TEMPEL IN A HOUSE

According to Cramer and Breitling in their book "Architecture and Existing Fabric", conversions and upgrades account for 50-70 percent of all construction works. It is in this context of crisis between the physical and costly constraints of architecture and the dynamic nature of content cycles that this unbuilt adaptive project: TEMPEL IN A HOUSE was born.

“Temple in a House” is a modest research design proposal to convert a house into a Buddhist temple in Buffalo, NY. Buffalo is a postindustrial city confronting a proliferating amount of obsolete buildings. In 2011, 15 families of the Burmese refugee community on Buffalo’s West side collectively purchased a vacant house to convert it to a Buddhist temple and residence for three monks.

This project was triggered by the International Institute in Buffalo which is a nonprofit organization. They introduced us to the Burmese community in Buffalo’s West Side. We participated in a number of discussions with the community regarding the scope of work for the conversion. Moved by the Burmese hospitality and the unusual enterprise, we designed an installation inspired by Burmese traditional weaving techniques, consisting of a red hovering topography that attenuates the radical, spatial and atmospheric gap between a Buddhist temple and a standard living room.

This interior design intervention enables the building to perform as a time-specific communication and a socialization device for the Burmese community in Buffalo, NY. The overlap of the existing domestic environment and the envisioned temple result in a very rich and unique spatial palimpsest of cultures and temporalities.
Temple in a House, Buffalo, NY.
Ceiling plan of proposed new temple space to be located at the first floor living room area.
Traditional weaving technique

Proposed motive

Combination of wooden combs and strings

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