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San Francisco streets represent 16% of the total land area of the city, a public space which is greatly valued by its citizens.

Many products are needed in the urban landscape to make public spaces useable, which is the basis for this project.

Public Wares are the products that shape the urban landscape, the products that belong to the city and its people.

This book will detail my thesis project proposal, how I plan on making it happen, and cover my previous experience and capabilities.

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**ware** [wair]

—noun
1. Usually, wares.
   a. articles of merchandise or manufacture; goods: a peddler selling his wares.
   b. any intangible items, as services or products of artistic or intellectual creativity, that are salable: an actor advertising his wares.
2. a specified kind or class of merchandise or of manufactured article (usually used in combination): silverware; glassware. (Public wares)
3. pottery, or a particular kind of pottery: delft ware.

The topic I propose to explore during my thesis is that of San Francisco’s public wares and how they integrate as a system into the urban landscape.

I intend to investigate how public spaces in San Francisco are used, how they could be improved to suit changing needs, and how they could become more legible and efficient.

I will also consider San Francisco’s image, and how a collection of public products could be created that embodies its core values.
The Paris Bench

Paris has its dark green benches, London has its red phone booths, even Dublin has matching trash bin... How about San Francisco?

Our fair city seems to be a sample board of public furniture under an intricate web of cables and sporadic collages of signage. Poles, nothing but poles and newsstands line the streets, forming clusters with trash cans at every intersection.

I imagine a city where the public wares are beautiful and beautifully efficient.
Problem Statement

“The city has become a jungle of posts and products. Weedlike these dense growths sprout from barren asphalt and concrete and flourish without systematic planting, cultivation, or pruning. The public right-of-way has become encumbered by the thicket of products from building line to center of the street. Community appearance lacks visual as well as functional order.” Harold Lewis Malt, design and engineering consultant specialized in street furniture

The involvement of a multitude of departments in the installation and maintenance of public wares has developed into the haphazard layering of wares in our public spaces.
San Francisco needs a cohesive system of street furniture that concentrates on the relation between the different wares, in order to create a more coherent and legible urban environment that San Franciscans can recognize and be proud of.

With the current redevelopment of SF streets, a systematic approach is crucial in guaranteeing the evident functionality of the new spaces, and coordinating the various city departments involved.
Who is involved?

**Government:**
- SF Public Works dept.
- Dept. of Parks and Recreation
- Park Scan SF
- SF Planning Dept.
- Public Utilities Commission
- Dept. of the Environment
- Mayor Newsom’s Livable City Initiative
- Mayor’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development
- Mayor’s Office of City Greening
- The Bicycle Advisory Committee
- Children, Youth and Families Dept.
- Emergency Management Dept.
- San Francisco Entertainment Commission
- Fire Dept.
- Golden Gate Concourse Committee
- Harbor Advisory Committee
- Local Homeless Coordinating Board
- Mayor’s Office on Disability
- Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Services
- Park, Recreation and Open Space Advisory Committee (PROSAC)
- Operation Park Committee
- Restroom Task Force
- Dog Advisory Committee
- Parking and Traffic Dept.
- Police Dept.
- Public Health Dept.
- Purchasing
- Redevelopment Agency
- SFMTA (Municipal Transportation Agency)
- Taxicab Commission
- Urban Forest Council

**People:**
- The Good People (and taxpayers) of San Francisco
- Visitors to the city (tourists, business, etc.)
- Vagrants

**Companies:**
- Street Furniture Manufacturers (JC Decaux, ...)
- Trash Pick-up companies

**Non Governmental Associations:**
- Plant*SF
- Rebar
- SPUR (San Francisco Planning+Urban Research Association)
- San Francisco Beautiful
- Volunteer Based Associations (e.g. Graffiti Watch, Community Clean Team...)
- Studio for Urban Projects
- SF Bicycle Coalition
I made a Matrix...

Currently, 58 projects are on the way of completion in San Francisco, with many more in planning.

These projects are being conducted by different government departments and community organizations around the city:

- Public Works Dept.
- SF Municipal Transportation Agency
- City Design Group
- Better Neighborhoods SF
- SF Redevelopment Agency
- Independent Community Projects

The main points of improvement concern urban renewal, circulation and community. (see following charts)

58 Projects
(See Appendix 1)
of all the current projects involve the installation of new furniture/wares.

67% of all the current projects will improve pedestrian life and circulation once completed.
Dept. Public Works Goals

1.D Improve aesthetic and other qualities of public space through innovation and collaborative projects, while ensuring public right of ways are designed to and maintained to be clean, safe and welcoming.

2.A Cultivate public pride through world class design, maintenance and project delivery services.

3.B Identify, engage, and partner with private and public organizations to further DPW’s mission.

3.D Deliver clear, coordinated and timely information within and across bureaux at all levels of the organization.

Community

Community is highly involved in projects concerning particular neighborhoods, and is often consulted in the form of workshops before a project.
Proposal.

Stakeholders

Survey (Results)
22 people interviewed in the public realm of San Francisco (See Appendix 2)

Main Concerns

<table>
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<th>Value</th>
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</table>

Value

Looks like everybody cares about public space!
Proposal. How needs are Currently being Addressed

Current Situation

Public spaces are greatly valued by San Franciscans (95.5% of people asked value SF public spaces more than average).

When asked to define San Francisco culture, respondents referred in majority to its diversity and 'weirdness'. This trait is visible and valued in the inhabitants of SF and its architecture. It is visible but not valued in its public wares.

Currently, public wares are put in place by the individual city departments that they pertain to (PW, SFMTA, etc.). This leads to the congestion of street wares on the thoroughfare.
Life Without Cars... (?!?)

The zeitgeist with regards to the future of San Francisco urban planning leans toward the abolition of cars as a mode of transportation within the city.

In the coming years, Mayor Gavin Newsom envisions Market street without personal vehicles or Muni.

Livable City advocates a car-free muni-reliant San Francisco, in a 40 year plan to change the city bad habits. The tightening of lanes to accommodate only public transit affords the widening of sidewalks and the creation of new public spaces for pedestrians.

Dept. Public Works Goals

1.D Improve aesthetic and other qualities of public space through innovation and collaborative projects, while ensuring public right of ways are designed to and maintained to be clean, safe and welcoming.

2.A Cultivate public pride through world class design, maintenance and project delivery services.

3.B Identify, engage, and partner with private and public organizations to further DPW’s mission."

3.D Deliver clear, coordinated and timely information within and across bureaux at all levels of the organization.
Target market

The target market for such a project could be the city directly. However, giving the current budgetary constraints in California, the target market is probably more likely to be an advertising company, licensed by the city to put in and maintain the public furniture.

The city of San Francisco has already started a sponsorship program with Clear Channel for the installment and maintenance of 1,200 new solar bus shelters.

JCDecaux is another street furniture manufacturer the product of which is found on San Francisco sidewalks. This company uses the services of outside designers to create their new lines, and could therefore be a target for a San Francisco public wares line.

Of course, these companies do not manufacture all the wares included in this project; further research will have to be carried out to find out whether or not it would be possible for one source to produce the whole system of wares, or whether a series of guidelines would need to be implemented by a series of different sources.
The City spends millions of dollars every year purchasing, installing, and maintaining public wares.

San Francisco’s Redevelopment Agency dedicates 30% of their budget to public infrastructure which represents $69 million, while the Department of Public Works reserves 45% of theirs towards public wares.
Target Users

As public spaces are used by every city dweller on a daily basis, it is difficult to define a precise series of target users. The following is a cross-section of user personas which start to reflect the wide variety of public space users.
The Tourist
Name: Anne
Age: 35

Anne is in San Francisco on holiday with her husband Jake for the week, and plans on doing lots of shopping and sightseeing.

The couple are staying in a moderately priced hotel downtown and are getting around using public transport (MUNI, BART) during the day and taking taxis at night.

Although she lets Jake hold the map, Anne is the real navigator. She relies on clear street signs and tourist maps to get around the city without getting lost.

This can be challenging, as it is easy for Anne to wander off into the San Francisco shopping streets without tracking her itinerary. And although she would never admit it to Jake, she sometimes leads them both into astray. (If only she had an Iphone!)

The Retiree
Name: Bob
Age: 72

Bob has a lot more time on his hands since he retired from his job in the financial district.

Being a very social person, he has difficulty dealing with the lack of professional interaction. He compensates now by being a very active member of his community and spending a lot of time in the local square chatting and playing chess with his friends.

Bob also enjoys keeping fit by walking along the promenade at the Embarcadero on warm Californian afternoons with his wife Helen.

The state of public spaces in San Francisco is very important to Bob. Lack of maintenance and Vandalism in the public spaces he worked hard to help create sadden him. He is a firm believer in the anti-graffiti campaign, and mumbles a swear word to himself every time he comes across evidence of vandalism.

The Skateboarder
Name: Ollie
Age: 16

Ollie is a hardcore skater. He skates to school, to the Rec center, to his part-time job at Jamba Juice.

Ollie defines himself by his love of skating. He wears Vans skate shoes, Volcom jeans and Element T-shirts, makes shelves out of his old boards for his room and uses expressions like “dude” and “rad”.

On weekends, Ollie and his crew of skater friends invade the downtown area around the Ferry building and practice kickflips on smooth paved expanses. Handrails would afford perfect ramps for boardslides, if the city hadn’t put in little metallic pieces to prevent a smooth slide...
The Business Women

Name: Elise
Age: 29

Elise is a very active and career driven young woman. She starts every day with a tall cup of black coffee with two packs of sweetener and a toasted whole wheat bagel.

Always professional, she keeps a spare suit, a toothbrush and a tube of concealer in a drawer of her desk for the morning after those long nights at the office finishing up a big presentation.

With such a busy schedule, Elise is an adept of the power girls’ lunch with her friends at a park nearby the office. She and her friends each bring their own packed lunch and spend their allotted 45 minutes catching up before running to that afternoon’s meeting. Elise is very wary of where she sits in the park however, as the benches are often dirty, and she doesn’t want to stain her suit.

The Young Mother

Name: Jenny
Age: 33

Jenny is the mother of six month old Noah, and has quit her job to take the best care possible of the little tike.

Noah rides to the park every day in the best stroller money can buy, and plays with a moist pretzel stick while his mother trades baby tips and tricks with the nice lady attached to the next stroller.

Jenny feels guilty that the apartment she and her family live in only affords a small patch of grass for Noah to grow up in, and hopes that going regularly to local parks will allow Noah to have the same happy and active childhood she had growing up in the countryside, until she and her husband have the money for a house in the suburbs. However, it is difficult to take the baby to certain parks, as there are often no changing facilities provided, and she feels uncomfortable breast feeding in public with so many ‘creepers’ around.

The Homeless Person

Name: Slim Jim
Age: 45

Slim Jim has been living in the street since 2004, when he lost his job and was kicked out by his wife. Over the last five years, he has learned to survive by collecting recyclables and begging in just the right spots.

Jim mostly stays out of trouble by moving around the city a lot during the day, although he keeps to a specific territory for scavenging. He keeps all his worldly possessions in a shopping cart, which he wheels around everywhere.

He is very embarrassed by his homelessness and has been out of contact with his family for the past four years.

His biggest day-to-day challenges are keeping clean, and interacting with the general population.
Proposal
Product Opportunities

Public Furnitures

- Seating
- Lighting
- Signage
- Waste Disposal
- Shelter (e.g. bus shelters, farmer’s market light structures, etc...)
- Restrooms
- Planters
- Water Elements
- Parking Furniture
- Tourist maps and information
- Safety elements (e.g. non-skid, skateboard-proof, etc...)
- Monuments/Decorative elements
- Play Structures
- Communication (e.g. phone booths, emergency stations, etc...)
- News Stands, Kiosks
- Advertising structures
Proposal

Key Considerations

Main Design Considerations

- Safety
- Identity
- Community
- Maintenance
- Cost
- Accessibility (ADA Compliance)
- Weather Resistance/Durability
- Public Behaviors/Misuse
- Hygiene
- Multi-Use of Space (Special Events)
If a cohesive system of public wares could be put into place linking all the city departments with stakes in the urban space and creating a distinct identity for San Francisco, then the urban landscape would become more legible and consistent throughout the city, making it easier to understand and navigate.

This would create innumerable benefits for the inhabitants, businesses and visitors of San Francisco, by encouraging people to travel more around the city and linger in public spaces and revitalizing less visited areas.
In the Meantime...

Before I start the research phase next semester (spring 2010), I intend on making the most of my winter break by getting a head start and taking a trip across the United States in order to get a broader idea of what American cities are like, and what is successful and what isn’t in terms of public spaces.

In order for this journey through the US to be as efficient as possible, I intend on spending the rest of the semester after midpoint researching an itinerary through the most interesting places.

Other Planned Activities

During the entirety of the project, I also intend to spend time in public spaces on a weekly basis in a purposeful manner, during which I will do sketching exercises.

This will hopefully keep me linked to the reality of my project and help me observe my surroundings in a different way.

All of this work and more will be compiled in a blog format, which will hopefully help construct a base of respondents to which I will be able to submit the question that arise in my research.
In an effort to establish contacts with the experts in my field, I have become a member of SPUR (San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal), and of San Francisco Livable Cities.

I have also attended talks at the Studio for Urban Projects (Planting the City: Supplanting the Pavement), and SPUR (Great Designs, City Challenges of the 21st Century, Bike like the Danes, Planning for the SF Bay, Greening Pairs).

My direct contacts include Cecily Renteria (recreation specialist), Taylor Smith (executive administrator at Richard Fischer Associates), Kritsti Caraveo (Deputy Director of Community and Personnel Services), John Bela (Rebar), and Shih-Wei Lu (Dept. of Public Works).

I intend to stalk people more vehemently in the coming semesters. I am also trying to integrate Livable Cities SF as an intern, in order to get information from the inside.
Noshi
Digital Scale and Measuring Cup

Completed for the DWR group project (with Fanyi Meng and Li Tung Tai) in the project 1 class, the Noshi digital scale and measuring cup is an effort to create a baking utensil for the contemporary kitchen.

The design is inspired by Japanese paper folding techniques (noshi and origami) to create a sculptural piece on a kitchen shelf or counter, as well as support a tilted digital display and slanted graduation plane which are easily and accurately readable from above. A wide spout makes Noshi useable for solid as well as liquid ingredients, while a stable base allows it to sit on the counter for reading and provides a tapeable surface to level out ingredients.
La Cocina
Partnership with Architecture

La Cocina is a Latin themed DIY style restaurant designed by Claire Toussaint and Felipe Lopez to replace the Zipcar lot on 20th and Valencia, San Francisco.

The main building, set back on the site, draws people through an atrium into a large cooking area, set slightly below ground, with massive windows, providing beautiful views of the restaurant’s herb and vegetable gardens on one side, as well as a wall covered in the Chilean’s national red bell flower on the other side.

In line with the restaurant’s spirit of sustainability, a series of modular dining tables were designed to be made of reclaimed woods in varying sizes and types, creating a striped effect reminiscent of the Mexican blanket better known as the Serape.

The Serape tables connect to each other through a diamond shape at the end of each table, which creates a registration point. The tables can be lined up to build a long banquet table, or separated for a more intimate experience.
Gusto is the result of the thesis project completed during my last year at Dublin Institute of Technology, the aim of which was to create a cooking station that reflected contemporary behaviors in food preparation by promoting social gathering and experimentation.

Gusto situates itself between kitchen and dining room, as a platform for multiple users to cook and eat simultaneously in a spirit of experimentation.

The large induction powered cooktop offers the possibility to safely achieve multiple tasks in close proximity due to its capacity to turn steel pots into heating elements while leaving the other utensils cool.

A studied play on ergonomics offers accessibility to wheelchair users (tested by Enable Ireland) as well as valid people. The set of accessories are tailored to the ergonomics of each particular task by varying in thickness.
Wall Skin
Material Exploration

Wall Skin explores the materiality of wall coverings as mural epidermis.

It is made by painting latex onto traditionally styled relief wallpaper, creating an imprint of the design. Certain pigments in the wallpaper also leach into the latex which takes on the appearance of burnt skin.

This project is the culmination of a year long reflection on façade and the materiality of surface decoration and 2D art.
Conclusion.

There are many products and experiences linked with public spaces, which creates a wide space for design.

San Francisco is an ideal city to implement a new systems approach in, as it is in the process of renewing its street and striving for a better pedestrian experience.

Thank you for reading!
Furnishing the Street by HL Malt, 1970 Mc Graw-Hill, Inc., USA

DPW Strategic Plan 2009-2012 (sfgov.org)

Street Furniture to Generate $1.4b revenue for city (the Free Library, at thefreelibrary.com)

The Path to a Livable City, Transportation for a livable city (livablecity.org)

Newsom dreams of a Muni Free Market Street (NBC Bay Area, nbcbayarea.com)

Catch the Wave by Jennifer Krichels, The Architects Newspaper (archpaper.com)

CSSF Coordinated Street Furniture: Identity and Amenity NYC DOT (nyc.gov)

Plant SF Permeable Landscape as Neighborhood Treasure in San Francisco (plantsf.org)

San Francisco Great Streets Project (sfgreatstreets.org)

SF Dept. of Public Works (sfgov.org/site/sfdpw)

SF Municipal Transport Agency (sfmuni.com)

San Francisco Planning + Urban Research Association (spur.org)

Supplanting the Pavement Studio for Urban Projects (studioforurbanprojects.org)

SF Redevelopment Agency (sfredevelopment.org)

Pavement to Parks City Design Group, SF Planning Dept. (sfgov.org/site/uploadfiles/planning/Citywide)

REBAR Art Design Activism (rebargroup.org)
Appendices.