luis Bunuel

The last decade or witnessed a sharp interest in cities, technology and the environment. This interest was due to factors like high population growth which had new demands that cities had to meet. This rise of cities was of course only slowed down, perhaps momentarily, by the economic collapse of 2008, but as a result, architecture's responsibility towards the urban environment increased. With such awareness, questions inevitably arose.

How was architecture to plan for such population growth? What kind of cities would architecture make? Conversely, and perhaps less recognized was the question of how architecture should record, preserve, remember and document the old cities that it was displacing.

The latter question has far too often been ignored by architects and planners. In the planning of new cities, where do the inhabitants of the old cities live after new cities arise? What buildings should be removed and which ones should stay? Do the inhabitants of these old cities have a voice in the new city planning or do the planners know best?

Between the fall of 1958 and 1960, the West End of Boston was razed during urban renewal. This action displaced 12,000 immigrants from their homes and left behind little to no physical trace of what was the West End. In light of such events, architectural planning was seen as a destructive force capable of erasing, uprooting and displacing cultural collective memories.

But is there a mirror image to such events? Can architecture re-construct what it has erased? Is it possible to construct new histories for places without memories?

Immigrant Hostel

"The destructive character... has a few needs, and the least of them is to know what will replace what has been destroyed... the place where the thing stood or the victim lived" — Walter Benjamin

Inspired by Italo Calvino's imaginative story about Venice, 'Invisible Cities', the project is an attempt to tell an imaginative story of the old West End through architectural representation. The drawings are intended to depict not only the void and empty characteristic of new West End but also offer potential alternatives to how the current void could be filled with voices and memories from the old West End.
The name 'Immigrant Hostel'(rather than Immigrant Museum) was based on two facts;

I) The old West End was mostly an immigrant populace (Irish, Italian, Polish, Lithuanian etc.) and, 
Z) The temporal aspect of immigrants living far away from their homelands reflects that of a Hostel; a place that is never fully considered to be ‘Home’.

The metaphoric relationship between an immigrant in exile and a prison as a place of exile seemed fitting for the projects siting, which is on one of the few remaining artifacts from the old West End, the Charles Street Jail (now The Liberty Hotel).

Because so much physical built evidence of the old West End was erased, the drawings try to express this erasure by curving out parts from the old Charles Street Jail building until fragments are left as its remnants.

Within these fragments are the last stories of the old West End.

There are five fragments/buildings; The Irish Wing, Italian Wing, Mixed Wing, Memory Cube and an Observation Tower. The Wings exhibit stories of their respective names, the Memory Cube serves as a reminder of the void left after erasure while the Observation Tower signifies the resilience of the old West End.