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EDITORIAL: BUILDING AS SERVICE

MARK JENSEN & TOM SPECTOR

This volume of Architecture Philosophy derives from the 4th biennial conference of the International Society for the Philosophy of Architecture held for two days at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado in July, 2018. The conference theme "Building as Service: People, Politics, and Governance," and the three keynote speakers, attracted a wide variety of papers including presentations on state architecture, representations of power, and symbols of politics from 30 additional presenters. The papers also ranged geographically: case studies from architecture in Nazi Germany to informal cities in South America were presented.

One of the chief attractions for conferees was the opportunity to explore the grounds of U.S. Air Force Academy: itself one of the 20th century's distinguished achievements in state architecture. The Academy is notable for coherence and completeness as an exemplar of International Modernist style. Its lead architect, Walter Netsch, and his firm Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, were at the forefront of this movement. Netsch's vision was built almost entirely as he intended and it was finished in less than 10 years: the Academy was created on April 1, 1954 and the last building of the initial plan; the celebrated Academy Chapel, was completed in 1962. Amazingly, the Academy still functions largely in accordance with its original design plan, thus Netsch's vision, together with the Air Force's intent for the campus, continues to inform the life of the institution today—some

> "MODERNISM, THEY ARGUE, POSES SPECIAL CHALLENGES TO ACCEPTED HISTORIC PRESERVATION VALUES"

60 years later. In addition to exploring the buildings themselves, visitors observed the ways in which cadets, faculty, and other personnel pursue their institutional objectives in concert with the supporting architecture. Conferees were treated with a tour of the campus led by the Air Force Academy's resident architect, Duane Boyle, who knew Netsch personally (Netsch died in 2008) and who shared details of both the architect's thinking and intent in designing the campus.

The conference was convened in the newest addition to the Air Force Academy, Polaris Hall which opened in 2016, also designed, like the rest of the main campus, by SOM. Polaris Hall houses both the Academy's Center for Character and Leadership Development and serves as a conference center just outside the secure boundaries of the "cadet area," where cadets live and learn and train. Its signature element is its skylight tower, which telescopes toward the pole star. The conference opened with a keynote from one of Polaris Hall's lead architects, Frank Mahan, whose contribution, fittingly, opens this volume of Architecture Philosophy.

In their piece, "The Future of Modernism," Frank Mahan and collaborator Van Kluytenaar discuss the architectural challenge of restoration in the context of restoring modernist buildings. Modernism, they argue, poses special challenges to accepted historic preservation values according primacy to a building's "literal materiality," first theorized by Ruskin and Morris, when a modern building is more driven by the "fathomless depths of its concept," better served by the idealistic preservation values of Viollet-le-duc. Drawing on the resources of Merleau-Ponty, they argue that plans for restoration and reuse must be recognizably continuous with the narrative behind the building or else risk losing important, albeit less material, qualities that make the building what it is. They illustrate this theory with a discussion of three case studies: Lever House, Manufacturers Hanover Trust, and Polaris Hall itself. It will not be lost on conference participants that these exact issues are at stake in the restoration of Cadet Chapel.

In his piece, "Design-Politics: How Buildings Mean," the conference's final keynote Lawrence Vale develops a set of distinctions first proposed by Nelson Goodman to examine the gap between what a building means and how it communicates its meaning to its audience. Through a series of case studies, Vale undercuts the possibility of a simple relationship between the meaning of a building and what it communicates. He points out that notable historic events, digital media, and temporary installations add layers to what it communicates that are not directly mappable to the meaning of the building itself. This recognition leads him to conclude that contemporary design cannot hope to slide underneath the political

dimensions of life: public buildings are not just neutral backdrops for political contests but actually part of the contests themselves.

In the next essay in this volume, "Koolhaas' Revision of Foucault's Panopticon," André Patrão explores the relationship between the disciplines of architecture and philosophy through Koolhaas' apparent, yet denied, appropriation of Foucault's philosophy in his proposal for a renovated panopticon prison. The panopticon, originally designed by Jeremy Bentham, is a prison in which the cells are arranged around a central guardhouse such that the prisoners are always under the impression that they are being watched, even though the guards themselves are unobserved, e.g., by means of one-way glass. Foucault uses the panopticon as a metaphor for the destructive power of the feeling of constant surveillance. Koolhaas, on the other hand, is faced with a real opportunity to renovate an actual panopticon prison. He proposes to eliminate the central guard tower and makes other changes that will contribute to the humanization of the prisoners inside. It would seem that Foucault must have had an influence on Koolhaas, but as Patrão argues, the genealogy is not straightforward. Foucault is never mentioned by Koolhaas in connection with the proposal and yet its aims are consistent with a serious appreciation of Foucault's widely disseminated critique. Patrão employs this case to examine the question: Can we, should we, to what degree and for what end assert intellectual influence when ideas are "in the air"?

Rick Fox's "Useless Speculation: Architectural Obsolescence and the Micro-Parcels of Gordon Matta-Clark's Fake Estates," uses the work of artist Gordon Matta-Clark to draw attention to the situatedness of buildings inside a public geography that may be marked by disorganization, confusion, and incoherence. In the 1970s, Matta-Clark acquired 15 very small parcels of land in New York City at public auction. That these parcels even

"VALE UNDERCUTS THE POSSIBILITY OF A SIMPLE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MEANING OF A BUILDING AND WHAT IT COMMUNICATES"

existed was an indication of errors in surveying, zone, and land contracts. Some of these parcels were completely surrounded by private property and hence inaccessible to the owner without the permission of an adjacent property owner. While Matta-Clark never constructed an art installation around his land parcels, Fox reconstructs the underlying critical perspective Fake Estates intended to make about the waste and obsolescence endemic to contemporary architecture and city planning.

In our final essay, "Constructing a Common World: Architectural Craftsmanship and Public Responsibility," Hans Teerds reconfigures Hannah Arendt's distinction between work and action for the architectural enterprise. For Arendt, work is the act of building something; action is civic and political engagement. Yet contemporary trends in architectural production towards the seeming objectivity provided by machines and algorythms tend to place the architect at an increasing remove from both. True engagement, he contends, must be found in subjectivity. While work is the natural home for architectural activity, Teerds argues that architects must be attentive to action as well, insofar as action takes place in the context of the buildings that architects design. Drawing upon the phenomenological tradition, Teerds describes the interplay between the design and craftsmanship of the architect in the world of work and the contested and deliberative environment of action. Architects today must design and construct in partnership with their clients and stakeholders—a community that, in the world of action, may not be coherent. In this way, the judgment and work of the architect today is inescapably political.

Our volume concludes with a review by Mark Jensen of Timothy Hyde's new book, *Ugliness and Judgment: On Architecture in the Public Eye.* Hyde's book provides both a delightful and frustrating tour through hundreds of years of British architecture, city planning, and the public and political responses to the series of poor design choices and ugly buildings that these architects and planners have produced. Unfortunately for the philosophical reader, Hyde does not supply an analysis of ugliness that might be of use to architects and planners alike in order to avoid despoiling the urban landscape.

We hope that, in this volume of *Architecture Philosophy,* you will find the variety, nuance, novelty, and interest that we have all come to expect at the intersection of architecture, design, philosophy, and politics. The next biennial conference of the International Society for the Philosophy of Architecture will be held in Monte Verita Switzerland. We hope to see you there!

AIR FORCE ACADEMY
CADET CHAPEL, 2018

THE FUTURE OF MODERNISM: ARCHITECTURAL INTENTION AND ADAPTIVE REUSE

FRANK MAHAN, AIA AND VAN KLUYTENAAR

> A man is judged by neither intention nor fact but by his success in making values become facts. When this happens, the meaning of the action does not exhaust itself in the situation which has occasioned it, or in some vague judgment of value; the action remains as an exemplary type and will survive in other situations in another form. It opens a field. Sometimes it even institutes a world. In any case it outlines a future. History according to Hegel is the maturation of a future in the present, not the sacrifice of the present to an unknown future; and the rule of action for him is not to be efficient at any cost, but to be first of all fecund.[1]
>
> —Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence"

"THE PRESERVATION OF AN ORIGINAL DESIGN INTENT REQUIRES THE EXTENSION AND MATURATION OF AN ORIGINAL IDEA INTO A FUTURE THAT BOTH MAINTAINS AND REINVENTS THE ORIGINAL."

PRELUDE

What does it mean for architecture to engage an existing building? The pages that follow address the singular importance of intention in the practice of adapting and preserving modernist architecture in the twenty-first century. There is a matrix of forces common to nearly every architectural project that shapes the final built object. Financial, programmatic, structural and environmental

constraints along with client objectives and tastes are all meaningful considerations that must inform the conceptualization of a new building. The aged building in need of restoration, however, contains an additional constraint: the need to engage with its unique history. The tradition of storytelling must be employed to synthesize time and place, bridging past and present.

The practice of adaptive reuse—the preservation, renovation and reuse of an existing structure for a new purpose—links the building's past with the contemporary world. It requires understanding a preexisting narrative as well as the crafting of a new narrative, one that both continues and extends the original.[2] Existing buildings function as complex formal entities that develop over time and space, accumulate human experience and produce unique historical richness. This accumulation of experience must be accounted for in the building's preservation and reuse. The significance of these experiences must be recognized and acknowledged. The narratives must be sorted and evaluated. Should nostalgia, for example, be a protagonist in the historical narrative of a building? Did historically significant events take place at the building? Did the building undergo alterations over its lifetime? Is the building considered significant in the eyes of the architecture or preservation community? Does the building occupy a place of pride in its community? A rigorous analysis and deep understanding of these existing narratives and the complexity of experiences they point to must provide the groundwork for the building's future. This requires research into the building's history. The historical context, the original design intentions, the building's programmatic and construction history, its social and cultural associations, all contribute to its existing narrative and must form a fundamental constraint relevant to all adaptive reuse projects. The narrative must be told. And by reimagining this narrative, adaptive reuse links the past with the present. It creates an urban touchstone that is both history and invention. The preservation of an original design intent requires the extension and maturation of an original idea into a future that both maintains and reinvents the original.

INTRODUCTION

In 1952, the same year that Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) built the watershed Lever House skyscraper (fig. 1)—thereby heralding a new synthesis of modernist ideals in architecture—the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty published "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," one of the most important reflections on modern aesthetics

FIGURE 1: LEVER HOUSE (PRIOR TO RENOVATION)

in twentieth-century philosophy.[3] The essay describes the way in which the individual elements of an aesthetic object bestow significance on one another precisely by virtue of their juxtaposition. Their rigorous, rule-based arrangement produces a matrix of meaning which corresponds to the lasting quality of the work. Strikingly, important aspects of the enterprise of modernist architecture—particularly as expressed in the work of SOM—invite understanding in terms analogous to those found in Merleau-Ponty's thought.[4] Moreover, this understanding has farreaching implications for what it would mean to preserve the kind of aesthetic objects that modernist architecture sought to produce. These objects—like language itself—bear meaning by means of an interrelationship of parts, the efficacy of which creates a seemingly unending world:

> We always have to do only with architectures of signs whose sense, being nothing other

"THIS EFFICACY OF THE OBJECT DEPENDS PRIMARILY ON THE DENSITY OF DECISION—THAT IS TO SAY, INTENTION—INHERENT IN THE WORK'S CONCEPTION."

> than the way in which the signs behave toward one another and are distinguished from one another, cannot be posited independently of them.[5]
>
> And further:
>
> It is as if each step taken called for and made possible another step, or as if each successful expression prescribed another task to the spiritual automation or founded an institution whose efficacy it will have never finished experiencing.[6]

This efficacy of the object depends primarily on the density of decision—that is to say, intention—inherent in the work's conception. Its commanding logic, or grammar, is everywhere present. For Merleau-Ponty, the lateral relations between elements born from the initial intention produce a world or matrix of almost infinite meaning. In contrast to the importance of the literal material of stone and craft—the literalism that is the theoretical foundation for contemporary theories of preservation—the meaning of modern architecture is found in the rigor of arrangement and relationship of its parts. The juxtaposition and relational positioning of architectural elements give meaning to the work.[7] It is thus in the idea of the elements and their interdependence—rather than the materiality of the elements themselves—that modernism finds its value. And it is precisely this kind of value, this modernist ideal, that SOM sought to produce in the second half of the twentieth century.[8]

In 1935, three years after Henry Russell-Hitchcock and Philip Johnson's "Modern Architecture: International Exhibition" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City—and as Le Corbusier visited the United States for the first time—Gordon Bunshaft was in Europe as a Rotch Travelling Scholar, absorbing the ideas of early European modernism.[9] Less than a year later, Louis Skidmore and Nathaniel Owings began a partnership that would become Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and, by 1950, the firm had completed several large projects including Manhattan House in New York, the Terrace Plaza Hotel in Cincinnati, and the Brooklyn Veterans Hospital. It was the corporate headquarters for Lever Brothers Company on Park Avenue, however, built in 1952, that was to shape the image of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill as a notable proponent of postwar modern architecture. Following the Lever House project, SOM would go on to design a number of the most representative buildings of modernist architecture in the United States including the Manufacturers Hanover Trust building in New York City and the United States Air Force Academy campus in Colorado Springs. These projects proposed design concepts

that were grounded in the modernist sensibility of the time. Based on rigorous conceptual models, modern architecture no longer found its meaning in the literal materiality of stone and brick, but rather in the almost fathomless depths of its concept. This understanding of the modernist enterprise is particularly significant to the preservation of modernist buildings. The rejection of the literal and the material in favor of matrices of ideas and rules require novel approaches to the practice of historic preservation more adequate to the objects of interrogation.

VICTORIAN ERA PRESERVATION

In 1849 John Ruskin published The Seven Lamps of Architecture where, in a section called "The Lamp of Memory," he develops his now-famous attack on the practice of architectural restoration: "Do not let us talk then of restoration," he writes. "The thing is a Lie from beginning to end." For Ruskin, the act of restoration is primarily an act of destruction:

> the old building is destroyed, and that more totally and mercilessly than if it had sunk into a heap of dust, or melted into a mass of clay […] But, it is said, there may come a necessity for restoration! Granted. Look the necessity full in the face, and understand it on its own terms. It is a necessity for destruction. Accept it as such, pull the building down, throw its stones into neglected corners, make ballast of them, or mortar, if you will; but do it honestly, and do not set up a Lie in their place.[10]

What is of primary significance for Ruskin in his understanding of 19th century architecture is the literal materiality of the structure, the craft of its production and the process of its aging. Particularly with respect to medieval stone buildings, Ruskin and other English Romantics found aesthetic meaning in the material's weathering and decay, "in

"BASED ON RIGOROUS CONCEPTUAL MODELS, MODERN ARCHITECTURE NO LONGER FOUND ITS MEANING IN THE LITERAL MATERIALITY OF STONE AND BRICK, BUT RATHER IN THE ALMOST FATHOMLESS DEPTHS OF ITS CONCEPT."

walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity."[11] As England was in the initial throes of industrialization, it became increasingly fascinated by its preindustrial past. [12] Four years after publishing *The Seven Lamps of Architecture,* Ruskin published the second volume of *The Stones of Venice,* his three volume treatise on Venetian art and architecture. In a section called "The Nature of Gothic," Ruskin emphasizes the importance of medieval and gothic craft arguing that, in previous epochs, art was the expression of man's pleasure in labor. It was this sentiment that lead the protopreservationist William Morris to reprint "The Nature of Gothic" in 1892; helping to create the theoretical basis for the contemporary preservation movement. Morris described Ruskin's paean to medieval labor and craft as "one of the very few necessary and inevitable utterances of the century."[13] Both Ruskin and Morris—the theoretical grounding behind contemporary preservation theory—insisted on the virtues of high quality hand labor, and the importance of the material in considerations of architectural preservation.

This romantic response to the industrialization of Victorian England took more definite shape in the Arts and Crafts movement toward the end of the 19th century, heavily influenced by Ruskin and Morris, which advocated the traditional craftsmanship of medieval arts and architecture. In 1877 Morris founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, an organization that came to be called "Anti-Scrape" for its insistence that the materiality of historic structures be preserved without alteration. Any work on the building was "a feeble and lifeless forgery" and "deaf to the claims of poetry and history."[14] The Anti-Scrape movement sought to resist all tampering with the fabric of a given structure and to "treat our ancient buildings as monuments of a bygone art, created by bygone manners, that modern art cannot meddle with without destroying."[15] This approach, born of an era in which the character found in the literal and the material were of primary importance, indeed remains appropriate and necessary for a premodern architecture. In this context, the preservation of the literal suppresses the precise boundaries of time and place, combining history, memory and architecture to link the discarded and the fragmentary with new beginnings. And while the intended concept remains significant for Ruskin, this prioritization of the literal material of the building contrasts sharply with the idea that the significance of modernist architecture lies wholly in its concept, allowing for a preservation approach radically different from that of Victorian architecture.

Postwar modernism, however, requires a preservation approach more adequate to its purpose. While the preservation of premodern architecture

finds its meaning in the literal and the material, in addition to the idea of the building, the muse of postwar modern architecture is located primarily in the conceptual. And it is this distinction that has extensive and far-reaching implications for the preservation and restoration of modernist architecture. For if, in contrast to the valuing of the literal materiality of the structure, the meaning of postwar modernism is located primarily in the rigor of the concept, its preservation requires an approach radically different from that of Ruskin and the Victorian Romantics who would not have distinguished between the idea of a building and its material execution, understanding one as a mere extension of the other.

A notable counterpoint to Ruskin's nineteenth-century approach is that of his contemporary Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc whose unique preservation ideas have remained anathema to preservation thinking for nearly two centuries. In contrast to Ruskin's emphasis on the significance of materiality, Viollet-le-Duc sought to maintain a fidelity to the original design, "to re-establish it to a finished state, which may in fact never have actually existed at any given time."[16] For Viollet-le-Duc, whose work focused primarily on the Gothic and Romanesque, preservation finds its adequate expression in re-establishing an original idea. Such an approach functions as a kind of precursor to the modernist emphasis on the importance of the conceptual. His studies of nineteenth-century iron structures contributed to his interpretation of the Gothic as comprised of a rational scheme of skeletal forms designed to bear the weight of increasingly taller vaults. On this view, aesthetic value is to be found, above all, in the visual expression of structural elements—ribs, arches, and vertical supports—that compose the logical structural system. Preservation warranted modification to this logical system when, in the example of the Vézelay Abbey, the changes preserved the appearance of the original structural

"FOR VIOLLET-LE-DUC, [...] PRESERVATION FINDS ITS ADEQUATE EXPRESSION IN RE-ESTABLISHING AN ORIGINAL IDEA."

intention.[17] Although a relevant precursor to the modernist emphasis on the conceptual in its eschewal of materiality, Viollet-le-Duc's attempt to recreate an original intention was often based primarily on an imagined fiction. The emphasis on the conceptual in the preservation of modernist architecture, however, benefits from advances in technology that allow for a more accurate understanding of a building's original design intent. The greater the understanding, moreover, the more potentially radical the intervention. Knowing the entirety of the original design intention allows for a preservation approach that articulates that intention in ways more adequate than Viollet-le-Duc and more appropriate to the contemporary world. In contrast to Ruskin, Viollet-le-Duc and the Victorian belief in the equivalence of ideal intention and material articulation, the meaning of modern architecture is expressed in its idea, thus requiring a radical rethinking of its preservation.

LEVER HOUSE

Consider, for example, New York's Lever House (fig. 1)—an architectural icon heralding "the beginning of a new wave of American skyscraper construction and a new synthesis of modernist architectural ideals"—was restored in 2001 and its famous glass and stainless-steel curtain wall was completely replaced.[18] Built in 1952 and designated a historic landmark by New York's Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) in 1983, the building is exemplary of postwar American modernism. Situated on the west side of Park Avenue between East 53rd Street and East 54th Street, Lever House is a 24-story glass and stainless-steel clad office building composed of a vertical slab rising above a horizontal base. Taking advantage of a unique zoning provision, the project broke the tradition of "shaped tower" skyscrapers that predominated in New York City. Its glass-sheathed façade and novel design concept became dominant elements of contemporary architecture. Its structure consists of two counter-posed volumes, balanced in proportion but contrasting in shape. And in contrast to the traditional commercial lobby, the ground floor is a two-story open plaza with a paneled glass gallery. The project introduced a number of innovations in skyscraper design including an integrally designed window-washing mechanism and the concept of the ground floor public courtyard.

The density or intensity or weight of decision—which is to say intention—in the making of its form is everywhere evident. The work is saturated with traces of artistic intention. And this intention is articulated by the lateral relations among its parts; in the language of

Merleau-Ponty, "in the eloquence of arrangement and configuration" that "implants a meaning in that which did not have one."[19] The entirety of the structure articulates a sureness of concept that made it a pioneer in American architecture. To begin, the plan features an open, colonnaded space flowing into the width of the Park Avenue sidewalk. Only one third of the ground floor is indoor space which is primarily enclosed by glass panels. The second floor then hovers over the entire site taking the form of a horizontal slab wrapped around the open courtyard below. The ground floor column grid is set back from the plane of the second-floor façade, giving the second floor slab the appearance of a weightless floating volume. The just 53-foot-wide tower, a vertical slab set perpendicular to the avenue, is entirely glazed on three facades (as well as the returns on the rear façade) giving the building a crystalline and volumetric quality. Its exterior walls are a grid of stainless-steel mullions, anchored to the structural skeleton at each floor, which hold in place large and small panels of fixed glass. The large panels, functioning as windows, are green-tinted heat absorbent transparent glass and the small panels are tinted wire-glass spandrels concealing the floor slabs behind. These darker bands give the structure a horizontal emphasis that provides a delicate counterpoise to the verticality of the building's columns and metal framing. And this juxtaposition of vertical and horizontal in the facade thematizes the vertical and horizontal volumes of the building more generally. It is the purposeful mutual inflection of elements throughout—its syntax—that gives meaning to the building. That is to say, its meaning is found in the internal consistency of its concept. And it was to the appropriateness of its concept that Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's 2001 curtain wall replacement sought to respond.

In 1952 the building's glass curtain wall was at the cutting edge of a new technology. Almost half a century later, it required restoration. Due

"IT IS THE PURPOSEFUL MUTUAL INFLECTION OF ELEMENTS THROUGHOUT—ITS SYNTAX—THAT GIVES MEANING TO THE BUILDING. THAT IS TO SAY, ITS MEANING IS FOUND IN THE INTERNAL CONSISTENCY OF ITS CONCEPT."

to construction material limitations, fabrication limitations, and weather conditions, the curtain wall experienced severe deterioration. The corrosion of the curtain wall resulted in the bowing of the horizontal mullions and thebreakage of most of the smaller spandrel glass panels, as well as some of the larger window panels. The Landmarks Preservation Committee designated the building a historical landmark in 1982—noting it as "outstanding for its spatial clarity, scale and beauty of form"—and allowed for a full replacement, in kind, of the building's curtain wall assembly.[20] This "radical facelift" has significant implications for a theory of the preservation of postwar modernist architecture.[21] It suggests that, in contrast to Ruskin's emphasis on literal materiality, certain buildings are characterized less by their physical instantiation than by the concept of the design. And therefore, any attempt to preserve and restore such buildings must determine its original grammar—the rules of its design—in order to preserve the meaning of a given structure. The logic of its rules will determine the appropriate degree to which restoration and alteration can occur without altering the original meaning of the design. Thus the entirety of Lever House's literal glass curtain-wall could be replaced with new, updated materials while maintaining the integrity of the initial design. The original tinted wired spandrel glass, no longer manufactured, was replaced with as close to a match to the original as possible. The original steel subframe was replaced with a concealed glazing channel, reflecting a state of the art solution in today's curtainwall technology. Throughout the restoration process, the materials were replaced—either in kind or as closely as possible—so as to reproduce the quality of the idea.

MANUFACTURERS HANOVER TRUST

Consider also the Manufacturers Trust Company Building, the preservation of which goes even further in extending the original design intention. Often seen as the very model of modernism (fig. 2), It was built in 1954, two years after Lever House, at 510 Fifth Avenue on the southwest corner of West 43rd Street and Fifth Avenue. It is a steel and glass cube with an unbroken glass façade featuring a seven-foot-wide circular metal bank vault visible from the street. Breaking all modes for bank architecture of the time, these elements opened what had been a cloistered world more commonly housed behind masonry walls and produced a novel relationship between architecture and city. Evoking the claim that the idea is paramount, *Architectural Forum* referred to the building as "the first big building truly to fulfill architects' immaculate drafting board idea of glass

FIGURE 2:
MANUFACTURERS
HANOVER TRUST

as an invisible material."[22] Particularly notable is the sense in which the meaning of the design is precisely the appearance of the building's materiality, rather than its materiality as such. In contrast to the formidable stone and shuddered fortresses of the premodern, the building's guiding design concept is the impression of an extreme, unparalleled lightness. "If it is characteristic of the human gesture to signify beyond its simple existence in fact, to inaugurate a meaning," Merleau-Ponty writes, "it follows that every gesture is comparable to every other. They all arise from a single syntax."[23] Almost everything in the syntax, or grammar, of the Manufacturers Trust building contributes to its meaning, to the unparalleled appearance of lightness. Supported by eight interior columns set eleven feet from the Fifth Avenue building line and twenty feet from the West 43rd Street building line, the secondfloor concrete slab cantilevers off the columns and is set back from the clear glass curtain wall façade. Accordingly, the main banking areas appear to be contained within one forty-foot-high space and the second-floor slab seems to float. Both the concrete slabs and the external metal skeleton were kept extremely thin,

"PARTICULARLY NOTABLE IS THE SENSE IN WHICH THE MEANING OF THE DESIGN IS PRECISELY THE APPEARANCE OF THE BUILDING'S MATERIALITY, RATHER THAN ITS MATERIALITY AS SUCH."

enhancing the building's appearance of lightness. Finally, cathode tube lights concealed behind thin plastic panels dematerialize the surface of the ceiling producing an impression of weightlessness. A true landmark in the delineation of space—and an arrangement of elements far beyond mere existence in fact—its design completely transformed our concept of the glass wall creating an entirely new relationship between interior and exterior.[24]

More than a half century after its construction, the building's striking formal clarity and rich history remain. The evolution of the city, however, has rendered its technical efficiency and programmatic relevance obsolete. 510 Fifth Avenue was optimized to the standards and ideals of its day. But by 2010, its original owner had closed its bank branch, the building's technological innovations were long outdated, and it no longer met the standards of contemporary architecture. In 2012 SOM adapted the building for retail, allowing old forms to meet the demand for new functions. Beyond the mere replacement of the structure's existing materiality, the adaptation required more significant changes that would work within the logic of the original concept. By means of subtle architectural alterations that tailor the space for an alternate purpose, they preserved the formal ingenuity of a unique and historic architecture while simultaneously producing new relationships between architecture and city. Drawing on archival research and guided by the original design intentions, SOM preserved the building's architectural meaning by preserving or restoring its primary elements including the glass curtain wall facade, the vast luminous ceilings, the Bertoia-designed screen, the white marble piers, and the celebrated circular stainless-steel vault door. The renovation and restoration of its glowing ceilings and polished plate glass façade brilliantly maintain the building's lucid grace and almost complete erasure of the threshold between architecture and city.[25]

To adapt the building for new uses, the architects integrated entrances into the building's east façade, divided the first floor to allow for additional tenants, and rotated the escalators to run parallel with the new partial-glass demising wall. By preserving the original architecture while adapting certain of its features for programmatic change, the renovation produces a kind of urban monument, one that is simultaneously both retrospective and prospective. On the one hand, the building's preservation brings forth layers of accrued implication deposited by time and human experience into contemporary urban life—almost Victorian in its materiality. On the other hand, the vitality of adaptive reuse lies in its essential engagement with the precise demands of the present. It allows for an architecture

that takes on new and disparate functions thereby producing new meanings. It directly mediates between past and present in an ever-changing world of shifting values—and, in this instance, it is precisely by virtue of this juxtaposition of past and present that the mutual inflection of elements bestow significance on one another.

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY

The idea of preserving architectural intent reached an apex in 2016 with Polaris Hall, SOM's addition to the United States Air Force Academy campus

FIGURE 3: POLARIS HALL

(fig. 3). With a scope far beyond that of Lever House or Manufacturers Hanover Trust, the project sought to extend the extreme rigor of the original concept into a completely new structure. It found in the depth of the initial concept the possibility for a building that would preserve the meaning of the original while begetting new meaning, born of the established relationships between already existing elements. This, in extreme contrast to the literalism

of the premodern Romantics, implies a theory of preservation at its most speculative, in which we locate the maturation of a future in the fecundity of the present. Its original design concept contained futures within its logic, allowing for precisely the kind of addition conceived almost a half-century later.

Begun in 1954 after the establishment of the United States Air Force Academy by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, the project is located at an elevation of 6,500 feet along the foothills of the Rampart Range of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado. Given the scope of the project—both a university and flight training academy, nine buildings in total—the concept not only addressed individual buildings but both the natural landform and the interrelationships between buildings.[26] By creating artificial terraces at the ridge crest with a series of concrete retaining walls, the plan allows the spaces between buildings to open into the larger landscape, maintaining the expansive character of the site.[27] The buildings in the Cadet Area—sited on the highest ridge and the symbol of the Academy to the public—were nestled into the mesa, allowing the structures' monumentality to be apparent from outside the complex while maintaining a human scale and smaller perceived-size from the pedestrian level. The entire area is based on a seven-foot module that produced the relationships and proportions of the buildings throughout. It produced the sizes of the beams and structural bays in the Cadet Quarters, as well as the width of the rooms, windows, spandrel panels and the detailing of the facades. Delineated rows of marble tile on the Terrazzo produce gridlines that reflect the module, a twenty-eight-foot organizing grid. The module organized the buildings and the space, but never restricted them resulting in "an extraordinarily sensitive composition of built and natural forms."[28] The corners of the grid were intentionally left open and implied, creating breaks in the horizontal plane that mirror those on the vertical plane, in the upper level loggias and height drops of the Academic Building and Cadet Quarters. The lengthwise visual momentum of the buildings—themselves floating on pilotis above open space—elevated above its surrounding terrain produced sensations of expansive soaring. Set against this backdrop of horizontality and the dramatic vertical peaks of the Rampart Range, the Cadet Chapel—the focal point of the Cadet Area—is intentionally distinct. Visually separated from the Court of Honor by its unique surface treatment, its wide ramp, and its dissimilar landscaping, the Chapel functions as the virtuosic punctum of the composition.

A half-century after its opening, the United States Air Force Academy sought an addition to its campus. Serving as an education and research

center and situated opposite and offset from the Cadet Chapel, Polaris Hall functions as the new home of the Academy's Center for Character and Leadership Development. Built in 2016 and designed by SOM, the addition's puzzle-like fit is as if the idea of the building were embedded within the concept of the original design. And in a sense, it was. It is a future that grew out of the outline and fecundity of the initial design. It is in this sense that the addition of Polaris Hall preserves the original, articulating the survival of its concept in another form.

Given the sensitivity necessary in adding to the sacred ground of the existing Academy, the Air Force proposed a competition between the three principal offices of SOM: San Francisco, Chicago and New York. The design jury consisted of Air Force officials Lt. General John Regni and Lt. General Ervin Rokke, architecture historian and critic Joan Ockman, Cornell University School of Architecture dean Kent Kleinman, and Robert Nauman, whose On The Wings of Modernism is widely considered to be the standard work on the architecture of the Air Force Academy. SOM began with a site visit and the design process took shape immediately. Weaving through the surrounding hills and valleys to approach the existing campus, the buildings came in and out of sight as a kind of dramatic foreshadowing of the intensity of experience induced upon arrival. Seen as a kind of ancient citadel recalling a modern Acropolis, the monumental scale of both site and architecture produced an almost spiritual effect. The low, long orthogonal lines and overwhelming consistency of the architecture stood in stark contrast to the raised rugged mountaintops and expansive blue sky of the surroundings. Significantly, the team noted that the architecture is raised on pilotis throughout to create cinematic, framed letterbox views of thenatural landscape. These framed views, moreover, align with the grid of the campus that is everywhere present,

> "THIS, IN EXTREME CONTRAST TO THE LITERALISM OF THE PREMODERN ROMANTICS, IMPLIES A THEORY OF PRESERVATION AT ITS MOST SPECULATIVE, IN WHICH WE LOCATE THE MATURATION OF A FUTURE IN THE FECUNDITY OF THE PRESENT."

inscribed in the very ground on which the cadets march. It was this visit to the site—and the attendant recognition of its monumental, quasi-spiritual character—as well as what SOM saw as the inescapable necessity to engage with the logic of the existing grid, that began the process of conceptualizing Polaris Hall.

The SOM design team underwent a period of sustained research into the existing architecture of the Air Force Academy as well as the self-understanding of the institution it houses. It became clear that the discipline of the existing architecture—the omnipresent grid, the perfect orthogonal lines, the exactness of framing—corresponded in important ways to the discipline of the cadets. And central to the Academy's mission (as to its crest), embedded in its conceptual framework like the buildings in the terraced plinth, was the Polaris star. The brightest star in its constellation, Polaris is known as the North Star, and functions as a symbol of the core values of the Academy. SOM used this guiding symbol as the basis of their design, seeking to embody Polaris by means of architecture. The idea to create a structure that emerged directly from the gridlines of the original thickened, rectilinear landscape with a skylight aligned toward Polaris came early. The initial design of the campus addition resembled a telescope, a long shaft extending diagonally from the ground toward the sky. To complement the telescopic form, SOM considered a collaboration with the artist James Turrell, with whom SOM had already collaborated on two other academic buildings. An intermediate design review with Air Force officials, however, caused a subtle but significant change.[29] Concerned that the initial design could be too easily read as a military instrument of violence, the design team added volume to the thin shaft, extending its base to encompass the entire form. This allowed for a more iconic, wing-like shape while bringing light and air into the entire space. The logic of the design follows almost naturally from its origin point of North Star alignment: its sunken form allows for clear views at ground level, glass demising walls bring the skylight as far as possible into the building, and the structure aligns the existing grid with the diagonal angle of Polaris.

The final design, a 105-foot glass-and-steel skylight aligned toward Polaris—the Academy's metaphorical guiding principle—emerges almost inevitably from the existing landscape. Like the Academic Building and Cadet Quarters, its auditorium protrudes into the Terrace level mimicking the stepped terraces of the original design. It follows the straight lines of the campus, preserves crucial sight lines and adheres to the original masterplan grid. It references the materials of the original campus including the colorful

Murano glass tiles that line the entry walls and the granite for the main exterior stairs which was cut from the same quarry used for the Cadet Chapel in 1954. Its structure, diagonal steel plates composed in a triangular grid calibrated to resist lateral forces, directly alludes to the Chapel's triangular repetition. The meeting and seminar rooms surrounding the central space below the Terrace level are comprised of glass storefronts adapted to the campus's seven-foot grid. And yet the building provides its own additional metaphors. Its protruding skylight works as a metaphorical moral compass, a reminder of the Academy's core values. The size and shape of the oculus align precisely with the North Star, signifying the Academy's guiding values. It serves as a source of natural light, and creates a precise optical alignment with the respondent's seat in the Honor Board Room, where investigations into the cadet honor code take place. The details of the building mirror the logic of continuity and break found in the horizontal momentum of the site plan. Shaped like an aircraft tailfin, the building eschews the muscularity of the Cadet Chapel, preserving the campus's existing hierarchy of importance.

An open, transparent nexus of interaction, the terraced levels of the building accommodate gatherings at a variety of scales and levels of formality. Its glass-walled collaboration rooms surround the central space emphasizing and encouraging collaborative, forward-looking research. The entirety of the largely transparent structure is an architectural interpretation of the Academy's moral aspirations more generally, aspirations of communication, transparency, and openness. Embedded within the constraints of the original campus design, Polaris Hall converts morality, sincerity, implicit hierarchies, and guiding principles into physical spatial conditions. Revisiting, renovating and adding to architectural icons requires that the original narrative be considered. And the revisiting engenders its own narrative, related to and born

> “POLARIS HALL, HOWEVER, ACTIVELY REINTERPRETS THE ORIGINAL, EXTENDING AND ADAPTING THE IDEA OF ITS GRID, ITS HIERARCHY, AND ITS MATERIALITY INTO A BRIDGE THAT BONDS PAST AND PRESENT.”

of—but different from—the original.[30] Polaris Hall, for example, can be seen as a kind of secular corollary to the original Cadet Chapel; a temple of research and learning more adequate to the cultural mores of the twenty-first century. In this sense, it is a project that exists in the unique, liminal space between past and present, a portal connecting one to the other.

It is this unique condition that the practice of adaptive reuse engages more broadly. Its ability to preserve an existing building while replacing materials (Lever House), repositioning the program (Manufacturer's Trust) or adding to the original (Polaris Hall), challenges certain widely accepted notions of historic preservation. Because of modernist architecture's unique focus on the rigor of concept, its preservation requires a shift in our understanding of what it means to preserve, which has typically focused on the preservation of the literal. In the case of Lever House, for example, the very materiality of the original object was wholly replaced while retaining its Landmark status, thereby shifting the framework of what it means to preserve modernist architecture. In a kind of response to Theseus's Paradox—the famous thought experiment in which the ship of Theseus, the mythical king and founder of Athens, has been completely replaced over time thus questioning whether the restored ship is the same object as the original—the renovation of Lever House expresses a determinate position. The complete replacement of its curtain wall assembly suggests a radical break in how we approach the historic preservation of modernist architecture. And just as the founder-hero of Athens is associated with major cultural transition and the establishment of a new social order, the preservation approach to Lever House, 510 Fifth Avenue and Polaris Hall heralds a new and radical approach to the practice of preservation more generally.

Viollet-le-Duc's attempt to recreate an original intention based primarily on an imagined fiction, while a radical approach for its time, foregoes any meaningful connection between past and present, as if existing on opposite sides of an unbridgeable gulf. Polaris Hall, however, actively reinterprets the original, extending and adapting the idea of its grid, its hierarchy, and its materiality into a bridge that bonds past and present. Merleau-Ponty claimed that in a successful aesthetic object, its meaning does not exhaust itself in the moment that has occasioned it, but remains as an exemplary type and survives in other situations in other forms and in other times. The United States Air Force Academy does exactly that. The depth and originality of its original conception outlined a future in its origin. The rigor and logic of the design almost included within it the birth of Polaris Hall. It instituted a world unto itself pregnant with transformations to

come. "History," Merleau-Ponty reminds us, "is the maturation of the future in the present, not the sacrifice of the present to an unknown future."[31] The Air Force Academy was decidedly not sacrificed to an unknown future. The fecundity of its original design inaugurated an institution. Its extreme rigor and depth of intention established a future within the logic of its present; a present that called for and made possible its next iteration. Rather than a complete departure from the initial design, Polaris Hall is the maturation of the original conception of the Air Force Academy campus into an inevitable future.

ENDNOTES

1. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," Signs, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston, Ill., 1964), pp. 39-83. The original essay in French, "Le Langage indirect et les voix du silence," was first published in Les Temps Modernes in 1952 and was included in Merleau-Ponty, *Signes* (Paris, 1960).

2. As Ada Louise Huxtable, the dean of American architectural criticism, writes in *The New York Times* in 1968, "What preservation is really all about is the retention and active relationship of the buildings of the past to the community's functioning present." Ada Louise Huxtable, "Where Did We Go Wrong" in *Will They Ever Finish Bruckner Boulevard?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 223.

3. *Ibid.* Notably, the work of Merleau-Ponty is at the heart of some of the most important art criticism of the 20th century, in particular the writing of Michael Fried whose seminal essay "Art and Objecthood" was published in *Artforum* 1967. He cites Merleau-Ponty throughout his writing, and "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence"

in particular. See Michael Fried, "An Introduction to My Art Criticism," *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 28-31.

4. The paper does not claim that SOM architects were explicitly reading Merleau-Ponty's writing. The claim, rather, is that Merleau-Ponty's understanding of how meaning is produced by the interrelationship of parts can help us think productively about the early work of SOM and what it means to preserve that work today.

5.Huxtable, "Where Did We Go Wrong," 223.

6. *Ibid.*

7. So Merleau-Ponty writes, "The primary operation which first constitute signs as signs, makes that which is expressed dwell in them through the eloquence of their arrangement and configuration alone, implants a meaning in that which did not have one, and thus—far from exhausting itself in the instant at which it occurs—inaugurates an order and founds an institution or a tradition." *Ibid*. p. 7. Michael Fried further echoes this sentiment in his description of the English sculptor Anthony Caro: "Everything in Caro's art that is worth looking at—except the color—is in its syntax." Commenting later on these lines, and citing Merleau-Ponty's essay in particular, he writes, "I associated the notion of syntax with that of abstract gesture, but what I saw was that the entire expressive weight of Caro's art was carried by the relations among the girders, I- and T-beam segments, and similar elements out of which his sculptures were made, not by… the industrial, modern-world connotations of his materials." Fried, "An Introduction," 29.

8. This approach is notably different from the more standard approach to Merleau-Ponty within architecture which prioritizes Merleau-Ponty's writing on phenomenology. For an interpretation of Merleau-Ponty and the role of phenomenology in the rise of postmodernism, see Jorge Otero-Pailos, Architecture's Historical Turn: Phenomenology and the Rise of the Postmodern, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

9. Bunshaft joined SOM in 1937 where he remained for more than forty years as lead design partner. He is credited with ushering in a new era of modernist skyscraper design and corporate architecture.

10. John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: George Allen, 1903), 244.

11. *Ibid.*, 177.

12. See, for example, Charles Dellheim, *The Face of the Past: The Presentation of the Medieval Inheritance in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 1982).

13. William Morris, "Preface," *The Nature of Gothic* (Kelmscott Press: London 1892, p.i).

14. William Morris, Philip Webb, et al, "Manifesto of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings," first published 1877, accessible on the society's contempoary website: "The SPAB Manifesto" at

https://www.spab.org.uk/about-us/spab-manifesto, accessed 10 Oct 2019.

15. *Ibid*. For discussion of these lines, see Andrea Elizabeth Donovan, *William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* (Routledge: London 2008), pp. 24 ff.

16. Eugene-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, "Restoration," from *Dictionnaire Raisonné de l'Architecture Française du XIe au XVIe Siècle (1854-1868)*, English translation as *On Restoration* (Sampson Low, Marston: London, 1875).

17. See, for example, Kevin D. Murphy, *Memory and Modernity: Viollet-le-Duc at Vézelay* (Penn State University Press, 1999).

18. Landmarks Preservation Commission (November 9, 1982); Designation List 161, LP-1277.

19. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," 67.

20. *Ibid*.

21. Suzanne Stephens, "The restoration of New York City's Lever House is not so same-old, same-old, as architects SOM and William T. Georgis demonstrate," *Architectural Record,* March 2003, Vol. 191, Issue 3, p. 122.

22. Landmarks Preservation Commission October 21, 1997; Designation List 285 LP-1968. According to Nathaniel Owings, the designers "were encouraged to come up with whatever popped into their heads, and the history and tradition of banking

be damned. Nathaniel A. Owings, *The Spaces in Between: An Architect's Journey* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), 103.

23 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," 68.

24. *Architectural Forum*, "Modern Architecture Breaks through the Glass Barrier [Manufacturers Trust Co. Branch, N.Y.]." Architectural Forum 101 (December 1954): 104-11.

25. For additional background and context to this project (510 Fifth Ave), see Evan Bindelglass, "LPC Chair, Top Architects Review NYC's Adaptive Reuse Projects", New York Imby (Dec 23, 2015), at https://*newyorkyimby.com/2015/12/lpc-chair-top-architects-review-nycs-adaptive-reuse-projects.html/*, accessed October 10, 2019.

26. Robert Bruegman, *Modernism at Mid-Century. The Architecture of the United States Air Force Academy* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago 1994), 47.

27. As Hegel points out in his *Aesthetics,* "Works of art enchant us not because they are so natural but because they have been made so natural." G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, Vol. 1* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 164. The artificiality of the landscape is yet another articulation of the project as willed intention. *Architectural Forum* declared that the architects "shaped the slopes as powerfully as the Babylonians, the Incas, and the Greeks once did." Architectural Forum, "The Air Age Acropolis", *Architectural Forum* 110.6 (June 1959), 158-65.

28. Bruegman, *Modernism at Mid-Century,* 53.

29. Meeting attendees included Lt. General Regni, Dr. Rokke, Colonel (ret) Tom Berry, and Colonel Ackerman.

30. As Nicholas Adams writes in *Casabella,* "it respects everything around it and yet it offers something completely original." Nicholas Adams, "Polaris Hall, Center for Character and leadership Development, Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado," *Casabella 871* (March 2017).

31. The logic of the present unfolds into its future. "It is as if each step taken called for and made possible another step, or as if each successful expression prescribed another task to the spiritual automation or founded an institution whose efficacy it will have never finished experiencing." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," 54.

DESIGN-POLITICS: HOW BUILDINGS MEAN

LAWRENCE J. VALE

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.

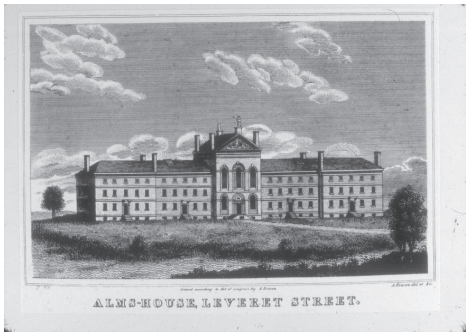

FIGURE 7: ALMSHOUSE

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.

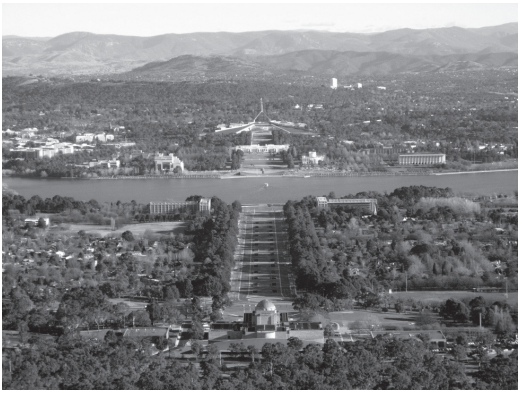

FIGURE 9: CANBERRA

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.

The author wishes to thank Dr. Suzanne Harris-Brandts for her excellent research assistance.

ENDNOTES

1. This phrase, from *On War*, is sometimes translated with the word "policy" replacing "politics" and with the word "by" replaced by "with."

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3. Earlier attempts to deploy Goodman to explain the Lincoln Memorial appear in both editions of Lawrence J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992 and New York: Routledge, 2008).

4. This exclusionary policy was dropped in 1943. At about this time, Maryland artist Mitchell Jamieson created a 12' by 7' mural, called "An Incident in Contemporary American Life," which adorns a wall in basement of the Interior Department Building. On Feb. 1, 2018, to mark the beginning of Black History Month the Interior Department held a ceremony to mark the mural's 75th anniversary. This resulted from the activism of a Massachusetts high school student who wrote an op-ed in the *Washington Post,* as well as letters to federal officials and Oprah Winfrey; Elise Takahama, "Westwood Student Wins Recognition for Forgotten Civil Rights Mural," *Boston Globe,* 1 February 2018; https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2018/02/01/westwood-student-wins-recognition-for-forgotten-civil- rights-mural/RLb65wWYVbOLGuMr6WV4nK/story.html

5. Goodman, 43-44.

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Assemblage 1 (October 1986), 6-23; Stanford Anderson, "Quasi-Autonomy in Architecture: The Search for an 'In-between,'" *Perspecta 33* (2002), 30-37.

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KOOLHAAS' REVISION OF FOUCAULT'S PANOPTICON, OR HOW ARCHITECTURE AND PHILOSOPHY JUST MET

ANDRÉ PATRÃO

1. TO ASK ABOUT THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND ARCHITECTURE

Architecture and philosophy have engaged with one other, directly, marginally, or just simply implicitly, in the works and discourse of academics, practitioners, and critics, most evidently in architectural modernism and postmodernism, but most intensively in the reactions to both. Philosophy has been avidly sought by architects to help question, disclose reveal, systematize, express, and expand the understanding of architectural works, the world upon which they intervene, the discipline itself, and the role of its practitioners and theoreticians. Architecture, in turn, has grown within philosophy from a passing example or an illustrative metaphor of some other matter, or a generally misfit artform within an aesthetic theory, into a topic in its own right—as testified by the recent development of a 'philosophy of architecture.'

The particularly acute multiplication and radicalization of interactions between philosophy and architecture throughout the 20th century produced a number of well-known cases in which an author, work, school, movement, or approach from one discipline had a direct decisive effect the other. Famously, Norberg-Schulz relied heavily on Martin Heidegger's philosophical writings to elaborate his own distinctive architectural phenomenological

theories. Kenneth Frampton, also well-read in the German philosopher's writings, was never shy about the effect Hannah Arendt exerted on him. At times philosophers and architects collaborated, such as in 1985 when Bernard Tschumi invited Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman to design a garden pavilion in Parc de la Villette (1982-1998), or when discussions between Jean Baudrillard and Jean Nouvel were published as the book *The Singular Objects of Architecture* (2002). Preceding them all is of course the philosopher who also briefly became an architect, Ludwig Wittgenstein in the design and construction of House Wittgenstein (1928).

These celebrated examples represent the epitomes of a still widespread tendency which, in diverse ways and to different degrees, shapes both philosophical and architectural works. And yet, seldom does either discipline take a step back to reflect upon the motives and methods of these interactions as a research topic in itself. How does architecture make use of philosophy? How does philosophy speak of architecture? Why does one turn towards the other? What comes about in their doing so?

We shall engage these questions by analyzing one particular case-study of such interactions: the potential influence of philosopher Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975) on architect Rem Koolhaas' Koepel Panopticon Prison renovation project (1981). This connection is far less well-known than the previously mentioned examples, as it is far more low-key. In fact, it is difficult to point out or even discern its existence. However, as shall be seen, this discreteness does not mean that there is no case-study, but rather that discreteness is one of its principal traits, and one which distinguishes it uniquely from the cannon of architecture and philosophy's interactions.

We shall begin by introducing the two protagonists of each domain and their respective contributions to the case-study: first, Foucault and the popular section of *Discipline and Punish*'s chapter "Panopticism;" second, Koolhaas' renovation proposal for the Koepel Panopticon Prison and the explanatory text *Revision* that came with it. Third, we will dwell on how the former's philosophical thinking may have exerted direct yet nearly imperceptible consequential influence upon the latter's architectural project. Fourth and finally, the distinctive characteristics of this case-study shall be brought before the broader questions of how philosophy and architecture can engage one another.

Michel Foucault has long been a recurring reference in architectural discourse. His writings on the socially marginalized, the power structures that set them apart from the mainstream, and the role of a certain conception of knowledge in enforcing this system have informed and influenced architectural concerns, generally—but not only—through the social sciences. His concept of heterotopia, for example, continues to sprout a rich variety of contradictory readings and reflections, while delighting the imagination for architecture researchers, practitioners, researchers, and even students, very much due to his original social critiques and the inspiring images with which he conveyed them. The force of Foucault's impact on architecture is rather surprising, though, considering that architecture is not a major Foucauldian topic, nor even a minor one, nor did he ever produce any literature whatsoever exclusively or even primarily dedicated to architecture. For example, the famous lecture about heterotopias "Of Other Spaces" (*Des Espaces Autres*), delivered to the Circle of Architectural Studies (*Cercle d'Études Architecturales*) in 1967, is in fact little more than a copy of "Heterotopias" (*Des Hétérotopies*), the 1966 radio broadcast on *France Culture* about utopia and literature, and with absolutely no intent to engage architecture at all—much like the concept's first appearance in *The Order of Things (Les Mots et Les Choses,* 1966) which also focused on literature. The closest Foucault came to addressing architecture directly, thematically and extensively was in "Space, Knowledge, and Power," a 33-question interview conducted by American cultural anthropologist Paul Rabinow, and published in the architecture and design journal *Skyline* in on March 1982. However, even there, architecture is not so much discussed directly as a topic in itself but rather as

> "SELDOM DOES EITHER DISCIPLINE TAKE A STEP BACK AND REFLECT UPON THE MOTIVES AND METHODS OF THESE INTERACTIONS AS A RESEARCH TOPIC IN ITSELF. HOW DOES ARCHITECTURE MAKE USE OF PHILOSOPHY? HOW DOES PHILOSOPHY SPEAK OF ARCHITECTURE?"

a gateway into topics that underlie it (e.g. knowledge and power) which actually interested him. It so happened that they interested architects too.

Indeed, in Foucault's writings architecture and architectural works only tend to appear as metaphors or as case-studies to illustrate and develop some issue other than architecture itself. And perhaps the most effective deployment of both strategies is found in the second section of the chapter "Panopticism" of his book *Discipline and Punish*.

Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison (Surveiller et Punir – Naissance de la Prison), published in 1975, is a genealogical inquiry into the emergence of the modern prison system, particularly in France, and a study of its disciplinary mechanisms' widespread presence in many other areas of society. The emphasis falls on the reformist disciplinary penal system developed since the late 18th / early 19th century which, though far more benign than the punitive system it supplanted, nevertheless constituted an intensive form of generalized social control. At the center of this kind of disciplinarity are surveillance strategies—as hinted at in the discrepancy between the book's original title (*Surveiller et Punir*) and its English translation (*Discipline and Punish*), where the French *surveiller* ("to monitor", in the sense of "surveillance") is replaced by "discipline."

To illustrate these disciplinary mechanisms, Foucault resorts to what he considers their most paradigmatic example: the panopticon, a building typology devised, curiously enough, not by an architect but by renowned the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), inspired by his brother Samuel's organization of industrial labor compounds. In its simplest and most characteristic form, the panoptical typology consists of a cylindrical multi-story arrangement of partitions around a central observation house. The observers at the center have a constant unhindered view into every partitioned space; hence the typology's name from the combination of the Ancient Greek *pan* (all) and *optikos* (pertaining to sight), meaning "all-seen" or "all-under-sight." From within the partitioned spaces, however, it is impossible to perceive what happens in the observation house.[1] Thus, in a panoptical system, a small number of observers can monitor a large number of people at any given time; the prominent feature, though, is that those monitored, unable to verify when they are or are not in fact being watched act as if they always are. The prisoners thus become their own guards.

Foucault, like Bentham, regards the panopticon as an architectural formulation of certain Benthanian philosophical and social principles—in a way making it too a case-study of architectural and philosophical interaction—which Bentham celebrates optimistically in *Panopticon; or,*

the Inspection-House[2] (Figure 1) and Foucault denounces bleakly in *Discipline and Punish*. For both, however, architecture is only employed as a means to make a point, but is not the point itself. Foucault does not invoke the panopticon *because* it is architecture. In *Discipline and Punish* the panopticon is both a metaphor—the disciplinary power relations described throughout the book symbolized by the dramatic image of the archetypal surveillance techniques employed to enforce it—and a case-study: not just a representation but a paradigmatic operational mechanism that enables and enforces the power structures of which Foucault speaks. Throughout the "Panopticism" chapter, Foucault's interpretation and depiction of the panopticon ends up producing a philosophical description of an architectural typology, by expounding its historical origin, purpose, possible functions, modes of operation, formal characteristics, and societal role. Inadvertently, though, in doing so his reading also becomes an interpretation of the panopticon *qua* architectural object, albeit one grounded on his own understanding of architecture seen later in "Space, Knowledge, and Power," as an mere instrument of far greater underlying forces. Hence this is why, in his words:

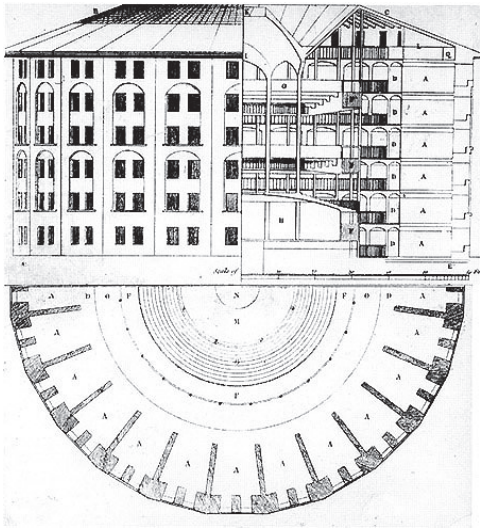

FIGURE 1:
BENTHAM'S PANOPTICON

> "ARCHITECTURAL WORKS ONLY TEND TO APPEAR IN FOUCAULT'S WRITINGS AS METAPHORS, TO ILLUSTRATE A NON-ARCHITECTURAL POINT, OR AS CASE-STUDIES, TO ILLUSTRATE AND DEVELOP SOME OTHER NON-ARCHITECTURAL ISSUE"

> the Panopticon must not be understood as a dream building: it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; its functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance or friction, [may very well] be represented as a pure architectural and optical system: it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached

from any specific use.[3]

Discipline and Punish thus unwittingly offers a philosophical critique of an architectural object and, with it, an accessible way from architecture into Foucault's philosophical thinking.

Between 1979 and 1981, Koolhaas made use of both.

3. REM KOOLHAAS, AND THE KOEPEL PANOPTICON PRISON

The second protagonist of this story is a young Rem Koolhaas, renowned in the architecture world after *Delirious New York* (1978) but still seeking to establish himself as a practitioner. In 1978, his Office for Metropolitan Architecture produced what would become the first entry in their official list of projects: the Dutch Parliament Extension, in The Hague, Netherlands. Despite an *ex aequo* first place in the competition, alongside the Dutch architect Leo Heijdenrijk , the proposal was ultimately rejected along with all the others. However, OMA was granted what Koolhaas called a "consolation prize:" in 1979, the Dutch Government commissioned OMA to assess the possibility of prolonging the lifetime, by another 50 years, of a prison, built in Arnhem between 1882 and 1886. (Figure 2) The original building, designed by Dutch architect and engineer Johan Frederik Metzelaar, was known as the *Koepelgevangenis*—a conjunction of the Dutch words "jail" (*gevangenis*) and "cupola" (*koepel*), alluding to its distinctive large domed roof. Along the inside of its cylindrical walls were four floors of holding cells, around a guardhouse at the center from which guards could originally see into every cell without being seen. In other words, the Arnhem *Koepel* was a panoptical prison.

OMA's proposal adds a series of new functions and structures to the prison complex: outside of the original building to the east there is the entrance, lobby, reception area, porter's room, and meeting room; from here a visitor heads south, to the visitor's garden and visitor's room; to the north is the pavilion for difficult prisoners, a kitchen, and a patio in between, as well as a storage area; to the west is the guard's' canteen, guard's' cloak room, instruction department, shops, and more storage space, as well as the sports area, which includes a gymnasium, judo room, multi-purpose room, running track, sports field, and a pool. Inside the old Koepel dome is a library, barber, meeting room, shop, and an infirmary.

The original building undergoes modifications as well: two new satellite structures house living quarters, dining rooms, and bathrooms, enabling the possibility of dividing the inmates of each floor into two groups (of

sensibly 48 people each), or even more if the satellite is divided too; and the cells, no longer constantly translucent to the guards, offer privacy. The most significant change, though, is the replacement of the central guardhouse by two lower-level streets intercepting in a cruciform manner, containing several of the aforementioned functions and opening access to the rest of the complex. In *S, M, L, XL* (1995), Koolhaas alludes to this simultaneously metaphorical and practical gesture with two gruesome frames from Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali's film *Un Chien Andalou* (1929), displaying an eye being cut: the crossing streets cut the all-seeing eye, the *pan-optikos*. In other words, Koolhaas removes panopticism from the panopticon.

FIGURE 2:
ARNHEM PRISON

> "THE CROSSING STREETS CUT THE ALL-SEEING EYE, THE PAN-OPTIKOS. IN OTHER WORDS, KOOLHAAS REMOVES PANOPTICISM FROM THE PANOPTICON."

Both generalist and specialized literature commonly assume that OMA's redesign of the Koepel Panopticon Prison was strongly influenced by *Discipline and Punish*, published just four four years before the commission, and by Foucauldian thinking in general. One of the earliest and most prominent examples of these texts was Anthony Vidler's article "The Ironies of Metropolis: Notes on the Work of OMA," published in *Skyline* in March 1982—by no coincidence in the same *Skyline* edition issue that included Foucault's interview "Space, Knowledge, and Power." According to Vidler, "[in the Arnhem prison project] we find echoes of a reading of Michel Foucault, whose studies of discipline and power have strongly influenced the politics and strategies of the generation of OMA.", and it is "in the space marked by Foucault after

Nietzsche, that the project has been conceived." [4]

Indeed, the easily accepted assumption of Foucauldian influence on the Koepel renovation does not appear to raise any red flags that would lead us to question it. Until we do question it, that is: Exactly where is this influence? We ought to remember that the current inquiry does not merely search for a possible Foucauldian interpretation of the project, one amongst many that a critic may adopt to understand Koolhaas' project once concluded, but rather the actual Foucauldian influence during the design process that produced the project. Thus, instead of assuming the existence of a case-study, we must first ask if there really is a case *to* study.

The task presents difficulties though. As it turns out, Koolhaas and Foucault actually met in what we could well imagine to be a pivotal event: Around seven years before the Arnhem commission, architecture student Rem Koolhaas had just arrived in Ithaca (New York, USA), where he would attend Cornell University from 1972 to 1973. In the fall semester of 1972, Foucault spent three weeks at Cornell lecturing at Cornell's Romance Studies Department. The celebrity French thinker and the promising Dutch pupil became acquainted during this time. The encounter itself, though, was not especially life-changing. Recalling the occasion in an interview with *The Cornell Journal of Architecture 8*: *RE* (2004), Koolhaas affirms that he "cannot claim any kind of significant intellectual influence"[5] from Foucault. Admittedly, the answer is disappointing, but not surprising, coming from someone who readily makes use of his formidably rich knowledge of his and other various fields in his works, but resolutely resists sacrificing his authorial originality to them. In 2008, in an interview for *Radical Philosophy*, the interviewers Jon Goodbun and David Cunningham noted how other architects of the same generation—Eisenman, Tschumi, and Libeskind—explicitly associated themselves with various philosophical trends while Koolhaas did not, to which he answered, after listing multiple philosophers he was acquainted with: "I don't think these influences or relationships necessarily need to be flagged up. But it's not an indifference to these thinkers."[6]

Indeed, any claim of an 'influence' upon Koolhaas must be cautious in its use of the word. Rather than a powerful force that invades and pervades his work, an 'influence' for Koolhaas seems more like an ingredient which he takes hold of, tinkers with, processes and mixes with others to produce something of his own. The original sources of these external contributions become almost untraceable. It is in this sense that we must understand an exceptional confession, made at an event hosted by ETH Zürich in 2011, regarding *Delirious New York,* published in the same year as the Arnhem

commission:

> [There is something which is generally not recognized,] that actually this book was a kind of French book, in the sense that it was profoundly influenced not only by Barthes, but also to some extent by Foucault, and particularly by somebody who had become my personal friend, Hubert Damisch.[7]

Could the same be said specifically for the Arnhem project, though? In 1981 OMA handed in the Arnhem renovation project to the Dutch Ministry of Justice with an essay called *Revision* containing an overall historical analysis of the Arnhem Koepel prison and its typology; the theoretical and conceptual framework in which OMA operated; and an objective programmatic and formal description of the project itself. The text was later published in *S, M, L, XL* (1995), a book traversed through and through by a cornucopia of words simulating a dictionary, and which includes three entries quoted from Foucault: 'exclusion', quoted from Foucault's 1970 address to the Collège de France under the entitled "*L'ordre du discours*," translated by Alan Sheridan in 1972 as "The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language;" and, from *Discipline and Punish,* 'visibility' and 'power.'[8] We may, however, argue that these dictionary entries came after the fact, as a later recognition of an influence.

Nevertheless, *Revision* also contains other little (but more than coincidental) connections. For one thing, the text's description of the panopticon uses a series of words that appear in Alan Sherridan's English translation of *Discipline and Punish*, but not, for example, in Bentham's *Panopticon; or, the Inspection House* (e.g. referring to the panopticon's floors as 'rings' instead of 'circumferences').

More importantly, though, *Revision* echoes Foucault's bleak critical interpretation of the panopticon, resorting to similar reasons and

"INDEED, THE EASILY ACCEPTED ASSUMPTION OF FOUCAULDIAN INFLUENCE ON THE KOEPEL RENOVATION DOES NOT APPEAR TO RAISE ANY RED FLAGS THAT WOULD LEAD US TO QUESTION IT. UNTIL WE DO QUESTION IT, THAT IS: EXACTLY WHERE IS THIS INFLUENCE?"

description, so much so that we can even pinpoint *Revision's* similarities to the first two paragraphs, and perhaps part of the third, of the second section of "Panopticism." Once again, though, we may counter by noting that perhaps these similarities only suggest a shared intellectual context between Foucault and Koolhaas, with crossing issues, discussions, and approaches, like Vidler had noted so well. This was already the case at Cornell, for the same academic milieu that brought Foucault to campus, and that even pioneered the introduction of continental philosophy in the USA through the journal *Diacritic*, surrounded Koolhaas during his studies. It is no coincidence that Koolhaas had also read Roland Barthes, another renowned structuralist and later post-structuralist from the same Parisian intellectual scene as Foucault's before producing his "French book."

Indeed, skepticism over the existence of a case study at all seems reinforced by the fact that throught the entire text of *Revision* Foucault is not once quoted, mentioned, or even alluded to even though he explicitly references the evaluation by the governmental Jacobs Committee, the accusations launched by the 19th century Dutch Parliament member Wintgens, and prison typologies experimented with in Amsterdam and Maastricht. Other unnamed decisive forces may also have come into play. Four years before *Discipline and Punish,* Robin Evans published the article "Bentham's Panopticon: An Incident in the Social History of Architecture" (1971) in the *Architecture Association Quarterly,* while Koolhaas, an eager reader of these issues, was still a student at the school. Evans, curiously enough, quoted one of Foucault's earlier publications in the essay, suggesting that not only was he acquainted with the French philosopher's work, but found him pertinent for the topic too. Their readings differed though: for example, Evans' focuses less on the role of authority—distinguishing his reading from Koolhaas' and Foucault's—but more on the panopticon's solitary confinement—like Koolhaas', but unlike Foucault's. This may explain certain particularities of *Revision's* interpretation of the panoptical typology: on the one hand its two main pillars are the all-seeing surveillance system and solitary confinement, not so emphatically highlighted by Foucault; on the other hand, it often omits critical components of *Discipline and Punish,* such as the panopticon's imposition of self-surveillance upon the surveyed, a fundamental point for both Bentham and Foucault.

An alternative possible explanation, though, comes from the same event in which Koolhaas admitted some degree of Foucauldian influence:

[S]omehow I have a kind of sense of reticence, or chastity, or perhaps

> it is that I write in my own kind of mind more literature than theory that prevents me from mentioning all these sources. And also because I am deeply aware that I am the kind of result of very respectable influences but also very unrespectable influences and that everything is a kind of amalgamation of trash and high culture […].[9]

In other words, we should not expect to find a smoking gun of direct influence as it may be dissolved with other elements, or even not exist at all. The difficulty in confirming the assumption of a case-study is both due to the fact that because the links between the architect's and the philosopher's works are not explicitly demarcated, and also because these are irreducible to a single simple and uncorrupted instance, act, or event. The cause lies partially with Foucault's less than marginal interest in architecture, but mostly with Koolhaas' own attitude towards external influences. It is nearly impossible to pinpoint an irrefutable, straightforwardly Foucauldian effect upon the Arnhem design, or to determine exactly how much can indeed be directly attributed to Foucault, or how many links were consciously forged by Koolhaas. Notwithstanding, a reading of *Revision* shall come to show that, to a significant degree, the Koepel design does indeed deal with a Foucauldian approach to a Foucauldian representation and discussion of a Benthanian object, regardless of whether this was or was not deliberate. It is in this sense that we can claim the existence of a case-study.

“THE KOEPEL DESIGN DOES INDEED DEAL WITH A FOUCAULDIAN APPROACH TO A FOUCAULDIAN REPRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF A BENTHANIAN OBJECT, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THIS WAS OR WAS NOT DELIBERATE.”

4. THE FOUCALDIAN 'INFLUENCE' (AND LACK OF) IN KOOLHAAS' DESIGNREVISION: KOOLHAAS FROM, THROUGH, BEYOND, BESIDES FOUCAULT

How does Foucault's and particularly *Discipline and Punish*'s influence appear in OMA's project for the Arnhem panopticon renovation? To better

understand the design process we return to the explanations given in *Revision*, whose seven small chapters may be split between a critical analysis of the old Koepel—from historical overviews to the broader architectural debates they provoke, and of the new proposal that follows—from its conceptual aim to its formulation as an architectural project.

The first few paragraphs contain OMA's interpretation of the panopticon *qua* typology, and of the Arnhem panopticon in particular. More than simply an introduction for the reader, this description reveals the architects' grounding interpretations of the site's pre-existing conditions, thus constituting the object upon which to intervene. For example, we could conceive of the Arnhem prison in terms of its urban situation, or of its distinct cylindrical form, or its colossal dome, the interior lighting, materiality, running costs, or environmental sustainability. Each different reading of the site's pre-existing conditions derives from different approaches, theoretical frameworks, priorities, interests, and many other factors which reveal and emphasize different aspects of the site and call for different responses

Koolhaas construes the Koepel according to "the Panopticon Principle, with its mechanistic ideal," as an application of "a universal principle of organization for situations in which a small group of supervisors monitors a much larger group of supervised." For Koolhaas, "[t]he Arnhem Koepel represents the principle in its purest form: a single, all-seeing "eye" is placed dead center in a circle of the observed." However, this principle, "[o]ne hundred years later, has become intolerable."[10] In these words we recognize a synthetic and superficial semblance to Foucault's reading of Bentham's description of the panopticon: the stress on its mechanistic character and the purity of an ideal put into an architectural form is even reminiscent of the previously quoted passage of *Discipline and Punish* concerning the panopticon's not being a 'dream building'. In other words, OMA's interpretation of the pre-existing object, upon which they, as architects, shall intervene upon, broadly coincides with a Foucauldian critical philosophical description of the panoptical typology.

Turning *Revision's* pages and moving towards the contents of OMA's own proposal, implicit reference to the philosopher, no longer limited to *Discipline and Punish,* persists. Consider, for example, Koolhaas' argument for programmatic flexibility, rather than ideal pre-determined architectural formal typologies (Koolhaas' real interest), as a manner of accounting for the inevitably incessant historically shifting ideologies and their social formulation (Foucault's real interest):

If prison architecture today can no longer pretend to embody

an "ideal", it could regain credibility by introducing the theme of revision as *raison d'être.* A "modern" prison architecture would consist of a prospective archaeology, constantly projecting new layers of "civilization" on old systems of supervision.[11]

A reader familiar with Foucault cannot help hearing echoes of the philosopher's own concept of "archaeology", as conveyed for example in *The Birth of the Clinic: an Archaeology of Medical Perception (Naissance de la Clinique – une Archéologie du Regard Médical,* 1963) and *Archaeology of Knowledge* (L'Archéologie du Savoir, 1969). Koolhaas' prospective archaeology both presupposes and builds from Foucault's archaeological method: on the one hand, it rejects trans-historical and trans-cultural absolute social and (consequentially) architectural models, embracing instead the constant transformation of what societies, or "civilizations" as the architect put it, regard as the best model in each period; on the other hand, it then turns this Foucauldian analytical tool deployed on the past for an understanding of the present into a generative design principle projected towards the future. Hence prospective archaeology, which does not simply create a new archaeological layer with the next prison typology, but rather builds on the fact of their inevitable demise and replacement. The Arnhem renovation project is founded on the thematization of prospective archaeology.

"Arnhem could be an experiment with a form of renovation that articulates programmatic and ideological change without destroying the building itself."[12]

Foucault's implicit presence as a reference understandably disappears as the design progresses deeper into architectural and technical territory. OMA's actual design gravitates around the surrealist-inspired metaphor of cutting the panopticon's all-seeing eye, executed by replacing the guardhouse

with the two sunken streets from which the rest of the project spreads out. While this gesture may act upon Foucault's reading of the panopticon, it certainly does not act according to him. In fairness, *Discipline and Punish* is mostly a descriptive endeavor, and thus does not offer prescriptive orientations that Koolhaas could follow. But would he, who so vehemently rejects external dominance over his work, ever agree to follow them even if he could?

In the end, the full weight and extent of Foucault's influence upon OMA's design process is measured not only by philosophy's presence, but also by philosophy's absence. While *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault, and philosophy in general do introduce decisive inputs throughout the design process, particularly in the initial interpretation of the pre-existing and in preparing an approach towards it, architecture is never sidelined as the dominating force. The Koepel renovation project was not meant as a mere literal architectural formulation, expression, or translation of philosophical principles, discussions, and ideas. Koolhaas meant to design, first and foremost, an architectural project—a seemingly banal yet radically simple approach within the larger architecture world's interactions with philosophy.

5. PHILOSOPHY FOR ARCHITECTURE„ ARCHITECTURE FOR PHILOSOPHY

Despite two years of discussions with the Dutch authorities and, eventually, an approval for construction, OMA's proposal for the Arnhem prison was never built. Its indefinite suspension was not due to any particular conceptual or programmatic problems, but to an all-too-familiar reason for architects; lack of funding. The Koepel would eventually be renovated by Martin van Dort, of Archivolt Architecten BV, in a process that started in 1994- and only ended in 2005.[13] But the declining number of prisoners in the Netherlands led the classified national monument to be closed in 2016, and sold in 2018.

Nevertheless, OMA's Arnhem panopticon renovation project remains an exceptional, unique, and—design-wise—highly successful instance of a consequential interaction between philosophy and architecture. This outcome may surprise considering the two protagonists involved, the way they work within their own disciplines, and how they interact with the other's: Foucault's disinterest in architecture as a research topic and Koolhaas' almost indiscriminate appropriating, and critiquing of the vast

multiple sources he knows.

The result is a case-study as much about architecture and philosophy's interested interaction as concepts and topics become shared across disciplinary boundaries as it is about their disjunction. We do not find an authoritative philosophical imposition of ill-fitting, inadequate, and even just unrealistic principles, norms, and judgements upon architecture. Instead, Foucault works within his own concerns, but develops them in such a way that they offer themselves to appropriation. In an interview with the geographers of the journal *Herodote*, in 1976, Foucault, insistently confronted with the fact that he had not said much about geography in his writings, offers a reply that can just as well be applied to architecture:

> If I do the analyses I do, it's not because of some polemic I want to arbitrate but because I have been involved in certain conflicts regarding medicine, psychiatry and the penal system. […] It's up to you, who are directly involved with what goes on in geography [or architecture], faced with all the conflicts of power which traverse it, to confront them and construct the instruments which will enable you to fight on that terrain. And what you should basically be saying to me is, 'You haven't occupied yourself with this matter which isn't particularly your affair anyway and which you don't know much about'. And I would say in reply, 'If one or two of these "gadgets" of approach or method that I've tried to employ with psychiatry, the penal system or natural history can be of service to you, then I shall be delighted. If you find the need to transform my tools or use others then show me what they are, because it may be of benefit to me.'[14]

This is where Koolhaas comes in. Not, however, as the architect who obsessively attempts to

"KOOLHAAS DID NOT SIMPLY COPY FOUCAULT INTO ARCHITECTURE, BUT RATHER BORROWED HIS CONCEPTUAL AND TERMINOLOGICAL CLARITY TO DEVELOP AND BETTER EXPRESS HIS OWN ONGOING ARCHITECTURAL DISCUSSIONS"

translate philosophical concepts into architectural form as if there lay an unassailable absolute foundation for architectural designs, and much less to superficially legitimize his work with empty or misunderstood quotations of a celebrated philosopher. Koolhaas, both a brilliant theoretician and practitioner, respectfully instrumentalizes philosophy and, along with many other tools, takes what he needs as and when he needs it for the sake of the production of an architectural project first and foremost. His sources, almost impossible to isolate in a single moment of contact, may also very well arise from the sheer shared discourse between disciplines, which often includes influential literature like *Discipline and Punish* and, it would seem, seminal works of architecture too.

The Arnhem project thus shows architects how their designs can gain from resorting to philosophy without sacrificing architecture in the process. However, there are relevant insights for philosophers as well. While Foucault's study of the panopticon created a philosophical critique of an architecture object, Koolhaas' design in turn created a philosophically-charged architectural reaction to a Foucauldian interpretation of Bentham's panopticon—the conception of the pre-existing object upon which OMA intervened. The Koepel renovation project contains an architectural critique of the Benthanian utilitarian vision that originated the panoptical typology, and a critical conversation with Foucault's own critique of it. As such, it can be read in philosophical terms, even if the architect's action itself is not philosophy nor primarily philosophically motivated, for it does engage in a dialogue with philosophy even if through the distinct means of architecture. The Koepel Panopticon Prison renovation is therefore not just a case-study for architects, but for philosophers too.

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"IT DOES ENGAGE IN A DIALOGUE WITH PHILOSOPHY AND ITS SUBJECTS, EVEN IF THROUGH THE DISTINCT MEANS OF ARCHITECTURE."

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USELESS SPECULATION: ARCHITECTURAL OBSOLESCENCE AND THE MICRO-PARCELS OF GORDON MATTA-CLARK'S FAKE ESTATES (1973)

RICK FOX

"History doesn't repeat, but it often rhymes." --Mark Twain

INTRODUCTION

More often than not, architecture is created to bolster the express beliefs and ambitions of those who sponsor it. Individuals, groups, and institutions in power tend to promulgate symbols of their own prestige. Architecture is thus understood as a tool of the powerful and by the powerful. Real estate speculators are undeniable agents of change; they possess genuine power to transform both natural and built landscapes. Many aspects of the change they promulgate are public and highly visible; others much less so. Processes such as title transfer, subdivision, lot merger, covenants, deed restrictions, dedications, and easements vary greatly in their degree of public visibility. While the twin pillars of real estate economics—market value and investment performance (and their shadow features of irrational exuberance and obsolescence)—do not figure prominently in most academic literature on architecture, these topics have become unavoidable for today's practitioners. An exploration of the

broader philosophical implications of an economically speculative architecture created, bought, and sold by a surprisingly small number of financial elites is highly relevant for anyone wishing to be on the side of fairness of opportunity in the context of today's staggering wealth inequality.[1]

The work of SoHo-based American artist Gordon Matta-Clark is particularly instructive in this regard for two reasons. First, architecture is simultaneously the subject matter and the medium of much of his creative output. Second, he challenges many cherished beliefs about the production of architecture. My point of departure in this essay will be an exploration of one of his lesser known but more conceptually-oriented works, *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* ("Fake Estates"). This work has been largely overlooked by critics eager to comment on his more famous building-cuts. Additionally, *Fake Estates* was a work conceived at a time in the 1970's when New York City was teetering on the verge of municipal bankruptcy, while at the same time promoting massive urban renewal schemes that clearly favored rapacious real estate speculation. These twin circumstances proved fertile ground for Matta-Clark in his work generally, and *Fake Estates* in particular.

In this paper, I argue that this specific work offers us valuable architectural and philosophical lessons if we view it as a *reductio* argument that: 1) exposes several contradictory values that underpin real estate speculation; and, 2) highlights potential pitfalls in the architect-speculator relation.

GENEALOGY OF REALITY PROPERTIES: FAKE ESTATES

In late 1973 and early 1974 Gordon Matta-Clark, best known for his building-cuts *Splitting* (1974) Englewood, N.J, and *Conical Intersect* (1975) Paris, purchased fifteen surplus parcels of land sight unseen for between $25 and $75 each from the New York City Real Estate Department at two separate public auctions. Fourteen of the parcels are located in Queens, and one on Staten Island. The parcels are tiny odd-shaped fragments ranging in size from a 27 square foot triangular sliver to a 355-foot long strip. The complete inventory of parcels is diagrammed in Figure 1. If all fifteen parcels were somehow aggregated their total area would be 3,264 square feet, not even enough to make a tiny residential lot in Queens.

Subsequent to their purchase, Matta-Clark collected all the relevant legal documents including notarized grant deeds, legal descriptions, sales

contracts, and parcel maps, along with numerous black & white photos he took during various site visits. The discrete works we know today as *Fake Estates* were assembled posthumously, in 1992, by his widow Jane Crawford, prompted by the urging of Corrine Diserens, a curator from the Institut Valencià d'art Modern (IVAM) in Valencia Spain who was researching a Matta-Clark retrospective, using the original materials he collected. While Crawford named the individual works, i.e. "Little Alley" Block 2497, Lot 42 (1974); "Jamaica Curb" Block 10142, Lot 15 (1974); "Maspeth Onions" Block 2406, Lot 148 (1973); and "Sidewalk Grass" Block 1107, Lot 146 (1973), it was Diserens who, in her retrospective, named the full collection *Reality Properties: Fake Estates.* The original materials themselves have an interesting provenance that is relevant here. Matta-Clark gave the materials to his friend Norman Fisher who agreed to hold them after Fisher agreed to pay the property taxes that Matta-Clark was repeatedly ignoring. When Fisher died in 1977, his executrix Tina Girouard became custodian who then returned the materials to Crawford sometime in 1979 or 1980. Matta-Clark died in 1978, but around 1980 Crawford began receiving what to her were mysterious delinquency notices from the City that the parcels were being confiscated for nonpayment of taxes. Apparently, at the time Crawford was unaware of her husband's purchases. The eventual foreclosures are ironic given that he had purchased these lots at tax-foreclosure auction. In the case of "Staten Island" Block 1224, Lot 12 (50.34 square feet) the unpaid quarterly tax for fiscal 1974 amounted to $1.83. As of 2003 only four of the parcels had been purchased by private entities; the other eleven remained in administrative limbo.

> "IT ONLY TAKES A SMALL SURVEYOR'S ERROR TO CHANGE A PERFECT RECTANGLE INTO AN OFF-KILTER TRAPEZOID WITH AN UNACCOUNTED-FOR SURPLUS SLIVER."

Curiously, Crawford elected not to include the tax bills in the assembled collages deeming them, "no longer relevant to the works"[2] perhaps because she earnestly endeavored to present Matta-Clark's

work in the best possible light—in its purest form. In hindsight, her decision is unfortunate for two reasons. First, given that *Fake Estates* is a posthumously presented work, the record is incomplete (or deceptively oversimplified) without the follow-on story of the aftermath of Matta-Clark's purchases because this story tells us a great deal about his collaborative networking method as an artist and social activist. Second, for our purposes of architecture philosophy the eventual disposition, ownership, and transference of the parcels is relevant as an additional object-lesson consistent with the overall import of his intended project. The fact that eleven of the fifteen parcels appear to remain in administrative limbo is of no small consequence to Matta-Clark's critique of property ownership as well as to my argument as to its importance.

What we know of Matta-Clark's intentions with respect to the fifteen parcels comes from numerous and fragmentary sources. Interviews with his contemporaries produce incomplete and contradictory recollections about his intentions. As one commenter put it, "...the story of *Fake Estates* is both mythologized and full of holes."[3] By other accounts he purchased the lots without a clear intent as to what he planned to do. According to Manfred Hecht, his friend and building-cut collaborator, Matta-Clark lost interest in the properties and it was Hecht who ultimately ended up owning them. One of the clearest expressions of Matta-Clark's intentions comes from *New York Times* reporter Dan Carlinsky writing a humor piece about the city's real estate auctions. When asked by Carlinsky after the auction what he planned to do with the lots, an effusive 28-year old Matta-Clark told the reporter he planned to use them in works of art he would soon be creating. Making reference to one of the parcels that had no access to it from the public right-of-way ("Maspeth Onions", Block 2406, Lot 148) he remarks, "That's an interesting quality; something that can be owned but never experienced. That's an experience itself."[4]

What the total record of recollections, interviews and manuscripts reveal is that at the time the complete work he envisioned consisted of three parts: 1) a written documentation of the parcel including exact dimensions and location, and "perhaps a list of weeds growing there"[5]; 2) a full-scale photo of the property; and 3) the land itself. He intended that parts 1 and 2 would be included in a gallery exhibition, and that purchasers would acquire title to the land as part of their art purchase. Thus, part of his reasoning for buying slivers becomes more obvious in that he regarded these parcel sizes to be "manageable" objects in a gallery setting where, for example, he might hang from the wall a 1-foot x 95-foot rectangular, or a 6-foot isosceles triangle-shaped photograph. Neither the full scale photos

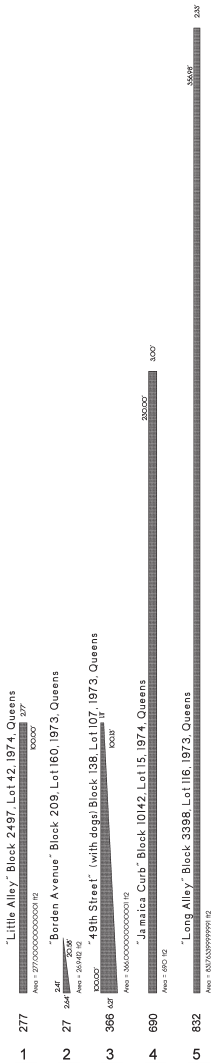

FIGURE 1.1: Micro-parcel Inventory

FIGURE 1:
MICRO-PARCEL INVENTORY

nor the gallery exhibition ever materialized.

For a young SoHo artist of insufficient means struggling to find affordable housing and cheap gallery space the cultural mythology of a gentry class buying an estate in the economically devastated New York City of the mid-1970's is an irony too rich to ignore. In the early 1970's New York City had become a bleak, violent and dilapidated city in decline. The steady loss of manufacturing jobs as industry moved out of the city combined with a general flight to the suburbs left the city with countless empty buildings. Abandoned tenement buildings and dilapidated side streets were commonplace throughout the City. The Bronx borough alone lost one-third of its population in the 1970's. The Brooklyn neighborhood known as 'DUMBO' remained uninhabited throughout most of the decade. In lower Manhattan the World Trade Center Site was being constructed while deteriorating neighborhoods burned. From 1970-1975 there were 68,456 fires in the Bronx alone.[6] Arson, as a percent of all city fires rose from 1% in the 1960's to over 7% in the 1970's.[7] Landlords would occasionally burn down their own buildings to collect insurance money when they could no longer afford to maintain them. By mid-decade New York City, the global epicenter of capitalism, was sliding inexorably towards municipal bankruptcy.

The absurdity that these parcels were all undevelopable—too small, odd-shaped, poorly situated, literally inaccessible from the public right-of-way—as homesteads, estates, or other meaningful forms of human inhabitation while they maintained their apparent exchange value is crucial to the ethos of *Fake Estates*. Matta-Clark was fascinated by the description of these surplus lots as "inaccessible." From a 1974 interview with Liza Bear for *Avalanche*, he says:

> What I basically wanted to do was to designate spaces that wouldn't be seen and certainly not occupied. Buying them was my own take on the strangeness of existing property demarcation lines. Property is so all-pervasive. Everyone's notion of ownership is determined by the use-factor.[8]

An example of what Matta-Clark might have meant by 'use-factor' is offered to us by a story told by one of his colleagues. Betsy Sussler who accompanied him on one of his 1975 site visits to the Queens parcels, that included a 2.55-foot wide strip of land in a 355-foot alley that neighbors had to cross over to enter into their private garages (Block 3398, Lot 116), remarks that Matta-Clark:

> …understood quite well the psychological and political factors involved in walking onto a person's property to inform them that his

> [Matta-Clark's] piece of forgotten land he'd bought was in fact part of their driveway.[9]

As far as anyone knows Matta-Clark never enforced his property right to exclude his would-be trespasser neighbors.

Collectively, these fifteen micro-parcels are important reminders of how the urban world is dissected by an underlying system of property ownership, and the laws and regulations governing their transfer. It is tempting to blame senseless bureaucrats for the existence of these land slivers, but that would be misleading. These parcel-fragments are the physical and conceptual residue of the rational machinations of a socially-legitimate process. The name of the collected works given to us by Diserens simultaneously highlights the vicissitudes of property ownership in an urban environment where every patch of dirt, no matter how small, is assumed to be a commodity, and it captures the juxtaposition of the real fragmented New York City with the unreal unified New York City of popular imagination. Matta-Clark was fascinated by the prospect that the mistakes of surveyors and architects might be the genesis of his micro-parcels. After all, it only takes a small surveyor's error to change a perfect rectangle into an off-kilter trapezoid with an unaccounted-for surplus sliver. While it is tantalizing to consider that professional errors and incompetency might be the source of these land fragments the truth is more telling. And the "error" he points to is much larger than a drafting mistake, or simple math error. Contemporary investigations into the title history reveal that these micro-parcels did not come about by accident but instead were the outcome of an intricate system of change in use and ownership—subdivisions and mergers, easements and dedications, road widenings, municipal projects, rural farmland conversions—both public

> "WE ARE BROUGHT FACE-TO-FACE WITH WHAT ARE SQUARELY PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS: WHAT EXACTLY IS THE BEARER OF VALUE? WHAT IS THE GENUINE OBJECT WE ARE BUYING AND SELLING."

and private.

Matta-Clark was equally fascinated with the North American collective imagination about land speculation these parcels signify. The reasons other buyers offered to the *New York Times* reporter Carlinsky for buying surplus parcels included: 1) a Virginia man who purchased a few small parcels as investments for his children; 2) a man who purchased 20 square foot adjacent to the tiny parcel he already owned in the hopes of selling both to his next door neighbor for a garden; 3) a New York City planner who bought three lots just because he wanted to own a piece of the city he loved; and 4) another man who purchased several parcels as Christmas gifts for his friends.[10] Given these diverse motivations, we are brought face-to-face with what are squarely philosophical questions: What exactly is the bearer of value? What is the genuine object we are buying and selling: Is it the actual land with weeds, trees and fences, or the legalistic paraphernalia of title transfer? Or is it participation in a cultural process (verging on myth) that supposedly grounds our self-worth? Or perhaps it is, as Matta-Clark seems to have intuited, only as art in the full 1:1 scale gallery photographs he conceived but never executed. By any conventional measure of use the land itself has no real value; its token value is the mere residue of a conceptual framework of ownership to which buyers and sellers are deeply committed.

The three-part nature of the work Matta-Clark envisioned offers important guidance. The ontological distinction between a discernible piece of the earth's surface and a commodified chunk of "real estate" is crucial. Without physical markers such as a surveyor's benchmark, a flagged property corner, a fence post, or some other naturally occurring thing, we only know that a discernible patch of the physical landscape exists as a "parcel" because of the legal-bureaucratic artifacts that record its existence and location. As Frances Richard so aptly puts it, "One can stand on a micro-plot and not know it is there."[11] In this scenario, we can own something but not experience it; exchange it but not inhabit it; delineate it but not occupy it; locate it but not enjoy it. With *Fake Estates,* and Matta-Clark's purchase of micro-parcels useless for any meaningful development, "the absurdity of real estate is laid bare as a bad pun."[12]

By engaging in purchase and ownership of these micro-parcels Matta-Clark sensitizes us to certain absurdities of speculation. Namely, 1) the process of buying and selling in the hope of continuously escalating exchange-value is regarded as authoritative even when it produces an irrational or dubious result; and, 2) the process of parcelization is a useful fiction about democratized economic power that helps prop up

cultural beliefs about value, and about self-worth. The supposition that a normalized process always produces its intended results ("everybody gets a piece of the action"), combined with a slavish adherence to an algorithmic procedure founded (in part) on contradictory assumptions, is the essence of Matta-Clark's *reductio* argument.

ONTIC INSECURITY: MATTA-CLARK'S EXQUISITE CORPUS

As a work of conceptually oriented art *Fake Estates* has strong implications for architecture philosophy insofar as it challenges the security of our ontic commitments to what constitutes the ground of possibility whereupon works of architecture are situated. A useful perspective on the theme of ontological insecurity in Matta-Clark's work is offered by Pamela Lee. In *Object to be Destroyed*, she argues that his work presupposes the eventuality of its own destruction. Extending this idea of ontic insecurity to *Fake Estates* is an important step to expanding our understanding of the implications of his acquisition of these micro-parcels. Lee's overall line of argument that Matta-Clark's work is best seen through the lens of expenditure or waste rather than destruction or violence is compelling. Even though he referred to his principle activity as 'un-building', we are not obligated to view it as inherently violent. He did not "destroy" for the sake of destruction, or because he found the world empty of value. Matta-Clark was no nihilist. Through his constant striving to make sense of his surroundings he resisted the notion that we live in a purposeless present. In this regard, Jeffrey A. Kroessler, in his essay "Gordon Matta-Clark's Moment," offers the useful insight that Matta-Clark was an artist re-imagining urban decay and finding the inspiration needed to be an agent of positive transformation.[13]

> "FAKE ESTATES HAS STRONG IMPLICATIONS FOR ARCHITECTURE PHILOSOPHY INSOFAR AS IT CHALLENGES THE SECURITY OF OUR ONTIC COMMITMENTS TO WHAT CONSTITUTES THE GROUND OF POSSIBILITY WHEREUPON WORKS OF ARCHITECTURE ARE SITUATED."

Because he was fascinated with processes of change, and things that embraced their own

outmodedness, it is tempting to read Matta-Clark's creative output as a monument to entropy. In his early work he explored senescence and decay, and recorded the process and effects of disintegration. Yet, he is not making a fetish of a ruinous state. He does not valorize it for its own sake. On the contrary, decay, waste, and disintegration are integral to becoming. Contingent circumstance and shifting temporalities characterize his entire output—his work does not lay claim to permanence. His creative practice is not about object-making, or even object-destruction, rather it is about process-intervention. He transformed architectural refuse into reminders of the deeply contradictory impulses of urban development with its deep schism between use-value and exchange-value. Seeing the long arc of Matta-Clark's creative practice as an intervention into collective practices of waste positions us on a path of resistance that in turn points towards some problems of architectural obsolescence that characterize both *Fake Estates* and the building-cuts for which he is most known. *Fake Estates* further sharpens our understanding of the difference between inhabited space, the space of social praxis, and abstract space (the universalized "zoned" commodity) at the same time it performs a wonderfully wry commentary on Kant's disinterestedness thesis by taking an object of such intense desire as New York real estate, stripping it of use-value, repackaging it as useless art, and then completing the circle by seducing the gallery-goer for a second go-round with the offer to sell the art.

MATTA-CLARK'S ANIMUS

The social geography of an urban place finds its expression in the architecture if we look close enough. As a result of his building-cut work Matta-Clark had acquired considerable skill in the manual labor of dismantling buildings, working with building materials, and re-capturing architecture-based resources; skills he came to see as relevant to the underserved communities of New York City. In 1977, the year before his untimely death, he was awarded a Guggenheim Grant for a resource center and environmental youth program for 'Loisada', the name given to the Lower East Side by its Spanish speaking residents. He used the proceeds to purchase a building on the Lower East Side. The resource center functioned (1) as a community salvage yard where materials and equipment could be recycled or sold, and (2) as a neighborhood youth training program that taught youth how to renovate and maintain buildings for community use. After his death the center completely disbanded.

While Matta-Clark is remembered for the ethical qualities of

his dynamic activist persona—his sociability, exuberance, inclusiveness, and tireless engagement—the aesthetic-political qualities of his overt architecturally-themed projects are restive, impatient, stubbornly dissatisfied, vociferous, and uneasy. Some of this schism may be due to the deep and abiding animus Matta-Clark harbored against the architecture profession. Even though he was originally trained to be an architect, attending Cornell's School of Architecture (1963-1968), Matta-Clark's chief aim, according to critics such as Yve-Alain Bois, is to negate the cultural prestige of architecture.[14] This view is borne out by Matta-Clark himself. In a 1976 interview with Donald Wall in *Arts Magazine,* when Wall asks what reaction Matta-Clark got from *Splitting*, his reply is unequivocal:

> I don't think most [architects] practitioners are solving anything except how to make a living. Architecture is a lackey to big business. It's an enormously costly undertaking and therefore, like government, comes equipped with its entire panoply of propaganda. I think Monolithic Idealist problem solving has not only failed to solve the problems but created a dehumanized condition at both a domestic and institutional level.[15]

One way for us to make sense of Matta-Clark's animus would be to view it as his worry that the profession as a whole, at the time anyhow, did not possess a well-formed social conscience. Or at least not a conscience he considered relevant to addressing the pressing problems that surrounded him. In one of his written fragments he writes, "empty and neglected structures were a prime reminder of the ongoing fallacy of renewal through modernization." [16] In his view then, the derelict condition of New York City's land and building-stock is emblematic of the state of the profession as a whole, and like so much of capitalist cultural

"HE IS NOT MAKING A FETISH OF A RUINOUS STATE [...] ON THE CONTRARY, DECAY, WASTE, AND DISINTEGRATION ARE INTEGRAL TO BECOMING."

production architecture is destined to become waste. So in this way, it is the means of producing architecture, rather than architecture as artifact (glorious, exalted, banal, or otherwise) that is the precise focus of Matta-Clark's critique. Xavier Wrona offers a useful amplification. He writes that for Matta-Clark, "architecture is not the building but the system that produces a particular kind of building—the order imposed on buildings, not the buildings themselves."[17]

Fake Estates explicitly raises questions about what it means to be a propertied person, to own property, to possess it, to occupy it, to abuse it, to glorify it, to transmogrify it, to transfer it, and to dispense with it as one sees fit. In spite of his personal acquisition of real estate he nonetheless harbored a deep resistance to ideologies of private wealth. He viewed private property and the human isolation he believed it engenders as increasingly unsustainable states, telling Donald Wall:

> What I am talking about is the very real, carefully sustained mass schizophrenia in which our individual perceptions are constantly being subverted by industrially controlled media, markets, and corporate interests.[18]

Matta-Clark was not enamored of American capitalism, laissez-faire real estate developers, disengaged policy makers, or uncaring slum lords who stood idle while deterioration progressed inexorably to demolition and then to the "solution" of redevelopment. Nonetheless, he viewed abandoned buildings through the political lens of liberalism as symptomatic of a socio-political system: (1) that doesn't look after its everyday citizens by caring for those who cannot care for themselves; (2) that favors the elite at the expense of the general population; and (3) where wealth accumulation is valorized as an end in itself rather than a means to something more worthwhile. Instead, to the greatest extent possible, he focused his own efforts on empowering marginalized citizens to take ownership of their neighborhoods. In his words, an urban site ought to be "responsive to the expressive will of its occupants."[19]

No doubt, the abstract urban grid is a tool for converting raw land into a commodity. As evidenced by *Fake Estates* in which the earth's surface is reduced to a series of complex abstract and interconnected legalistic property descriptors, an otherwise rational process can, with successive iterations, yield an irrational or dubious outcome. Yet, the occasional anomaly is not what obsesses Matta-Clark. Rather, his two-fold reminder is that the usability of a piece of land is necessarily tied to abstract processes of demarcation, ownership, and transfer. Second, the rapacious drive

to accumulate wealth disengages exchange value from the utility of a piece of land. And hence, the ground of architecture is rendered precarious. As Lee, rightly observes, "For property is not so much considered a thing at all but a right: a relationship between object and subject structured around terms of personality and consumption."[20] In our era, property has become more than an extension of who we are—it now threatens to define us. This threat continues to deepen, and deepen unevenly across the wealth divide.

ARCHITECTURAL OBSOLESCENCE: THE EYE OF THE SPECULATOR

Fake Estates, far from being a curious leftover side-project to Matta Clark's more well-known building cut projects, is one tent-pole for expressing his over-arching concerns with the related ideas of waste and obsolescence. Matta-Clark's chief concern with the obsolescence paradigm is that it creates its own set of mythic beliefs by transforming complex cultural processes into ones that seem self-evidently natural, unchangeable, and universal. The false claim that "the new" naturally supersedes "the old" is a long-standing criticism of capitalism. The argument that capitalism sustains itself by promulgating emotional and psychological discontent is another familiar grievance. Other commonplace grievances include: everlasting transience; endless replacement; continuous forced supersession; and, rapid and sudden fluctuations in valuation. While the narrative of relentless devaluation and expendability eventuates in waste, it is precisely this narrative of perpetual change the capitalist entrepreneur needs in order to expand consumer demand for the "new now," and the "next now." Joseph Schumpeter, the Austrian economist and ardent defender of capitalism, who in 1942 defined capitalism as "creative destruction," unapologetically embraced the idea that obsolescence is fundamental to

capitalism. According to Schumpeter, entrepreneurial innovation is the vital force behind the progress and instability of capitalism thus explaining boom and bust cycles. Creative destruction is thus understood as one of the "iron laws" of capitalism. While capitalist enterprise and its critics have moved beyond Schumpeter's mid-century pronouncements, it seems clear to me that what links Matta-Clark's *Fake Estates* and his building-cut projects is that both are caught up in this net of "iron laws." Thus, his critical perspective on capitalism remains relevant along with its impact on us.

In his recent book *Obsolescence: An Architectural History* Daniel Abramson is succinct, "Architecture and its history have lessons to teach about coming to terms with capitalism."[21] He cogently argues that in the United States the idea of architectural obsolescence was birthed by the real estate industry around 1910. Since its advent in 1913 when it was created by the 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the U.S. Tax Code tax deduction for asset depreciation has served to reify the abstract concept of obsolescence into dollars and cents. In the dissociation of economic life-span from natural durability, economic obsolescence runs faster than physical decay and this is by design. The life-span tables in the Tax Code are politically and economically driven to benefit capital. They are not obtained from empirical building science data as to durability and structural integrity of the underlying architectural asset. So, the cycle of real estate investment, disinvestment, and reinvestment operates entirely independent of naturalized obsolescence. Unlike most material objects and consumer goods, land and works of architecture while easily neglected, abandoned, or de-valued are not easily discarded. The invention of architectural obsolescence normalized capitalism's inclinations and offers a convenient tidy rationale for the chaotic changes it tends to foster. Though Matta-Clark is not the first artist to recognize problems with the myth of obsolescence and its implications for the production and consumption of architectural objects, he is certainly the first to attack it with crowbars and power saws.

Physical mortality is relatively predictable, whereas de-valuation arising from highly contingent market circumstance is not. To be sure, the impermanence of the built environment is the condition of possibility for virtually all of Matta-Clark's creative output including *Fake Estates.* While he purchased these micro-parcels amidst the wholesale abandonment of erstwhile usable land and buildings it is precisely this conceptual framework—that architectural change necessarily requires wholesale or widespread expendability—that Matta-Clark wants to criticize in all his

projects.

While I think it is clear that Matta-Clark understands (if only inchoately so) the distinction between value-extraction and value-creation, and he rightly identifies many of the problems associated with value-extraction, he under-appreciates or misapprehends the potential pitfalls associated with value-creation as a tool for architectural change. These potential pitfalls also have important implications for the architect-speculator relationship. Since the early decades of the twentieth century the architectural community's response to obsolescence runs the gamut from denial through resistance to reluctant acceptance to enthusiastic embrace. Throughout most of architectural history the temporal horizon for works of architecture was characterized by gradualism—the desire for permanence but acceptance of gradual change as inevitable. The past was always present and time passed slowly. Beginning with the twentieth century fixity, permanence, and gradualism began to recede. Abramson puts it this way, "Only in the twentieth century did a place of unending ceaseless change in the built environment come to be understood as the new normal."[22]

> "THOUGH MATTA-CLARK IS NOT THE FIRST ARTIST TO RECOGNIZE PROBLEMS WITH THE MYTH OF OBSOLESCENCE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF ARCHITECTURAL OBJECTS, HE IS CERTAINLY THE FIRST TO ATTACK IT WITH CROWBARS AND POWER SAWS."

Whether, and under what circumstances, the political question of whether land parcelization is reversible gets overlooked and remains under-theorized in *Fake Estates.* Though a man of strong politics, Matta-Clark's work wants to get at the existential assumptions concerning ownership, value and, use underlying the political. Similar to archeological data, loss of information about the past is one of the pitfalls of real estate speculation as it endeavors to create economic value. Costs associated with these pitfalls are scarcely accounted for in development proformas or financial balance

sheets. Few real estate speculators factor 'externalities' such as the loss of historical-architectural data into their economic calculations.

From an ontological perspective, obsolescence is a species of impermanence whose discourse asks us to actively disengage from past-being while encouraging us to privilege incipient, emergent-being. Since their economic power is recorded temporally in architectural obsolescence, the speculator in essence presents us with a bogus historical narrative that is a false dichotomy: either passively acquiesce to the relics of an ossified dysfunctional past, or aggressively seek economic advantage over others for control of a would-be prosperous future. Although we in the architectural community are loath to admit it, and at times quick to justify it, the profession's incessant drive towards novelty, experimentation, and the pursuit of ever-more dramatic three-dimensional form helps fuel architectural obsolescence. Our prevalent talk of the 'relevant' with its emergent-minded focus on 'the germane', 'the immediate', 'the topical', 'the fresh', 'the cutting-edge', 'of the moment', infuses our theory with enticing rhetoric, and inflects practice towards their seductions as Matta-Clark intimates. To the extent that we in the architectural community accept this false dichotomy by embracing a speculatively-driven obsolescence narrative, then yes, we are part of the problem. Those of us in the architecture philosophy community working to foster awareness of social justice issues need to sharpen our attitudes about the temporal composition of the future, the present, and the past. This implies the abiding necessity for a genuine understanding of the temporal processes that constitute the milieu in which we think and act. There is of course, the perennial uncertainty about what future generations will deem relevant. We can never know with certainty just what it is that our future selves will value that our present selves do not.

Under the influence of disembodied market forces, architectural obsolescence would appear to transcend politics, state influence, and individual subjective interest. It is as if human worth is being judged entirely by "objective" external standards not of human construction. In short, under speculation human dignity is relegated to the sidelines. This should not be the case. It is a mistake to portray what is essentially a complex series of interconnected value judgments as if they are disembodied objective quantifiable natural laws, because this caricature wrongly masks the essential human agency of the ones doing the judging—we the living. It is of just this sort of disempowerment that Matta-Clark warns. *Fake Estates* is simultaneously comic and tragic. Tragic because the notion of a propertied estate as the summative expression of human worth propels the

continued squandering of natural and architectural resources, and the splintering of the social space that grounds such worth. Comic—comically absurd—because the process of speculation continues to generate more of the same.

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DESIGNING A COMMON WORLD: PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY AND THE AIM TO OBJECTIFY ARCHITECTURE

HANS TEERDS

INTRODUCTION

Many architectural offices today tend to present their works as the inevitable result of the program brief and building site. Often, they showcase their designs on their websites, in architectural magazines, in lectures, or on internet blogs as the sum of a few logical steps, adjusting a simple volume (the possible envelope according to local restrictions) towards a final form (a response to programmatic and site-specific characteristics). These design-narratives often are illustrated with simple and schematic line-drawings, emphasizing the logic of the final result. It is of course a simplified version of the design process, a 'narrative' only possible in hindsight. The tendency beyond, I think, is an eagerness to withdraw from the 'subjective,' with its associations as grounded in mere personal preference in the presentation of the project, in favor of reason and logic, which operate in the open, outside the subject. The same tendency can be recognized in the effort by other offices to present their projects as the outcome of working methods grounded in a strict and seemingly scientific analysis of big data, made possible by the unprecedented power of computers to envision and manipulate data (in real time), and

to map and manipulate information flows. (figure 1) Once again, some of these offices use such computational models to evoke the impression that the design work is the logical, even irresistible, outcome of an objective and extensive analysis of information. Some even suggest that in the (near) future architectural designs can be generated through artificial intelligence. No architects required (or better said: only software engineers needed)! And thus, the narrative goes: the design process will be objectified in such a way that the obvious subjectivity of the designer is excluded from the process in favor of the much more subtle subjectivity of the computational model. It is the old quest of 'architecture without architects', this time not in favor of a vernacular architecture, local traditions and spontaneous building processes, but in favor of the promises of the black box of Big Data. To these two claims that aim to overcome the subjective aspects of architectural design (or as stated, of the architectural designer) we might add a third direction: the renewed interest in participation trajectories. Both in scholarly research, as well as within architectural practices, there is a growing interest in the development of open design trajectories wherein stakeholders (beyond the usual: clients, investors, and planners but also future residents and users) are invited to intensely participate. This interest in participatory design, moreover, is not limited to the design phase. The product itself, the building, should be built in an 'open' system, where users can easily adapt the spaces to their wishes in time. Many examples of the tendencies above can be given, both from the field of practices as well as from academia. However, as I do not want to pinpoint offices to a singular take, I leave it to the imagination of the reader to frame these tendencies in architectural practice to actual cases.

Although these three attempts are very different in character, a shared aim can be recognized: the aim to reduce the subjective aspects of architectural design by (in theory) minimizing or altering the role of the designer from creator to something more like 'facilitator.' Such a 'humbleness' that emerges from the field functions as a corrective to the era of 'starchitects', wherein the creativity and genius of a single architect was emphasized, alongside a worldwide inclination towards the 'new', 'novel', and 'original.' The 2008 world-wide financial and economic crisis that followed the collapse of the Lehman Brothers bank in the USA made very clear how hollow such a perspective was. Architecture simply had become an empty shelf: the 'surplus' aesthetics attached to buildings, the icing on the cake. Although this can be understood in economic (and even Marxist) terms as the 'surplus' value, which could be made profitable in terms of marketing and branding, it of course hardly can be seen as a 'proper' understanding of the significance of architecture for inhabitants, users, society. After

all, due to the crisis, it immediately became clear that such a surplus value was only profitable in the case of the few designers that had become a brand in themselves. Or better said: there seemed to be no language left wherein the significance of architecture could be explained, neither to the inhabitants and users, nor to society as such, and, in line with that, also not to clients, constructors, investors, developers. Architecture had turned into a 'statue of Nebuchadnezzar': beautiful, spectacular, impressive, powerful, glamorous, but only loosely rooted in society (if rooted at all).

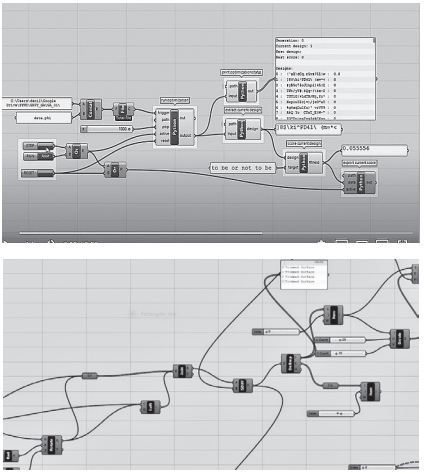


FIGURE 1:
GRASSHOPPER PROGRAM
COMPUTATIONAL ARCHITECTURE

Consciously addressed in articles in the media and (new) assignments to architects, or unconsciously touched upon in discussions, it seemed that the 'subjectivity' of the architectural designer was to blame. And thus, we can understand (and probably also value) the above-mentioned ways to organize and present design differently: they are mostly sincere attempts to overcome the crisis in architecture and to (re)connect to the client and user, to each other, as well as to society. The subjectivity of the designer has become the 'whipping boy' of architectural design. These reflections implicitly divide architectural practices into two very different approaches: the artistic practice versus the engineering practice. Schematically, both positions can be seen as the outer ends of a spectrum. On the one side the architect is presented as creative genius producing original and unforeseen (architectural) proposals (model: the 'starchitect', Ayn Rand's *Fountainhead*) which need to be characterized as 'art', while on the other side one would find the architects that simply understand their practices as consultancy offices, and their work as a form of engineering. These architects get the project done, straightforwardly fulfilling the wishes of the client (model: a 'service

"THEY ARE MOSTLY SINCERE ATTEMPTS TO OVERCOME THE CRISIS IN ARCHITECTURE AND TO (RE) CONNECT TO THE CLIENT AND USER, TO EACH OTHER, AS WELL AS TO SOCIETY."

office').[2] Whereas most of the architectural offices, obviously, operate in the grey zone of this spectrum (aiming to do a good job with regard to both ends of the spectrum), the above signalized tendency in practice heads towards this latter end of the spectrum.

This tendency walks a dangerous path because the removal of subjectivity entails the loss of the underpinnings of architectural responsibility. In order to unravel this idea I will lean upon two perspectives offered in the writings of the philosopher Hannah Arendt. First I will use her distinction between the earth and the world. This distinction and her understanding of the world as a world-of-things offer a perspective wherein the practice of architecture can be understood as world-construction, a valuable external reference frame for the professional field of architecture. This perspective at first sight might seem to offer an argument to reduce subjectivity in design, but that, as we will see, is at odds with Arendt's own perspective. A certain balance between objectivity and subjectivity is needed. In order to define that balance, I secondly will use her unfinished reflections on the human faculty of 'judgment'. This last perspective offers a key to the aspect of subjectivity in design, wherein subjectivity and responsibility are intertwined. This perspective is important, as it opposes the move to align architectural design with the repressive and dangerous tendencies endemic to technocratic engineering.

Before I set up this argument, three brief remarks. First: the tendencies described above are not novel at all. Amongst others, the writings of the architects George Baird and Giancarlo De Carlo and historians Kenneth Frampton and Robert Gutman have stressed the tension between the artistic and the functional throughout the 19th and 20th century, and pondered attempts to either transform architecture to a more scientifically or socially 'just' professional field, or reduce it to a solely artistic one. Current trends, while not novel, are intensifications of these tensions.[3]

Secondly, it is the subjectivity of the designer that I focus on even though it must be recognized that the building process is shot-through with subjectivity: subjective are the aims and wishes of the client, investor, developer, of the public official that formulates the restrictions for a particular site, and of the politician that wants to develop a lasting monument before time in office has finished. Design, however, is a particular instrument within the building industries. It is a tool that architects have, a tool that bridges the different viewpoints. This is an important given. Even in times wherein the subjectivity of architectural design is under attack, we need to understand the unique capacities of design.

Third, it of course is clear that this 'designer' almost never is a single

architect. In most cases, design is teamwork, work of an office with project architects, assistant designers, interns, drafters. So when addressing 'the architect', I have in mind both the single designer, as well as the collaborative.

THE THINGS OF THE WORLD

> "THIS TENDENCY WALKS A DANGEROUS PATH BECAUSE THE REMOVAL OF SUBJECTIVITY ENTAILS THE LOSS OF THE UNDERPINNINGS OF ARCHITECTURAL RESPONSIBILITY."

How can we understand the context of architecture: What is its significance beyond the beautification of buildings, urban spaces, and cultural landscapes? The writings of Hannah Arendt offer an appropriate perspective in this regard, through which the cultural and political meaning of the profession can be understood. The Canadian architect and theoretician George Baird stated in his 1995 book *The Space of Appearance* that Arendt has been one of the very few philosophers of the 20th century to include "the things of the world"[4] in her political philosophy. In other words, within political reflections in philosophy and other academic fields, theories hardly grasp the tangible world, the things that surround us. Arendt's perspective then stresses the tangible world as politically relevant. In order to understand this relevance, let us first explicate what she meant by 'things of the world'. In her writings, Arendt distinguishes the 'world' from the 'earth', a distinction she partly based on the writings of philosopher Martin Heidegger, who had been her professor during her studies. The distinction roughly is between the natural and the cultural, the globe versus the human interventions, human affairs, and relationships. But where Heidegger offers a negative reading of this distinction, Arendt ponders the world in a clearly positive perspective.[5] Where Heidegger takes the classical philosophical stance and understands the humble and stumble, rumour and noise of public life, as disturbing the

vita contemplativa, she, on the contrary, aims to celebrate the participation in public life and the engagement in the world and its wanderings, the *vita activa.* A perspective overlooked and neglected within philosophy, according to Arendt – and not without consequences. The whole political development in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century urged her—as a Jew born in Germany, searching for refuge in France and the United States—to become politically aware, and publicly active.[6] So what does the distinction mean for her? To her the earth stands for the natural circumstances of the globe, depicted by the cycle of nature. For Arendt this is not an idealistic situation, as she stresses the need to transform that globe into a habitable place. This transformation establishes the world. The world thus is the earth made fit for human habitation and the human community.[7] Through human intervention, through the creation of artefacts (houses, furniture, infrastructure), the earth is transformed into a human world. The distinction between the two terms thus roughly corresponds to the natural and the cultural spheres. Arendt emphasizes the different qualities that belong to both entities: it is the cyclicality of nature versus the perpetuity of culture, the survival of species versus the permanence of the human artefacts. For Arendt 'things' are not just objects, but they are part and parcel of that artificial 'world'. Human artefacts establish the world. In addition to this basic principle, Arendt draws attention to two perspectives of artefacts that qualify this world, which also turns them into a prerequisite for sensible political life —the relationship Baird stressed.

1. For Arendt the world always is a world shared with others. Or in her terms: the world always is 'in-common.' Human artefacts, that at once establish a world, immediately also establish commonality. "To live in the world," Arendt writes in a famous quote, "means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time."[8] Arendt stresses that this 'table' not only is to be seen as a spatial commonality (to be collected around an artefact-in-common)), but also as a commonality that stretches in time (we have the object not only in common today, but we share it also with previous generations, as well as with those to come).[9] Both continuities (or commonalities) of the world are rendered by Arendt as prerequisites for sensible political life. The intangibility and vulnerability of "action and speech," that Arendt frame as the crucial activities of political life, requires a durable and common stage.[10] Politics, for Arendt, does not

primarily relate to parliament and government, to town hall and council, but to "the coexistence and association of different men," which certainly relates to the intangible interaction between human beings (like in the political arena) but also is related to the tangible (public) artefacts and institutions that structure and organize the world and orients their inhabitants.[11] The world of things, in other words, is at once the stage of politics as well as the concern of politics.

2. While the first point stresses artefacts as such, delivering a stable stage for the realm of politics, the second perspective qualifies these artefacts. They are not neutral atoms in space, but have a particular shape, history, tactility, or to be short: presence. They appear to the human being through their form—a form that is particular and recognizable, and that can revive particular memories and narratives.[12] According to Arendt, this particularly counts especially for such artefacts as memorials, monuments, and works of art. She thus underlines the capacity of artefacts—in particular: works of art—to reify stories and narratives, to memorize actions of the past, and to make history present today. Artefacts are carriers of meaning, memory, heritage, orientation, order, and identity, they can revive (collective) memories and evoke remembrances.[13] This aspect of the 'things of the world' is related to a crucial capacity of the human being; the possibility to tell a story. The life of the individual—a narrative in time between birth and death—is an example of such a story, but also the 'the life of the polis', which obviously is the story of particular histories. The crucial aspect of the narrative is not only the possibility to contemplate actions within time, but also that it can be shared with others. This, for Arendt, transforms the life of the *polis* into a political life.[14] This capacity to tell stories is foremost a capacity of the human being,

but, as Arendt also stresses, such narratives are the "everlasting essence of the work of art" in the context of politics.[15] Needless to say that works of art indeed often consciously reify (historical) narratives, and that such works of art have been important to the realm of politics and the self-understanding of human communities. However, we do not have to limit our understanding at this point to figurative art, Greek poems, or the plot in movies. The particular shape of artefacts (works of art as well as everyday artefacts) can be a 'holding place' for narratives: objects can evoke remembrances, and thus are able to make particular histories present, but they also can evoke future perspectives, which unfold and are addressed in stories too.

To summarize, artefacts not only offer stability and permanence, but also memory, remembrance, structure, and orientation in the world. Both layers of understanding of the 'things of the world' value artefacts in a very sensible and concrete way, engaging aspects of spatiality, materiality, tactility, tangibility, and the capacity of narration, as well as the inherent aspects of production and use. All these aspects in one way or the other may contribute to the commonality and durability of a political community or disturb it.

ARCHITECTURE AS WORLD-CONSTRUCTION

This perspective upon the 'things of the world' offers a valuable path to construct a cultural and political—and therefore also ethical—framework to understand the work of the architect, not only for architects working on grand cathedrals, but also for those developing and designing not-so-grand bicycle sheds.[16] Arendt stressed that works of art are the most worldly human artefacts, particularly since they are objects not intended for commonplace utility but only to be accessed in a disinterested attitude, and therefore will not be damaged through use and spoiled by use or consumption. Works of art therefore are, if kept well protected from natural influences, the most durable objects on earth, and thus will offer the most stable underpinnings for society.[17] Arendt nevertheless does not limit the twofold aspects of the 'things of the world' solely to works of art, but only placed them in hierarchy above the other works of the human being.

With these concepts in mind, let us stretch Arendt's perspective to the field of architecture. We first need to recognize how important architecture is with regard to the establishment of the world (and in the

context of an existing world, the maintenance and continuation of it). The built environment after all literally shapes the world for its inhabitants. It constructs the everyday places of human life, as well as the monuments that structure political life, the memorials, the buildings of the parliament, the offices of public institutions. It structures the cities and neighbourhoods, where people live, work, enjoy a movie, or go to court, as well as the landscape, where the food grows, the natural reserves are, the slopes for skiing. Architecture builds the museums, where the works of art are exhibited, and it delineates the public squares, where people can gather. Architecture, in other words, mediates between the human being and the earth, as well as between the human being and the human community. It creates the private spaces of the home, as well as a context for meaningful collective life. It offers room for actions to unfold, for stories to be enacted, for history to take place, for experiences to be gained —and by doing so, through all the events that take place on their stairs and balconies, their wooden floors and tile pavements, against their walls and columns, (hi)stories are written. The patina of the materials, the traces of use on the stairs and floors —they are not entirely negative, as Arendt seems to argue: it is particularly through these traces of decay and use that history is made present, that memories and remembrances of users, inhabitants, and communities are evoked.[18] Buildings and cities, landscapes and works of infrastructure—they all first accommodate the human community, but second also offer a 'holding place' for memories from the (recent) past.

> "ARENDT STRESSED THAT WORKS OF ART ARE THE MOST WORLDLY HUMAN ARTEFACTS"

Works of architecture (both grand and humble), we might conclude, simply relate users and inhabitants with the earth and with each other spatially through the placing of walls, doors, windows, roofs, pavements, and so on. This relation not only is established at this point in time, but also over time, with generations of the past as well as

of the future. Architecture plays a role both in a tangible and material sense (by the very structures), as well as in a mental sense (by being sites of heritage, memory, and so on). Architecture, therefore, should be understood as 'world-construction.'

If architecture, a term which here includes the fields of planning, constructing, urban design, and landscape architecture, is world-construction, then it needs to carefully engage with the world it brings into existence in order to keep it fit for human inhabitation and political interaction. Architectural design then cannot be indifferent to the world-in-common, but requires an attitude of engagement towards the worlds it both touches and creates. From this perspective, we can usefully define three tasks for the professional field of architecture:

1. This perspective stresses the value of the existing (built) environment as the context of the social network of the inhabitants as well as a 'holding place' for stories, memories, remembrances. It thus offers an argument for a careful renovation, restoration and refurbishment of existing buildings, urban structures and cultural landscapes. The existing built environment is not a tabula rasa, nor neutral ground, wherein architecture intervenes.

2. Importantly, this is no argument for stasis. In her reflections on culture, Arendt stresses that two perspectives align in culture: the careful maintenance of the existing intertwines with the intervention that creates room for the new. The second task for architectural practices thus is to embed the new in the existing.[19] This of course creates a new composition, a new entity—but with respect to what has been, and how that has been established.[20]

3. For the third task, we need to take one step further. To acknowledge that through the shape of artefacts narratives can be told, is to challenge the architect to both understand and take responsibility for the narratives inherent in their proposals. This charge, of course, counts for all interventions in the world, but from a political perspective, it particularly counts for the design of public buildings. After all, public buildings—townhalls, schools, libraries,—through their form also reify particular narratives, as for example a well-designed public school will narrate the importance of education in our society (moreover, the structure of the school does influence the possibilities of education, but also narrate what educational system we are after—think of the early school-designs of the Dutch architect Herman Hertzberger), while a rundown public school building simply seems to show that public funding of the school is not prioritized.[21] Just as townhalls of the past perfectly reify the relationship between local power and the citizens and cathedrals do the

same for religion and the community of believers, new townhalls and churches also reify comparable narratives.[22] They are carriers of the organization of the current human community and thus expose what has been assigned as important for this community. As political philosopher Bonnie Honig argues in her recent Sydney Lectures in *Philosophy and Society*: "Public things are the infrastructure of democratic life, and they underwrite the signs and symbols of democratic unity, that, for the moment, still survive." And while she relates this perspective with the previous mentioned need for a stable underpinnings of the political realm, she writes: "things … stabilize the web of meanings in which we live and into which we may act."[24]

These three tasks: valuing the existing built environment for its embedded meanings, sensitively engaging that environment with new revisions, and care for the narrative quality of architecture, are crucial assignments for every architectural intervention in the world. What designers propose never is neutral. It must always deal with structures from the past, as well as their inherent narratives, while at once adding new narratives that in their turn reify the current relationship to the earth (and its environmental issues) and the world (as a world-in-common).

THE CHALLENGE OF SUBJECTIVITY

According to George Baird, this perspective "electrifies the architectural project," ethically. Rightly so: while individual wishes, needs and ambitions as well as commercial perspectives, profits, and business cases are the genesis of most architectural assignments, there is always spillover.[25] Architecture—even in the most isolated circumstances—always is tethered to the world-in-common, and thus is establishing, maintaining, and intervening in the world, which in turn has

political and cultural meaning. Architecture thus is an inherently political and cultural endeavor, the import of which forms the basis for its unique ethos, for not only does it assert that architecture significantly establishes or maintains the world-in-common, but also that architecture can become an agent of destruction to the commonly shared world. It can disturb the possibilities for establishing political life and obliterate the (collective) stories that are stored in the world.

This is what justifies holding that the architectural project thus reaches beyond the immediate interests of the stakeholders: through its impact on the commonly shared world. This of course not only offers an ethical perspective upon the architectural designer's work, but also is applicable for other parties involved in the building process, from commissioner to building manager, and from constructor to politicians who decide upon the building regulations, or the ambitions with regard to urban renewal, social housing, or public buildings. Arendt's perspective offers a framework for a (self)critical approach to each building assignment—a horizon against which a project (from program brief to design, and from construction to demolition) can be evaluated, challenged, and valued, as it both challenges the 'what/why' as well as the 'how' of a project.

Although this perspective of 'the world in common' might call for sensitivity amongst designers to the larger context of their work, it does certainly not plea for objectivity in design. Baird, argues that neither a radically subjective position, nor a supposedly objective approach are appropriate responses vis-à-vis the idea of a shared world.[26] Obviously, to develop participation processes, create open-building structures, make use of data modelling, and present architecture through a logical explanation can be valued positively as exhibiting awareness of a certain architectural ethos. These strategies are particularly welcome against an architectural era that uncritically engaged with the new and the novel, the *oeuvre* and the artistic. However, there is a clear downside to these attempts to wipe out subjectivity as well: if objectification of design is the endgame, it comes with a reductionist perspective and risks dissipation of design-responsibility. This assertion is based on three considerations:

1. According to Arendt, the world is characterized by plurality: it is site-specific and time-specific due to the natural circumstances of the earth, the development of the world, the cultural and political development and engagement with the world, the development of tools and instruments (technology) that make minor and major interventions possible, as well as through the histories and events that unfolded within the world and thus upload the world with narratives. Although the 'facts' of these differences

can be traced in comprehensive analyses, or can be collected in the numbers of 'big data', their cultural, social and political meanings, that is to say, what gives them ethical import, are out of reach of these instruments. Without acknowledging the personal and collective narratives, the cultural and political aspects of the built environment, architecture is stuck in reductionist and purely materialist perspectives. This particularly is the case if the design-instruments (as data-mining, logical reasoning, participation) are magnified, and rather than being mere tools to achieve an ethical end become regarded as self-justifying processes. In all of the mentioned cases in the introduction to this article, there is the risk to reduce the reality of the world to objective facts: either to the 'factual' perspective of participants in the development process, or to the overwhelming amount of 'facts' that are collected through data mining, or finally to the 'facts' that are seemingly the inevitable result of logical investigation in program, site, and use.

> "IF OBJECTIFICATION OF DESIGN IS THE ENDGAME, IT COMES WITH A REDUCTIONIST PERSPECTIVE AND RISKS DISSIPATION OF DESIGN-RESPONSIBILITY."

2. Simultaneously with such a reductionist perspective, these methods and attempts to objectify architecture also disturb the ethical understanding of architect's practice since the process of 'design' is misunderstood. When the design-method is so magnified, the process should follow its predefined path. Such a process is repressive; it strongly steers while diminshing the freedom to do things differently, to be surprised by one's findings. This steering both removes opportunities for personal reflection and simultaneously taking responsibility for one's decisions. One can hide behind the outcome of data mining, the wishes of the participants, the facts that are taken from the context and program, or behind the investors or client—any of which somehow 'automatically' lead to the proposed project. This of course is a bit of a simplified presentation: there still is 'design', but it operates on a higher level of abstraction: the design of the used methods and instruments, the selection

and development of the computational program, the selection of data scraped, the way data are connected, the 'architecture' of the algorithm. This is a way of defining the organisation, a matter of decision making, and interpretation—and their impact on the world can be devasting. However, now the design decisions do not operate in the open, but are kept at a remove from the actual projects. A new and obfuscating layer, defining the algorithm or the structure of the design method, is added between the designer and the end-object. It distances challenging and subtle matters of subjectivity, biases, ethical dilemmas from the actual design task. This remove easily hides the subjective and ethical aspects of the project from the public eye, particularly if these methods and instruments are seen as objective, even if not scientifically truthful, and thus are neither challenged nor questioned—not in the discussions within the designer's office, nor in the (everyday) talks to clients, neighbours, and society.

This, I would argue, is hiding behind the instruments, and behind the outcome of the application of these instruments, without taking responsibility for one's own decisions (not on the level of the design of the method and instrument, nor on the use of the outcome of the implementation of these methods and instruments). In other words, if method and instrument are presented as factual and scientifically truthful, the outcomes easily can be understood as 'objective facts' too. What then is left to the designer except implementation? The architect will operate a design-machine, and needs to follow what is prescribed—simply turning the diagrams or directions into structures (if this is still needed, one might imagine that artificial intelligence even this step in the design process can take over). He or she probably will follow a self-prescribed path (through the definition of the algorithm)—but without taking responsibility that this path is inherently subjective and hence to be challenged continuously.

3. Arendt's perspective of the world-in-common clearly at once both challenges the subjective intervention in this world, as well as the aim to be objective. It not only provokes the idea that design simply can be the 'just' interpretation of big data, or that it can be the application of computational models and logical reasoning, but offers a 'critical' reading to all other instruments through which the professional aims to define a more or less 'objective' underpinnings of his designs. Arendt also is critical of the immediate and unquestioned application of theories, dogmas, philosophies, particular design methods, and so on. All these 'instruments' can form an obstacle between the designer and the world, particularly when the tools are overvalued and the complexity of the world is reduced to singular perspectives. Architectural design, understood as 'world-construction'

is a matter of immediate engagement with the world-in-common, and reflection on its existing structures, meanings, its rootedness in the past, and how it can be strengthened, enhanced, continued, while immediately offering space to new needs and wishes. Architects simply are challenged to apply their work with caution, not to destroy the precarious threads that connect us with the past, neither to insert the failure-projects of tomorrow, nor to lose their rooting in society.[27]

This, for architects seeking to execute the ethical fullness of their charge, clearly is a balancing act between the objective and the subjective. The perspective that design deals with concrete artefacts that are in-common challenges designers to organize the ethical questions as clearly and concretely as possible within each design project (and not hidden in abstraction, or obscured in the instruments and methods), while communicating openly and accessibly about the subjective aspects of the activity of design (and how to deal with them from an ethical perspective).

> “ARENDT'S PERSPECTIVE OF THE WORLD-IN-COMMON CLEARLY AT ONCE BOTH CHALLENGES THE SUBJECTIVE INTERVENTION IN THIS WORLD, AS WELL AS THE AIM TO BE OBJECTIVE.”

ARCHITECTURAL JUDGMENT

How then can we understand architectural *design*, if it is a balancing act between the objective and the subjective? The design process often is understood as a black box, wherein imagination and experience, taste and other subjective aspects, play a role. Generally speaking, architectural design is not understood by the broader public, as is tangible in all sorts talks about architecture in the media or in personal conversations in which the architect after all never is never challenged by his audience to respond to the costs of one iconic building, the terrible leaking of another, the un-functionality of again another spectacular building? However, if we zoom in to the actual process of design, we obviously immediately understand that the design first and

foremost is embedded in the wishes of the client. Architects actively define and shape the intervention in the existing environment according to a program brief, along the lines of wishes of clients, investors, developers, and other stakeholders. This perspective at first sight seems to limit the responsibility of the architect. After all: most of the outcome of the design-process is already given and predefined in a program brief (particularly in complex projects, these program briefs are like books containing hundreds of pages with prescriptions). However, design is not simply *the* answer to a particular program brief, as there are many answers to that same program brief, as architectural competitions clearly show. [28] This simple given of the multiplicity of possible outcomes already shows how crucial the position of the designer is, despite his currently often limited power in the process of development. Besides the very activity of sketching and investigating, two aspects of design are crucial with regard to the world-in-common:

• Through the design process, often contradictory and conflicting viewpoints and insights evolve, as the needs of the client are addressed as well as the wishes of the future users and inhabitants, the concerns of the neighbours, the ambitions of local politics, the constraints of the existing situation, the regulations of local rules and laws, and so on. Design investigates possibilities and opportunities, and through these investigations, new, unforeseen, and unthought-of perspectives open up—perspectives that might unite contrasting positions.

• Through design, moreover, the question of imagination is posed: what do we envision as the outcome of the project, what should it narrate, what does it stand for (and how does it contribute to the world-in-common)? In one way or the other, decisions have to be made upon the directions of the design process. To treat these issues as jigsaw puzzles that can be solved through mathematical logic, smart reasoning, or through complex computation is to abdicate architectural judgment: to make choices, to decide upon what is important, to value the several perspectives, and to be able to discuss these issues publicly.

It will be useful to introduce at this point another term borrowed from Arendt's writings: her reflections on political judgment. These reflections, although not fully developed because of her sudden death in 1975, incorporate ideas about the public access as well as the inter-subjectivity of such judgments. In particular, two aspects of judgment—the accessibility of the decision as well as its intersubjective character—are pressing questions regarding architectural design.

Arendt based her understanding of political judgment on Immanuel Kant's proposition of aesthetic judgment. The crucial feature Arendt

adopts from Kant's perspective is his idea of the "intersubjective validity [of judgment] in the public realm."[29] Aesthetic judgment, for Kant, is not limited to the application of personal taste (although the development of taste is crucial), but always is related to the larger context of society. It requires an active engagement with this community, particularly through the application of an enlarged mentality. This latter term open to an important perspective, particularly in regard to the activity of design. What is important at this point is that Arendt also argues that politics, upon which she is focused, should not be understood as a realm of 'truths' in a scientific sense. "Truth in the sciences is dependent on the experiment that can be repeated by others; it requires general validity. Philosophic truth has no such general validity. What it must have … is 'general communicability'."[30] Surely, facts do play a role in the realm of politics—as clearly can be derived from the omnipresence of 'alternative facts' in today's political institutions. However, even if all participants stick to the same facts, paradoxical and even contractionary perspectives can be developed. Facts after all require both interpretation and validation. In politics, it is much more about the weighing of facts and understanding their relationships, particularly in relationship to the world and its wanderings, than it is about finding and defending *the* truth. In politics, moreover, understanding the facts and their relationships does not lead to a political program or decisions that can organize society in all its plurality. On the contrary, for Arendt the political arena is not about facts and figures, but about conflicting interpretations and contradictory perspectives. This approach thus requires the capacity to make decisions not solely on the basis of facts, but also with regard to conflicting perspectives and within complicated situations. Political judgment, Arendt therefore argues, is bound to a certain community. One judges "as a member of this community and

not as a member of a supersensible world."[31] Being part of a community urges us to understand the subjective aspects of our own position in the world, and urges us to take "the viewpoints of others into account."[32] Arendt stresses that the capacity to acknowledge other perspectives rightly requires a specific human capacity that she calls after Kant the "enlarged mentality." "The 'enlargement of the mind' is accomplished by "comparing our judgment with the possible rather than the actual judgments of others, and by putting ourselves in the place of any other man."[33]

The striking perspective Arendt stresses here is that she seems to take this process of judgment very literally. To take other viewpoints into account is not to think *about* other perspectives (or to take note of these perspectives), but literally means entering the problem at hand *from* the standpoint of other positions in the world. This describes a process of active engagement: to re-place oneself to another position, to re-write the story from that very perspective. Judgment requires the ability to place oneself in the place of others, in order to think from their position in the world. This is a crucial perspective: judgment implicitly requires a public. The plural public is at the heart of judgment processes—if not literal, then through the human faculty of imagination. "By the force of imagination it makes the others present and thus moves in a space that is potentially public, open to all sides."[34]

The crucial point for our reflection on architectural design is Arendt's next step: it is one thing to replace oneself to other positions, and to be able to think from within these positions, but the question how to *judge* is still open. It still requires judgment to make up one's mind and to make decisions. Judgment requires a space to reflect, think, test other points of view, as it eventually also requires expertise, experience, knowledge, and intuition. Such a judgment requires engagement and reasonable training, as it does not depend upon general rules but on "thinking the particular." Since in judgment imagination and intuition are involved, it is understood as requiring faculties of the human being that are shaped through active engagement in the world and participation in public life, as well as fueled through experience and knowledge. Through such an engagement in the world, one is able to recognize the particular, and to imagine the particular from different points of view. It is only through such a process, Arendt argues, that judgment becomes "communicable:" It can be communicated to others, as it is based on the thinking from different perspectives and on the development of and reflection upon multiple possibilities. This communicability takes the form of a persuasive activity: it is able to appeal to the variety of perspectives within society, even if it has judged that some

of the perspectives seem to be other than just.[35]

If we now turn back to architectural design, we easily can see the parallel. On the architect's drawing table literally lay a variety of perspectives at hand: the client's, the users', the inhabitants', the local politics' perspective, and the neighbors'. The architect listens to their voices and challenges the project from their point of view. In the end, however, it is the design that needs to bring these (often conflicting) perspectives together, against the horizon of the world-in-common (in space and time) and not the design tool, the algorithm, the survey, or the sorted data. Design is an activity that sometimes unfolds somehow in solitude (within the office, at the drawing table, in meeting rooms, and so on), but that inherently also requires a continuous, imaginative conversation with its context, with the world-in-common. It requires imagination to "make the others present," and by doing so making the architectural office and the subsequent meeting rooms (of clients, engineers, planners, politicians) where the design is developed, a public space.[36] It is through the making present of the public at the heart of the process of design, that the design also can be made public, that the design is communicable, that it is accessible to be discussed publicly.[37]

> "ALL ATTEMPTS THAT AIM TO DIMINISH THE SUBJECTIVE FROM DESIGN WILL FALL INTO THE TRAP OF TECHNOCRATIC ENGINEERING, WHEREIN A REDUCTIONIST AND MATERIALIST VISION IS EMBRACED, AND RESPONSIBILITY IS ENDLESSLY DISPLACED."

CONCLUSION

Returning to the three examples of resistance against subjectivity I described at the outset: Obviously, we can't lump all three examples together as a singular tendency completely. Especially the attempt to open up the design process for the participation of future users and inhabitants seems to stand out. New technologies appear especially promising in this regard where they help to streamline processes of interaction, discussion and debate, and how new techniques, developed in the

gaming industries, also can be applied to architectural and urban planning processes. Moreover, in several countries around the world new ways of developing buildings appear, where in cooperative ways future inhabitants strongly work together, and are completely involved in the processes of developing and designing, and even financing and constructing their future housing. However, this does not diminish the role of design in these processes. Moreover, it is clear that if all these voices have to be heard, the complexity of the design process increases. How to incorporate the different and often opposing viewpoints into a single design? It is in this perspective that we can validate the parallel between architectural design and political judgment, as pondered by Hannah Arendt. Judgment requires the training of the human faculty of 'enlarged mentality' and imagination. To judge means to be able to think from different perspectives, not to define the average of these perspectives, but in order to come to an informed judgment.

A similar case can be made for design. Design requires the ability to think from the perspective of the stakeholders, as well as from a more general context (as the world-in-common). It requires imagination to make these perspectives present. However, in the end it needs to judge, it needs to make decisions. Such 'informed' judgments do not only mean to be informed about the different perspectives at stake, but also are informed through personal experiences, taste, knowledge, skills, and so on, that is to say, subjectively. All attempts that aim to diminish the subjective from design will fall into the trap of technocratic engineering, wherein a reductionist and materialist vision is embraced, and responsibility is endlessly displaced. It is particularly in the very moments where the subjective enters judgment that a public and political discussion on architectural proposals is possible, and that architects can be held responsible for their ideas and proposals. Conversely, architectural design requires balancing between stakeholders and the public, between the earth and the world-in-common, the world as it is gained from the past, and the world as it can be in the future. This balancing act requires personal engagement in the world, which will feed the architectural knowledge that can be gained through studies and experience, which is gained through extensive practicing, studying, and reflecting upon the world.

ENDNOTES

1. Many examples of the tendencies above can be given, both from the field of practices as well as from academia. However, as I do not want to pinpoint offices to a singular take, I leave it to the imagination of the reader to frame these tendencies in architectural practice to actual cases.

2. Cf. Dana Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1991), 28-35d.

3. George Baird, '"La Dimension Amoreuse" in Architecture', in: Charles Jencks and George Baird (eds.). *Meaning in Architecture* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, The Cresset Press, 1969); George Baird, *The Space of Appearance* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1995); Giancarlo De Carlo, 'Architecture's Public', in: Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu and Jeremy Till (eds.) *Architecture and Participation* (Abingdon: Spon Press, 2007); Kenneth Frampton, 'The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects: a Reading of The Human Condition', in Kenneth Frampton, *Labour, Work, and Architecture. Collected Essays on Architecture and Design* (London, New York: Phaidon Press, 2002); Robert Gutman, *Architectural Practice: A Critical View* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998).

4. Baird, *The Space of Appearance,* 21.

5. Julia Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 77.

6. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2006), 82-84.

7. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1958]), 2.

8. *Ibid.*, 52.

9. *Ibid.*, 167.

10. *Ibid.*, 173-174.

11. Hannah Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics', in: *Hannah Arendt, The Promise of Politics* (New York:

Schocken Books, 2005), 93.

12. Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 73

13. *Ibid*., 95; cf. Paul Holmquist, 'Towards an Ethical Technique: Reframing Architecture's "Critical Call" through Hannah Arendt,' in: *The Plan Journal,* 1 (1) 2016, 19.

14. Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt,* 41.

15. *Ibid*., 41.

16. I of course refer here to Nicolaus Pevsner's famous distinction between architecture and building, as defined in the first paragraphs of his book on the history of European Architecture: Nicolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture* (Harmonstworth: Penguin Books, 1968), 15.

17. Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 167.

18. Every architect today will at this point hear an echo of Aldo Rossi's famous reading of the monumental buildings in a city as the carriers of (collective) memory. Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2007 [1962]).

19. Hannah Arendt, 'The Crisis in Culture: Its Social and Its Political Significance', in: Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future. Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York 2006 [1961], Penguin Books), 208-210.

20. Hannah Arendt, 'Culture and Politics', in: Hannah Arendt, *Reflections on Literature and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 190.

21. See Herman Hertzberger, *The Schools of Herman Hertzberger* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2009).

22. This of course is perfectly understood by the Trump Administration and their attempt to 'Make Federal Buildings Beautiful Again' – although one can question whether the choice of narrative is appropriate. See: https://www.architecturalrecord.com/articles/14466-will-the-white-house-order-new-federal-architecture-to-be-classical (accessed March 12, 2020).

23. Bonnie Honig, *Public Things, Democracy in Disrepair* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 17.

24. *Ibid*., 42.

25. Baird, *The Space of Appearance,* 22.

26. *Ibid*., 22.

27. *Ibid*., 285.

28. This of course is one of the reasons that design cannot be brought back to a formula: program briefs as well as the local circumstances require interpretation, and thus judgment from the designer. There are as many

answers to an assignment as there are architects (and even more, as also architects themselves often come up with multiple possibilities).

29. Seyla Benhabib, 'Judgment and the Moral Foundation of Politics in Hannah Arendt's Thought' In: Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (eds), *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics* (New York/ Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 194.

30. Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 40.

31. *Ibid.*, 67.

32. *Ibid.*, 42.

33. *Ibid.*, 42-43 (Arendt quotes Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, §40).

34. *Ibid.*, 43.

35. *Ibid.*, 72.

36. *Ibid.*, 43.

37. *Ibid.*, 67.

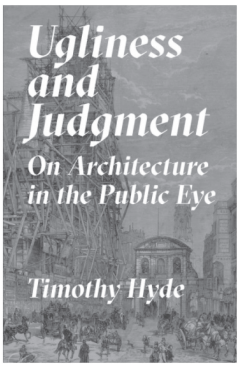
Book review:

Ugliness and Judgment: On Architecture in the Public Eye

by Timothy Hyde

Princeton Architectural Press, 2019

223 pages, Hardcover $35.00



reviewed by Mark Jensen

Ugliness and Judgment is a delightful and frustrating book. Timothy Hyde's project lies at the intersection of history, architecture, aesthetics, and public policy. By focusing on Britain, or more specifically on a series of ugly moments in British architectural history, Hyde goes part of the way toward narrowing what would otherwise be an unwieldy project. His aim is to answer the question, "…how does architecture participate in societal judgment?" especially judgments of ugliness (2). Along these lines, he explains:

> …architectural ugliness must be explored not along a philosophical plane, but along the horizon that composes the difficult reality of architecture, which is not necessarily the material reality of buildings…but the realities of the norms, institutions, and standards of expectation that precede architecture. (8)

In other words, Hyde supposes that judgments of ugliness in architecture are not made from the standpoint of the dispassionate art critic, but instead from the standpoint of the people who must live, work, and play in and around the structures in question.

Organizationally, the book is divided into two

parts: (i) Stones and (ii) Persons. The three chapters that concern Stones are "Improvement," "Nuisance," and "Irritation," wherein Hyde works through a set of structures—one prominent structure per chapter—in which he explores judgments of ugliness as these judgments attach to specific types of socio-political engagement with architecture. "Improvement" concerns the architect John Woods's attempt to improve the aesthetics of the city of Bath using neo-classical elements; "Nuisance" concerns the reconstruction of Parliament with building materials that were becoming tarnished by pollution before the project was complete; and "Irritation" concerns the South Bank Arts Centre—a reviled example of 20th century brutalism in central London. Together, these three chapters present a picture of interplay between buildings, architects, clients, and the public, where this interplay includes judgments of ugliness as well as attempts by parties to respond to these judgments.

In Persons, Hyde takes up the topics of "Incongruity," "The Architect," and "The Profession." Here, he is focused primarily on the persons rather than the buildings, especially the interrelations between architects, city planners, and society at large. "Incongruity" is concerned principally with libel: criticisms of architecture in 18th and 19th century Britain were met with libel suits by the architects, which only emboldened public engagement with aesthetic judgments of the architects work. "The Profession," concerns the relationship between particular architects, e.g., Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, organizations like the Royal Institute of British Architects, and the public. "The Monarch" focuses on Prince Charles' interventions, presumptively (on his part) on behalf of the public and in rendering judgments on architectural projects that he (speaking for the people) took to be especially ugly.

The delight of the book is its engagement with very specific episodes in the history of architecture and the social and political consequences of architecture in Britain, especially London. It seems to me that when the literature and philosophy of architecture abstracts from context—and not just the context of buildings, but also the social, political, geographic, and historical contexts in which buildings are built—it quickly becomes dry, unengaging, and boring. Hyde's book avoids these interest-killing abstractions: the discussion is immersed in the details of buildings, episodes, architects, commissions, courts, etc., that serve not only to bring ugly buildings into hideous life, but also to establish the context in which their hideousness can be put on full display.

The English themselves are half of the delight, being at once both earnest and silly: earnest in their legal actions to protect buildings, in

their legal defenses of the reputation of professional architects, and in the attempt of the royals to prevent the construction of ugly buildings. They are silly in the architectural and planning choices that public officials and professionals make, in the juxtaposition of diverse architectural styles that span centuries, in the variety of social, civic, and political organizations who intervene in these affairs, and even in the names that they have given to their organizations, places and buildings: "Ugly Face Club, "Consistory Court," "Mansion House Square, "Isle of Dogs," and "No. 1 Poultry."

The delights of the book give way to a bit of a worry, which is this. It might be that the episodes in question fail to serve as paradigmatic examples or key representatives of broader trends in architecture, politics, and history. It may be instead that Britain is unique: it is characterized by a deep-seated conservative culture and it lacks an overall architectural style. When parts of London were destroyed in WWII, large-scale rebuilding was required, which put these two characteristics into conflict. As a result, it may be especially difficult to draw any overall lessons from the history of ugliness in British architecture. To be sure: Hyde is careful to point out that he is not undertaking an analysis of ugliness or ugly buildings or even judgments of ugliness as we find them in British cases. But one has a sense that Hyde is attempting to draw overarching conclusions about way ugliness shows up in public discourse. At the end of the book, he writes:

> the judgment of ugliness signals the participation of architecture in a social circumstance in which resolution is not achieved by aesthetic means; instead, the aesthetic dimension of architecture, precisely because of its insufficiency, is transferred into other instruments of social consequence. Ugliness, therefore, is the judgment of an irresolution and an insufficiency, but

"THE DISCUSSION IS IMMERSED IN THE DETAILS OF BUILDINGS, EPISODES, ARCHITECTS, COMMISSIONS, COURTS, ETC., THAT SERVE NOT ONLY TO BRING UGLY BUILDINGS INTO HIDEOUS LIFE, BUT ALSO TO ESTABLISH THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THEIR HIDEOUSNESS CAN BE PUT ON FULL DISPLAY."

> additionally is the instantiation of that insufficiency into social technologies, into concrete processes, customs, and institutions. (184)

What he means to say, I think, is that the judgment that a building is ugly is a composite reflection of the aesthetic qualities of the building, the broader social and political context in which the building is built, and the background assumptions of the people making the judgment. But as noted above, it is far from clear that he has a sample of the size and type that would justify this judgment. Perhaps insufficiency and irresolution are features of British culture that spillover into its architecture, rather than intrinsic features of architecture itself.

Another frustrating aspect of the book, evident in the quotation above, is Hyde's prose, especially when he attempts to draw broader conclusions. He tends toward a kind of theory-speak that obfuscates the points that he wants to make. This is frustrating not only because he will scare away educated but non-technical readers interested in the concept of the 'ugly' in architecture, but also because he is clearly on the right track—despite the idiosyncratic nature of his evidence—in thinking that the judgment that a building is ugly serves multiple aesthetic, social, and political purposes. He is also right in refusing to be caught up in the ideological or reductivist games of providing *the* definition of ugly architecture and then justifying this definition through cherry-picked examples.

Admirably, Hyde instead uses his examples to demonstrate the enormous conceptual, social, and political range of the judgment of ugliness. Some clarity about the concept of ugliness emerges in the discussion of specific buildings, such as his description of the ugliness of the South Bank Arts Centre:

> …the ugliness of the South Bank Arts Centre consists of an intrusive, situated dissonance. This dissonance results not merely from infelicities of function, from a building not adequately serving its programmatic demands, or from insufficiencies of symbolic or associational legibility. It manifests from a third register of ugliness, not within the shape or material of architecture, but that consists of the relation between the architecture and the person who encounters it... (80)

As he goes on to explain, the third register is one of feeling: ugly architecture can evoke disgust, irritation, or antipathy.

This passage is as close as Hyde comes to stating succinctly that judgments of ugliness in architecture are matters of form, function, and

feeling. However, when properly qualified by individual, social, and political contexts, one will find that this is the view that he defends in the book. We might forgive Hyde's lack of concision in light of two broader truths. One is the old Aristotelian proverb that we can only expect as much precision as the subject allows. Given the range of disciplines in view, it would be a mistake to expect much here. But second, the British case, with its unique dispositions and history, invites hosts of qualifications. This is a nation-state lacking a distinctive, unique, and celebrated architectural style. Its architecture is a bit like its cuisine, but quite the opposite of its music and literature and theater. In other words, it is easier to write about Shakespeare and the Beatles than it is to write about British architecture.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

FRANK MAHAN, AIA, Associate Director of SOM's New York office, M. Arch, Princeton University. He is the firm's Adaptive Reuse practice leader.

VAN KLUYTENAAR Architectural Professional at SOM, M. Arch, Princeton University.

LAWRENCE J. VALE Associate Dean and Ford Professor of Urban Design and Planning, MIT. D. Phil., Oxford University.

ANDRÉ PATRÃO is a doctoral student at EPFL.

RICK FOX, architect, President, Stratos Form. Professor, Interior Designers Institute, M. Phil., CSU.

HANS TEERDS Faculty member, ETH, Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture. Ph. D, TU Delft.

MARK JENSEN Professor of Philosophy, U. S. Air Force Academy. Ph. D, Univ. of Notre Dame.

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