

Though the term “concept” is profusely used in architecture, architectural concepts are very hard to come by. Different from a strategy, a composition, a *parti*, or a collage, a concept is distinct by virtue of its specificities while its degree of abstraction makes a design outcome, on some fundamental level, generalizable. In setting certain projects apart from what would otherwise be merely the product of compositional strategies, the effect of a concept is twofold. First, it facilitates the access of design work to the plane of discourse, since, even when graphically represented—typically through a diagram—a concept is still primarily an intellectual construct. Once on that plane, the project in question is capable of being discussed and further developed through a host of appropriate discursive figures: premises, judgments, inferences, ideas, conclusions, etc., as channeled through thought and expressed through language. Second, concepts in architecture tend to catalyze the kind of singularity that paves the way for making significant contributions to the domain of architectural thinking. This singularity sets apart the make-up of a project and is usually the result of a series of patterns, underlying rules, or design gestures that are clearly codifiable. This Core I section will undertake a conceptual approach to architectural thinking on the grounds that such an approach, as understood here, will be especially effective for finding alternatives to the public-versus-private dichotomy prevalent in our Broadway study area. Taking the block as an essential urban unit, opportunities will be sought to destabilize the dominant sharp contrast between the publicness of streets and avenues and the privacy of anything happening within the block. In addition to concepts, this section will emphasize materiality as a realm of design central to an architect’s sensibility.