DESIGN-POLITICS: HOW BUILDINGS MEAN

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19th century Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz famously stated that "War is the continuation of politics by other means."[1] The same might be said about the architecture of public buildings. But if public architecture is also an extension of politics by other means, what—more precisely—are those means?

Philosopher Nelson Goodman is among the few to pose this question directly. In his essay "How Buildings Mean,"[2] Goodman rightly points out that we must consider the prior question of how a particular work of architecture conveys meaning before we are able to address the issue of what the building may mean. Goodman, writing in the late 1980s while based at Harvard during the latter part of his career, thereby inserted himself in a debate starting to percolate in the more rarified precincts of architectural education—such as the Harvard Graduate School of Design—about the extent that architecture constituted an autonomous practice. In his essay, Goodman aims to identify the categories of meaning that the built environment may convey as well as to elucidate the mechanisms by which these meanings are transmitted. This sort of analysis is crucial for understanding the boundary between properties that are intrinsic to works of architecture and those properties ascribed to architecture that are central to its reception in a politically-driven world.

In this paper, I consider both the strengths of Goodman's formulation and its limitations–as viewed three decades later in an era when digital media have dramatically reoriented the ways that architecture is both presented and represented. The enhanced attention to the role of media makes it increasingly difficult to sustain much practical sense of architecture as an autonomous or even quasi-autonomous practice. Rather—in an era of programmable facades, highly-charged urban contexts, and countervailing artistic interventions and augmentations—it seems increasingly impossible to isolate Goodman's ideas about "denotation," "exemplification," "metaphorical expression," and "mediated reference" from a building's political reception. The result, I argue, is a kind of conjoined design-politics. In what follows, I explore the power of that design-politics hyphen through a set of examples that range from the Lincoln Memorial[3] to Donald Trump's hotels.

GOODMAN'S IDEAS ABOUT ARCHITECTURAL MEANING: AN EXAMPLE

Denotation

The Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. (Figure 1) provides an especially good example of Goodman's first type of meaning—denotation—because it is, literally, full of texts. In this sense, its meanings are intended to be read directly, at least for those who can read English and Roman numerals. The entablature and upper setback of the building contain carved names of the forty-eight contiguous states that comprised the United States at the time construction of the Memorial finished in 1922. (Awkwardly, but understandably, a separate plaque in front of the structure discontiguously adds Alaska and Hawai'i, which were added as states only in 1959.) Continuing the denotative content, the building façades feature a total of thirty-six columns—one pillar for each of the states in the union in 1865 at the close of the Civil War. Through the deployment of these columns, the states of the union that Lincoln saved directly structure the proportions of the building—twelve on the long sides, eight on the short sides (That adds up to forty but the corner columns are seen from two sides, so that is why it totals thirty-six.)

The denotation continues on the inner walls of the building, with parts of two Lincoln speeches literally carved into stone. Importantly, the two speeches chosen—the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural Address—are both centered on the role of Lincoln as preserver of the union of states. By contrast, architect Henry Bacon (and, presumably, his clients) chose not to highlight other famous texts that may well have carried far greater political or policy significance, such as the Emancipation

FIGURE 1:
LINCOLN MEMORIAL

Proclamation. The Civil War may well have been fought over the future of a southern slave economy, but the Lincoln Memorial—at least in its denotative sense—was centered on reminders of union, not on freeing slaves.

Metaphorical Expression

The Lincoln Memorial also nicely conveys Goodman's second type of meaning—the notion of metaphorical expression. The building is not just a rectangular object with columns, but a metaphorical temple, with Lincoln as a seated deity. Here, a public building conveys meaning because of widely shared cultural notions (at least in Western culture) about Greco-Roman practices of deification and worship. And just in case the metaphor might be lost on some visitors, architect Bacon and his team also made use of Goodman's first type of meaning—denotation—by carving a more literal reminder just above Lincoln's head: "In this temple, as in the hearts of the people for whom he saved the union, the memory of Abraham Lincoln is enshrined forever." We are thereby shown a metaphorical shrine and temple, and also reminded about what we are seeing.

"THE BUILDING IS NOT JUST A RECTANGULAR OBJECT WITH COLUMNS, BUT A METAPHORICAL TEMPLE"

Exemplification

The Lincoln Memorial is also a prime site for

observing Goodman's third mechanism of meaning: exemplification. Goodman observes that every work of architecture exemplifies certain of its properties in ways that draw particular attention. In the case of this Memorial, it is clear that the building serves as the termination of an axis, and emphasizes bilateral symmetry, both as a building and as a work of urban design. As a composition, the building itself exemplifies a clear pattern of solid-void-solid, as a way to draw attention to the statue of Lincoln at the center. And, at the same time, the form of the building emphasizes the gleaming white materiality of its marble, in contrast with the darker interior.

Mediated Reference

Finally, the Lincoln Memorial helps us understand Goodman's fourth type of architectural meaning—what he terms a mediated reference. Here, beyond the notion of metaphor, the building asks those who view it to associate it with broader conceptual references—notions that could be about such things as worship, democracy, freedom, or unification. Construction of the building had been controversial—from lingering sectional disputes about the role of Lincoln to the idea of constructing this temple on a former swamp— so project proponents needed to do everything possible to remind visitors about the ideals of unification and unity. They did so in 1923 by having the American Institute of Architects use the building to stage a pageant honoring Henry Bacon, keeping the focus on neoclassical design and worshipful display.

A decade and a half later, however, the mediated reference of this monument began to shift. In 1939, famed African-American contralto Marian Anderson was denied the opportunity to perform at Washington DC's Constitution Hall by the Daughters of the American Revolution, due to her race.[4] At the urging of Eleanor Roosevelt, secretary of the interior Harold Ickes arranged for Anderson to sing instead from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. A mixed-race audience of 75,000 people showed up. The mediated reference altered again on August 28, 1963, when the building served as the terminal focal point of the March on Washington, (Figure 2)one hundred years after Lincoln had signed the emancipation proclamation. Marian Anderson began the program by leading the singing of the National Anthem. Memorializing the events of the day and adding to the mediated reference of the building itself, the federal government authorized placement of a carved stone added on the platform from which King gave his famous "I Have a Dream" Speech. In this way, the mediated reference had shifted from Saving the Union to Securing Civil Rights. In

its late-20th-century messaging, the building was less about political union than about the pursuit of racial and economic equality. The metaphor was still that of a temple and its god, but now Lincoln was to be deified for other reasons.

FIGURE 2:
LINCOLN MEMORIAL, 1963

In 1968, the Lincoln Memorial consolidated its relationship with Martin Luther King, when King's Poor People's Campaign was granted a permit to construct Resurrection City adjacent to the memorial. In this way, the mediated reference of the building as a representation of both civil rights and economic rights reached full fruition. It was thus no surprise that Barack Obama chose to celebrate part of his inauguration in 2009 at the Lincoln Memorial.

BEYOND GOODMAN'S QUARTET OF MEANING TYPES

> "THE BUILDING ASKS THOSE WHO VIEW IT TO ASSOCIATE WITH BROADER CONCEPTUAL REFERENCES"

Clearly, the notion of a mediated reference starts to take the meaning of a building into a larger realm of applied ideas, more so than do notions of denotation, metaphor, or exemplification. Yet Goodman is still content to view mediated references as part of the way that buildings mean as works of architecture. That said, he also readily acknowledges that buildings may also have non-architectural meanings—things that he considers to be more arbitrary, with no intrinsic connection to design. Goodman writes:

> A building of any design may come to stand for some of its causes or effects, or for some

> historical event that occurred in it or on its site, or for its designated use; any abattoir may symbolize slaughter, and any mausoleum, death; and a costly county courthouse may symbolize extravagance. To mean in such a way is not thereby to function as an architectural work.[5]

Applied to my example of the Lincoln Memorial, there still seems good reason to attach the mediated reference label—whether "Union" or "Civil Rights"—to the building itself, since the associations are clearly not arbitrary. Still, it is possible to imagine other events happening on the site—a plane crash, say, or a murder—that would, indeed, bear no relation to the Memorial's meaning as a work of architecture. Goodman—presumably prodded by his nearby colleagues at Harvard's Graduate School of Design—wanted to cling to the possibility of an autonomous realm for architecture, or at least to lay claim to what MIT architectural historian Stanford Anderson first called "semiautonomy" and later "quasi-autonomy."[6] But, increasingly, quasi-autonomy just leaves me queasy.

We now seem clearly in a world of queasy autonomy, one where the public and the media insist that public buildings be seen as inhabited places and as parts of cities. This may understandably threaten the professional self-esteem of some designers, especially if they expect their work to communicate their own design intentions. Yet we are long past any era where architects can hope to control the received meaning of their designs. We are in a world where public buildings are experienced not just as objects but as productive processes engaged with human labor, material supply chains, financial tradeoffs, and community impacts. It seems increasingly harder to preserve a separate realm of meanings that are intrinsic to architecture *qua* architecture, separate from some presumed set of overlaid meanings that are somehow non-architectural. Especially if one looks at buildings at the scale of urban design, this implicates them in their surroundings and, accordingly, asks us to consider ways to account for their associated meanings.

Increasingly, I argue, the power of what Goodman would consider "non-architectural meanings" has become so predominant that there is little practical value in declaring them to be non-architectural. In short, just as the boundaries between architectural and non-architectural meaning are harder to maintain, so too it is harder to maintain a separation between the world of design and the world of politics. Instead, especially with the burgeoning of digital media in the three decades since Goodman tried to set categories and boundaries for "how buildings mean," all public buildings have become what I have previously termed "mediated monuments."[7] Such

public buildings are inseparable from the media campaigns conducted to construct (and constrict) their interpretation.

In what follows, I will take Nelson Goodman on something of a world tour in search of what he may have missed. I will stick with his four terms, but probe how they may be altered by externally imposed agendas. Building from Goodman's nomenclature, this means that denotative meaning can now be temporarily—or permanently—annotated with additional texts, and thereby altered. It means that the expression of metaphors may stray far from the positive associations predicted by architects. It means that buildings may exemplify certain properties, but that the aesthetics of these properties are increasingly inextricable from political economy. Finally, taking Goodman forward means that, with burgeoning forms of new media, mediated references proliferate and shift. We can see this even in the Lincoln Memorial, depending on how we view it. Seen obliquely from above on a summer's day, the monument may seem a forested object rather than a temple at the end of an axis reminding us about civil rights. Or, if one looks beyond the Memorial to the northwest, we see yet a different context. Instead of locating Memorial within the artifice of Washington D.C. with its Mall and its height limitations, we are confronted with broader realm of capitalist investment that has jumped the Potomac to build high-rises in less restrictive northern Virginia, Amazon's future new hub. The meaning of buildings clearly varies depending on the viewpoint of the observer, and the scale of environment being observed.

> "GOODMAN [...] WANTED TO CLING TO CLING TO THE POSSIBILITY OF AN AUTONOMOUS REALM FOR ARCHITECTURE [...] BUT, INCREASINGLY, QUASI-AUTONOMOUS ARCHITECTURE JUST LEAVES ME QUEASY"

BEYOND GOODMAN, TOWARD DESIGN-POLITICS

Taken together, I am arguing for a convergence of design and politics, and propose that they be conjoined by a hyphen. Seen this way, how buildings

mean is inextricably linked to what, why, and where buildings mean. We can begin by taking on Goodman's notion of meaning by denotation. Once denotation gets tied in with marketing, toponymic alteration (aka name-changing), and annotation, the denotation gets engulfed by its design-politics.

Denotation Gets Trumped

One prominent place to start is with Chicago's Trump International Hotel and Tower, the city's second tallest building—even if this is a place that would initially seem to have little to offer students of Goodmanian denotation. When first opened, in 2008, the building appeared as a vast composition of soaring blue glass, with minimal signage. But in 2014, 6 years after completion, the Trump Organization added five 20' tall letters spelling out T-R-U-M-P 141-feet wide, lit at night with LED fixtures (Figure 3). The designers located this lettering 200 feet above street level for maximum urban visibility at a distance. Initially proposed to cover 3,600 sq. ft., Chicago's planning and development department insisted that it be down-sized by 20 percent, still leaving it at 2,891 sq. ft. A pre-presidential Donald Trump assured *Chicago Tribune* architecture critic Blair Kamin that the backlit LED lighting "will be more subtle"–to which Kamin responded: "as subtle as Godzilla."[8] At night, the signage stands out not just as the terminus of north-south streets, but as the dominant presence of the east-west view along the Chicago River. Trump, apparently a scholar of architecture and of philosophy, is clearly into deal-making dialogue with Nelson Goodman when he commented that the sign is "part of the architecture of the building." He also knowingly enters into the realm of semiotics when he adds that "the people in the building" (who of course are the only ones who don't actually have to look at the signage) "love it as an identifier."[9] Trump told an interviewer that he expected the sign to become an important part of the cultural landscape of Chicago in the manner of the Hollywood sign.[10] Importantly for Trump, the sign covers part of the building occupied by air conditioning vents and other mechanicals, so it doesn't restrict views or revenues from interior space. That, too, is part of the building's design-politics.

In gaining its new signage, Trump's eponymous Chicago tower is, arguably, now not the same building. Its new denotative layer, though, adds more than mere explanatory lettering; it also adds a new kind of exemplified property, and it shifts the mediated reference of the work, linking it to a global brand associated with ostentation. And, in both the run-up to the 2016 presidential election and its presidential aftermath,

the billboard-bold presence of the Trump name on the city's most storied skyline could not help but be polarizing. Any effort to analyze this edifice as merely a tall structure of glass and steel, devoid of other associations, now seems fruitless—and certainly bears little relationship to how the building is received on the ground. It is also another reminder that buildings exist as urban artifacts not just as isolated structures. In urban design terms, this one does more than terminate an axial vista; it trumps it.

Chicago's Zoning Committee belatedly realized what it had inadvertently permitted, and duly established a "Chicago River Corridor Special Sign District."[11] Still, this did nothing to undo the design-politics of denotation that had already been allowed to occur. The new ordinance just meant that TRUMP will have no future competition for visual attention.

FIGURE 3:
TRUMP INTERNATIONAL HOTEL AND TOWER

The chief recourse has come via the work of artists. One such interpretive designer simply de-pixilated the first letter--removing the 'T' to alter the meaning. Another artist sought a permit to float a series of gilded pig-shaped balloons, strategically aligned, as new form of editorial erasure.[12] Other editing (and editorializing) photoshoppers proposed a quick demise for the structure as a whole.[13]

Following Trump's election as president, the denotative meaning of his eponymous structures underwent pointed alteration in some locales. In 2018, the majority owner of the Trump Ocean Club in Panama City had the TRUMP part of the name removed, and then grandly performed an anti-fascist song in the lobby to mark the occasion.[14] In

terms of shifting the scope of Goodman's notion of "denotation," perhaps the most sustained commentary has come from video projection artist Robin Bell, who has been annotating Trump properties in both New York and Washington, DC.

On the evening of August 7, 2017—one week after reports surfaced that special counsel Robert Mueller had impaneled a grand jury as part of his investigation into Russian interference with the election and any possible collusion with Trump campaign staffers—Bell projected a huge Russian flag onto the street-facing front of the TRUMP SOHO property. In turn, the middle blue stripe of the flag was annotated with a sequence of matter-of-fact advertisements in English and Russian: "Follow the Money"—"Laundering Services Available"—"Happy to help, Bro!," along with an image of Vladimir Putin. Accompanying this, a retinue of five uniformed militarized marchers in red hats and mock Russian Army garb strode toward the building to the strains of the Russian national anthem. A projection project that lasted less than 15 minutes in real time quickly went viral on social media posted by onlookers, leading to widespread coverage on everything from the *New York Daily News* to *Huffington Post* to *Business Insider* to *Artnet.com.*[15] The Trump Soho hotel would never be the same. By December, the hotel was renamed The Dominick.[16]

Bell's most publicized work has happened in Washington, DC. At the Trump International Hotel, a building with a long history of shifting denotation and meanings. Taller than either the Washington Cathedral or the U.S. Capitol, the Old Post Office and Clock Tower along Pennsylvania Avenue—originally completed in 1899—clearly appealed to the Trump Organization. Shortly before Trump entered the presidential race, his company won the right to redevelop the Old Post Office site as a luxury hotel. In 2016, they put up a massive construction sign in front of the building that echoed the coloration of the campaign bumper sticker and read "Trump: Coming 2016."[17] The Trump International Hotel opened shortly after Trump was elected president in 2016, and Robin Bell was quickly on the scene to annotate its façade using video projections from a truck parked just across the street, generating substantial press coverage in such outlets as CNN, the BBC, the *New York Times,* and the *Los Angeles Times.*[18]

As legal challenges arose regarding the issue of whether profits from the hotel violated the emoluments clause of the U.S. Constitution,[19] Bell's annotation elided Goodman's notion of denotation with other modes of meaning, especially mediated references. The post-election backlash entered the realm of design-politics though efforts to turn the building

into a meme about corruption: "Pay Trump Bribes Here" and "Emoluments Welcome" featured an arrow pointing to the hotel's arched entrance. At the same time, through a new form of denotation, the installation sought to remind the public about the actual text of the emoluments clause.

Bell also flashed façade dialogues that engaged other emergent news items, including proposed bans on certain terms at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention such as "diversity" "entitlement," "fetus" "transgender" and "science-based."[20] On another occasion, he annotated the headquarters of the nearby Environmental Protection Agency with a warning: "Don't let a climate denier take over the EPA." In addition, Bell annotated the Department of Justice building with an image of Attorney General Jeff Sessions as a Klansman, with an illuminated "#SESSIONSMUSTGO."[21]

> "BELL'S ANNOTATION ELIDED GOODMAN'S NOTION OF DENOTATION WITH OTHER MODES OF MEANING, ESPECIALLY MEDIATED REFERENCES.

The Politics of Metaphors

Next, it is worth examining how Goodman's ideas about metaphorical expression are also inextricable from the politics embedded in such metaphors. The messages may not be as angry or partisan as the Trumpian annotations, but metaphors, too, intertwine design with politics. Metaphors are not neutral; classic phrases such as "A Man's Home Is His Castle," are famously gendered. Since at least the early 17th century, this notion has been part of English Common Law, later transmitted to the United States, where it conveyed the right to forbid entry. This has been used as a way to assert individualism and anti-government views. Another image, from a promotional booklet produced by the National Association of Real Estate Boards in 1922, (Figure 4) underscores the ways that home-as-castle is a deeply gendered

FIGURE 4: HOME OWNING BREEDS REAL MEN

notion, rooted in differentials in power and access to resources.[22]

This is not "man" as in "mankind"—rather, as explained here, "Home owning breeds REAL men"—"It is what puts the MAN back in MANHOOD". Such metaphors mean not just as works of architecture but as acts of politics.

Sometimes the metaphor has less serious overtones, as in the notion of Hotel as Palace. There are places named Palace Hotel across the world, often in cities long past ties to any actual royal rule. The opportunity to be temporary royalty may be little more than a frivolity of the wealthy, yet it may reveal deep-seated anxieties or jealousies or, alternatively, just an exaggerated sense of self-worth. More prosaically, in suburban Boston during the 1980s the architect Robert A.M. Stern fancified a postmodern speculative office building into a faux-Renaissance palace. It is really no more than a mini office park in an auto-dominated zone of malls, multi-lane highways, and vast parking lots; inside is no palace. Still, Stern and the developers correctly deduced that it would be possible to market the palace metaphor more than the reality.

THE POLITICS OF EXEMPLIFICATION

Turning next to the design-politics of exemplification it is also clear that architectural properties—even basic constitutive issues such as height, color, materials, and symmetry that very much seem to be confinable to the realm of aesthetics—are nonetheless more complex socio-cultural products and, therefore, are embedded in politics. Consider the long-standing aim to construct tall buildings as an index of power. It is certainly possible to isolate the aesthetics of a building as a tall shape from any other of its properties, and to see such buildings, in Goodman's terms, as exemplifying the property of height. It is also true that some buildings are made taller in order to convey that property. But height-mongering has an agenda; the 'how' of its meaning seems increasingly inseparable from the 'why' and 'where' of its meaning.

The Design-Politics of Height

The height of buildings, throughout the history of architecture, has been inseparable from its institutional presence, whether as funerary pyramids or as church spires, mosque minarets, victory arches and columns or capitol domes. Especially since the late 19th century, with enhanced global communication, the height of a building has become a comparative

and competitive phenomenon.

Even so, the competitive design-politics of tall buildings began much earlier. Bruges boasted an early non-religious tall building as early as 1240, an observation tower constructed on top of the market building, which included spaces serving the city's major cloth industry and the municipal archives. An octagonal part added was added in the 1480s, bringing the tower to 83m (272 feet), and, with its former wooden spire, it used to be even taller—354 feet (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5:
BRUGES MARKET
SQUARE TOWER

The height was clearly about conveying the economic power of Bruges. In other words, the exemplification was not just about the physical properties of its tower and spire, but about the city leadership seeking to exemplify (and thereby market) its financial prowess. At the same time, it means through metaphor, by serving as a prototypical "cathedral of commerce."

Sometimes, such marketing served primarily internal domestic purposes but sometimes the visual statement was intended to be understood internationally. Spiro Kostof notes that drawings from Gustave Eiffel's office showed height of his famous tower as, quite consciously, larger than adding together Notre Dame, the Arc de Triomphe, and the Statue of Liberty. It also mattered that it eclipsed the Washington Monument as tallest manmade structure in the world (and almost doubled it).[23]

Until 1889, New York's the spire of Trinity Church was that city's highest structure, though it faced competition throughout the 1870s and 1880s as the Empire State's media struck back. An irrational obsession over building height along New York's Newspaper Row (with towers all eclipsing the

adjacent City Hall) led to protracted battle among the *New York Times*, the *Tribune*, the *Sun* and Pulitzer's *World*. By 1909, however, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Tower outdid both church and press and, at 700 feet, became the tallest occupied building in the world. With a 50-story tower on top of 11-story base it resembled the campanile of St. Mark's in Venice. The tower also featured a clock that was visible a mile away and was topped by a beacon: "the light that never fails." As a company pamphlet put it, "High and lofty, like a great sentinel keeping watch over the millions of policy holders and marking the fast-fleeting minutes of life, stands the Tower." Geographer Mona Domosh explains that the tower conveyed "a civic as well as a commercial message," revealing the new economic power and prestige of insurance companies. Life insurance, the product of 19th-century prosperity and the availability of a new immigrant market, helped calm a family's fears that its breadwinner might die young.[24] The multivalence of meanings for tall buildings continued to develop with completion of New York's Woolworth Building in 1913. Not just content to express the fact that it was the world's tallest building, it needed the additional "Cathedral of Commerce" moniker to stake a metaphorical claim as well. Church and state stood recombined in a spire that conveyed capitalist triumph.

Sometimes, though, the use of exemplification and metaphor in tall building has taken more traditional forms. The Chicago Temple, designed by Holabird and Roche in 1924, is a United Methodist church on top of skyscraper. It was the tallest building in Chicago from 1924-1930. And, at 29 stories and 568 feet, it remains the tallest church building in the world (still outdoing the Côte d'Ivoire's Yamoussoukro basilica, which soars a mere 489 feet).[25] Two U.S. states—Nebraska and Louisiana—have skyscrapers as their capitols, but these were exceptions to the growing subjugation of government to private corporate towers.

Other planned towers participated into geo-political competition. The Russian communists proposed a mammoth Palace of the Soviets in the 1930s, intended to overshadow both the past achievements of the adjacent Kremlin and to handily out-do America's Empire State Building. The project remained unbuilt. Elsewhere, the use of building height as an extension of international political tension reached a particularly memorable moment in the urban staging of the national pavilions of rival powers at the 1937 Paris World's Fair. Here, arrayed across a grand court constructed adjacent to the Eiffel Tower, the German pavilion was allocated a site immediately opposite the spot offered to the Soviet Union. In his rather self-serving famous memoir, *Inside the Third Reich,* Hitler's architect Albert Speer

revealed the true design-politics impulse behind his design for the German side of the urbanistic confrontation. "While looking over the site in Paris," Speer writes with a degree of implausibility, "I by chance stumbled into a room containing the secret sketch of the Soviet pavilion;" sculpted figures 33' tall striding toward the German pavilion. "I therefore designed a cubic mass, also elevated on stout pillars, which seemed to be checking this onslaught, while from the cornice of my tower an eagle with the swastika in its claws looked down on the Russian sculptures."[26] (Figure 6)

FIGURE 6: POSTCARD, 1937 PARIS EXPOSITION

During the early years of the Cold War, Stalin proposed a series of large towers intended to house (and thereby highlight) a series of non-capitalist achievements, such as universities. Clearly, building heights had become not just a matter of an exemplified architectural property but a tool for geopolitical competition—a way for Russians to contend with the Americans at their own game. In that context, the specter of a much-discussed Trump Tower in Moscow, whether constructed from partnership or collusion, would have carried an additional layer of import.

> "CLEARLY, BUILDING HEIGHTS HAD BECOME NOT JUST A MATTER OF AN EXEMPLIFIED ARCHITECTURAL PROPERTY BUT A TOOL FOR GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION"

Overall, though, the design-politics of skyscrapers has long since shifted away from either an intra-American or Cold War enterprise, and long since become an international phenomenon. Cities in China, Taiwan, Korea, and Malaysia have put national, and often nationalist, stakes into the ground through aspirations to build tallest. Then, before "peak oil" might come to pass, Middle

Easterners joined the game with peaks of their own. Dubai's leadership willfully invented a high-rise corridor, culminating with the world's tallest building in 2010, standing 828 meters (2716 feet). When under construction, it was known as Burj Dubai to highlight its location—even as Dubai faced considerable economic difficulties. But at the opening, which was timed to coincide with the 4th anniversary of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashed al-Maktoum's rule in Dubai, the name was announced as the Burj Khalifa, in honor of the emir of its neighbor and rival, Abu Dhabi, which had lent money to cover Dubai's debts.[27] So, in Goodman's terms, the Burj does indeed exemplify height, but renaming Dubai's apex for an Abu Dhabi emir also reveals the heights of chutzpah—though I doubt that was the word they used to describe it.

By the early 2020s, the home of the world's tallest building—intended to rise at least 1,000 meters (3,280 feet) will likely have migrated to Saudi Arabia, another place seeking the global recognition for its Kingdom in a manner that is more visible—and visualizable—than hidden oil reserves.

The Design-Politics of Color

If the architectural property of height also exemplifies politics, so too does the property of color, especially if that color can be strategically manipulated. Increasingly, whether through interior lighting or through projections, architectural façades have become re-programmable. Buildings are often lit to commemorate particular holidays or sports facilities, but sometimes the use of color can deliberately carry a design-politics. As one example, following the tragic shooting of Coptic Christian pilgrims near Cairo in May 2017, the Mayor of Tel Aviv honored the victims by lighting the Tel Aviv municipal building in the colors of the Egyptian flag. This act of symbolic solidarity action was repeated in November, following an attack that killed more than two hundred worshippers at a crowded mosque on the Sinai Peninsula known to be frequented by Sufis.[28]

The Design-Politics of Materials

Similarly, even the actual materials of buildings can sometimes be an expression of design-politics. Albert Speer, aided by some sketches provided by Hitler himself, planned and designed the gargantuan Germania to replace the center of Berlin with a grandiose North-South axis. Speer reports that Hitler insisted that the vast dome of the Great Hall be constructed of masonry without any steel reinforcement. Accordingly, Speer's highly dubious "Theory of Ruin Value" promised that the resultant building,

once rendered into ruins after a thousand years, would have no aesthetically displeasing protrusions of rebar.[29] Just as the city was to be an extension of the Nazi politics of global conquest—the word in stone—so, too, the materiality of the unreinforced stone itself was meant to convey power and control.

But this is not the most striking way that the very materiality of stone exemplifies design-politics, and not just design. Martin Kitchen's trenchant biography, *Speer: Hitler's Architect,* notes that in Nov. 1938 some three thousand Jews were forced to leave Berlin every month; they were "evicted, forced into exile, terrorized or rounded up in concentration camps." Speer wanted to do this not just to free up well located apartments for others but also to build up an ex-urban workforce that could be used for Germania. As Kitchen argues,

> In close collaboration with the SS, he ruthlessly exploited the labour of concentration camp inmates in quarries, brickyards and factories producing building materials, they worked under appalling conditions and the mortality rate was shockingly high. Speer made thousands of Jewish families homeless, most of whom were handed over to the Gestapo to be shipped to what was delicately described as 'the East.' [30]

The Mauthausen (Austria) and Flossenbürg (Bavaria) camps established in 1938 were explicitly sited to provide high quality stone for Berlin rebuilding. Sachenhausen (near Berlin) supplied labor for brickworks at Oranienburg, which was also built at Speer's request in 1938. Specialized stone for other projects led to siting of Gross-Rosen (in Polish Silesia) for bluish-grey granite, and Natzweiler-Struthof in Alsace for reddish granite. In this way, the material needs of rebuilding Berlin and other monuments caused Speer and his team of planners and architects to be intimately involved in the 'Final Solution.' This chilling account

"THIS CHILLING ACCOUNT PROVIDES FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT ARCHITECTURAL PROPERTIES SUCH AS STONE MAY EXEMPLIFY FAR MORE THAN THEIR LITERAL MATERIALITY."

provides further evidence that architectural properties such as stone may exemplify far more than their literal materiality. Nazi architecture and Nazi urbanism were not just violations of scale and distortions of neo-classicism in aesthetic terms; their material origins also inextricably linked them to violations and distortions of human rights. In short, the siting of concentration camps and the building of cities were part of the same nefarious complex of design-politics.

The Design-Politics of Symmetry

So, if seemingly innocuous aspects such as height, color and materials are implicated in design-politics—and cannot be left to inhabit some wishful quasi-autonomy of architectural design—are there any exemplified architectural properties that might still remain apolitical acts of aesthetics? One possibility for this might be the notion of symmetry. Surely something as quintessentially aesthetic as this can occupy a place safely removed from politics? Well, perhaps not—or at least not always. Architectural symmetry is not just the solid-void-solid of the Lincoln Memorial. It can also convey implications of equivalency, with parallel weights given to each side of some central point. In turn, however, it also matters what (or who) is being weighted and aesthetically presented as parallel and equivalent. And symmetry also draws particular attention to whatever is signaled out as the center of the composition, be it a front door or an entire highlighted realm.

Sometimes, as in the case of the almshouse developed in 1800 to house Boston's poor, symmetry is about more than visual balance; it also can encode a sense of separated but equal that carries a social, or even political meaning. What we see here is symmetry used to accommodate and enforce the institution's gender separation—indigent men on one side, indigent women on the other. And, importantly, the middle part is not just some attractively articulated A-B-A aesthetic rhythm, but is instead generated by the need to provide a chapel at center, as a source of moral judgment and redemption for the benighted denizens of the almshouse. (Figure 7)

THE DESIGN-POLITICS OF MEDIATED REFERENCES: FREEDOM, SECURITY, DEMOCRATIC ACCESS, EXCLUSION

If even the most intrinsically architectural elements can be bound up with politics—Goodman's category of exemplification—it is even easier to return to the case for finding a design-politics in the other categories

of denotation, metaphor, and mediated reference. Denotation, especially when it can be altered or augmented through the actions of others, seems easily bound with politics. And, similarly, metaphors—simply because they are already rooted in culturally freighted language—also seem particularly malleable to political manipulation. This leaves mediated references, already the part of Goodman's quartet that seems furthest from architectural purity. Using two final examples, I aim to show how designers deliberately shape the intended conceptual resonances of their work, while also demonstrating just how easy it is for such mediated references to shift—just as the Lincoln Memorial moved from "Union" to "Civil Rights" as its primary referent.

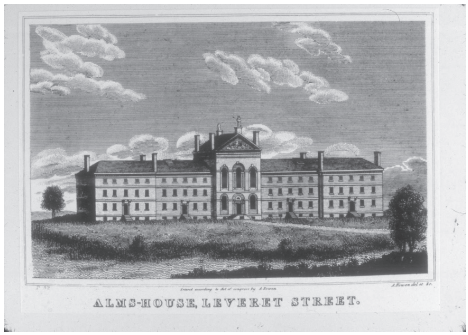

FIGURE 7: ALMSHOUSE

Following the destruction of the twin towers in the 2001 9/11 attacks--themselves a deliberate targeting of exemplified architectural properties (height) and metaphorical expression (capitalism and world trade)—Daniel Libeskind's competition-winning urban design plan for the ground zero site memorably entered the world of mediated references because he dubbed his central structure the Freedom Tower. Moreover, Libeskind gave it symbolically resonant height of 1776 feet—a number that had culturally-encoded American meaning as a mediated reference for "independence" even if it could not be a palpable measurement of height. Underscoring the designer's

FIGURE 8:
FREEDOM TOWER AND
LOWER MANHATTAN

intent—just in case the conceptual resonance of the building might be lost—Libeskind's competition rendering showed the form of the seemingly abstract building to be anthromorphically mimicking the raised arm of the Statue of Liberty.

The design-politics of the urban design scheme and the building were as much about the concept of American-style freedom as a direct counterpoint to the restrictive politics of terrorists as it was about the form of buildings. Sadly, the mediated reference to "independence" and "freedom" was not to last; instead, as built, the blockier One World Trade Center building designed by David Childs exhibits far greater attention to issues of security than freedom; its fortified base is designed to withstand the impact of a truck bomb (Figure 8).

Turning now to Canberra, Australia, it is possible to explore other struggles over mediated reference in the contested terrain of this capital city designed by American Walter Burley Griffin. Griffin's competition-winning plan featured a "land axis" that included a triangular district of government buildings culminating in a "capital hill," as well as a perpendicular water axis along an artificial lake. The Australian government, slowly but surely, executed many aspects of Griffin's plan despite many alterations, yielding a long axis of power stretching from the Australian War Memorial at the base of Mount Ainslie southwest to Parliament House. (Figure 9) The result is both a dominant narrative about "garden cities" and democracy—but also a counter-narrative promulgated in the same central space by Aboriginal activists who regard the very site of the capital as an illegitimate usurpation of "sacred land." Intermittently since 1972, and consistently since 1992, these activists have maintained an "Aboriginal Embassy"—an informal settlement placed directly athwart the country's most iconic political space.[31] (Figure 10) In addition to tents and signage that conveys reminders about "stolen children," "native title," and "genocide," a ceremonial flame has been kept alight since 1998. In other words, there is no shared mediated reference; one group's strong association is the negation of the other.

It took three-quarters of a century, but eventually Griffin's plan for a capital hill with a capitol building yielded an unusual hybrid—a parliament building carved into the hill, seemingly there to symbolize the people's freedom to walk over the top of the hill and look down upon the halls of the legislative representatives. Yet security concerns quickly ended the access to the summit, thereby shifting the mediated reference. Meanwhile, parliamentarians drive their cars directly into underground parking and, unlike the provisional parliament house that preceded this one, there is

no longer any intermediary outdoor space where lawmakers can be stopped to confer with journalists.[32] And for some aboriginals, the building still seems closed off.

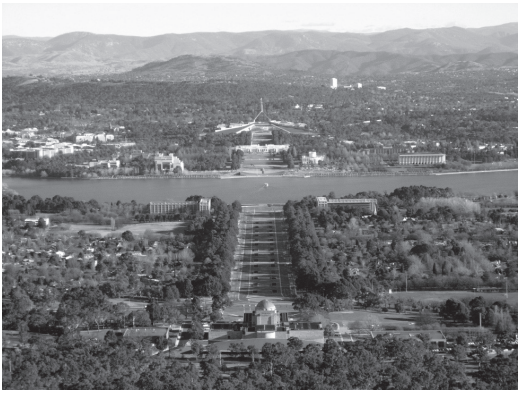

FIGURE 9: CANBERRA

Politicians celebrated the role of the aboriginal artist who designed the mosaic forecourt but the official Royal Institute of Australian Architects booklet about the building treats the entry sequence as a calculated symbolic spatial sequence that narrates the "advent of European civilization."[33] With entry through a detached trabeated portico, (Figure 11) it is as if indigenous culture has been trampled over and left outside. Clearly this Parliament House is a building, like all good public structures, that means in multiple and complex ways.

FIGURE 10: ABORIGINAL EMBASSY

CONCLUSION: BUILDING A DESIGN-POLITICS

As these examples from around the world have shown, there is increasing convergence between design and politics—enough, I think, to warrant a hyphen. The mechanisms of meaning—the 'How?' sorts of questions about the meaning of buildings that Nelson Goodman asked us to try to isolate—are inextricably linked to what, why, and where buildings mean. Is the building on

FIGURE 11: PARLIAMENT HOUSE

sacred land? Does acquiring its materials depend on conscripted labor? Do its metaphors allude to oppressive rather than emancipatory practices? Will artists annotate the façades with contentious messages? Agendas for public buildings are set not just by architects, or even by their clients, but by a variety of contested actions and personal, subnational, national and international priorities. The architecture of buildings matters, but it is their larger design-politics that richly renders them as central to the human experience.

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ENDNOTES

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