

[00:01:20.030] - Speaker 1

Maybe I should put it in context, my fascination with it. I'm 49, child of the 80s for the most part. My father owned a beer distributor at Monroeville Mall. In it.

[00:01:41.670] - Speaker 1

This all makes sense, I promise. And from fourth grade on, I would get the school bus to my father's mall. I would go do my homework, work at the store. Then I was given a couple of bucks to which I had a routine of going and buying comic books at the Nudistan and going to the mall arcade and playing video games, buying a diet soda pop on the way back down before he closed for the night and we went home. So I was raised in a mall and had very specific routines about what I did in a mall.

[00:02:17.310] - Speaker 1

So my standard was Monroeville, which was fine, but it was an absolute delight and like a dream to go to Century Three. And we would go, like, prior to Christmas, starting in the fall, we would go once a month, like on a Friday or Saturday night when I like fifth to 9th grade. Those four years or middle school years were kind of like the sweet spot. And we would go because it was rather celebratory to go to Century Three because my sister and I loved it. It's like what we look forward to all week because it has to do with the architecture of the space. Being inside that space was so different than any other space that we are ever in and it felt special.

[00:03:07.860] - Speaker 1

And it's a weird thing, having that kind of space which is more like an amusement park or a stadium mixed with consumerism, which was a very heavy blend.

[00:03:19.630] - Speaker 1

But we loved going, and it was going before Christmas, so there's this anticipation of tips and purchasing and all that shit that happens. But when we go, we had very specific things that we did. Me and my sister still joke about it. We equate walking into Century Three into the bigger courtyard area where you can see all the different levels. We equate to going through the Fort Pitt tunnels and seeing the city of Pittsburgh.

[00:03:52.210] - Speaker 1

It's like a similar experience. And I was meeting with Miami Vice. And I loved fashion. And so my mother would take me to clothing stores. I don't know the names of them, but I know it was just complete 80s grid.

[00:04:13.050] - Speaker 1

Chrome racks covering the walls, bright lights, and then everything was modular so they could hang things anywhere they wanted and just like just think Miami Vice pastels. And I remember getting a shirt once of a man's face that said x ray specs on it and they had the x ray specs on I to death, but we would do that. Then we'd go to like a little educational science store and my sister and I would always get balsa wood models of dinosaurs that we would build later.

[00:04:46.210] - Speaker 1

Yeah, obligatory. My sister would get an Orange Julius. I'm a diabetic, so I could not that's like the diet soda. I would get a diet soda. And then we hit the arcade very briefly.

[00:04:57.890] - Speaker 1

And I don't remember what else would happen, but I know before we left there was a popcorn, small popcorn kiosk that had probably like 20 flavors of popcorn, which nowadays that's probably rather pedestrian, but then was absolutely insane brightly colored. And we would get my sister would get, like, the rainbow, the mix of all of them, and I would get strawberry every time, and we get a big bag of that. And then we could literally get in the car on the way home and eat our popcorn and reminisce about the experience we just had for 2 hours at the mall.

[00:05:36.110] - Speaker 1

Yeah, so that's like the epitome of what Century Three is that and I probably have there's like three or four locations that I revisit with dreams that they take place over and over. A hybrid mosh of like, Century Three with a fantastical thing that doesn't exist is one of my places that I returned to every now and then for a dream sequence.

[00:06:14.530] - Speaker 1

And it's funny because I teach art and film theory for high schoolers, and I don't even think I told them about Century Three. And two of my students I really like, came up to me and like, hey, we broke into Century Three. This is like, three months ago. We broke into Century Three mall last weekend. And I'm like, oh.

[00:06:33.480] - Speaker 1

And they're like, oh, there are these skaters skating all through there. We hung out with them for a little bit and then we went into JCPenney, because I guess that's how they broken through JCPenney. And we emptied fire extinguishers everywhere. We found fire extinguishers and we just emptied them everywhere. And I was like, oh, okay, just don't get caught.

[00:06:54.090] - Speaker 1

Like, oh, they boarded it up, we can't get in the same place. They realized how we got I was like, oh, okay. But then telling me that it was, like, funny but sad because I remember the glory of what it once was. A little jealous that they get to kind of have their experience with it also in a completely different way than I did. So it's still giving that place.

[00:07:48.630] - Speaker 1

Yeah, it was not a gradual thing for me. When I graduated high school, I was like, I'm out. I'm never going back to this fucking town.

[00:08:01.290] - Speaker 1

So I've lived a lot of different places, but I'm back now, and I always end up coming back. But I probably so early 90s was the last time I was there with any regularity, let's say like 90, 91. And then I did not return. I went to school, came home as little as possible. I didn't move back until the late ninety s, I think.

[00:08:27.440] - Speaker 1

Ninety nine s. And then my father became ill in late 2000, and I was the only family member here, so I was taking care of him. It was a very difficult time. And at one point I'm like, I need to go for a drive. And I just went for a drive to clear my head and I ended up at Century Three, like near century Three, and I'm like, oh shit, I'm going to Century three mall.

[00:08:57.310] - Speaker 1

I need a little of that nostalgia magic. And then when I pulled up, it was very sudden, the hard time, it I was like, oh, okay, you can go in and it's what, 10% capacity or something? Like, there's nothing there.

[00:09:22.010] - Speaker 1

I'm having a lot of trips on memory lane during that time anyway, so I still walk around inside and like, the uniqueness of the space and the memory still flooded me, but it was also kind of sad. That what it had become. And I'm like, okay, so this is all things kind of in a way, like all things from my childhood are now being destroyed. And I'm finding it was like our childhood home. My father no longer lived there.

[00:09:51.340] - Speaker 1

Someone had completely changed it.

[00:09:57.550] - Speaker 1

All these things are happening. This tree was really important. My parents got married under at Frick Park. My dad got sick of another place I went because we used to go have picnics there and that tree had died. It was gone.

[00:10:08.840] - Speaker 1

What the fuck? How is this happening? Century Three was part of that. Like, seeing it in a state of decrepitude was just very sun, so I didn't get to see a gradual shift. It was just like, you know, it was there and all the glory and then it just was a shell of itself.

[00:10:22.540] - Speaker 1

The next time that I went to go to be comforted and saw that.

[00:10:36.590] - Speaker 1

Yeah, a good like ten or eleven years from when I was late 80s when I go regularly with my family, and then I'm sure I'd still gone once or twice, like in 89, 91, that was late high school and I was more concerned with other things. There was a big period of time, at least where I just never went. And then that was what it was like when I went back.

[00:11:45.950] - Speaker 1

I'm kind of indifferent. The idea of it turning into an Amazon, the idea of anything turning into an Amazon facility doesn't exactly get me excited.

[00:11:57.050] - Speaker 1

But yeah, it's like even bigger than mall. It's like all these malls because even like the Pittsburgh Mills, I go to movies there every now and then in the whole mall just done. Like the idea of mall these culture artifacts was fascinating. I mean, growing up in what is fascinating to me, but they're big waste of space and my humanist nature would love to see them turned into like some kind of utopian living society or use greater good somehow. Actually, the Pittsburgh Mills two weeks ago, there was a hard to recycle day and they used the mall for that and I was like, fantastic.

[00:12:39.020] - Speaker 1

This is what it should be used for every day, not just this random weekend.

[00:12:48.570] - Speaker 1

The malls have had their times. They were once giant and they're done.

[00:12:54.930] - Speaker 1

If they can be repurposed for something great, that's awesome. But my expectations are somewhat less than that.

[00:13:16.450] - Speaker 1

Yeah, it's great. I mean, the space is there. Like instead of building up, let's repurpose things and change them. It's like the bones of the mall that the bones of the mall help be beneficial to society if possible.

[00:13:45.770] - Speaker 1

No, the closest I'd get is just my students telling me about being there at night with flashlights and people skating and all that, but no urban legends.

[00:14:00.930] - Speaker 1

There was an extra added cache to the mall because my father was like, oh yeah, an ex Eagle player is one of the owners. Like these athletes. I don't know if that's true or not, but that's the only thing that gave it a little extra. Oh wow, that's cool. When I was Eagles fans or anything, but there was just like a status to that for some reason that made it more interesting.

[00:14:45.470] - Speaker 1

I mentioned that x ray specs t shirt that was like huge for me when we found that.

[00:14:54.570] - Speaker 1

That's like the one member I remember waiting in line with my mom to buy this shirt. Literally, I was just like, I'm putting it on now. And I took it off in the store and put it on and she was like, oh, okay. And I wore that out. And then from there it was like we had to find x ray specs glasses that I could wear with it and that was like and then I don't even know if it was that mall or another mall.

[00:15:20.430] - Speaker 1

I bought like this blue sparkly overcoat to wear with it and that was like my Halloween costume for like two years or just whatever.

[00:15:29.670] - Speaker 1

That memory, like the two strongest memories. Honestly, it's like buying that shirt. I remember everything about it and then that time when I be comforted like twelve years later. And then just like it being a ghost town and just walking around in there, just like really feeling like you're walking inside like whale bones or

some old creature that's just a memory of itself. Those two are the most they stick out more than anything.

[00:15:55.440] - Speaker 1

When I think of century three ball, the arcade wasn't as big as I would have thought it was for the majesty of the mall. Mind you, all arcades start to blend together in my head because I remember you. How old are you?

[00:16:36.710] - Speaker 1

Okay, so the first arcade, like even before the mall, there was just like, what are now gas stations. It was like a gas station size building that just had games even before I took and that was awesome. And then they appeared in the malls and that was even better. But I always remember century three arcade. I am feeling subpart in the Novo Mall.

[00:16:59.570] - Speaker 1

It may have been familiarity, but I do know that there was a game, I don't know the name century Three. It was a shooter game where you were a sniper, but it was like a sniper in like who knows if this is accurate. This is my memory telling me it was a sniper game, like gangster era Chicago, like 30 gangsters that you were at. And it was a cool game, and it was the only one that was in Century Three that was not at Monroe Mall. So I always played it when I went to Century Three.

[00:17:36.940] - Speaker 1

And again, one of my favorite games at the time that I know I played it both, and I know Century Three had this battle zone where it's like you're looking through a periscope of a tank, and it's like it's very tron like looking, right? So it's just like a big black field, everything's white lines, and you are a tank, and you're shooting chunky missiles at other tanks that are in this scape, this horizon that you see in front of you. So real basic graphics, but you're moving the scope and you have one of your hands is holding like a plastic grip that accelerates, and the other one has the button for firing your weapon. And it wasn't like a lot of games. You're just pressing the button as fast as you can.

[00:18:22.700] - Speaker 1

It's a little more realistic that you press the button. It was a chunk load fire. Pause. You couldn't shoot again.

[00:18:31.970] - Speaker 1

This is a trip. You couldn't shoot again for a couple of seconds. So you had to be very considerate than another game on how you interacted, which is what made Battles On really fun. Cool. But I definitely know that I played that as Century Three.

[00:19:00.990] - Speaker 1

No, it's the stairs and the levels. Like, when you're in a building or a mall, station Square has it a little bit, where the elevators are, where the businesses are, where you can see beyond most malls, you can see two levels. Right? There's a space in the middle. You can see two levels.

[00:19:18.870] - Speaker 1

But there are parts of Century Three where you can see three levels all in one space. And then Navigating, the glass elevator had the first glass elevator. I remember that. But the level and it wasn't like simple, like, oh, just take an escalator or a stair to this level. They were more circuitous paths.

[00:19:42.990] - Speaker 1

It was like upstairs, and then the ramp turns to the side, then up a few more stairs. So you're navigating space in a more unusual manner, but that also gives you visuals and lines of sight to take in much more than you would see anywhere else. So it was how you navigated up and down from the level that was unique. And honestly, it felt like, god, the old River River Stadium had these concrete I'm not sure what the words are they are concrete ramps on the outside and they would have turned you had to take to get up to the levels. And it felt very much like that, but on a smaller scale, but interior, not on the exterior of something.

[00:20:29.350] - Speaker 1

On the interior of something, which is again not common. But yeah, it was the way that you navigated to the levels and being able to see more than two at one time, that stands out. Like with the architecture. I don't even remember Cobblestone. I remember the glass elevator.

[00:20:49.510] - Speaker 1

Yeah, that's it.

[00:21:09.090] - Speaker 1

I would have been too old for that at that point. Yeah, I mean, I'm sure it was decked out for Christmas. I don't remember. I just remember that was just the time that we went because there was more offers at Century Three mall than at our mall. So for like Christmas gifts, that's where we could go and see something I remember more as a vibe.

[00:21:37.330] - Speaker 1

And that's when we would go. Because as anticipation builds for Christmas, like, that was centrally was just like built into the fabric of that, of the holiday of anticipation. But I don't remember the specific decorations on a selfish note. Just that I really do think the strawberry popcorn was the way to go. More so than any other who says different is just wrong.

[00:22:18.930] - Speaker 1

But again, I guess I've seen there's popcorn now. There's like colors and it just wasn't like colored popcorn. It was more like Caramel Corn. It was like covered in like a shell of red, even more three dimensional, like this coating. And there's red slop.

[00:22:42.030] - Speaker 1

Not just like a red colored kernel.

[00:22:46.930] - Speaker 1

Probably looking back on it, probably should not have been eating. It doesn't even seem like a food type substance and food. But yeah, that was the strawberry is definitely the way to go.

[00:23:02.930] - Speaker 1

When I read, I didn't remember where I saw the premise for this, but I'm like, everything is going into this. And I probably understand 40% of it, but I love reading all this. And anyway, if there's any receptacle for the thought that part of my brain that is saved from malls, I would love to have the opportunity to just view it to someone and have it make it into something for posterity. That'd be fantastic.

[00:23:35.610] - Speaker 1

You're welcome. You're welcome. Good luck. I think it's a great idea. I'd love to see what comes of it.