ABSTRACT

Title of Document: Toward an Architecture of Suspension: Promiscuous Collisions of Transient Cartographies

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Degree and Year: Master of Architecture, 2008

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Professor of the Practice Gary A. Bowden, FAIA

Many political experts argue that we have tried too hard to fully resolve international and geopolitical conflicts by trying to negotiate full and lasting resolutions. International crises are dangerous episodes that are destabilizing not only to those directly involved but also to the entire international community. Long and exhaustive methods aimed at negotiating conflicts to end crisis have not been effective and have resulted in deaths and human suffering that may not have been necessary. What is evident is that international conflict is increasing and has rendered the world as a more dangerous place to live and has exposed future generations to greater peril. A growing number of experts in the United Nations diplomatic community contend that the best and the most expeditious way to end deadly violence in the world is to suspend conflict, to promote and extend a suspension of conflict, rather than seeking to overcome it. This thesis will investigate and explore the ways in which qualities of architecture can assist the suspension of deadly conflict. I am interested in discovering how architecture can help diminish the intensity and scale of conflict by creating a place where constructive talks between conflicting parties can be best carried out. How can architecture help to achieve a greater comfort between conflicted parties when searching for a less threatening ground? Can architecture foster greater empathy between adversaries?
Toward an Architecture of Suspension:
Promiscuous Collisions of Transient Cartographies
by
Farzam Yazdanseta

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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2008

Advisory Committee:
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dedicated to

Garth Rockcastle
Michael Ambrose
This thesis would not have been realized without the help of my great friend

John W. Bryant
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introduction

“...Peace among men, it is important to note, is not the object of desire, not by any stretch of the historical, political, or sociological imagination. Nothing unites a community, with all the good fellowship and cooperation one can imagine, like the external threat of a common enemy. But the threat is originally internal; it is the violent threat of all against all. It is the annihilating threat of this internal difference, or difference, that we have rematerialized in the postwar, postmodern era; with the world itself at stake all differences would by definition be “internal” differences...war is a state of order, a classic state of lines and of columns, of maps and of strategies. It is a remedy to the violence of the furious, raging multitude...a society makes war to avoid at all costs a return to that state. Peace, then, is not the object of desire, but its by-product, the calm to which the deferred appropriation of the victim gives rise. It is a calm logically-that is, necessarily-attributed to the miraculous agency of the victim, thanks to whom for the first time something like a before (war) and after (peace), an outside (sacred) and inside (community), is marked-marked-, above all, as remarked, for its experience is necessarily mimetic and collective...”

Andrew J, McKenna
Violence and Difference, Girard, Derrida and Deconstruction
Architecture can help suspend conflict. In order to do that it needs to be rarified and move beyond the normative expression employed in our typical surrounding world. This architecture needs to create a space and represent ideas to help compel us to act otherwise. Architecture of suspension can help critically awakens an otherwise passive and complacent public by stirring our imaginations and challenging our assumptions. It can thereby help us awaken empathy in other human beings and their circumstances or plights. It appears that 60 years of United Nations effort and agency has failed to resolve deadly global conflict. Conflict is a necessary byproduct of tensions and differences but conflict escalates to destructive levels when parties fail to see or accept differences in each other and come to abuse or transgress each other’s fundamental rights to exist. The ultimate goal for the new complementary United Nations Conflict Suspension Center on Roosevelt Island is not to try to eliminate conflict but to help suspend it. Architecture of suspension begins with a sharing of a presentation or choreography of the “others” strife. At first, in Isolation, adversaries need to learn more of the other, their pain, their dreams and their needs. They prepare to open themselves to others. My thesis takes the position that this best happens on an Island that even though removed, is not isolated for it exists in close visual and spatial proximity to Manhattan and Queens. This simultaneous separation and connection will be part of the
architectural language of my thesis, a new United Nations Center. I am proposing that by the means of art, theatre and exhibitions prepare adversaries to better understand each other. Divergent cultural values and perspectives along with utilizing more abstract, less conventional images and spatial qualities will be embraced in this thesis to help me set alternative design parameters and discover new ideas for spaces that I believe can help bring the adversaries together. These will become spaces of sharing, healing and common ground. Spaces that facilitate building trust and empathy. In addition, housing, another component of the program, will be designed to help brings adversaries closer together.
The site, Southpoint Park, with its mythical history is charged for hosting such an event. Southpoint has had a history of shifting. Over its various incarnations, the outline of the islands southern tip has expanded dramatically, mainly as a result of manmade efforts and human impacts on the earth. At the time of its construction, the Smallpox Hospital sat overlooking the edge of the island. 1975, the site had repositioned itself in such a manner that the building laid almost 900 feet from the islands southernmost edge. The island’s original boundaries are is now impossible to discern without a map. Design inspirations could be drawn from forces at work in and around the island, both visible and invisible. A fundamental question might be how is this “new ground” that is being added (and lost?) in the river corridor become an asset to the thesis? And how might the phenomena of that shifting ground become a part of the conceptual thinking about the project in this location? Some of these influences include the subway tunnel which transverses the island, the harsh tides of the East River with their diurnal swing in direction and sight lines to other natural and manmade New York phenomena.
“…The traditional sense of space is only produced in the very gesture of its subordination. To interfere with that gesture is to produce a very different sense of space, a sense that at once disturbs and produces the tradition. It is to mark this sense that Derrida uses the word “spacing” a word that carries some of the connotations that the tradition attaches to space in its attempt to dismiss it but also carries senses that cannot be recognized by the tradition. To disturb the tradition involves subverting its attempt to detach itself from space by identifying that attempt as a form of institutional resistance that attempts to conceal the convoluted structure of the tradition that makes it The exclusion and subordination of space produces an orderly façade, or, rather the façade of order, to mask an internal disorder. The traditional anxiety about space marks a forbidden desire that threatens to collapse the edifice of philosophy from within…”

Andrew J, McKenna
Violence and Difference, Girard, Derrida and Deconstruction
Traditional Modern architecture, the language used to signify the United Nations identity, on the edge of East River in New York, I believe is now showing its limits. A new and more rare architecture could disrupt and the boundaries of this tradition by the means of spacing. Spacing is not about literal space (a noun) but what Derrida describes as becoming space (a verb) or that which is meant to become without space (presence, speech, spirit, ideas, and so on). It is that which opens up a space, both in the sense of fissuring an established structure, dividing it or complicating its limits, but also in the sense of producing space itself as an opening in the tradition. Spacing is at once splintering and productive. As Derrida puts it, “spacing is a concept which also, but not exclusively, carries the meaning of a productive, positive, generative, force…it carries along with it a genetic motif: it is not only the interval, the space constituted between two things (which is the usual sense of spacing) but also spacing, the operation, or in any event, the movement of setting aside.” As an Iranian American, raised in Iran during the eight-year deadly conflict between Iran and Iraq, I am motivated to bring my personal emotions and recollections into this architectural language of this thesis project. For me architecture is a form of expression that helps me release my personal and emotional feelings about my surrounding world. Iran has been a prime subject of international politics and major party of numerous heightened conflicts since the creation
of the United Nations. Architecture of the United Nations Center seeks to foster greater empathy between adversaries in order to suspend deadly conflict. The success of projects like the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum Complex in Israel, by Moshie Safdie, the Memorial for Murdered Jews in Berlin, by Peter Eisenman, and the Jewish Museum in Berlin, by Daniel Libeskind lies in the fact that their designs were conceived and realized by architects sympathetic to the Holocaust issue. Libeskind, Safdie and Peter Eisenman are all Jewish, not to mention that Daniel Libeskind’s mother was a Holocaust survivor. These architects have successfully created buildings and commemorative sites that have been very strident and evocative about an awakening process. These commemorative projects make us aware of the past, make us open ourselves to others and open the path for a better and peaceful future.
precedents

“...because of media the body has been cut off from the mind and the eye. In other words we become so accustomed to sitting, watching TV, watching video, watching film, we become a sedentary culture. What this building tries to do is to bring the body back into the mind-eye relationship. Because you are constantly being thrown off our guard. You are brushed up against things. Things are too small, too narrow; they are too wide; you feel a sense of your body in the space. Everybody can see everybody. You see bits of pieces fragments. You see people in ways you have never seen before. The building frames and reframes the body and activity and motion and that’s what is exciting. I did not want to make a static building. I wanted to throw off. The walls tip and curve and move....”

Peter Eisenman
In Conversation with Charlie Rose about Aronoff Center for Art and Design, Cincinnati, Ohio
“...Architects give shape to the physical world and shape our mental world by choosing how to guide our minds eye. Architecture sets parameters on consciousness by holding the minds eye to certain capabilities of apprehension. Architecture both reflects and shapes how perceive ourselves and our communities. 9/11 abruptly changed the conditions of the culture around the world and the conditions of architecture. The September 11 terrorists were about terror and the spectacle. The planes were calibrated half an hour apart precisely so after the first tower was hit everybody would be watching the second tower be hit. Those spectacular images of media have brought an end to postmodernism and also an end to the society of the spectacle. What is eroding the civility and culture of the western world is the fact we are turned into spectators and standing by and gradually watching things rather than participating in things. New Yorkers on September 11th experienced what it meant to be there unlike the world that watched the events unfold on TV. Dust, chaos and massacre at war zone, something United States had not experienced since the civil war, the most American deaths in one day. What this meant for architecture is that suddenly being there became important. Not watching something happen but being where it happened. Can architecture come back to a situation were we are no longer attempting to become media darlings and try to produce images that conflict with media but in fact try to produce spaces
that cause people to be somewhere and feel that they are there. Architecture has been the one discipline that combines the mind, the eye, and the body unlike any other because it produces spaces that are important to the mind, eye, and the body and now architecture is experiencing a return to thinking about being there and with thinking about place and being there in relationship to a social constituency. You cannot make place for an individual. You cannot make places of assembly unless it is about a political will. In United States we do not care about public space and spaces of assembly and how these spaces can help in the political and social process of bringing people together because we continue to be a country undermined by the media and spectatorship...”

Peter Eisenman
Lecture at Vanderbilt University,
Nashville, Tennessee

The following precedents are of significant importance to this thesis. They heighten the significance of context and historical and physical attributes as a generator of the architectural space and form. Additionally these precedents reinforce the fact that projects with significant commemorative values have been designed by architects sympathetic to those values. The first three precedents, the Memorial for Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum Complex in Jerusalem and the Jewish Museum in Berlin are used
to demonstrate the importance of the context and the authority of the architect and his or her personal sympathy and sensibility towards the subject and program. The next two precedents, The Imperial Museum of War in Manchester, England and the Nunotani office building in Tokyo, Japan are nested well within their context and are site/context driven. The next precedent, Tadashi Kawamata’s installation on Roosevelt Island, uses architecture as a vehicle for social and political commentary. Lastly, I introduce the work of Joesph Kosuth, a New York artist. His work, One and Three Chairs, 1965 has been displayed at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Four of these projects are examples of the work of architects Peter Eisenman and Daniel Libeskind. The reason I use these two architects is due to the fact of their expertise in deconstructing the core values of the subject matter in a project and their ability to synthesize those findings into architecture. While the Memorial for Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, by Peter Eisenman, and Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum Complex in Jerusalem, by Moshe Safdie, both memorialize the Holocaust, each approach the problem in different ways. Both engage the topography of the site, leading the visitors through a variety of sensory and kinesthetic experiences.

“...In Berlin’s case, the abstracted, sculptural field is charged by repetition and number, its subliminal language expressed through hundreds of steles, flung at the heart of Berlin like and unspoken indictment. In Jerusalem, the architect directly incised a sculptural form like a gash into the hillside, providing a partially buried setting for the reflection and remembrance. Neither looks like the other. In both cases, material and form constitute the means to enriching larger cultural settings, each speaking silently to visitors clearly as if in a known, civilized language...”
In the third precedent, The Jewish Museum in Berlin, by Daniel Libeskind, the building itself, sits as an abstracted object of display in the context of Berlin. This project like the previous two is tasked to commemorate the Holocaust. Designing memorials for the Holocaust is usually fraught with dilemmas peculiar to this unusually sensitive topic. Such philosophical questions as aesthetics, memory, memorialization, the nature of mourning and the passage of time persistently confront the designer, and if left unresolved can subvert his or her original intention. The next two precedents, The Nuno-tani Headquarters building in Tokyo, by Peter Eisenman and the Imperial Museum of War by Daniel Libeskind are context specific. The Nunosani project is a tribute to victims of earthquakes and natural disasters, while the Imperial Museum of War in Manchester by Daniel Libeskind is about the conflict of the globe and war.

Please visit conflictUN.blogspot.com to view images of the precedent studies.
“...911 Abruptly changed the conditions of the culture around the world and also the conditions of the culture of architecture...”

Peter Eisenman
Lecture at Vanderbilt University
Nashville, Tennessee
One large project, designed by sculptor Tadashi Kawamata, was an enormous land sculpture that encompassed the Small Pox hospital. For Tadashi Kawamata, however, this was a private piece as much as a vehicle for social and political commentary. Temporality and the dialectic of construction and deconstruction are recurrent issues in his work - a response to the rapid changes, the growth and decay that take place in so many cities.
Lastly, I introduce, One and Three Chairs, the work of Joseph Kosuth, known to be the Father of Conceptual Art. In this work of art, a chair sits next to a photograph of a chair and a dictionary definition of the word chair. Maybe all three are chairs, or codes for one: a visual code, a verbal code, and a code in the language of objects, that is, a chair of wood. But isn’t this last chair simply a chair? Prodded to ask such questions, the viewer embarks on the basic processes demanded by Conceptual art. “The art I call conceptual is such because it is based on an inquiry into the nature of art, Thus, it is a working out, a thinking out, of all the implications of all aspects of the concept ‘art,’” Chasing a chair through three different registers, Kosuth asks us to try to decipher the subliminal sentences in which we phrase our experience of art. The work of Joseph Kosuth is of significance and relevance to me since just like the proceeding examples he attempts to deconstructs the values and meaning within the subject of the design and communicate in literal and abstract languages to the viewers.
site (de)code | (de)construction

The following chapter is a graphical analysis of the thesis site. Please visit www.conflictUN.blogspot.com for more detailed graphics.
Figure 3. East River (de)code | (de)construction
Figure 4. East River in Manhattan Context

Figure 5. East River in Manhattan Context
Figure 6. FDR Drive
Figure 7. Queensboro Bridge
Figure 12. I-495, Queens Midtown Tunnel

Figure 13. United Nations
Figure 14. Manhattan, Long Island City

Figure 15. Boundaries, 42nd and 52nd Streets, 1st Avenue
Figure 16. Conflicts of the World

Figure 17. Conflicts of the World_Manhattan
Figure 22. U-Thant Island (Belmont Island)

Figure 23. U-Thant (Burmese UN Secretary General)
Figure 24. Anable Basin
Figure 27. East River (de)code
Figure 29. Roosevelt Island Growth
Courtesy of rooseveltislander.blogspot.com
Figure 34-37. Roosevelt Island Growth
b3 thesis meeting
September 10_2008_3pm

Dean and Professor Garth Rockcastle, FAIA
Assistant Professor Michael Ambrose
Assistant Professor Sonja Duempelmann
Professor of the Practice, FAIA
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express our

Figure 55. Diagram
Figure 57. Diagram

Figure 58. Diagram
promiscuous collisions of transient cartographies
(de)code + (re)code con(text)
(de)construction of con(text)

force field of attributes
not looking for (con)ventions_exploring the (in)ventions

Figure 59. Diagram
Figure 60. Diagram
b4 thesis meeting
October 7_2008_6pm

Dean and Professor Garth Rockcastle, FAIA
Assistant Professor Michael Ambrose
Assistant Professor Sonja Duempelmann
Professor of the Practice, FAIA

Thank you Lisa Lacharite-Lostritto for taking notes
LONG ISLAND CITY

deconstruction

MANHATTAN

Figure 64. Diagram
Figure 65. Diagram
b5 thesis meeting
October 27_2008_3pm

Dean and Professor Garth Rockcastle, FAIA
Assistant Professor Michael Ambrose
Assistant Professor Sonja Duempelmann
Professor of the Practice, FAIA
Figure 66. Diagram

Figure 67. Diagram
Figure 72. Diagram
Figure 73. Diagram
b6 thesis meeting
November 17_2008_1pm

Thesis Committee
Dean and Professor Garth Rockcastle, FAIA
Assistant Professor Michael Ambrose
Assistant Professor Sonja Duempelmann
Professor of the Practice, FAIA

Honorable Jury
Karla Maria Rothstein_Professor at Columbia University GSAPP
Filippo Caprioglio KEA Distinguished Professor_Caprioglio Associatti_Venice
Chris Pfaeffle_Principal_Parameter_Baltimore
Shawn Rickenbacker_UPenn_Creative Director_Creative Front_New York
Paul Jakob_Chairman_RTKL
Elisabetta Terragni_Studio Terragni
I embrace

**DECONSTRUCTION**

as a means to see and understand
the world and its conventions,
alternatively.

By doing so, possibilities expand and reveal the hidden prejudices of our mind and the places they reside in.

This opening and discovery process permits and promotes new insights and experiences.

This is the core value of the work I have pursued for this thesis of **SUSPENSION**.
This thesis is a manifestation of an inductive process I chose to pursue, not the traditional deductive process, not a set of formulas prescribed to me. I was very fortunate to have the support of my committee who agreed with the way I chose to pursue this thesis. I am interested in places that create curiosity and wonder. The alchemy you see here is a result of all these discoveries. I am very humbled to have discovered these facts, things I did not know about that would support this architecture of SUSPENSION. The goal is to bring together conflicting parties, conflicting biases in the hope of revealing facts other than the ones we are used to.
Figure 91-93. Fabrication Process
Figure 97-99. Fabrication Process
Figure 100-102. Fabrication Process
Figure 103-105 Fabrication Process
Figure 106-108. Fabrication Process
Figure 108-110. Fabrication Process
Figure 111-113. Fabrication Process
Figure 123. Diagram

ADMINISTRATION ACCESS
Figure 125. Diagram
Architecture is no more about the events that take place in space than the space it occupies is about the events that take place in it. Rather, it is a medium of experience. It is the medium through which experience is shaped and structured, and it is through its medium that we experience the world. The medium of architecture is the space it occupies, and it is this space that allows for the manifestation of events, both physical and experiential. In this sense, architecture is not a destination but a means of navigating and experiencing the world. It is the medium through which we understand and interact with our environment, and it is through this medium that we shape and transform our world. The medium of architecture is not just a physical space, but a conceptual space as well, a space that is both experienced and understood through the medium of architecture. It is through this medium that we create and recreate the world, and it is through this medium that we understand the world we create.
Figure 134. Diagram
Figure 138. Garth C. Rockcastle, FAIA, Thesis Chair
Concluding Comments
November 17, 2008 1pm
Figure 149. 2008 KEA Distinguished Professor
Filippo Caprioglio
Figure 155. Diagram
Figure 156. Diagram
Figure 157. Diagram
Figure 170. Video | Animation Frames
Figure 171. Video Animation Frames
Figure 172. Video | Animation Frames
Figure 173. Video | Animation Frames
Figure 174. Video Animation Frames
Figure 175. Video Animation Frames
Figure 176. Video | Animation Frames
Figure 177. Video | Animation Frames


5. availabe at YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-l1gOzxEM
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