

LANGUAGE AS STRUCTURE FOR MEMORY COMMUNITIES

by

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ABSTRACT

Architecture is a language - an intense cultural and historical force. This thesis will expound how architecture reflects, and contributes to, an identity via spoken language and diachronic cultural signals. While our built world is not easily reduced to literally grammatical morphemes, architecture offers equally meaningful, albeit abstract, messages of semiotic importance. I believe it is our individual and collective rendering of language that affords the promise of multiple understandings and creative solutions. Yet, the messages presented and perceived by our designed surroundings, at home and abroad, remain largely under-analyzed and discounted as prospective remedies to universal problems. Our built environment speaks enormously about our past and future, social priorities, demographic fluxes, aesthetic proclivities, etc. Ultimately, it is the world we construct which conveys our identity and prompts recognition of each other and ourselves.

I accept a future where architecture obliges a global acuity that acknowledges an associative, multi-presence of cultures and can translate an identifiable ‘local’ character. Similarly, an architectural disparity manifest from a multilingual society affords a unique opportunity to study how language might be structured, to influence a formative role in architecting a pluralist future.

This thesis will consider how the protracted marginalization of a culture and the gradual forfeiture of its language challenge how a cultural ‘memory’ is sustained – despite a steady linguistic and architectural regression.

In fact, contrasting architectural and linguistic practices used by burgeoning communities, this thesis will examine how economic and geographic isolation have led moribund minorities to an assortment of survival strategies, including – aside from emigration or assimilation – a dependence on mythologized culture and the memorializing of architecture as bastions for identity and remembering a common history.

If identity is memory, then the linguistic vestiges of a place offer a chance to recall and re-imagine an architectural lingo that fortifies a prior history, so as to re-contextualize a shared future in a country, and in a world, of competing cultural identities. This thesis will explore how architecture may inherently propagate a ‘dialogue’ in multilingual domains, for a temporal dissemination of identity by virtue of memory communities.

PLACE

Site

While this site is situated alongside culturally prevailing Euro-Mediterranean and Islamic-Middle Eastern nations, it is confronted in its unique alignment as a platform for interconnected peoples and cultures. Africa has historically been perceived as a subdivided place of parts. The Sahara Desert geographically acts as one of many discriminating divisions which split a comparative northern ‘modern’ and sub-Saharan ‘traditional’ continent. More than 2,000 distinct languages and an inestimable number of dialects are spoken in Africa – "one third of the world’s linguistic heritage". (UNESCO, 2009) Africans adhere to numerous adaptations of Christianity and Islam and variations of Hinduism, Judaism, and traditional ‘indigenous’ beliefs. Pronounced economic injustices are more prevalent in Africa than anywhere else in the world. As recovery in North Africa after decolonization sets the region apart - sustainable development today is fundamentally contingent on national improvements in tolerance and integration.

Despite millennia of trans-Saharan, European and Middle Eastern cultural contact, the conceptual divide separating these localities remains. The site for this design bridges all of these physical and conceptual divisions. The extensive communication (trade, travel, etc) performed largely by nomadic movements (Berber) and emigration, across geographical and also religious, social and linguistic frontiers, is favorable in tempering an architectural time-gap (modern-tradition) and mitigating cultural disparity (lingual discrepancies).

The Maghreb hosts a history of rich traditions and racial diversity derived from millennia of successive invasions, settlements and assimilations by the Phoenicians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Turks, Arabs, French, etc.

As the threshold to Europe, Africa and the Middle East, Tunisia offers a geo-strategic location with a diversely (divided) population, an emerging modernized trade industry, and a stable national and political structure receptive to, and in need of, identity formation.

The fixed urban constraints of the capital city serve a dual consideration for ‘accepting’ marginalized cultures (nomadic, immigrant, etc) while not intruding on or chasing isolated social groups. The interest to successfully influence an inclusive lingual scope within a broad cultural and historical setting can be especially achieved and understood in Tunis, where ‘memory communities’ can concentrate design intentions toward a newly defined, pluralistic identity. From the most populated city and the point of national politics and culture, Tunis, as an influential city, offers the ability to support an architectural program that endeavors to impact a national identity (while conserving a cultural heritage) and transmit architectural solutions across the country.

Listed as a World Heritage Site since 1979, the Medina is both a prominent landmark in the ‘city image’ for Tunis and a defining feature of Tunisia. (Ettehadieh, 3) The necessity to revitalize a historically valued and nationally (and internationally) distinguished place presents the opportunity for a dramatic social resolution: to perpetuate longstanding historical values and introduce new, multicultural defined values.

By accepting the overdue challenges in the Medina of controlling density, mitigating deterioration, reconciling cultural heritage and modern impositions, this design is sited so as to respond to a multiplicity of site specific issues which also parallel the conceptual basis for this thesis.

Context

Topography: The Medina urbanscape is essentially flat.

Weather: Moderate coastal temperatures of a Mediterranean ‘tropical’ climate reduce HVAC requirements. Tunis receives 15 to 24 inches annual rainfall, and records an average low temperature of 45°F in January and an average high of 90°F in August. Winters are mild and rainy while summers are hot and dry. Humidity can be severe and heating systems are beginning to become more common. Gas heating is currently the most economical system for the region. Air conditioning is not widespread and is expensive.

Population: Approximately 100,000 people live within the Medina, an area of 1.05 square miles (270 ha).

Demography: While Tunisia is an Islamic, predominantly Arab nation, Tunis and the Medina especially pinpoint a regional crossroads for diverse cultural exchange. Islamic, Jewish, Christian, African, Arab, Berber, European, etc are all present and share within this urban site.

Architecture: "The old city has an intricate and dense urban fabric around a central core: the mosque. One architectural type, the courtyard house, is used by all social groups, from communal houses to palaces. The irregular clusters of houses are accessible

through a hierarchy of paths, dead ends, alleys, narrow streets and souks (markets). The Medina is surrounded by peripheral boulevards, which have replaced the former city walls. Porte de France, a former city gate in the south of the Medina, opens up to the main axis of the European city, Bourghiba Avenue. The 19th century buildings there are influenced by French and Italian models. They are three to five storeys tall, with Art Nouveau, Art Deco, and Neo-Moorish whitewashed masonry facades – all of which have flat roofs and numerous balconies". (Ettehadieh, 3)

An *oukala* is coined as "an in-town caravanserai – a kind of hotel with rooms rented on a daily or weekly basis. Since the 1930s ...the Medina was strongly affected by a population shift...[of] rural migration and [a] departure of...urban gentry. Many private residences and monuments of the Medina were "oukalisied", i.e. turned into multi-family dwellings that sometime sheltered up to twenty households, often...in unacceptable sanitary conditions. Building deterioration, exacerbated by defective [joint-ownership] rental laws, caused the oukalas to become precarious homes for low-income families, with all or part of the buildings falling apart from time to time". (Ettehadieh, 2)

Local, national and international efforts (Association Sauvegarde de la Medina, UNESCO, etc) have identified 600 oukalas housing approximately 3,000 households as a historical and humanitarian priority for immediate rehabilitation and appropriate development. (Ettehadieh, 3)

In 1990, per the "National Programme for Reabsorption of Spontaneous Housing" all 'high risk' structures (approximately 256 oukalas, 1,296 households) were razed and their occupants were temporarily re-housed in new temporary housing outside the

Medina. Since then, 1,218 housing units were constructed in three phases. (Ettehadieh, 4-6,9)

In all of the previous reconstruction phases local labor and a variety of local technology and materials were employed. "In the new quarters in situ reinforced concrete construction methods [were] used. Interior and exterior walls [were] made of brick....Stone or brick walls and stone or marble columns [were] strengthened with original materials and existing techniques. Fissures [were] secured with steel fasteners and grout injection. Existing wooden floors [were] used as a lost form for reinforced concrete slabs, and degraded wooden beams [were] replaced. Stone or brick floors [were] sanded...and [overlaid] with lightweight materials. Weathered I-beams were sanded, cleaned and coated with an antirust agent. The masonry work [was] repaired and covered with a reinforced concrete slab. All types of floors [were] rebuilt using poured in place reinforced concrete and brick block fillers". (Ettehadieh, 7)

PROGRAM

Constitution

As partially proposed by the Association Sauvegarde de la Medina and the Municipality of Tunis (Ettehadieh, 6) :

Rehousing: Control density and diversity;

Reconstruction: Devise appropriate development and economic intervention;

Rehabilitation: Minimize deterioration and bolster sustainable preservation;

Restoration/Adaptive Reuse: Conserve heritage and support cultural, social and educational programs

Spatial Components

Prefabrication Inventory; endeavors to provide citizens, from a range of social profiles and cultural backgrounds, direct participation in their identity formation and language culture – entitling each household to an environmental authorship.

Oukala; for specific Oukala (ghettos) within the Medina

Regimented, variable space blocks; Transitional housing for diverse cultural groups

Poetically, instruments for cultural communication and heritage

INTRODUCTION

Architecture is the environmental response to human contact with the natural world and the communicative act of human interaction. Communities are layered conversations of complex human exchanges and associations, between people and their environment, with each instigating a 'remark' from the other. The shared 'conversation' of a community structures an identity that speaks, not to a measurable, but to a metaphorical heritage.

Thesis

This thesis aims to discover how architecture and language correlate from which an architecturally expressive identity becomes fundamental to understanding and remembering a cultural and historical milieu. The investigative outcome of this thesis will realize how a traditional relay of the built and spoken past parallels a contemporary cultural 'memory' based on perceptions of heritage through regenerative design and language.

SEMIOTICS

Symbols, Signs and Signals

Prior to responding to a communicative act it is first necessary to perceive the language being used. "The sign must be discriminated before it can function." (Henle, 73) Certainly our world is individually and collectively rendered in infinitely diverse (sometimes contradicting) languages – patterns of signs which facilitate our daily understanding of everyone and everything we encounter. The science of semiotics elaborates on the values certain communities appoint to particular sets of symbols and signs. Semiology "aims to take in any system of signs, whatever their substance and limits; images, gestures, musical sounds, objects, and the complex association of all these... [that] constitute, if not languages, at least systems of signification." (Barthes, 9)

Significant to architecture and the built environment, semiology contends that every designed and constructed element disseminates information and that people are situational spectators 'receiving' and acting upon these implicit 'messages'. While architectural gestures endow a universal 'reading' (for example, French speakers are able to understand physical, 'built' signs in an equal manner to English or Arabic speakers) the assigned meaning or connotation to every sign - both lexical and non-lexical - varies between cultural perspectives. Just as no single language is more accurate than any other, there is no single most appropriate sign or symbol among a multitude of different languages for a given value. Within a language community, every sign has unique significance to a specific group of 'interpreters'. Cultural evolution requires "a kind of

‘social selection’ that assumes the existence of a linguistic community [where] the members of [that] community...both produce as well as interpret the signs of [that] language." (Henle, 86)

Where any specific sign indicates a set social value, the correlation of signs, functioning not as a ‘word’ but as a ‘phrase’, is especially important in interpreting composite relationships – complex cultural values. It is the cumulative, cultural patterning of signs – across multiple, local language domains – within a specific environment, which jointly suggests an inclusive regional or national language identity.

Language Metaphor

An architectural study of ‘language’ provides an opportunity for careful observation and semiotic participation within a (memory) community. As language reflects cultural values, insights into the language and the identity it expresses ultimately assists in a developed recording of a cultural perspective.

Vernacular

The role of language as sets of semiotic ‘values’ in group identities is as important today as it was in the past. While a semiotic dichotomy of ‘old’ and ‘new’ within a cultural language might suggest a fallacy in articulating a cohesive identity, a range of timely values acts to link diachronic designs – preceding and subsequent meanings (ancient to avant-garde). The change of values over time for any specific culture is fundamental to appreciating the contextual time and distinctive ‘voice’ of every

age. The inherent advancement of culture is singularly unique, but certain. For example, nomadic language inherently ‘evolves’ at a pace distinctive to its cultural priorities and unlike an urban language. The relative rate for cultural advancement by semiotic progression is largely influenced by the accepted design approach for responding to socially set values – whether a community responds approvingly to existing values (extends) or challenges and derives new corollaries (adapts) – in both new construction and renovation. The challenge in all times and for all lingual groups is to reconcile traditional values with progressive evaluation. Strict policies to maintain a prescribed ‘character’ (vernacular) propagate continuity and familiarity at a loss of invention, creativity and cultural advancement.

Imitative semiotic expressions (vernacular designs) that disregard tradition and rely on assumed preexisting, ‘common’ values risk conflict with cultural heritage. Alternatively, deliberate inconsistencies and variations of use and style present opportunities to reinterpret and question semiotic significance. Consequently, a semiotic strategy must be clearly established, otherwise an unresolved approach will obscure the practice and purpose for ‘reading’ by an audience.

‘Reading’ the correlation of vernacular values against environmental conditions and material resources is one way to understand the suggested semiotic strategy and clues for interpretation. For example, a log cabin constructed in a tropical setting blatantly insinuates a deliberate semiotic reevaluation. So, in addition to time, environment similarly challenges how semiotic values are used and interpreted. As attempts are made to juxtapose vernacular values beyond a specific context, ecological rationale proves at

odds with cultural (pluralist) tendencies; characteristic ‘expressions’ challenge environmental considerations which place site specificity at a premium over cultural specificity.

Semiological Survey

Our universal proclivity for creating (and defining) semiological values can be historically linked to our existential perception – our cognizance of place. The human need for communicating with each other and with our environment is originally derivative of our observation of the cosmos and the spectacle of human activity within enormous, dynamic space – a mundus, a kosmos, etc. Communication that orders our place, in relation to one another and our surroundings, (and also perhaps orders our human purpose) has been, since early civilization, crucial to cultural progression (and social hierarchy).

A primal concern for accurately representing reality (by any medium) functioned historically to understand and confront the environment. Eventually, and even today, the appeal for ‘accuracy’ is diminished with the recognition that representation can surpass reality in its ability to offer an added insight, an auxiliary revelation. By augmenting our designed surroundings and representative structures with connotative significance, our ‘value-added’ environment becomes rendered with symbolic, yet subjective representations which provoke a personal experiential sensitivity.

Architecture, throughout history, has revealed a certain interpretative process that, culling from previous perceptions (ideas and traditions) and comparative identities (similarities and oppositions), contemporaneously aims to define the here and now, by

reconciling the past while characterizing the future. In examining a range of cultural movements – specifically the diverse makeup of Tunis – it is evident that architecture yields to a timeless impulse to reinterpret semiological values, so as to continually fashion a unique contemporary identity.

Jewish

Since there is no mandated Jewish religious architecture (albeit a few required elements) Jewish structures have instead been characterized historically by the relative effort invested in the design and construction, and degree of ‘permanency’ - depending on the extent that the supporting environment endorses a ‘welcoming’ sentiment and whether the social circumstances (political, religious, etc) allow for Jewish settlement or emigration. When allowed and pursued, Jewish building relies on firm designs and unwavering construction ethic. Jewish designs also express both a contrasting character that provides an identity and a ‘dated’ quality so as to dismiss a history of dislocation. Indeed, so much of Jewish history is chronicled ‘in exile’ that contemporary Jewish designs semiotically counter for disappearance and destruction – stylistically permanent and fortified.

Historical and contemporary aspects of Jewish identity and migration are effectively translated into architectural terms most plainly in the synagogue. Designs based on the Temple (*Al Quds* in Jerusalem) extract significance of a homeland and permanence while, in parallel, the tabernacle acts a symbol of a wandering past. Descriptive architectural elements such as a Decalogue (Ten Commandments), a

menorah or a six-pointed star (Star of David) are sometimes overtly applied to an external surface to denote a Jewish structure, likely a synagogue. Occasionally reference is made to the Temple with paired columns, exterior turrets or intentionally an unfinished wall.

"When architects attempted to impose a Jewish identity on a building through design and decoration, this was often done in opposition to prevailing Christian forms, rather than through the embodiment of specifically calculated Jewish or the overall adoption of something recognizable as a Jewish sensibility" (Sachs, 23) Most Jewish architecture around the world takes geological and climatic cues from Israel, where priorities value sheltered, cool and safe spaces. To create dignified and comforting spaces, monumental forms and simple, emphatic materials are often employed. Innovative use of contextual materials frequently distinguishes a Jewish identity and also suggests a local, historical connection.

As a result of a mostly painful past, Jewish architecture in particular deliberately appraises the value in remembering a historical past as an identifying element. The Star of David evokes an irrefutable Jewish identity – but also, post-holocaust, by placement and intent can imply persecution and intolerance. The difference of distinguished identity and segregated pariah becomes easily blurred depending on perspective and circumstance; the semiotic interpretation becomes of greater significance. Contemporary Jewish designs, consequently, concentrate on plan, formal massing and structural function over decoration.

Judaism has realized a unique architecture, despite the adaptation and reinterpretation of common forms and methods, in symbolic distinction derived from an on-going diaspora and inconsistent presence - more than religious tenets.

Berber

The organization of Berber society in any given place or period is inextricably linked to its setting: house, village, landscape. From pre-biblical times the Berbers have employed a variety of architectural typologies, including both mobile and fixed structures. Exploiting a harsh, desert environment, Berber pastoralists move along well established routes between summer and winter. The fragile, moveable shelters of these nomadic groups and more 'pure' nomads are indicative of a simple material culture. Tents are the basic architectural unit of nomadic Berber society and are wholly a woman's space. The marriage bed and tent are constructed in part from a portion of bride's mother's tent. "The interior of the tent is divided into halves by gender – the men's to the east and the women's to the west". (Brett, 211) From puberty on, men sleep and spend nearly all of their time outside of the tent. Consequently, the semiotic and mythological transmission of cultural content is essentially in the care of nomadic Berber women. However, the residential grouping of tenting communities is still patriarchal.

Berber houses in fixed rural, communities are characteristically scattered apart, except when for purposes of fortification houses are structured together as a defensive fortress. In established communities, an emphasis on privacy is especially characteristic of Berber housing, where openings are limited on a ground floor. Similarly,

few apertures doubly consider environmental constraints, as continuous, heavy insulated walls control ventilation and day lighting. Shared, shaded courtyards, however, typically offer ample space for a common retreat and interaction. Rural Berber housing is almost always a singular expression – a self-contained unit for a nuclear family. In troglodyte villages individual family cells are dug separately but still open to communal spaces, describing fluid and clustered relationships. Berber housing demonstrates a predominant, shared main room with ancillary spaces, such as a loft for storage, sleeping rooms and sometimes attached stables. "Each division of the room has its own rituals, according to a balanced division between dry and damp, light and dark, high and low." (Brett, 241)

Limited interior articulation and furniture express a variable use for a number of activities, for example weaving, food preparation, sleeping, etc. The hearth "is the most important area, often defined by a raised semicircular step in the corner of the room opposite the door. A second raised area is for the loom...placed along the wall opposite the door, the 'wall of light'...[and] in comparison sleeping and storage are...secondary, occupying spaces which are either temporary or inferior (the darkest corners)". (Brett, 240)

In urban environments, similar to traditional Arab housing, Berber residences are normally structured with a series of long, narrow rooms opening off of a large, shared courtyard. "Rather than being enclosed by the building, or adjoining it on the outside, the courtyard seems to contain the rooms. The relative equal size [of the rooms] and the fact that they communicate only with the courtyard, rather than internally, emphasize the dominance of a central [courtyard] space. Even those activities which take

place within the rooms can be kept under surveillance from the courtyard...[and] access to the courtyard is limited by single, angled entrances, which serve as a visual screen as well as a space where people might sit and chat....All activity in the house can be controlled from the courtyard where the separate cells communicate with each other." (Brett, 242) "Between these groupings other relationships result from the layout of [a Berber community]. A concentric structure, with the 'oldest' groups at the top and the newer arrivals towards the bottom, implies [a] transverse, horizontal [link of similar] allied [groups]...whereas, the vertical...cuts between [temporally dissimilar groups]. Relationships between [groups] are...a cause and an effect of their topographical position." (Brett, 248)

Berber communities obey stringent, democratic (local) laws. Patriarchal representatives from each family are obligated (by penalty of a fine) to attend meetings where decisions are "taken on communal life [and] judgments are made...on a body of customary law...It is hard to overestimate the degree of social control exercised by a Berber community [where] offenders are literally excluded from all communication with the rest of the community". (Brett, 249) Consequently, the semiotic management of a Berber community is explicit and inescapable. Further, in close-knit communities equal inheritance among extended families poses a constant problem for fragmentation of responsibility and structure. Yet, the collective (familial) maintenance of an inherited property becomes a symbolic display of wealth and identity. Unlike Arabic markets which center around neighborhood mosques, Berber markets are generally located at the perimeter of the community or between territorial boundaries.

European

The metaphorical distance between humans and the supernatural became a measurable reasoning (anthropomorphism) in early Greek and Roman design for all things - the universe, architecture and humans. As such, much early European semiotic values are characteristically (literally) self-identifying.

Most historical European architecture is remarkable for its developed classical orders and refined architectural attainment. Unique to western European architecture are five classical orders – a language with separate ‘significations’ rising from a base through a column to a capital and entablature: Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, a composite of these three, and Tuscan. "Resting on ...essentially [a] post and beam structure...(trabiated), is [a] triangular-hipped roof with [an] elaborated end section, the pediment. The cupola... (drum and dome) are a further extension of both the structural evolution of the classical language and its technical vocabulary." (Clarke, 45)

Western Europe exploits many of the proportions and detailing typical of Greek and Roman temples. Closely spaced, slender columns (with less pronounced entasis and echinus) and a new variation of peripteral design are characteristic of all Greek temples and also made singularly original. Embellishment was rarely spared in the construct of most European architecture. Every architectural member was conceived to separate, precise specifications. These careful refinements (most of which are imperceptible) are indicative of the importance early Europeans, Greeks in particular, placed on an ordered system of semiotics in their religion and in their architecture.

Across a programmatic spectrum (temples, churches, palazzos, piazzas, etc) European architecture developed a wide multitude of styles (Gothic, Pagan, Renaissance, Mannerism, Baroque, etc) each with unique variants from a diverse cultural makeup (Greek, Italian, Roman, French, etc). Eventually, the variation of established orders and deviation from an ideal mandate served to shift perceptions of ‘ideal’ and also the tidy meaning of ‘orders’. Today, the same classical orders symbolize a culture of antiquity.

Islamic

Islamic architecture derives ‘signs’ from many recurring themes of earlier civilizations. It was with early Islamic conquests throughout the Middle East culminating around the turn of the first century that Muslims – despite disparate cultural attitudes and needs – began the process of fusing elements from diverse architectural styles as a means to generate a unique style of their own, founded on religious metaphor. Religious meaning compensated for a limited architectural tradition and a fresh recycling of form and structure.

Islamic building develops largely from two major programs, each with its own unique embodied meaning: the mosque and the palace. The Islamic palace metaphorically asserts the power and authority of a ruler. The palaces of many Islamic leaders had four *iwans* facing the cardinal points, which implicitly reinforced the concept of ruler as a ‘cosmocrator.’ (Hillenbrand, 19) However, the Islamic palace has scant spiritual symbolism compared to the mosque. The mosque typifies a sense of shelter and refuge. Muslims unite together in a mosque to collectively pray. Indeed, the very purpose of a

mosque as a religious center necessitates a more profound spiritual architectural symbolism.

Typically symbols do not evolve into forms, but rather forms, through social or religious reasoning, justify symbolic significance. In Islamic architecture, surface, walls and roofs become a symbolic aperture for a spiritual perspective. The *qiblah* containing the *mihrab* niche extends the focus of the Muslim worshipper to a space beyond the immediate mosque. As all mosques are oriented toward the Ka'ba in Mecca (the axis mundi of Islam) – which subsequently, is oriented to the cardinal points – every mosque in the world ultimately shares in the same cosmic connections.

The dome in Islamic architecture figuratively prompts a sense of a place beyond as well: heaven. *Muqarnas* vaulting invites contemplation by its sheer infinite complexity, and inspires in a symbolical bridging between the faithful (mosque walls) and the divine (dome). Visible from afar, the dome – and particularly the minaret – become veritable beacons marking a sacred place of worship. As a result of its religious function in calling the faithful to prayer, the minaret has become a symbol of prayer, a symbol of an Islamic town, and even to a degree, a symbol of Islam itself.

Yet, Islamic architecture also conforms to scripture: "Forms are transient. Only Allah, who is formless, is eternal." (Katz, 13) Representative of another unique, symbolic Islamic paradigm is 'hidden architecture'. Often situated in congested urban areas, Islamic architecture evolved to shift concentration to the interior spaces of mosques. This consequently contributed to an impassive exterior, void of perceptible function or meaning. With an ascetic exterior and an overly detailed interior, the

transitional space between boundaries becomes metaphorically very important. The passage in mosques between exterior and interior symbolizes, in a way, a "passage from one mode of existence to another." (Barrie, 59) The Islamic proclivity to disregard expressing structure (or icons) in mosques is resolved by a similar penchant for ostentatious ornamentation. The intricate decoration on the interior of mosques serves to dematerialize surfaces and defy structure. Monochrome exteriors contrast lively interior surface colors. (Katz, 13)

Islamic builders deliberately intended to provide a setting for the "anticipation upon earth of the pleasures of the hereafter." (Hoag, 9) They achieved this symbolic character utilizing more temporal qualities, including light and water, in addition to the use of impermanent physical constructs, to instill a deeper significance to spaces.

In the Koran, it reads, "God is the light of the Heavens and the Earth. His light is as a niche in which is a lamp and the lamp is as in a glass, the glass is as though it were a glittering star." (Hoag, 48) Certainly the symbolic use of light, both natural and artificial, as a synonym for God fulfills a long held religious metaphor. Light engenders metaphysical connotations, dynamically recalling a divine presence for the faithful. Light metaphorically transforms the simple materials of a mosque to a living envelope with animated shadows. In North Africa the "shadowy mosque interiors contrast with bright courtyards... shadows cast by high walls onto winding paths suggest a certain relationship between sun and shade."

Likewise, water is an important, symbolic component in transforming Islamic architecture. Water replicates and alters detailed decoration. Ablution fountains provide for 'purification' and lavish use of water, especially in desert environments, alludes to gardens and paradise.

These typologies and designs share a unique architectural language that proved sensible for their respective time and cultural identity, and which today, transcends original intentions. The common concepts of order (communication) recognizable in any period only become uniquely identifiable to any time or place as the signs are designed and interpreted.

Symbolism

While some designs directly derive their 'value' from structural or operational necessity, or in relation to programmatic use, symbolic assignment additionally connects contextual use with conceptual beliefs and affords a duality of experience – a supplemental layering of reality. In fact, the extent to which the semiotic value rejects or supports the 'use value' is significant.

While, the physical presence of a 'sign' may be obvious, the meaning – always changing – is usually never visually evident. Whereas semiotic assignment is sustained through a comprehensive aesthetic experience, symbolism specifically addresses a formal structure for meaning. A semiotic interpretation of a symbolic form (as structured) inherently distinguishes "the prominence of certain parts over others" – a gestalt of meaning. (Henle, 233) Consequently, the symbolic structure, in many ways,

acts as a guideline for more specific (detailed) semiotic interpretation. Both composition (form, order, materials, etc) and details (inscription, motifs, ornamentation, etc) become variables with a spectrum of significance for potential value.

Ornamentation and Typography

Cultural motifs and (semiotic) signification physically represented in architecture (and socially rated and valued) are not confined to any special area of construction or design; however, the expressed character of a structure is understood largely and most immediately (for a majority of occupants) by the superficial presentation – that which is immediately and visibly evident.

Indeed, the detail of a form or surface or text testifies to its cultural importance – added attention. The perception of ornamental values is no less significant. Where otherwise, routine, ‘everyday’ perception of habitual, colorless surroundings eventually render people and communities semiotically insensitive - individual interest in ‘decoding’ ornamental designs presents an opportunity for a deeper, evaluative experience – deliberate semiological interpretation.

Ornamentation, like buildings, relies on control of material, organization and an understanding of aesthetics. Yet, ornamentation (unlike formal structure) is easily applied and transferred between mediums and material forms. Informal and mostly non-figurative, ornamentation as abstract signs facilitates transformation of values.

Arabesque is an Islamic ornamentation that transforms literal, lexical signs into abstract, geometric expressions. In Islamic perception, Arabesque "refers to the

wonderful construction of the world, just as everything made by man represents a sign for the believer pointing to something that cannot be grasped" (Bruderlin, 32) Religious meaning is transformed by language, and transferred to surfaces covered in geometric text. "Language of the Koran contains a 'baraka' (blessing)...[as] it becomes audible and perceptible". (Bruderlin, 33) A variety of calligraphic styles over time support integration of decorative scripts into a range of architectural designs with direct semiotic significance. Architecture, language and cultural (religious) beliefs are all inseparably linked in arabesque expression.

Deconstructed Diglossia

In language communities of multiple dialects (diglossia), analogical analysis affords a way to better understand any language individually. The foiling of meanings and idioms between dialects becomes an important practice for discerning particular social priorities and cultural identities. Analogies suggest comparable significance via specific meaning (ex function, pattern, proportion, etc). Analogical architecture means then to transcend assumed semiotic values (often defined by tradition) and mediate for future identity formation.

People make sense of their surroundings, in part, by contrasting and comparing (ex security, quality, etc). The appraisal (aggregate values) we place on a space is determined as a distinction against all prior spaces experienced. Likewise, the use of a space may be inadvertently imposed depending on prior program or semiotic

influence. I believe there to be inherent potential for manipulating ‘assumed’ programmatic use (spatial connotation) in similar but unfamiliar ways.

An analogical manipulation of space and program is a sensible approach for recognizing and reinterpreting a variety of cultural values over a period of time. As analogical interpretation is a principal catalyst in the evolution of communication, so to might analogical associations fuel the evolution of an architecturally expressed cultural identity.

A diglossia community, where diverse, contrasting cultural perspectives collide, lends to a variability in perceptually ‘reading’ architecture – semiotically and spatially – between cultures (language groups) and affords an analogical transformation (and development) of values: pluralism.

A multiplicity of possibly perceived meanings, where values are never explicitly fixed (are always open to differences of interpretation) is central to Deconstructivist theory. "The claim that there is a single, correct meaning or interpretation of a text or visual image usually relies upon both knowledge of the author’s intentions and trust in the text’s ability to convincingly communicate this single meaning. (Clarke, 79) However, as meanings will invariably change (over time and with social resolve) the unified meaning and common understanding of certain ‘signs’ for a specific time and place is integral to the formation and identification of lingual communities, and lingual groups in a multilingual community. Additionally, in a multilingual community where a given ‘value’ is represented through cross-cultural reiterations, a comparative translation becomes possible. Like a Rosetta Stone for culture, a redundant representation

becomes equally important for contemporaneous and future deciphering of semiotic values and cultural perspective.

LINGUISTIC IDENTITY

Architectural Diplomacy

Differentiation of cultural identities is equally beneficial in promoting tolerance and cross-cultural understanding. Architecture acts in one way as designed testimonials to a cultural identity – immovable (but adaptable) social ‘statements’ that can both represent or oblige acceptance (ex propaganda, etc) of local values. The hesitation to unfairly interpret or impart a local (perhaps Western) mentality and set of values on a foreign reality can be justified and disregarded by taking a global, diplomatic perspective. Architecture as language is not restricted as a means of communication beyond a geographic or political focus – despite architecture being ‘frozen’ (in time), ‘immovable’ (in place). This thesis maintains that the portrayal of culture and national identity can and should be understood universally. In fact, the extent that the legibility of a national identity is conveyed as a function of mass communication and public diplomacy is challenged in this design.

An architectural diplomacy has the potential to engage foreign audiences by not only informing identity and accurately representing established national values, but also accruing goodwill and priming peaceful international relations. Twenty-first century diplomacy policies focus on counter-terrorism theory, which maintains that if democratic, western countries do not actively convey their identity, than extremists will. Tunisia is poised as a progressive Middle Eastern nation to mediate contrasting values and affect cultural amity.

Conservation and Conversation

History is continuous and unstoppable, yet people are affected temporarily and individually. Ideas and trade are increasingly communicated globally, instantly, independently. In a way, we have lost our sense of time. While a temporal structure preserves a historical order, technology distorts reality as our cultural sensibility incorporates or dismisses values at an unnatural, meaningless tempo. Periodically, a temporal disparity (modern against tradition) between lingual groups endangers multicultural recognition and respect, and directly instigates conflict. For example, Arabic culture is seemingly defined by tradition, while Western culture is seemingly defined by innovation. The opportunity for multicultural communities to go forward and temper tradition and innovation is today a prevailing global issue.

Yet, it is often a mistaken assumption that the middle and upper class of societies possess the exclusive means for determining cultural progression – semiotic transformation toward or away from a modern perspective. Consumption is not the only method for reconciling between ‘old’ and ‘new’. Semiotic values are designed without a price and are equally interpreted regardless of monetary worth. Cultural networks, collective and organized forums where ideas and values are shared and appraised can set the direction for classless semiotic transformation via material resources.

RESOURCES

Material Lexicon

‘Local’ lexicons (verbal and physical vocabulary) reinforce the unique character of a culture. The extent of a ‘semiotic diction’ determines a cultural ‘voice’ – the capacity to express values and represent an identity. The potential in new language ‘forms’ for a clarifying, precise vocabulary is offset by limitations of mass audience interpretation.

Historically, construction materials were limited by availability. Initially, as trade and travel accelerated exchange (communication) between previously unassociated cultures, (while significant material transport was still relatively unfeasible) foreign designs were imitated with what was immediately available. The limitation of local materials, consequently, compelled an interpretation for a cultural translation of semiotic values.

Today, geographically, material limitations have been eliminated - effecting, in part, more diverse semiotic grouping and increasingly ambiguous cultural identities for a particular place. In many ways, limitations in materiality act as important ecological motives and cultural catalysts. Minimized transporting and processing affords sustainable construction and sensible management of renewable materials for controlled consumption. Subtle modifications and (re)interpretations of component-values afford semiotic revision and cultural forecasting.

Prefabrication

In recognition of current global trade systems where tariffs, profitable labor and lucrative markets dictate material distribution and construction potential, a prefabrication approach allows for a local control of building parts and construction process. Architectural designs have historically relied on the creative reconfiguration of a limited range of manufactured elements and stylized materials. Indeed, construction techniques promote a system which, like language, is characterized by the combination of interdependent parts. "The history of architecture is the history of the adaptation and recombination of established types and styles." (Davies 116) Building products and language are both fundamentally 'cut and paste' and rely wholly on preferential assembly. A continual evaluation of cultural values offers a legitimate prompt for the appraisal of contemporary and traditional aesthetics. Over time, a sustained progression of value-components can be easily modified and also recorded for posterity. Moreover, a streamlined (socially determinate) valuation-production system sensibly reconciles traditional tendencies while supporting efforts of a modern, industrializing nation.

A comprehensive itemization inherent in prefabrication ensures that an architectural program is holistically scrutinized. In addition to semiotic valuation, prefabrication equally includes considerations for quality assurance, wide-ranging implementation of sustainable means and methods, and scheduled execution. Additionally, prefabrication allows for architectural decoration – which might not otherwise prove practical in modern architectural design.

What commonly is consented as a downfall of prefabrication – lack of choice – is actually a design asset in a community seeking a more controlled, cohesive identity. A regulated semiotic vocabulary affords an articulate diction for distinguishing among diverse groups. While a basic set of components become standardized, the potential for different permutations can be infinite. Similarly, the boundless production capabilities of prefabrication offer a design range for informed social commitments: from transitory to more permanent. In fact, an absolute customization strategy in architecture would be unnecessary and imprudent. From a familiar set of materials and resources the choice process becomes a fundamental part in a community's identity formation.

Within a prefabrication format, socially managed (pluralistic) programs can intervene and act as semiotic arbitrators (parallel to mediating historical and traditional inclinations) – methodically inquiring, reviewing, and resolving semiotic values. A systematic design and construction process provides opportunities for individual and communal contribution toward a dialogue of (architecturally intimated) future identity development.

In some ways independent of site specificity, prefabrication presents useful, responsive solutions to environmental concerns. Principally, architecture should be unique because every site is unique. It is commonly accepted that site specificity in architecture is what makes a 'site', a 'place'. Yet it is not irreconcilable, within a context, for the cultural surroundings to correspond with (communicate) the site conditions.

PLANNING

Our world is organized by linguistically articulated patterns – where interpretation of cultural values is the primary access to an (historical-environmental) experience. Indeed, borders are not manifestly distinguished or readily designed; instead, they are habitually inherited, historically deferred. Intrinsic to historical divisions, is the development of a community and the divergence of ‘old’ and ‘new’. Cities around the world demonstrate contrasting examples (and implications) of this temporal split. In general, European culture reveres history and historical city centers are esteemed, valuable property areas; conversely, the historic districts in most Middle Eastern nations are regarded at ‘equal or lesser than’ value of surrounding expansion and where negligence is exhibited as a leitmotif. For example, downtown Cairo is diametrically opposed to *l’escargot* and les arrondissements of central Paris. Almost universally, however, occupant use remains congruent to the character of temporally-defined space: historic neighborhoods are distinguished by traditional trades (cafes, markets, leather tanning etc) and contemporary developments are typified by modern enterprises (commercial, corporations, etc). However, housing becomes uniquely split among modern and historic zones – and inhabitants, consequently divided by vocation.

A distinct historic district in many North African cities, the Medina (Arabic ‘city’, Hebrew ‘nation’) is often a cultural hub – comprising markets, fountains, palaces and mosques. Initially fortified to protect an ancient city’s innermost treasures and values, the Medina now has been restructured to showcase a local identity and cultural

values for tourists and locals. Characterized now, as in the past, by scrutiny and exchange, the Medina supports an active, cathartic cultural and temporal ‘discussion’.

Isolated away from, yet pivotal to, a cultural discussion, our most intimate places (private rooms and homes) evoke the most honest characterization for individual expression through spatial/semiotic values. Although, with ‘possession’ of a space comes the sense of entitlement to ‘privatize’ and ‘make unique’ – to some degree, a joint sense of ownership (a private room shares within a house, an apartment shares within an complex, sharing within a city, territory, and nation) tempers even the most distinct, individual representation.

Autonomy

The presence of multiple social-lingual groups yields an enriched, yet complicated unified identity. Just as not all the buildings in a city need to share a resemblance for the city to be recognized, the semiotic makeup (a cultural scope) demonstrates how a pluralistic perspective respects individual ‘personalities’ within a more extensive contextual identity. From a geographical location, during a historical period, the understanding and promotion of a multifaceted identity goes to reveal a compound communication between ‘active’ cultural groups.

Who we are now is a direct result of who we have been – individually as well as collectively. As Tunisia moves forward from a recent independence (1960), a new identity is invariably predicated on its colonial past, but also equally on a diversity of emerging, empowered cultures.

Knowledge is gained, tolerance is realized and culture is advanced by placing ourselves in the position of others: a pluralist 'recital'. Communities thrive, and define themselves, from the multiplicity of associations between autonomous entities. Significance is found and designed in the contextual relationships between self-interested expressions and surrounding responses within an urban 'dialogue'.

MEMORY COMMUNITIES

The ‘narrative’ experiences of one person are a single part of an interconnecting set of cultural experiences – a diverging reality. Embedded in the collective memory of a community’s shared narratives is a cultural identity. An individual history, perceived separate from a social memory, becomes an abstraction devoid of value to a cultural ‘character’. Our individual experiences of the present largely depend upon our understanding and knowledge of the past. Each of our ‘pasts’ serves as the continual contextual overlay for our present experiences. Consequently, we will each experience the present differently in accordance with our separate pasts.

However, we come to know each other by sharing accounts. Indeed, most architecture is not privately experienced; even the most intimate of spaces reveal some contextual front for its surroundings. Residency within any community involves the exploration and sharing of spaces. Consequently, the extent to which people communicate (share) the semiotic description of their most private spaces indirectly impacts a community’s collective ‘memory’.

Referential Reduction

There is a tempting social conviction that to forget means to lose. But, in many ways forgetting is a gain – perhaps equal to a loss. The potential in the paradox of forgetting as the basis for the formation of a new identity can be understood as a reprioritizing of semiotic values – to discard the least valued or most insignificant

meanings in turn for newer designations toward more defining future values – as a constant cultural calibration.

We each have the capacity to remember and to forget. Yet, our social capacity to recall or disregard is decidedly a collective evaluation – a tacit, recurring appraisal of historical importance – and which directly informs our cultural priorities. As immigration obligates cultural assimilation, the forfeiture of language obfuscates the semiotic transmission of tradition and ‘memory’. The loss of certain cultural values reduces the relay of a prior ‘memory’ – at least in verbatim. The connections to a past history are, in a sense, diminished as the linguistic reinterpretations (temporal translation) devalue an ‘original’ (truest) account; however, as language evolves and meanings change, ‘older’ values lose sense among new generations, which look to contemporary meanings to understand the past plainly. The ‘ability’ to forget values is only partially accomplished by people and communities. Environmental contact (deterioration, etc) is also an unavoidable influence on our physical memory – shaped by semiotic permanency. The passage of time inevitably reduces all things – memories and materials. The residual artifacts – architectural structure for semiotic values – embody fractional expressions of memory and history. The replaceable quality of semiotic values underscores the active process for creating new and shared, (pluralist) identities and our own mortality.

By default, we all forget. Yet, in many ways, technology has inverted this trend. Unlimited digital space has transformed how semiotic assignment is recorded and the rate of reevaluation. With technology, the semiotic process becomes both more

convoluted and also more controllable. Standardization and mechanical production (prefabrication) offer new methods for regulating the rate and role of values.

The cultural resolve to define what is desirable and what is dispensable is equally important for both discarding (forgetting) and assigning (remembering) semiotic values. For marginalized cultures, the imperative to sustain fundamental, defining values while decisively substituting less core values becomes especially crucial. The physical definition of semiotic meanings always requires deliberate social action.

Social Read

Without interaction, our environment is mute. For the cultural appreciation of design as language, a subjective interpretation obliges active participation from the designer ('author') and also from the observer ('reader'). The human element in a semiotic system fundamentally engages a 'dialogue' which implicitly contributes to realizing 'experience'.

Additionally, the disparity of structured discussion on establishing the preferred language among architectural projects (partly) results in built designs being either a social 'statement' or part of a social 'dialogue'. Some designs are a private matter between an architect and a client. Increasingly, a social influence in community projects assume a more inclusive negotiation involving public agencies, lobby groups, bureaucratic bodies, etc. The cooperative selection of an architectural language is integral to an expressed (pluralist) identity.

Cultural Preservation

To acknowledge the past is to record it - a consolidation of time. Yet the recording of history, intentionally or unintentionally, limits and contorts reality and, ultimately, cultural perspectives. The future is now – it is inescapable and unlimited. But, never as equally realized, the past is easy to ignore. Every place in the world, since the beginning of time, contends with merging the design of tomorrow and yesterday. How individuals or cultural groups relate to remnants of the past is indicative of what a (mainstream) community values – still or again or no longer.

Particularly important in declining cultures, the preserved (legible) cultural signs explain – more than a sense of aesthetics – the values a community once accorded, against contemporaneously recognized values. Sometimes, as with most religious doctrine, a precise preservation of values is prioritized to be continually ‘clarified’ from ambiguous modern interpretation of indisputable, historical ‘truth’. Other times, as with revolutions and crisis, values are loosely regarded in deliberate efforts for construing new significance. Architecture serves to mark timely cultural identities by recording the semiotic ‘story’ of successive programmatic or spatial advents.

Identity Markers

Architectural accomplishments become tangible memories of history. Physical (cultural) bastions serve as the associative element to a unified future – conciliating between traditional and modern perspectives. The physical ‘record’ of an

architectural history translates a passing (cultural) character or identity from a specific moment, through distorted memory, as a lasting (permanent) reified 'fact' for future recollection. Structures surviving millennia are, today, the most telling evidence of now extinct cultures.

Where a structure acts as a memorial (by intention or coincidence) it challenges the ephemeral, by imposing on future cultures for scrutiny in reinterpreting and reassigning new (contemporary) values. Regardless of future semiotic value, a building offers a prolonged statement – a tangible impact that 'inscribes' an actual moment in time and the effects of the interval time. The built environment, including Tunis' Medina, bears the physical effects of time and also, the vestiges of human movement: transition, assimilation, transiency, etc.

Transhumance

As a geographical juncture and with a progressive economy, Tunis today continues a historical trend for attracting a diverse group of people from all around. While colonization and Islamization facilitated recent immigration, the motives for each diaspora are unique to every person and group for their time; however, once arrived, the living requirements become the same.

As this episodic cultural transfer has in many ways contributed to the successes and tolerance in Tunis, the perpetual incursion of foreign groups has also greatly influenced the urban demographic. A combination of a departure by the 'urban

gentry' to newer suburbs and an incessant influx of diverse foreign groups, has supplanted and condensed a city center with underprivileged, unrelenting populations.

A major participant in recent immigration to Tunis, in addition to Arabs and Europeans, Jews and Muslims, has been the Tunisian Berbers. Originally, the indigenous inhabitants of North Africa, the Berbers were 'scattered' to rural mountains and deserts upon centuries of arriving conquerors and colonizers. Slowly, as the Berbers have relocated from rural to urban areas, a nomadic life has surrendered to prospects of higher standards of living – with a submission of sovereignty, religion, language and identity. Where every nomadic journey (transhumance experience) can only be repeated by memory, fixed communities readily render a perceivable historical bearing. A community's edge between urban and rural marks a stark difference in the amount and method of memory.

The Berbers represent a dynamic (migratory), albeit ephemeral, existence and their tenuous path remains largely 'unwritten' – discernible perhaps momentarily in the environment. The immigrant's passage is similarly indefinite and anxious. The migratory life "can only be known by an activity of an ethnographic kind: you must orient yourself ... not by book, or by address, but by walking, by sight, by habit, by experience ... every discovery is intense and fragile..." (Barthes, 36)

The relay of cultural values among rural migrants and nomads is challenged in an urban scenario. While the transient path of the Berbers is not easily recorded or portrayed, in the same way does their architecture present an obstacle for imbuing cultural-values to enduring materials and designs. The impermanent quality of nomadic

life transcends all Berber values, and at once endangers their culture to be forever lost and also precariously characterizes their cultural identity. As a result of a constant risk of loss of cultural values, the Berbers rely attentively on traditional practices as the predominant relay of cultural identity. A narrow reliance on traditional practices (a mythological relay) and on temporary semiotic valency (architectural records), obligates a rigorous onus for transmission to each person, each generation and also lessens a faithful (inflexible) historical 'truth' (myth).

Likewise, much of Jewish history is reserved to wandering through the desert and exile. But where the Berbers historically lacked a conventional writing system, the "Jewish collective memory materialized and was kept alive ...[in] communal record books and memorial lists" as well as traditions through the synagogue. (Sachs, 13) Comparatively, the physical semiotic representations of more hegemonic cultures (French, Islamic, etc) trump the transient semiotic presence of the Berbers. Lingual groups that craft more permanent 'signification' experience a similar forfeiture of tangible values only upon immigrating, but are more aware of the loss and more ready to recreate or reevaluate their semiotic surroundings. As Tunisian Berbers and immigrating groups today are transitioning to an unfamiliar, urban setting they are poised to mediate between fundamental strategies for an identity relay through history.

Mythological Renovation

When the content of a communal memory becomes shared it becomes subjected to systematic criticism and improvisation. Over a period of time, successive

repetitions of various 'memories' invariably modify and integrate local and timely perspective. "Myths...have importance in large measure because they represent...significances, meanings that transcend individual needs, desires, and values. They provide a mechanism for enabling holistic interaction" (Doty, 49) Semiotic reactions are gauged and influenced by our lingual perceptions. By believing or disbelieving, semiotically enhancing or contradicting, individual histories and identities repeatedly over time, communities mythologically renovate their collective cultural traditions and values.

Perhaps not unlike culture or language, specific to a place, mythology evolves abstractly over time – assimilating, integrating and refiguring in context. "There is always a dynamic relationship between myth and...the social contexts in which they appear and...seldom [is] an entire myth...pattern remaining unchanged over long stretches of time. Variations and new combinations of parts continually occur, and the total patternings must be perceived as dynamically interacting rather than normalized once and for all." (Doty, 51) While traditional notions and cultural identities endeavor to survive, they invariably 'adapt' in response to shifting trends and influences. Similarly, architecture consciously exploits this adaptive response (of history to the present and future) for cultural promotion.

Important to sustaining history, tradition acts as a generational relay of beliefs and values that connects periods of time. Mythology, in fact, is the temporal mistranslation, a generational product, inherent in reinterpreting outdated values with contemporary values. Decoding our past is not an easily appreciable, straightforward

process. Extracting meaning from past languages invariably mistakes certain original ‘truths’ – but also lends to new perspectives and values. Attempting to ‘demythologize’ the value-content of the semiotic past causes a reevaluation (renovation) of contemporary values.

The charge to ‘mythologically renovate’, that is, to sustain a constant revision of self-expression is a fundamental aspect of how architecture delivers opportunities for individuals to reconfirm their involvement in and articulate their connection with a multicultural heritage. As cultures opt for conflicting mythological strategies, in an architectural sense, this thesis conceptually mandates individual responsibility to reference and contribute to the past in order to access and influence the future – resulting in a reactive and sustainable design.

CASE STUDIES

Eberswalde Technical School Library

Eberswalde, Germany 1997-1999 Herzog & de Meuron

The photographic facades of the Eberswalde Technical School Library display a consciously-crafted narrative. The chemical imprinting of carefully chosen images on a variety of materials (glass, concrete, etc) create a dramatic visceral impact from, essentially, historical ornamentation. The exact placement of images conceptually refers to an interior spatial program and structure. The upper band of images is intended to insinuate morality and intellectual discovery. The imagery surrounding the entry is meant to imply historical hallmarks in technology.

The exterior facades semiotically translate the function of the library - as a repository for the dissemination of information. Monumental, 'anonymous' forms are transformed into identifiable and representative surfaces through explicit imagery, but which does not necessarily express timely cultural values.

The City of the Dead

Cairo, Egypt

As the population growth and a severe housing crisis quickly expanded urban development, a four-mile long cemetery on the outskirts of Cairo became over time, an inadvertent community. The poor and reclusive of Cairo made refuge among the memorials to the dead, living and working between tombstones and gravesites. At one point the

population within the cemetery reached one million people. (Levinson) In 1992 a tragic earthquake razed the entirety of informal shelters as well as destroying much of Cairo and killing more than 500 people and injuring about 6,500. (Levinson) Municipal cleanup efforts after the seismic event actually legitimized housing on the cemetery site. While not initially sanctioned, restoration formalized housing within the cemetery, among the tombs and in the mausoleums. With the city providing electricity and water, the former poor residents were no longer able to afford their previous impromptu shelters and were, incidentally, removed further away in the Cairo suburbs. The stigma of ‘living among the dead’ has since prevented any social group from moving into the renovated homes. Consequently, the ‘city’ remains doubly dead: vacant memorials.

The loss of a provisional character not only dramatically altered the identity of the space, but also spatially exposed unambiguous social divisions.

Clothesline

Backyard, Everywhere

When the corporal evidence of our individual identities are proverbially ‘aired out’, our spatial surroundings adopt a *quotidien* character - unique to time and tradition. A cultural disclosure, even in conservative domains (Islamic, etc), exposed dressings and undergarments are put to the wind to reveal an intimate peak of what otherwise goes unseen. This individualizing, dynamic display to neighbors and passers-by doubly serves as an environmental indicator. As a showy draw of attention to otherwise disregarded, uninhabited space, a clothesline can become a connective armature within a

neighborhood. Poetically outfitting the 'spaces between', the collective vestiges of a community's wardrobe symbolically serve as an aggregated language-identity.

Arab World Institute

Paris, France 1981-87 Jean Nouvel

Employing motorized diaphragms, the southern facade of this building contrasts the northern curtain-wall front. The foiled exteriors are both environmentally responsive, as well as culturally considerate, and offer a contemporary expression to a program premised on historical review.

The dynamic, repetitive *moucharbiehs* which filter interior lighting, and reinterpret eastern-occidental geometric patterns, counter the literal "mirror" of the surrounding Parisien western-cityscape.

Facsimile - Moscone Convention Center

San Francisco, California 2005 Diller Scofidio Renfro

Conceptually exploring the spatial experience of interior and exterior activity, this installation offers a technologically-involved approach for revealing a (virtually) transparent architecture. A live video camera behind a monitor apparatus points in crowded "pre-function" spaces on the second level and transmits the activity in real time to the street vantage.

Where a 16 x 27 foot video monitor suspended from a traveling armature glides along the periphery of a glass structure, inside activity is essentially slowly "scanned" and broadcasted to the exterior.

As this particular design focuses on showcasing interior activity so as to encourage entry and participation, a similar approach might concentrate on exhibiting interior spatial language (e.g. formal arrangement of living/working spaces or material possessions, etc) to an exterior presentation - so that an public facade suggestively "reads out-loud" a culturally-private discussion of an individualized, semiotic existence.

Palazzo Del Lavoro

Turin, Italy 1960 Gio Ponti

Transforming an older, dilapidated structure with a running gallery of casted panels, this renovation strategy enhances a bare, "speechless" surface with imbued significance.

Over 800 different forms become secondary cladding, documenting the yielded remnants of a local technical process. The decision of use-over-disuse reconciles material limitations.

Offset from the immediate supporting structure, the varying composite pattern doubly offers a dynamic, backlit atmosphere. Utilizing transposable forms over an uncovered framework, the overall pastiche "evolves" with limited difficulty.

CODE ANYALYSIS

In compliance of the International Building Code 2006 and International Residential Code 2006.

SECTION 302 - CLASSIFICATION Section 1004, Occupant Load

8. Residential:

R-1 Residential occupancies containing sleeping units where the occupants are primarily transient in nature

SECTION 1004 - OCCUPANT LOAD

1004.1.1 MAXIMUM FLOOR AREA ALLOWANCES PER OCCUPANT (FLOOR AREA IN SQ. FT. PER OCCUPANT)

Residential: 200 gross

SECTION 1105 - ACCESSIBLE ENTRANCE

1105.1.6

Tenant spaces, dwelling units and sleeping units. At least one accessible entrance shall be provided to each tenant, dwelling unit and sleeping unit in a facility.

1107.6.1.1 ACCESSIBLE DWELLING AND SLEEPING UNITS

TOTAL NUMBER OF UNITS PROVIDED 1 to 25 TOTAL NUMBER OF REQUIRED ACCESSIBLE UNITS 1

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