UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

Date: May 16, 2007

I, ____________________________,
Magdalena A. Wala,
hereby submit this work as part of the requirements for the degree of:

Master of Architecture

in:
Architecture

It is entitled:
Security Entrance and Media
Center for the United Nations

This work and its defense approved by:

Chair: Aarati Kanekar

Michael McInnur
SECURITY ENTRANCE and MEDIA CENTER for the UNITED NATIONS

a Thesis Submitted to:
The Division of Research and Advances Studies of
The University of Cincinnati

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:
Master of Architecture

In
The School of Architecture and Interior Design
of
The College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning

2007

by
Magdalena A. Wala
B.S. Arch., University of Cincinnati. 2005

Committee Chairs:
Professor Aarati Kanekar
Professor Michael McInturf
Professor Tom Bible
Abstract

Focusing the United Nations within a Post-Modern framework, the organization is viewed as a series of simulations. In order for these simulations to defy collapse and maintain validity, the system must misalign its simulations from its reality, through the use of seductions. Providing critical distance, with these contradictory plays of appearance, the organization’s main purpose, to provide hope for a better future, perseveres.

Upon this foundation of knowledge, this thesis proposes a replacement to the security tents currently used at the 46th Street entrance (2007). Put up as a knee-jerk reaction to the September 11 attacks, the tents are telling in their own right; and all interventions should be viewed as poignant experiments in re-writing the present era into existence. However, in light of the present condition of our world, the tents seem weak and inadequate; only hinting at the circumstances they engage in.

The project first sets up its playing field by describing Baudrillard’s 3 Orders of Simulacra. This commentary explains how symbolic exchange has been heading towards a self-referential collapse, since the feudal system, due to perfections in technology and science. Exploring how this collapse is inescapable, it seeks to understand how architecture can play a role within this dilemma. For methodology, the project uses the discussion between Jean Baudrillard and French architect, Jean Nouvel, in the book *The Singular Object.*
Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Setting the United Nations within a Post-Modern framework, this thesis proposes two interventions to the present scheme. The first will serve as a replacement to the security tents currently used at the 46th Street entrance in New York City (2007). The second intervention, will acknowledge the critical role ‘image’ plays, amongst today’s society of simulation.

As will be explained through the writings of Jean Baudrillard, technological advancements collapse the simulations in our lives, which in turn, hinder our understanding of our existence. Architecture helps us address this collapse by providing a space and critical distance through design. Both, the project’s security and media interventions will seek to heighten the intensity of symbolic exchange taking place between the organization, city, world, and user in order to strength the identity of the UN through multiplicity.
ARCHITECTURE NEEDS TO FIND LIMITS

Design looks for justification and meaning by relating itself to limits, a set of laws, which it proceeds to work against and around. Although these limits are critical, their existence often seems difficult to determine in this complex world we live in. At times it seems only greater chaos leads toward greater purity. Determined to find an edge amongst the disorder, this thesis engulfs itself within it. The chapters to follow will explore Baudrillard’s theory as a proposal for architecture to generate meaning and understanding in the midst of the absurdity inherently produced.

REALITY A VOID

To understand the dilemma and piece together a plan of action, we heavily look towards theoretician Jean Baudrillard’s writings about hyper-reality and simulation. Studying his theory, we come to understand how we are born to a perfect state of reality; which due to its perfection is also a void and unbearable. Faced with reality as void, we create meaning for our lives by partaking in a complex system of symbolic exchange. This symbolic exchange involves creating cultural objects through various levels of simulation. Without simulation, the void of reality is filled with meaningless illusion. Therefore, it is only through simulation that reality’s void becomes real, but only in relationship to itself. As Baudrillardian critic, Rex Butler, explains, we now understand our current state as “no longer, as responding to or explaining a previous real, but as bringing about its own real.”

SIMULATION /seduction

In order to understand our existence, we partake in an infinite number of simulations. The paper will explain how these simulations,
which have been going on since feudal times, have been perfected by media and science to a state of utter collapse. Collapse happens when the copy of the original, picks up all of the original’s imperfections and flaws. Becoming a new real, the system of symbolic exchange collapses, for clones of clones are nothing once more.

Not so easily collapsible, architecture however is loaded with all the inherent politics that come with space and the body. Therefore, in order for architecture to translate meaning, we try to create works which at least feign shedding architecture’s social realm. By doing this we can play a significant role in the theatrics of symbolic exchange, which help hold the copy and original from flattening.

ARCHITECTURE’S SOCIAL REALM

In order to create meaningful architecture, it is necessary for us to understand how to manipulate simulation and seduction, so that our designs have a voice of defiance or approval in this predetermined game. This thesis uses a discussion between French architect, Jean Nouvel and Baudrillard, in the book The Singular Object, as a catalyst in an investigation of how architecture must play within its fatalistic confines. In general, following their reasoning, architecture’s spatiality hinders it from a self-referential collapse. This inability becomes its new limit, and challenge. Time and time again, Baudrillard explains how the end result of simulation and seduction is indifference. In order for a simulated copy to be created, the original must exist, but at the same time, the simulation now only exists due to the fact that the copy has been made. The indifference overcomes us, when we realize that one will never know which reality is true or which came first.
Since there is nothing outside of its simulated self, architecture’s opposition must come from within; a practice of marginalizing one’s self with one’s own self. Therefore, this architectural project attempts to write its own script in order to gain control over its own collapse. The visual arts must bring the social realm upon themselves in order to marginalize it; architecture however must marginalize its own social realm with more seduction. It is by understanding and pushing towards its own collapse, that architecture can test its own limits and can resist complacency.

UN / MOVIES / ART / ARCHITECTURE

The main test of thesis document will be an explanation of Baudrillard’s ideas about simulation, and seduction. In the design section, it will continue on with an explanation of Baudrillard’s methodology, and provide a collection of visual and spatial manipulations to accomplish this through architecture. Cutting into the main text, two additional narratives inform the document. The first is an overview of the United Nations in New York City, seen through a Baudrillardian perspective. The second narrative will apply the thesis’ methodology to the UN building, in order to create two architectural interventions, a security center and a media center.

Along with the narratives various precedents from art, architecture, literature, film, quotes and media will be woven in to support both the Baudrillard text, the UN as a simulation statement, and the thesis methodology and design. Amongst the myriad of examples, two films will be analyzed for their portrayal of the UN as a framework for this simulation. The first is the film North by Northwest, directed by Alfred Hitchcock and second is The Interpreter, directed by Sydney Pollock. Read in the light of Baudrillard’s main

“...does not represent it, it does not evoke it. On the contrary, it shows that it has already happened, that it is already here, since it is impossible to imagine. It is in this sense again that simulation is not a real phenomenon, does not take place in the real, but is rather a doubling of the world. Henceforth, after the hypothesis of simulation, things just as they are...can only be explained because of it.”

Rex Butler
ideas regarding reality and the importance of defending nothingness, these movies are significant for their portrayal of the United Nations amongst this stage set as well. Many movies, such as The Matrix, could have been used to support Baudrillard, however the chosen film were selected due to their description of the UN through a post-modern ideology.

METHODOLOGY

As Rex Butler explains, the challenge for architecture, and all other fields, in this hyper-real predicament, is to determine “how to speak against this simulation,” especially when “there is nothing to which to compare it, when there is nothing outside of it or when that outside can only be imagined in its terms.” In order to do this, this thesis project looks upon the social realm as a device which must be marginalized by manipulations. In order to marginalize the UN’s purpose, manipulations will react to the seduction already existing at the complex. More specifically, the thesis will draw out the security progression, from the city and into the complex, as its chosen social realm to marginalize. The project will then problematize this seduction with proposals for interventions which hyper-accentuate their irony.

MANIPULATIONS (VISUAL AND SPATIAL)

In order to marginalize the social realm, we must manipulate how the user interacts with the politics of the project both visually and spatially. These, manipulations will be taken from precedents ranging from architecture, art, movies, and media. It is important to note that the chosen examples of the manipulations, do not take into account whether they were consciously designed to be the manipulations they
have been recognized as.

**THEORY FICTION / PROJECT A PARALLEL**

Coinciding with Baudrillard’s explanations, the attempt to engage a symbolic void in rounds of symbolic exchange is a fictional occupation. Simulation does not exist itself, for it is immeasurable. In other words, it is “not an empirical phenomenon, something that actually happens” for there is nothing to compare, what is lost and created by simulation, against. Thus, Baudrillard’s theory is a hypothesis for understanding our existence, while his methodology is only a way to form a design which speaks to the possibility of a real reality and not reality.

Not concerned with seeking empirical truth, this project does not deal with real things, such as death; which exist before they are written about, and are measurable, but instead focuses on things which are voids, such as access, knowledge, and security. It uses seduction in order to simulate a parallel interpretation of the symbolic void, or the UN. As Michael Hays explains in the introduction to Jean Baudrillard’s and Jean Nouvel’s book, The Singular Object, this study searches “for a force or effect produced by the object not in culture but alongside it, in the penumbra of culture, a force that thickens the situation, obscures the scene, and gums up the hegemonic workings of visibility and transparency.” Providing a fiction “alongside” the UN, allows the organization to reflect back onto itself, and bring the reality, or void of the UN, amongst the real. Therefore, we are not concerned about trying to determine whether the United Nation is safe or dangerous, useful or incompetent, just or corrupt; nor whether its role for the world is to be an actor, a stage, framework, or spectacle. It is a given, in Baudrillard’s theory, that the UN, as a symbol, is all of

“Everything I write is deemed brilliant, intelligent, but not serious.”

Jean Baudrillard

“I saw no need to decide whether these intentions were conscious or unconscious. The fact that they were evident was enough.”

Jean Starobinski refering to her study of Alfred Hitchcock films
these realities.

Stating that ‘the United Nations is a void’ seems very jarring, when pulled away from Baudrillard’s logic. He himself is known for such bold, aggressive titles which ruthlessly dismiss human suffering, such as in The Gulf War Did Not Take Place, and undeniable things, such as ‘The Year 2000 Will Not Take Place.’ Attention-grabbing, they are only trying to bring notice to their role within symbolic exchange. By proclaiming these examples out loud, controversial as they might be, their existence starts a discussion in regards to their relationship to the real. “For what is being repeated each time here? It is the logic of the third order of simulacra (seduction), in which the system puts forward an other to itself so that it is proved all the more.”35

FOR AN END

By understanding how simulation and seduction leads toward a fatal collapse, the project hypothesizes a fictional way of working around the inevitable. It examines the seduction already happening at the UN, and tries to identify political opportunities which it can pull out and seek to further marginalize by intentional manipulations. Exploring rather than unknowingly indulging in the end, proposing such ideas hopefully creates opportunities for more interpretation and misalignment, where new meaning and identity about the complex can be gleaned. In the spirit of Jean-Claude and Christo’s Wrapped Reichstag the thesis tries to problematize seduction with purposeful absurdity and irony. As the Berlin project successfully did for the gravity of Germany’s historical landmark, it is hoped this project could apply a sort of light-heartedness to the UN’s identity.
Wrapped Reichstag

On August 14, 1941, aboard warships in Argentina, Newfoundland, Theodore Roosevelt and Winston Churchill drafted the Atlantic Charter. With World War II coming to a close, the two found it pressing to set up an outline for international collaboration in maintaining peace and security in the future. Their Atlantic Charter would become the foundation for the present day United Nations, a replacement for the League of Nations.

With the world shaken by the horrors and possibilities of WWII, Roosevelt and Churchill knew that their United Nations would have to play a much more active role in world politics. In order to prevent isolationism from reoccurring, like in the League of Nations, the UN would need to actively engage all of the world’s nations into its organization. At first, the UN was considered a wartime alliance of peace and security, insisting a pledge of loyalty against the Axis powers. However, if the organization’s mission was to intervene in
international conflicts, combined militarist and governmental force would not be sufficient. The root of social conflict would also need to be addressed and the UN’s role expanded to protecting human rights, and leading humanitarian efforts.

With these new issues added to the UN agenda, the organization became infinitely complex and impossibly challenged. Time would show that the UN’s abilities to intervene and respond to the crises of the world would be weak. Some success would be had, such as helping to eliminate polio, educating about AIDS, restoring peace in East Timor, and eliminating colonialism. However, much failure in accomplishment would occur as well, such as, Rwanda, Somalia, Darfur, and the Middle East.

In light of its limited means and insurmountable tasks, this thesis suggests that perhaps one of the UN’s most priceless functions is not in its actions, but in its role as a framework for its vision of peace and as an avenue of diffusing crisis through the misalignment in interpretation. This stance finds large support in Professor Francois Debrix’s book Re-envisioning Peacekeeping: The United Nations and the Mobilization of Ideology, in which he applies the theories of simulation and media strategies to the UN’s peacekeeping operations. With this shifted viewpoint, the UN is seen as a frame which is supported by a series of simulations. If this is the case, the UN is no longer set back by its incomplete actions. Rather, the UN’s success comes from keeping up the belief that the world could one day be at peace and that good is still worth striving for.

UN BUILDING’S ROLE

Amongst a field of textual exchange, everything produced by or about the United Nations, whether it is media, object, logo, icon,
adds to its identity when interacted with by its users. Since, it is important for these texts to be malleable and amplified, architecture can play a large part in setting them up for interaction with users. Through, manipulations of space and vision, architecture can add to the unintentional or intentional multiplicity of readings.

Although not architectural, Francois Debrix’s book analyses the simulations of UN peacekeeping, in order to strategically design amongst them and contribute to their need for misalignment. Similarly this thesis starts off by shedding a general light upon the spatial simulations at the UN. The thesis then focuses in on specific simulations, which support the UN’s main purposes, and proposes an intervention to strengthen them.

Before the simulations of the UN are investigated further, it will be necessary to examine the basic intentions and history of the UN building first. A more involved study of the UN’s simulations, and intrinsic seductions, will be discussed within the design methodology.

DESIGN: LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Although America never joined the League of Nations, and the world fell into World War II shortly after its creation, the League of Nations was not a complete failure. After the world witnessed the potentials of current war technology, the League would mark a major shift in modern political thought and would serve as a first mock-up in uncharted internal collaboration.

Like the organization itself, the League of Nation’s building design would provide a paradigm for the future United Nations. Trying to define an international aesthetic, amongst Formalism, Functionalism, and Internationalism, the design competition for the
League of Nations captured the Modern masters at a crossroads in their search for the current age. The winning design for the competition was from Le Corbusier, however it was never built. A Beaux-Arts building was erected in default. Yet, nevertheless, two significant designs emerged from the pack and would be significant for the future. The first being Le Corbusier’s Formalist proposal and the second, Hannes Meyer’s Functionalist scheme. Together they would foretell the design direction of the UN complex.

Le Corbusier’s design was rich in romantic optimism and grounded in the symbolism of nature. With its main areas opening up to the outdoors, he saw the proposal as a “communal machine for enlightened, well-meaning functionaries whose life would be daily nourished through contact with nature; a modern palace for the world elite.”

Along with nature’s insightful power, trust was placed in the assembly of nations rather than in the organization’s bureaucracy. Placed along the dominant axis, the assembly hall played a key role in the design’s ceremonial character. The hall, a curved volume for acoustics, overpowered the design, as it symbolically opened up to “transmit the deliberations of the League of Nations to the wider world.”

An admirer of Russian Constructivism, Hannes Meyer’s Functionalist proposal, on the other hand, took a more skeptical approach to the poetics and elitist values of the League of Nations. Loaded with social commentary, Meyer disagreed with the design brief’s call for ceremony. Instead, he suppressed the assembly hall and championed the standardized module of the office tower, or Secretariat. Slightly suspicious from the beginning, Meyer believed the League of Nations could only be successful if it were to be designed for transparent function, as “a mechanism for reaching
“For the people who have lived through Dunkerque, Warsaw, Stalingrad and Hiroshima, may be build so simply, honestly, and cleanly that it will inspire the United Nations, who are today building a new world, to build this world on the same pattern.”

William Harrison, 1947

Therefore, in hopes of providing an organization of transparency, Meyer strongly suggested “no back corridors for backstairs diplomacy, but open glazed rooms for public negotiation of honest men.” With a factory aesthetic, and working class atmosphere, Meyer had no intentions of honoring, that which was not yet accomplished. As designing the UN, Le Crobusier would make very similar remark regarding the UN.

In support of ‘New Objectivity’, the German architect championed ‘honest’ functionality, technique, and classless, democratic forum. His proposal, although never chosen, would become one of the main precedents for the United Nation’s complex. Although the Director of Planning the UN, Wallace Harrison would one day famously describe the UN complex as, “Neither an office building nor and international parliament, but a “workshop for peace,” the future would prove that the UN’s success as a building, might actually come from its ever present duality between ‘office building’ and ‘international parliament’. This tension between Secretariat and General Assembly (GA), playing an important role in the symbolic exchange of the UN today, can be traced back to the League of Nations proposals by Meyer and Le Corbusier.

DESIGN: UNITED NATIONS

By the time the UN complex was designed in the spring and summer of 1947, the Internationalist Style, had give way to Functionalism. Considered too symbolic, its demise was perpetrated by being outlawed in German, Russia, and Italy. With Wallace K. Harrison in charge, the team spent four months designing the complex in the spring and summer of 1947. In the spirit of collaboration, Harrison, the director in charge of planning for the UN, gathered a
team of architects from around the world to New York’s Rockefeller Center. Having learned from the League of Nations competition, the designers and founders realized the stakes were even higher with the UN, and that the design process itself would need to serve as symbolic precedent for the UN’s own working future.\(^5\)

In the end, re-accessed by time, the committee’s design process might have mimicked the workings of the UN to a greater degree then hoped. With a powerful Security Council, made up of fifteen nations, the UN is not a perfectly democratic process, and in parallel, neither was the UN design process. For example, after his late arrival to New York, Oscar Niemeyer’s well-thought out first scheme was found exceptional by the team of architects. However, Niemeyer, as a loyal student, backed down to his ‘master’ Le Corbusier, when asked. Determined to see his design succeed, Le Corbusier, ‘filibustered’ the gathered architects with a scripted ‘Agenda’ speech. Not unlike the backroom politics at the UN, in this talk, he extolled his design’s appropriateness amongst the others.

Oscar Niemeyer would later recall, “When the project (scheme 32B) was ready I wrote on it: ‘This is my idea but I advise my colleagues to examine again Le Corbusier’s plan.’ It was not exactly what I was thinking. The big block that Le Corbusier had imagined in fact did not please me, but I was not wishing to compete, the important thing for me was to remain at his side.”\(^4\) Out of respect to Le Corbusier, the team too let his designs remain in the forefront. With this situation, collaboration on this scale, both in architecture and the world, was given precedent; not an entirely democratic precedent, but an appropriate one at that.

“To those outside who question us we can reply: we are united, we are a team; the World Team of the United Nations laying down the plans of a world architecture, world, not international, for therein we shall respect the human, natural and cosmic laws . . . There are no names attached to this work. As in any human enterprise, there is simply discipline, which alone is capable of bringing order.”

Le Corbusier

“I could feel tension rising. Most of us were torn. We admired and agreed with much of Le Corbusier’s strong articulation of principles. Nevertheless, we couldn’t agree with his ignoring all scheme’s but his own, with only faint praise for Niemeyer’s.”

George Dudley
NORTH BY NORTHWEST

Directed by Alfred Hitchcock and written by Ernest Lehman, the movie North by Northwest (1959), chronicles a thickening plot of mistaken identity in classic Hollywood style. A cinematic masterpiece on many levels, this thesis will use the work on two fronts. First, a reading of the movie’s ideologies will support Baudrillard’s ideas about hyper-reality. Here, plot twists and quotes from Hitchcock regarding the purpose of the movie, will correspond with the United Nations intervention’s intentions and shown methodology. Secondly, frozen still-frames from the movie will be analyzed for their complexity in scripting. In enormous control of the diffusion of information, in regards to what is shown in the movie and what the audience is piecing together and assuming as they watch, Hitchcock’s methods and manipulations serve as beautiful precedent for an architecture of scripted experience. Thus, the visual messages he splices together...
with the audience’s collected knowledge will be studied as a guide.

The movie’s main character, Rodger Thornhill, is a witty New York advertising executive who is no stranger to the communicative power of constructed ambiguity and the fabrication of illusion. Within the first ten minutes, Thornhill gets himself abducted by a group of villains from a hotel café by raising his hand for a phone call requesting George Kaplan. Although, George Kaplan is a fake personality, and Thornhill’s intentions for raising his hand are in regards to a personal call he himself wants to make, all that is needed is for a sign to be made and to be read. It does not matter if the signs match up, or as Baudrillard would say in his 1st order of simulacra, are counterfeit to one another, an exchange has occurred and a narrative can commence.

After his initial kidnapping, Thornhill makes multiple attempts to rid himself of George Kaplan’s hollow identity. At one point, after the police are of no help, he goes to the United Nations Headquarters to bring innocence to himself. Yet even at the United Nations, symbolically, his guilt is only compounded further, as the villains, one step ahead, stage crimes for him to step into. Used as a stage to perpetuate the story rather than solve the dilemma, North by Northwest’s depiction of the United Nations parallels this thesis’ point of view.

Scattered throughout the narrative are hints regarding the need to exchange counterfeit identities, auction prices, and security scares. By the end, even Thornhill himself realizes that only by embracing himself as Kaplan, can he save the life of his love interest, Eve. Yet, corresponding with this project’s methodology, even in this most critical of moments during the movie, when Thornhill portrays himself as Kaplan publicly, Hitchcock does not let the absurdity be

“Thornhill’s final plunge into chaos is set in the supreme symbol of potential world order, the United Nations building.”

Murray Pomerance. An Eye for Hitchcock
A 'triumph of style over content', the plot twists seem to overtake the story. However, it is important to explore the reason for all this action. The answer lies in the classic hinge point device around which events are structure called the MacGuffin by the director. Agreeing with his critics that "Hitchcock's got nothing to say", Hitchcock believed North by Northwest contained his greatest MacGuffin, or nothing, of all. The villains, in pursuit of Thornhill, thinking he is George Kaplan, are actually after a decoy personality created by the CIA. In an attempt to track and arrest public enemy Vandamm, who is accused of stealing government secrets, the CIA has created George Kaplan. Although, ownership of the government secrets could be considered the reason for the narrative, here too Hitchcock tries to make them as close to nothing as the technology of the time will allow. The secrets, stored on microfilm and placed within an African statue, are rarely shown and are seldom mentioned. In parallel with Baudrillard, this nothing, as core, is the nucleus of all action and happiness. Therefore, the movie, an exploration of our existence as void, is significant to this thesis, since it explores the United Nations amongst this void as well.

In the spirit of the 1st order of simulacra, the filming of North by Northwest allows for thought in regards to the idea of 'real'. Taking place on a MGM sound stage, the establishing scenes, high above the United Nations main circle drive, are delightfully hand rendered. Although obvious that these images are not of the 'real' United Nations, the trailer seems to know better then the audience, insisting that "every staggering site and sound is real!" Following Baudrillard's logic, Hitchcock’s trailer does make sense. The movie is yet another mechanism for justifying the reality of the United
Nation’s identity through the creation of a parallel fiction. If the background drawings engage us into symbolically exchange, which they do, for they certainly evoke the weight of the world headquarters quite well, then the trailer is correct; every “staggering site and sound is real” in the movie.

THE INTERPRETER

Unlike the hand drawn backdrops in North by Northwest, today’s advances in technology allow movies, art, and media to create perfect replicas of their subjects. Particular aspects of the Sydney Pollock thriller, The Interpreter, do just this, and spiral the UN back into a reality of void. However, the movie’s plot, regarding the role and need for interpretation at the UN, provides a solution for resisting this cave-in for a while. Therefore, this thesis will intertwine The Interpreter with the main text in two ways, sometimes as the anti-example to this project’s methodology for keeping up simulations, and at other times, as representative of the 3rd order of simulacra.

Before explaining how media can shatter the UN into crisis, we first turn to the plot of The Interpreter, which like in North by Northwest, underscores the need for absurdity. The film starts by setting up its main character, Silvia Broome; who born in New York has spent much of her childhood in Africa. Fluent in the fictional language of ‘Ku,’ created specifically for the movie, Silvia Broome works as an interpreter for the United Nations. One night while gathering up her belongings after work, she overhears a confidential conversation in her interpreter’s booth. As she reports to the United Nations security, the whispers regard a planned assassination of an African world leader who is scheduled to visit. As the movie develops, the audience realizes that Silvia’s family was murdered by this leader.
“In *The Interpreter.* . . . the hopes for a better future and the dangers lurking within the very process that will get us to that place have found an eerie, confusing and ultimately safe home. . . . Ending in the “safe room” behind the General Assembly Hall, it lets the structure serve as a cocoon around political violence—though it is the decisions made by the actors, not the building itself, that create peace and reconciliation. The building remains immutable, useable in different ways, but intact as a set piece and a symbol that frames the actor’s search for truth and justices.”

*Aaron Betskey. The U.N. Buildng.*

“First of all it was very difficult for him to get the authorization. He [Sydney Pollock] thought they were going to have to go to Toronto... I think he said that in the movie, he would really incorporate the idea of what the UN stands for, the ideals, and what it is all about, so I think that’s what tilted the balance.”

*Brigitte Andreassier-Pearl. UN Interpreter. movie interview*

—in the past. Thus the validity of Silvia’s interpretation starts to be questioned. Even in the end, when the assassination attempt turns out to be staged, the audience is still left unsure whether the main character realized it was fictional, and participated in pushing it along for her own motives; or whether she believed it was true herself and in light of her past, was manipulating information in order for the assassination to happen.

Although, Hitchcock’s MacGuffin was in relationship to the movie’s plot, Pollock’s MacGuffin is in relationship to the audience, and their inability to understand the fictional language of ‘Ku.’ However, both film’s ideologies and plots highlight Baudrillard’s importance for seduction. Underlining this point is the tagline used on posters and trailers for the movie The Interpreter, “The truth needs no translation.” In other words, for reality to become real, or the “truth,” it does not happen through the one to one character of translation; instead reality becomes real only with the disharmony of interpretation.

The plot renders the United Nations with hope, while the movie’s filming and promotion melts the UN’s identity by coming too identical to the original framework. Released to national theaters in 2005, it was the first motion picture movie to be allowed access to the UN. Although resistant in the past, with The Interpreter, the United Nations agreed for its site to become a movie set; and no title could have been more appropriate for today.

However, in this thesis’ opinion, as will be discussed in the 2nd order of simulacra, with professional acting and the physical United Nations as backdrop, the identity of the organization and the film’s plot and symbols became identical; no longer copies of one another, but two separate realities. Erasing the gap between reality and fiction
even further, the United Nations started recruiting celebrities to promote their issues. In the case of UN Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman, her role as actress for the UN organization and actress for the UN film became indistinguishable.

With Hollywood’s silver screen and the United Nations media screen becoming one and the same, the UN’s reality is no longer being progressively juxtaposed and informed by these translations but collapsing upon them. Without distance there is no absurdity, and without absurdity there is no conversation.

Absurd: (n) the state or condition in which human beings exist in an irrational and meaningless universe and in which human life has no ultimate meaning

*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

"If you start from the idea that the world is a total illusion then life, thought, become absolutely unbearable. So you have one has to make every effort to materialize the world, realize, in order to escape from this total illusion. And the ’realizing’ of the world, through science and technology, is precisely what simulation it is- the exorcism of the terror of illusion by the most sophisticated means of the ’realization of the world.’”

Jean Baudrillard

BORN INTO PERFECTION

We begin by defining the term, ‘reality.’ In regards to our existence, reality is the perfection we are all born into. Since it is perfectly complete, it is simultaneously everything and void, an absolute artificiality. In order to represent it, an infinite number of rational systems, also known as illusions, can be used for its
translation. However amongst these illusions, none is better than the other, each a hollowed void in itself. Therefore, starting from this bleak beginning, reality, a void, is unbearable for humans. Thankfully, however, we are suspicious of our single perspective, and are inspired to mitigate relationship between us and other humans and objects in order to inform our lives through simulations. These symbolic exchanges, although apocalyptic from the beginning, at least allow us the ability to experiment with our longing for lack and imperfection through the use of simulation.

1976, SEDUCTION

This realization that reality is void could no longer be ignored by theoretician Jean Baudrillard in 1976. With his publication, Symbolic Exchange and Death (1976), Baudrillard stated that the void of reality is inevitable. From then on all simulations, from his point-of-view, could only be considered constructed parallels to which engage with our real. However, by real, he meant the internal real, or nothingness, among each simulation.² Having worked through the 1st and 2nd order of simulacra and in the 3rd order today, we find ourselves engulfed in the nothing, while at the same time trying to make sense of it. In the words of Rem Koolhaas the challenge has never been so great as we continue to realize our dilemma. “This process intensifies in the 20th century and is accompanied by a parallel malaise: the fact that all facts, ingredients, phenomena, etc. of the world have been categorized and catalogued, that the definitive stock of the world had been taken. Everything is known, including that which is still unknown.”³

“If once we were able to view the Borges fable in which the cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up covering the territory exactly- as the most beautiful allegory of simulation, this fable has now come full circle for us, and possesses nothing but the discrete charm of second-order simulacra. Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, of the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyper-real.”

Jean Baudrillard
“I believe that the moment is at hand when by a paranoid and active advance of mind, it will be possible to systematize confusion and thus help to discredit completely the world of reality.”

Salvador Dali

HOW DO WE MATERIALIZE?

With the end already set, we try to enrich the void of our existence through temporal remedies; “make every effort to materialize the world, realize, in order to escape from this total illusion.” Longing for some kind of exchange to define ourselves with meaning, we send out texts, or deflections. By manipulating what we say, how we act, and the value we agree upon for objects, a parallel existence to our reality is created. This narrative serves as a reflection, for the first time, validating our reality, which was void, as real.

Baudrillard, in his writings, explains a variety of different systems used by humans to understand their place within artificiality. Each, with their own logic, some simulations lead to the inevitable conclusion automatically, while others succeed in leaving room for discussion, and put up a fight. He starts off with the most basic scenario, in which human-to-human, and human-to-object exchange carries with it only a value of “reciprocal obligation.” Present during the Feudal system, in this system all things are exchanged for their obligatory and honest value. Transparent, this system is no different than the ever-replaceable illusion, and leads reality straight back to its origins of artificiality.

Starting at the Renaissance, signs no longer related to their intrinsic value but began to misalign by relating to subjective interpretations of value. It was actually by these differences, where meaning could be reaped. “Our different day-to-day activities are no longer tied to determined needs or to specific exchanges between people and objects, but rather to [a] total universe of signs and simulacra floating in economic and cultural-informational fluids.” However, here too, this system could be used recessively. For, if a
new value were to be applied too seriously, in a desire for it to become the value and not just a value, the system would fail instantly. No matter how efficient simulation is, the void of reality still remains. Denying it, with selective ignorance is no more progressive then illusion.

HYPER_REALITY

Even the most sophisticated simulations will always collapse back into artificiality. Each method returns to an apocalyptic perfection, or hyper-reality, sooner or later. Nevertheless, not doing anything is also not acceptable, and we manipulate any way we can to create signs with meaning for ourselves. Creating absurdities, waste, and seductions will be our only possibilities. Ironically, denying this fact, as well as illustrating it too perfectly, only brings the system to an end automatically.

Therefore, the void of reality, like in the 3rd order of simulacra, must be acknowledged in the background of translations; its presence adding tension, forever reminding us of our ultimate destiny. If not, then each solution quickly fails as too artificial in and of itself. With a relative degree of success, seduction provides distance for reflection and slows down the collapse between reality and its copy. However, even Seduction, if too successful, illustrates that all realities are equally true realities and brings about the end.

Seduction then becomes our methodology for it endows our existence with meaning, while at the same time never losing sight of the fact, that it is all hinged around a nothing. With artificiality taunting in the background, some works of art, and architecture are able to interject a voice of defiance and opposition before collapse. This thesis investigates the reasons why some examples succeed
and others fail in scripting the complicated performance of seductive symbolic exchange.


Never able to shed our social realm; we pacify ourselves with tricks and manipulations. A simple analogy would be, to compare the dilemma to vegetables on a child’s dinner plates. Although, their disappearance (eating them) remains impossible, the greens staying put on the plate is also not an option. Therefore, the child feels the need to scoot them around, stack them, hide them, creating an illusion that things are better then they were; trying to pacify their parents that at least steps were taken towards their elimination.
The United Nations, from its inception in its Charter, has been nothing more than a framework: “a formal arrangement transcending national boundaries that provides for the establishment of an institutional machinery to facilitate cooperation among members.”¹ As a frame, the simulations which take place within it promise society, the possibility to intervene in future wars, inform the world about its citizens, provide a neutral place for the resolution of crisis, and serve as a role model of partnership.

Prior to the Cold War, international theorists actively pursued the idea of the UN as a translator, or representation of the world which covers up the absence of reality. Focusing their ideologies upon the UN’s functionality, they desperately tried to erect the UN’s inexistence into an existence. However, the harder the absence of the UN’s reality was covered will illusions of existence, the more impotent and unsuccessful its identity became.² As

---

¹ UN_ Void

² Neo-Realism, INSTRUMENT: The United Nations is not a significant player in the world. It is dominated by hegemonic powers such as the US, which uses and abuses the UN at their will.

² Neo-liberal Institutionalism, ARENA: The United Nations helps states to coordinate their actions and prevent violent conflict. The UN helps states to share the costs of international governance and provides services to states (monitoring, treaty-making, adjudication).

² Constructivism, ACTOR: The United Nations is a significant player in world politics. It is not primarily driven by a hegemon [realism] or by state interests [institutionalism], but it is driven by its mandate the values contained. The UN legitimates NGOs and other actors promoting her mandate (human rights, equality, etc.).

² Post-Cold-War Neo-Institutionalism, SIMULATION: The United Nations serves as a parallel to the void of war, and information. It is a seduction, although not real, it gives us hope that the noble idea is ever greater.
Francois Debrix concludes, “the more the UN tries, the less it achieves. Or, rather, the more it intervenes, the more it shows its formal emptiness.” Thus, as a representation, the UN can be viewed as nothing but failure; its logistics and economics simply unable to signify the diversity of the world it would need to ‘represent.’

Today, as the world continues to spiral into a more complex setting, and we struggle to make sense of life, we place the United Nations within a Post-Modern setting. As Francois Debrix explains in his book, Re-envisioning Peacekeeping:

“In a postmodern age, the UN is best understood as a postmodern construct, as a structure without depth. There is nothing more to the United Nations than the objects themselves, the architectural eeriness of the building, and the proliferation of signs, symbols, arrows inside the edifice which are nonetheless devoid of meaning and direction.”

With visual and spatial plays of appearance, or simulations, the hollow framework is rediscovered, and the organization can be considered a success.

Thus the UN’s goal is a generator of symbolism not a symbol itself; used to keep the search for peace alive, rather then succeed in its fruition. Therefore, it is a backdrop for contradictory performances between delegates, employees, tourists and the citizens of the world. There is no correct method at the UN, nor is there a singular task or act which can fill it. Secretary General Trygve Lie could not have been more correct by telling his successor Dag Hammarskjöld in 1953, that the “UN is the most impossible job in the world.”

With time and technology, even the UN’s simulations, like all simulations, become perfected. With this mastery, the multiplicity of
simulation, or what Baudrillard calls singularity, starts to dissolve, and the distinction between reality (the artificial) and the potential for multiple identities weakens. With this collapse from perfected simulations, the UN loses its purpose, for it unable to relate itself, when its copy is identical to the original. In order to prevent falling into crisis, and becoming a singular symbol, the UN has to constantly reposition its relationship to these original purposes and values.

Therefore, when the search for peace becomes too absolute and unilateral, as will be spoken about in the 2nd order of simulacra, seductions must spark the much needed misalignment once more. Today, the UN survives in the face of this collapse by pushing its simulations towards contradictions. Through intensification of its simulations, or seduction, the UN is once more enlivened and informed; providing distance for the organization to reinvent, evolve, and re-conceptualize it’s identify.

EXAMPLES OF UN SIMULATIONS

In parallel to the main text’s discussion on Baudrillard’s theory of 1st, 2nd and 3rd order simulacra, a narrative regarding the UN as a simulation will serve as support. In correspondence with Baudrillard’s ideas, all simulations must attempt to defy collapse, through a reversal in stance through an over accentuation of the present condition. Therefore, Chapters 3, 4, and 5 will illustrate how the UN, has continually re-adapted its position to its original purposes in order to stay afloat. Taken from its Charter, the UN’s original purposes, which it must continually re-interpret are international law, international security, economic development, social progress, and human rights issues, or in brief, war.

We are operating in a world which is quite brutal and there are some very wicked people around. Nobody denies that. But in the business I am in, we sometimes have to shake the hand of the aggressor, to lend them an ear, in order to save lives.”

Kofi Annan
information, translation, and partnership. Plays of contradiction amongst these purposes give the UN a constructive critical distance and allow its identity to stay afloat.

Using Baudrillard’s theories, the UN is set up as a void, in which simulations come close to collapse and must be engaged with seductions. However with this groundwork set, of particular interest to this thesis, are those seductions which have spatial dimensions or have succeeded in some ways to marginalize their spatial dimensions, such as the dominance physicality of the body, or the architectonic limits in materiality. The end of the thesis, will speak about a collection of targeted visual and spatial simulations/ seductions already seen taking place at the UN today. These will lead into the thesis design, which will amplify some of these seductions in the name of security and media.

4 www.un.org
Chapter 3
1st ORDER of SIMULACRA

“For the world is no longer that of representation, reflection, of critical distance. It is no longer that of critical discourse and debate, or figure. It is a world of touch and manipulations.” ¹
Mike Gane

In order to understand how seduction provides a purposeful methodology to this intervention, we start by taking a closer look at the three stages of simulacra explained in Baudrillard’s essay “The Orders of Simulacra.” Each successive phase of simulation, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, supports, in its own way, Baudrillard’s “law” of society. Hungry for the real, Baudrillard believes, we are driven towards becoming more digital. To attain it, ironically this drive provokes the advancement of technology, which spins us further into an endless cycle of teetering collapse within simulation.
According to Baudrillard, around the time of the Renaissance, signs start to break away from their ‘reciprocal obligation’ and start to relate to one another through an external reality. Abstracted, they begin gathering their meaning, not from an evaluation of self, or use value; nor by comparing themselves to an equivalent other, or exchange value. Instead they start to compare themselves to similar items, or sign value. Therefore, in the first order of simulacra, intrinsic value which was prone to illusion is replaced by the counterfeit’s potential. The image therefore masks or perverts the basic reality. Symbols are “no longer directly exchanged from person to person, but only through some common or agreed-upon third, which performs the role of the medium of exchange.”

Thus, a counterfeit replica of a sign creates meaning for itself as long as another agrees to exchange with it.

Once we realize that the reality of our existence is perfect and therefore artificial, we try to understand our world in two fundamental ways. The first is by engaging with people and objects, not symbolically but through their obligatory value. From this type of interaction, the void of the artificial is filled with illusion. As cheap filler, illusion is an infinitely replaceable image; capable of pretending to be any reality at any time. The second way is through simulation, “the generator of models of a real without origin or reality, a hyper-real.” With reality a void, simulation provides our existence a parallel narrative in which to justify itself.

Before simulation, the perfection of life made living intolerable. Once simulation starts, signs are always understood amongst an overall system of simulation, however our ability to achieve this comes from the internal limit of the void. The void, as origin, cannot be
forgotten. Therefore ironically, nothingness only exists if the thought of things outside of it still remains. As Rex Butler explains, “even if the system is to expand forever and nothing is outside of it, it is also never entirely closed, something is always left out of it. And it is this internal limit, this difference that makes resemblance possible, that Baudrillard calls the real.”

Therefore, the situation is not hopeless, simulation allows us to justify the nothingness of the void, by letting us to define our realities and critique ourselves amongst the void.

Francois Debrix explains the transition from representation to simulation: “Representation was undoubtedly strategic to the extent that it sought to move cognition away from the realm of the senses and into the categories of the mind. Simulation can be strategic too. But its strategy is no longer about re-inscribing “empirical reality” in reason or thought, but of “reviving” reality through the hyper-real, simulated, visual, and virtual instruments offered by technological media.”

With the dawn of the 1st order, the void of existence can, for a time being, engage in communication. No longer weighed down with its obligatory value, the sign becomes abstracted. Delaminated it provides space for thought. Amongst simulation, the 1st Order of Simulacra is characterized by a sort of crudity that is left behind from its production. The imperfections of the copy are obvious and do not fool the eye. Thus, makeshift and primitive these simulations suggest their originals, but by no means believe they are replicating them. They leave behind a charm and space for the spectator to fill in their own narrative. According to Baudrillard, sooner or later, reality will once more collapse into void. However, at least for a moment, the counterfeit era’s simulation provides an opportunity for experimentation, and voice before the end.
As the opposite of illusion, simulation is not random, but purposeful and thoughtful. This pull and the multiplicities that result are synonymous with understanding our cultural surround. In the end, it too will fail. All of its moves will, “ultimately only stand in for the very ‘nothingness’ of the world, which at once has already occurred and never actually takes place.” When everything leads us back to the voids of reality and hyper-reality, we continue with simulation; for through it we have a voice to address the artificiality of our reality. Thus, studying simulations and applying manipulations to our work, provides us with hope that our simulation’s collapse can be brought about on our own terms.

By the Industrial period, copies no longer evoke their originals, but instead duplicate them with one-to-one precision. Where in the 1st order, image and reality were linked by difference; in the second, they are so exact that they are linked by having nothing in common. By the 2nd order of simulacra, we no longer see the real. It is no different than its copy; for the two have folded into one another. This loss of misalignment is also a loss of comparison and opportunity to provoke imagination and open-ended narrative for the spectator. Learning from the mistakes of the 2nd order, the 3rd order of simulacra revives the need for distance. It is here that “the image speaks of the difference between it and reality and reality only arises as an effect of the image.” However, unlike the 1st, it questions how symbolic exchange can occur progressively, yet still defend the real from collapse.

SUSPENDING PERSONAL MEMORIES OF THE UN, WE BEGIN TO ANALYZE THE UN AS A VOID. IN ORDER TO JUSTIFY THE UN’S EXISTENCE AMONGST THIS VOID, WE SIMULATE A SORT OF PARALLEL NARRATIVE FOR THE UN THROUGH SIMULATION. SIMULATIONS MUST KEEP A DISTANCE BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND THEIR ORIGINALS, IN ORDER TO BE PRODUCTIVE. IN THE 1ST ORDER, SIMULATIONS DO SO BY DEFAULT. AS SIMPLE AND CRUDE, THEY DEFY COLLAPSE BY BEING INHERENTLY INCAPABLE OF BEING PERFECTED. THE FOLLOWING ARE A SERIES OF SIMULATIONS, WHICH MIGHT ALIGN WITH BAUDRILLARD’S IDEAS OF 1ST ORDER SIMULACRA. MOST ARE SIMPLE, AND EXCEEDINGLY AMBITIOUS, AND AS WILL BE EXPLAINED, HAVE BEEN MARGINALIZED OVER TIME WITH TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA.

1) WAR/ TERROR

Created from the traumatic aftershock of the Second World War, the United Nations made its initial purpose clear within the first line of its Charter; it was set up to protect mankind from the scourge
WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

UN Charter

of war. With the massacre of millions and the development of the atomic bomb, humanity’s conscious could no longer be trusted to prevent apocalyptic elimination. With no limits, the founders of the UN realized that war and peace were becoming interchangeable. In order to validate peace from this void, the United Nations Charter was written. As a first attempt, the Charter evoked the idea that, no matter how evil the world became peace could still be valid. As technology advanced, simulations and seductions, spun off of the Charter, would continue its purpose.

2) INFORMATION PROVIDER

In order for the world to work towards peace, the founders of the UN quickly realized they would need to address the humanitarian problems which plagued the earth. However, not surprisingly, the world’s complex and impossible-to-solve crises were way beyond what the UN could handle. In this state, the organization turns to simulating action, by serving as data collector and record keeper of the humanitarian problem. With its perpetual creation of reports, it ironically also serves as recorder of its own progress and non-progress in pacifying these problems.

3) NEUTRAL TRANSLATOR

Stating that the United Nations will serve as a neutral translator for the world is a perfected void in itself. Justifying the UN within this light, a series of simulations have taken place since its inception in order to destabilize its neutral translator status.

Starting from the city block around the United Nations, we quickly realize that this ‘neutral international territory’, but is rather trapped on the island of Manhattan, in the most condensed city in the Alphabetically arranged GA hall

UN Charter
United States. It seems, it would have been hard for Le Corbusier and the site committee to have chosen another location with more pressure against impartiality. However, if the UN is seen as a series of simulation, revived by seductions, the complex’s placement should only embrace and promote these contradictions. As George Dudley recalls, “Le Corbusier . . . since his League of Nations experience, he seemed to have been circling Manhattan like a moth, drawn, yet denying any attraction. In the site search, he was tantalized by New York . . . and it becoming home for the United Nations itself.” He continues by quoting the master architect mentioning New York as a “voltage at the cross-roads . . . a city capable of replacing itself.” Therefore, the placement of the UN, in the city, was extremely purposeful; helping the organization expose itself as void, thrive from the city’s instability, and nullify itself continually.

Zooming into the complex’s activities, the most theatric room in the complex, and the gathering space for “the whole world”, is the General Assembly. However, it is persistently out-staged in status, attention, and power by the Security Council. Unlike the General Assembly, which is composed of all nations, alphabetically arranged and equal, the Security Council is its opposite; containing five permanent nations, with veto power, and an additional ten nations, rotated in every two years.

Although, the GA is out staged in power, it is notable that the ceremonial gathering of the GA still occurs yearly. Productive in its own right, the gathering helps support the discrepancy between the GA and Security Council. Without the meetings, the Security Council would become absolute in the equation, and thus void. However, with the GA meetings, apprehension is restored to validate the imbalance between the two bodies.
4) PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLE

The last series of simulations we touch-on, are those which try to create identity by aligning the United Nations to a model of partnership. The idea of the UN as a mock-up of partnership has been used on all scales, large to small, since the UN’s beginning. Even, the architectural design process was supposed to stand in as precedent for the UN’s modeling of partnership. Today, with its ceremonial gatherings, the GA meeting does the same. Even the UN’s Millennium Report, cannot help underscore the UN as a special partnership in its opening lines; stating the UN “remains the only global institution with the legitimacy and scope that derives from universal membership, and a mandate that encompasses development, security, and human rights as well as the environment.”

Following suit with this idea of partnership, each member country, no matter what its size, appoints a single UN ambassador for the organization in New York. Taking part in the one country-one vote system of the GA, the UN’s delegates represent a miniature world. Each UN ‘partner’ has its own identically sized flag on First Avenue, and alphabetic seating arrangement in the GA hall. These symbols of equal membership are prominently displayed around the complex and spoken about proudly in guided tours and public information packets.

Embedded in the 1st order of simulacra, their prominence is touching. Nostalgic and simple, they are set to fail. For no matter how alphabetically-ordered the flags along First Avenue are, they will never be equal. Spatially, those countries whose name’s start with letters in the middle of the alphabet, will receive the spots of
honor along the famous semi-oval drive. With these spots, comes more press coverage and image-taking. Therefore simulations such as these, in their rudimentary and imperfect nature, although not progressive, at least display the UN’s partnership ambitions as a void.

3 UN Millennium Report, pp. 67-68
Chapter 4
2nd ORDER of SIMULACRA

As described in the 1st order of simulacra, in this game of symbolic exchange, objects, signs, and values become real, not when traded for their actual worth, but when they are traded according to subjective values. Thus, reality can only be made real, when a sign is compared to it; when “the image speaks of the difference between it and reality and reality only arises as an effect of the image.” Therefore, the comparison between original and copy can not mimic reality too closely, but needs to evoke the original and speak to their difference. Therefore, the 2nd order of simulacra is defined by the image or simulation, masking the absence of a basic reality.

CRUDITY ERASED

As technology advanced in the Industrial Revolution, the grainy simulation of the 1st order of counterfeit simulacra was slowly lost to the perfected series of the machine in the 2nd. Able to capture
every detail of the day to day, copies no longer evoked the original but copied it perfectly. As replicas became the same as reality, the copies became simply new realities. It is here that the 1st collapses and become the 2nd. With one to one simulation, reality replicates itself into singular objects, each one, just another void reality.

If our initial existence were modeled, we might imagine it as an opaque sphere that we float within. Unbearably perfect, no reflections of us are deflected off of its walls. In its stark plainness, the environment only leaves us to question who we are and what others think. Through illusions we apply images to our sphere’s wall, yet we realize each is as replaceable and true as the next. For a more meaningful understanding, we interact with deflections of our selves, or simulations. If these simulations become too identical to our own reality, they are only copies of our perfect existence and no longer helpful. As in the 2nd order, when the deflections begin to translate reality flawlessly, they themselves turn into realities. Reflections which turn realities back into voids through simulation bring about a hyper-reality. Hyper-reality happens when we can translate the truth about our world perfectly. In this scenario, each individual realm will translate the equal importance of every other existence. This perfection will be apocalyptic, and if modeled, the same as being in a private mirrored sphere. No narrator will exist to explain the situation, for no existence will have the opportunity to imagine that there are others as well.

MEANING GONE

With the loss of distance in the 2nd order, the purpose of simulation, to create meaning also disappears. Therefore, when simulation becomes a perfected reflection, it dissolves the purpose
for its existence. By erasing the distance in the model, no meaning or imaginative narrative can be generated. Providing little comfort, the 2nd order of simulacra is all but a short intermediate period, 'rather inadequate as an imaginary solution to the problem of mastering the world.' Learning from the inadequacies of the 2nd order, the 3rd order, tries to think through the dilemma of reality, and proposes a new direction for simulation.

Pulled by the refinement of technology towards fate in hyper-reality, the UN’s simulations at the UN also become too perfect. When its simulations become too absolute, and identical with reality; the UN once more is considered nothing but void.

1) WAR/ TERROR

Defining itself against force and war; the United Nations has purpose. However, with real-time war coverage and advances in battle, war’s reality starts to approach a simulated perfection. With CNN reporters in the line of fire, the news has become as critical to war as battle. Embedded in the story and creating the story, news anchors report on the battle, as well much as they do on their own reporting. With this real-time loop, traditional war is suppressed and replaced by an “information coated-image”. War has become a precisely choreographed storyline with televisions screens magnifying...
“Films that appear once again to open themselves up to the real only to make the real over in their image, close the real off more than ever.”

Rex Butler

"There is a reality to the fact that the United Nations exists on the edge of the East River of New York City, and that we are here, and we are shooting it. You will feel it on film.”

Making of The Interpreter interview

Along with the simulation of war, the United Nations symbol hollows from the organizations liquefaction across media and popular culture. Setting the stage for this, UN events become front page news on the New York Times homepage as soon as they are released. Like the camera men on the battlefront, CNN has permanent offices in the Secretariat triumphing the affiliated UN radio and television next door. When the famous flags are not available for the shot, a digital green screen behind the speaker is enough.

Feeding into the celebrity culture craze, the UN is not above using stars to illuminate its focus; including George Clooney in Darfur, Princess Diana with landmines, and Angelina Jolie in Africa. Coverage regarding the United Nations has become an entertainment sport,
“Patriot missiles, infrared sights for night warfare, and other inventions of the Star Wars era are assembled only a few kilometers from the site where tourists board fantasy rocket rides based on George Lucas’ Star Wars. Disney World has the Space Mountain roller coaster; Orlando has Free Flight Zephyrhills, a firm that is experimenting with wind-tunnel technology to simulate a sky-diving experience on the ground. Disney’s Epcot Center has Michael Jackson in 3-D as Captain Eco; Orlando created the simulators on which allied pilots learned to aim their smart bombs.”

Jean Baudrillard

and celebrity ‘UN Ambassadors’, personify the UN in blockbuster movies one day, and the next, speak on its behalf about poverty.

3) NEUTRAL TRANSLATOR

Unlike war and media, the purpose of neutrality/translation and partnership/gathering seems to have an in-built spatiality. This relationship to space helps keep the role of the UN afloat. By continually re-energizing progressions of seductions, the result is a poetic destabilization; with an amplified simulation striking-up others, in order to keep the previous one afloat.

Nevertheless, even the spatiality of the UN, as a Neutral Translator, is often dangerously undermined by the enormous advancements in communication. Travel and contact between nations has become an easily surmountable logistics issue. In this day, it is no question that world leaders can communicate with one another whenever they need. With power deals happening daily, behind closed conference doors, the UN as a meeting place is logistically unnecessary. At times, no amount of seduction can shelter the UN’s role, in politics, as rendered hollow.

4) PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLE

In theory the UN is owned by every citizen of the world. However, like the realization that war and peace are interchangeable, we cannot bear this perfection and part. Beginning to test out its contradictions, our first grace comes from the realization that the UN can not recognize each human’s individual voice. With this limit comes the ability for protest. An extreme expression of the reversibility of partnership, enacted, is the recent suicide bombing attacks on UN headquarters around the world. Protests and
contradictions must prevail, in order to justify the UN. Varying on scale, some are horrendous and absolutist, such as the attacks on the Baghdad UN, and collapse simulation with their totality. Others, like protest and security are healthy, providing a medium for simulating the UN amongst its void reality.

Chapter 5
3rd ORDER of SIMULACRA

From the Industrial Period until today, we partake in the 3rd Order of Simulacra. In review, the 1st order’s liberation has taken place, and “nothing remains outside of it and there is no perspective on it.” All we do from here is fiction. With the 1st and 2nd orders behind us, our next steps come from within the artificiality we accept. It is actually at this conclusion which this thesis proposal begins: “Chapter 2) Reality is Void.” Slowly through the neutralization of the 1st and 2nd orders, we have come to accept the fact that reality is void. However, as will be explained, it this acceptance and support of this nothing which spurs simulation on, and provides a voice for our work amongst it.

SINGULARITY

In all of Jean Baudrillard’s essays and especially in The Singular Object, with Jean Nouvel, the term ‘Singularity’ continues to appear. Its erasure he mentions as the failure of the 2nd order,
and only through its rebuilding do we become progressive. He even states that its protection is our only hope, “the singular object is the way of access, through the coils of contradiction, to be sure, but nevertheless opening onto the determining conditions of its own cultural surround.”

Supporter of distance between image and original, it seems strange that Baudrillard would support all methods which keep the ‘singular’ alive. However, on closer examination, the play of words becomes apparent. Unraveled, the definition and term cleverly contradict each other in order to guarantee one another’s existent. Therefore, Baudrillard’s singularity is in fact multiplicity. Destined for collapse, like all simulations, the singular is named for its end result. Singularity is thus “the condition of being different, dual to the dominant discourse.” Correctly so, the 2nd order of simulacra puts all, which is ‘singular’, in danger; as it brings upon the system to perfection and fullness. In the 2nd order of simulacra, the system has become totally functional. Full, it is dangerously forgetful of its void, and therefore sick, vulnerable and unusable. Or as Francois Debrix explains: “What post-postmodern writings oppose is, as Baudrillard mentions, the disappearance of singularity (of the condition of being different, dual to the dominant discourse) under the appearance of global unity and neo-liberal universality.”

INDIFFERENCE

No matter what we do, the pull for hyper-reality continues to collapse the critical distance between our simulations. Without this pull, our lives lack progressiveness, and without simulation they lack meaning. In this game of simulation, we notice that both the original and the copy, work together in order to exist. However, neither can be
“The crossing of this unidentifiable point] is therefore irreversible [contrary to what Canetti implicitly hopes]. The situation suddenly becomes entirely novel. We can no longer discover music as it was before stereo (unless by an effect of supplementary simulation), we can no longer discover history as it was before information and the media. The original essence (of music, of the social...), the original concept (of the unconscious, of history...) have disappeared because we can never again isolate them from their model of perfection, which at the same time is their model of simulation...We will never know what history was before its exacerbation in the technical perfection of information or its disappearance in the profusion of commentary- we will never know what anything was before its disappearance in the completion of the model...such is the era of simulation.”

Jean Baudrillard

responsible for the others engagement, Baudrillard explains.

Baudrillard makes this point further by using the work of Kierkegaard’s 'Diary of the Seducer' to illustrate the concept of seduction. A tale of pursuit, the story investigates the symbolic exchange between its male protagonist, Johannes and a young female, Cordelia. Interested in young Cordelia, Johannes starts to visit Cordelia’s family’s house for other affairs. Never explicitly given attention or spoken to, Cordelia nevertheless, for the first time in her adult life, starts to notice that she has been seen. Aware of her presence in his mind, the two begin to interact in a game of seduction. For now on, Cordelia will only be aware of her world through the reflections and comparisons of others. She will always need this other as much as she needs her own reflection in order to understand herself. It is impossible to say who started the exchange between the two characters and in a way, neither existed, until the simulation began, for “we cannot have a relationship without this un-decidability, without it being impossible to determine whether it is we who lead the other or is it the other who leads us.”

SEDUCTION

Although the author, Kierkegaard, rejects his character’s act of seduction, and claims he could move beyond it with ethics and religion, Baudrillard believes the endless loop is impossible to remedy. As it seems all hope is lost, Baudrillard slips in the possibility of a certain type of reversibility to the scenario. Although in the most general sense, it is impossible for the characters to move past their loop of indifference, their indifference is only impossible to conquer if a methodology exists which considers the situation’s opposite. In order to insure the impossibility’s existence, indifference can be
viewed as non-static. With this view, the system perseveres and we try to capture and overtake the potential indifference which remains beyond it.

To illustrate this concept, we come back to the two seducers. Seductions ultimate goal is to make sure Cordelia consciousness of her self, by making sure that she knows that the eyes of Johannes are upon her. In other words, seduction’s aim is to “ensure that the other cannot remain indifference, that their apparent indifference or unself-consciousness can only be explained because of us. Since the two never spoke, never acknowledged each other’s presence, it is impossible to prove that this seduction has even occur and that Cordelia indifference has, in fact, been erased.

The problem deepens if we consider the fact that, the characters can also feign their indifference to one another. No matter how hard Johannes pursues Cordelia, she still has the ability to remain indifferent, or at least feign her indifference unbeknownst to us or him. Since, she can never be forced to follow, her personal position allows for ambiguity within the system. Therefore, as Rex Butler explains “seduction is the necessity of taking the other into account when trying to produce resemblance. It is a limit we cannot go beyond in our relationship to the other if we still want to maintain a connection with it.” Since the other person’s motives are never certain and clear, we continually produce new simulations, in order, to address the never-ending possibility of indifference.

Therefore, seduction spurs simulation on by doubling it. Once we try to stand in for the relationship between the same and the other, by using seduction, “we also know that this relationship comes about only after our attempt to stand in for it, that this attempt to stand in for it also opens up the possibility of another coming after us.” Therefore,
in order to be on the edge, we must try to seduce and therefore create the need for more simulations. Among this system, “we only seduce in so far as we risk being seduced; we only seduce insofar as we cannot know whether we seduce or are seduced.”

SOLUTION

“Nothingness is pregnant with meaning and is the origin of all creativity.” Nicholas Haeffner

The loss of critical distance in the 2nd order of simulacra has meant a loss of opportunity for reprocess and reinvention. Such perfected simulations, “lose their power to move us or to involve us in them, not because they are not good but because they are too good.”

In order to engage ourselves again, we pass into a higher level of simulation, or seduction.

First, seduction disallows us to reduplicate our past and averts us from erasing our Singularity. Secondly, seduction’s hunt for indifference, gives us the ability to pursue new simulations. Therefore, in the 3rd order of simulacra we come to realize that by accepting our indifference as inevitable. Continually working against it, we use the nothing to spur the system on. With the nothingness of our existence, in the forefront once more, the erasure of singularity remains, for the moment, ahead of us. With these new simulations, seduction re-roots our simulations within the nothingness of our existence, thus allowing us to think and critique.

As Jean Baudrillard says, “A successful object, in the sense that it exists outside of its own reality, is an object that creates a dualistic relation, a relation that can emerge through diversion,
contradiction, destabilization, but which effectively brings the so-called reality of a world and its radical illusion face-to-face."

As our powerful allies, seductions protect us against virtual sameness, by focusing our attention towards the possibility that indifference might still remain and therefore new simulations are needed to contest it. With this mission, seductions breathe life into simulations once more. In fact, we come to realize by the 3rd order of simulacra that our system of symbolic exchange can not exist without these seductions in the 1st place. Thus, Baudrillard refers to Seductions as ‘inextricable’, ‘inescapable’, and ‘essential form of the world.’ Created consciously and unconsciously around us already, this thesis first explores how to amplify the seductions around us, in order to keep them alive, by piecing together a general methodology from Baudrillard’s works. Even though collapse is inherent and nothing remains outside of simulation, these seductions still have the ability to defend the Real, “to which all else is compared, but which must itself be excluded to allow this comparison,” from temporary collapse.

Yet more importantly, the thesis hypothesizes how seductions can be used as a means for producing a voice of defiance amongst the apocalyptic system we are given. Investigating how seductions can be used to bring about and spur on positive outcomes within the system of symbolic exchange, provides humor, sheds light, and re-open up possibilities for interpreting a subject’s identity. Applied to the field of architecture, targeted visual and spatial manipulations can be used to highlight the specificity of place and the poetics of a situation. Through these scripted and chosen seductions, or interventions, meta-narratives can result, which in turn, deepen the identity of the subject and allow it to come alive.
The UN as a post-modern construct is inherently an ironic one, for simulations and seduction depend on their reversibility to stay active. As François Debrix says about the UN, “today is a time when meaning and intent no longer matter since appearance and pretense (always already) prevail.” Therefore, with the UN’s simulations collapsing, its plays of appearance must be reworked in order to keep a critical distance, for thought and discussion, open. From Jean Baudrillard’s writings, we know that simulations can only prevent their collapse by heightening their intensity. By doing so, they bring about a reversal in stance. Sometimes this is demonstrated as a literal turnaround in ideology; such as the UN’s policy towards war, translation, and partnership. Other times, the amplification provides the simulation with such an over abundance of support, that opposition to the stance is more subtle, as demonstrated by the UN’s
over production of information.

The ability for the United Nations to continually seduce becomes more difficult with time. Advances in ‘war’ and ‘information’ have been especially challenging to maintain validity. Both have become so digitalized, so immediate and self-generating that it is hard to distinguish their copies from one another. However, the simulations of ‘neutral translation’ and ‘partnership’ seem to have more potential to create distance and disorder, and thus more identity. Although they too are affected by the perfection of their simulations, they seem to have an inherent spatiality to their subject which provides rich potential for intervention, re-conceptualization, and added simulations.

1) WAR/ TERROR

With war collapsing into a self-referential hyper-reality, the United Nation’s identity slips into void once again. In order to revive itself, the UN must start to exaggerate its simulation, so that the virtual and the real are realized at the same time. Outsourcing its peacekeeping operations to non-governmental organizations, the United Nations affirms force as a powerful tool, even proclaiming that at times it is morally compelled to employ force.

When seriously discouraging conflicts take over, a parallel universe of sutures is created to keep the “purpose” alive. Hollywood productions, such as Hotel Rwanda, bring visual fantasies of peacekeeping to war torn countries. The UN, like these movies, speaks to the possibility of hope, with fictions where “nations are rebuilt [Somalia], nuclear weapons are destroyed [Iraq and North Korea], war crimes are eradicated [Bosnia], and humanitarian
assistance is implemented (Rwanda).”

2) INFORMATION PROVIDER

The UN’s role as a distributor of information has been perfected by the 2\textsuperscript{nd} order of simulacra greatly as well. With the liquidity of media already, to impede collapse, it seems that the UN can only worsen the situation in order to create resistance. Digitalization and popularization of the United Nation’s image has continued to erase the much needed gap between fiction and the reality. Increasing constantly, telecasts, video clips, watch-groups, web-cams, and press releases, copy the workings of the UN simultaneously across the globe in real-time. In order to create a resistance to the void of information, the UN problematizes this situation by exaggeration of information’s infiniteness. Every day, hundreds of United Nations reports are added to an endless downloadable line. Never before so organized, never before so accessible, the information has never before been so doubly impenetrable and inaccessible due to its shear quantity.

3) NEUTRAL TRANSLATOR

Although, the idea of the UN as a neutral translator has been undermined since the beginning of the organization, today the process continues with the hyper-accentuation of media. A quick investigation of the UN’s interior neutrality reveals its ultimate in-neutrality. Arguably one of the most iconic interior images, the Security Council’s official meetings held in the chamber, are well-known for being the most scripted and pre-written. Although, this fact is not new, the
proliferation of the Security Chamber’s image through the media has only added to its discontinuity.

Where once the Security Council was undermined by the ‘real’ debates, occurring behind closed doors in the closed quarters attached to it. (President’s Office, the Consultation Room, and the Caucus Room). With today’s heightened access to media, this misaligned is only more exaggerated. All trivial facts and live-video feeds of Security Council proceedings can be seen on the internet. However, the ‘real’ discussions, behind closed doors and away from media cameras, are not accessible. The situation becomes more absurd, and intensified when access to the ‘real’ areas of the Security Council is not allowed.

However, the same principles found in the scripted meetings continue throughout the organization, from the Security Council to the role of the Interpreters. In the end, as well as being a neutral territory for international talks, the UN can just as well be defined as a biased territory for interpreted, not translated, talks.

4) PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLE

Like the example before, the UN engages in seduction in order to validate the purpose of partnership and secure its identity for the time being. One major way, the UN starts to destabilize this simulation of partnership, is by undermining its relationship with the world, the city, and its employees through the use of Security. These manipulations of safety and danger in relationship to other users, the flags, and the building, are the basis of this thesis proposal’s security and media center design.
Chapter 6
METHODOLOGY

This proposal’s methodology will first suggest how to provoke seductions which prevent the collapse of our system into hyper-reality. It will then explore how seductions, in the field of architecture, must first marginalize their inherent social realm before being able to create a critical distance on their own terms. The last part of the methodology will look into how, with forethought, these resulting seductions can be used for positive measure, along with their role of saving the singular.

As shown within the progressive orders, simulations, pushed by technology, attempt to erase the difference between the original and the copy. When the distance collapses, and the copy becomes identical to the original, the reality is once more nothing but void and meaningless to us. Although forever plagued with failure, this system can be thought of as an opportunity for scripted symbolic exchanges within the cycle; if viewed as “not so much a grieving process as a
process of disappearance, of controlling disappearance as much as appearance.”

SEDUCTION AS TOOL

As mentioned in the 3rd order, we produce seductions in order to re-establish the in-discrepancy between fiction and reality; “distinctive signs, full signs, never seduce us. Seduction only comes through empty, illegible, insoluble, arbitrary, fortuitous signs, which glide by lightly, modifying the index of the refraction of space... As such, the signs of seduction do not signify; they are of the other of the ellipse, of the short circuit, of the flash of wit (le trait d’esprit).”

In order to jump start the system once more, seduction pushes the copy past its original mode of signification into amplification, thus “seduction is both the distance that allows this resemblance and the distance that arises when this space is crossed.”

Seduction’s aim is to eliminate the indifference in our existence. By indifference, Baudrillard means a state of unself-consciousness, or being trapped within the void of ones reality. Knowing that we can never eliminate all the indifference present, and therefore will always be within the system of simulation, Baudrillard’s theory suggests we embrace our predicament and create waves in the only way possible, through amplifying seduction. “The aim of theory is thus not to win the game, but to overcome the indifference of the world or to oppose to the indifference of the world an even greater indifference,” says critic Rex Butler. In a sense, a dare, opposition can only come by worsening the situation.

DOUBLING

“Double your bets or fold, double or nothing” Jean Baudrillard
In order to provide a distance for critique and calm amongst the unease of eminent collapse, we provoke simulations to their limit of absurdity. Problematizing our existence, with this strategy we bring about collapse on our own term, using the system for its own destruction. “The only strategy of opposition to a hyper-realist system is pataphysical, a ‘science of imaginary solutions’: in other words, a science fiction about the system returning to destroy itself, at the extreme limit of simulation, a reversible simulation in the hyper-logic of destruction and death.”

Not based on opposition or contradiction, seduction works from within the logic of the system by magnifying simulation and hoping it naturally inverts. Thus, through the use of absurdity, seductions allow for a meta-narrative by continually bringing the nothingness of the system to the forefront. Simulations, on the other hand, try to dissolve the meta-narrative into a single story, and thus must continually be destabilized with more seduction.

In Delirious New York, Rem Koolhaas summaries this seduction once more; as a “remedy against the anxiety... through conceptual recycling, the worn, consumed contents of the world can be recharged or enriched like uranium, and the ever-new generations of false facts and fabricated evidences can be generated simply through the act of interpretation... proposes to destroy, at least upset, the definitive catalogue, to short-circuit all existing categorizations, to make a fresh start- as if the world can be reshuffled like a pack of cards whose original sequence is a disappointment.”

IMPLOSION

As mentioned, the amplification of simulation hopes to push

“Interpretation is oral. You go to a booth, put on your ear phones, and listen to the speakers, and it is ours is simultaneous not consecutive, that means when the speaker speaks you have to interpret right away, and you don’t wait for the speaker to finish.”

Diane Tien-Li Liao. UN Interpreter

“You need to know your technical side, but also have a certain disposition before you can do it well. When you are in the booth, when you are in front of a meeting, part of it is performing also. Because you are after all on air, and you can’t redo what you just did.”

Diane Tien-Li Liao. UN Interpreter
simulation past its one-to-one collapse and into an absurd realm. By doing so, the system hopes to avert collapse, in the only way it can, by escalating the condition present. Although escalating can happen through intensifying or deemphasizing, when both occur at the extremes of their ability the methods are not two fold, but more like the opposite sides of the same coin.

For example, the artist-turned-architect, Vito Acconci, believes seduction is the same as flipping the current condition around into a stream-lined intervention. In his own words, “conventions, images, signs, objects are turned upside down, or collided one with the other, or broken into bits, so that the conventions are de-stabilized and the power that grounds each convention is exposed [the space becomes an occasion for discussion, which might become an argument, which might become a revolution].” An example of this misalignment, for Acconci would be a spaceship which, “lands in an alien place; it revels in its look as if it came out of nowhere, it makes no attempt at camouflage to fit its surroundings.”

On the other side, Baudrillard often speaks of successful seductions as implosions, which are designed to attract and accumulate the critical mass of objects and people, which in turn accelerates their reaction. With more and more symbolic exchanges happening, these simulations becomes intensified, saturated, over-dense, overloaded, over-regulated, and thus implosive. The result is both fusion of mass circulation, mass overload, saturation, and fission, a breaking apart, and crushing of the original system.

Either way, Baudrillard explains that this seduction “should be a labyrinth, a library of infinite permutations, an aleatory redistribution of destinies by the game of lottery- in brief the Borgesian universe- or yet Circular Ruins...an experiment in all the different processes of

“They (interpreters) work without a net. “

Sydney Pollock
Sincerity:

The most important thing about an actor is his sincerity. If he can fake that, he’s made.

George Burns

representation: diffraction, implosion . . . change connection and disconnection- in short a culture of simulation and fascination.”

STEPS

In order to create seductions on our own terms, we must first observe the simulations which occur around us. Every simulation taking place and its resulting absurdity we consider seriously. Next, dependent on the situation and the political stance promoted, the seductions which heighten the chosen stance are selected. Once picked, the symbolic exchange is mobilized through the application of specific visual and spatial manipulations to the current condition. The energy from this opposition, and support of the Singular, inverts the destruction of multiplicity once more by recreating indifference in the system.

5 Baudrillard, Jean. Cool Memories 1, p. 81
8 Acconci, Vito. Lecture. http://www.undo.net/cgi-bin/openframe.pl?x=/Pinto/Eng/facconci.htm
UN_ Methodology

“UN is a trompe l’oeil.” ¹ François Debrix

Pressured to keep itself involved in symbolic exchange, this thesis analyzes the symbolic rally present between the UN and the world. In an attempt to use the UN’s architecture as an interpreter for misalignment; rather than a translator, the project acknowledges the web of simulations occurring simultaneously at the UN. Sinking itself amongst them, the thesis focuses its attention on those simulations which try to depict the UN’s role as a partnership and information provider. The project then amplifies these chosen simulations with a spatial/architectural proposition of two progressive and insubordinate interventions, which hope to insure that the UN’s “singularity” is not erased.

The previous chapters, running along with Baudrillard’s orders of simulacra, have rendered the United Nations a hollow
frame. With this fundamental understanding, the UN must fill itself with simulations which align themselves with the United Nation’s noble intentions. However, with the drive of technology, in order for simulations to remain relevant, they must push themselves into states of hyper-accentuation. With the ability to mediate space and vision, architecture can play a vital role amongst the spectacle of amplification and implosion.

UN HISTORY CRITIC 101

Hugely anticipated, the United Nations’ architectural unveiling, in the early 1950s, was greeted with mixed reviews and an overall anti-climactic final statement in history books. However, one telling review came from architectural critic Lewis Mumford, who believed the building “failed to create a fresh symbol.” From the Baudrillardian perspective, where signs are valued for their power to evoke and not duplicate, the architects of the UN building could not have received a greater compliment. However, over the course of the years, this has not remained. Fighting against collapse, or becoming “a fresh [singular] symbol”, for over half a century, the UN has had to revive its simulations which subtle, but powerful interventions, policy changes, and rearrangements to its architecture as well as organization.

Today the details of the design process have been recorded and published by George Dudley, in his book A Workshop For Peace: Designing the United Nations Headquarters. Having been assigned, as a young architect, to serve as record keeper of the process, his meticulous note-taking and memories of off-the-record talks provide a day-to-day account of the UN’s design. With closer
“So the trucks can be keep to Second Avenue? First Avenue can have a residential character, a Ville Verte? We can create more than just a tunnel—maybe an overpass, also?”

_Le Corbusier_

“He does not know that in Manhattan theories are only diversionary tactics, mere decorative dressing for the essential founding metaphors. And Le Corbusier’s urbanism contains no metaphor, except that of the Anti-Manhattan, which is, in New York, unseductive...In LeCorbusier’s UN, the office slab is places exactly in the middle of a street. The auditorium, although lower, blocks a second street...The rest of the site is scraped clean like an old painting too drastically restored, all its layers of real or phantom architecture removes: the metropolitan surface replaced by a green Band-Aid of grass.”

_Rem Koolhaas_

“Harrison is an admirer and friend of the Swiss architect...he sincerely considers the merits of Le Corbusier’s proposal, but discovers that what is intended as explosive fragment of an anti-Manhattan has no detonation charge. Le Corbusier’s UN is, after all, nothing but a part of a redesigned Manhattan, laundered of its metaphoric and irrational containments through Le Corbusier’s equally irrational interpretations. Harrison restores its innocence. In his elaboration of the UN—transforming it from theory to object—he carefully removes its apocalyptic urgencies.”

_Rem Koolhaas_

“Harrison imperturbable in the face of the French torrent of articulation, is and remains in control of the UN project as architecture, not theory.”

_Rem Koolhaas_

reading, the book also reveals a series of symbolic themes which challenged the designers of the original design, and continue today. Discussions regarding views, the physical artifacts of security, the use of entrances, and the placement of translators, press, delegates in relationship to one another in plan and section, reveal how the complex was already being thought about not as symbol itself, but as a stage-set and generator for symbols. Therefore, from its inception, documents show the design committee contemplating how to express the UN as ‘void’, and how to create a journey, for ‘the pedestrian must see a spectacle...’

Similar to Meyer’s statements about his League of Nations proposal, Le Corbusier explained to a newspaper reporter in 1947, “I do not see all this (our design) as a symbol...a world capitol or a temple of peace...It is too soon to use such fine phrases, non? The UN simply does not exist yet. The nations are not united. The UN is not proved. It is simply a poste de combat.”

Still true today, the world is still not united, however the UN design is not a symbol; the interactions within create symbols and meaning, while the architecture provides a backdrop for continued simulations.

LE CORBUSIER’S ANTI-MANHATTAN UN

Although the complex is often dismissed as a water-down Le Corbusier work, others believe its failures and insignificance are judged too quickly. Either way, the building certainly captures a critical point in architectural history. Not only foreshadowing the explosion of international design collaboration, the work also starts to crystallize an attitude against Modernism’s search for absolute truth. Questioning the very notion of truth existing, the committee starts
“According to myth, Wallace Harrison was the “bad” corporate architect—if not simply a hack—who stole Le Corbusier’s design for the UN building (1947-50) and made it mediocre reality. This myth was sufficiently established to prevent anyone from taking a serious look at the building itself. But a closer inspection of the dry theoretical pretension of Le Corbusier’s proposition and the polymorphously perverse professionalism with which Harrison realized it suggested, if not a reversal of the myth, a rewriting; the UN was a building that an American could never have thought and a European could never have built. It was collaboration not only between two architects, but between cultures; cross-fertilization between Europe and America produced a hybrid that could not have existed without their mating, however unenthusiastic.”

Rem Koolhaas

explores the complex, not as symbol but as stage.

Rem Koolhaas, in his book Delirious New York, explains the design process as a fight between Le Corbusier’s, theoretical stance, and Wallace Harrison’s, architectural pragmatics. Many of the most provocative and contradictory ideas in the complex’s design, seemed to be have been scaled back versions of Le Corbusier’s bold beginning ideas. Corresponding, with his Anti-Manhattan dreams, where the congestion of the Manhattan grid, created for the horse, should be replaced with a highway of less condensed roads and skyscrapers, Le Corbusier suggested the UN Complex take over the surrounding streets and push traffic below ground.

However, like Koolhaas points out, only a taste of these apocalyptic and self-implosive ideas remained, once reprocessed. Koolhaas believes that, for Harrison, Le Corbusier’s ideas of destruction were not revolutionary for an already highly simulated and renewable city like Manhattan. However, understanding the design in a Baudrillardian sense, maybe that compromise was needed, not only for the building to be accepted and built, but also to provide opportunities for increased seduction for the UN’s future.

POST-COLD WAR

During the Cold War years, with the Soviet Union’s and United States’ veto power canceling each other out in the Security Council, the future of the UN’s role, as a conscious simulation, was foreshadowed. In this period, the UN was dead-locked and unable to act for itself. Yet, as the possibility of the world’s annihilation loomed, after the Cold-War, the UN provided a forum for nations, to showcase their power with “war-making” simulations, but not engage in war literally. Therefore, once nations realized that with the UN was really
a nothing, they could use the organization like never before to “fill the promised space of global security”. In the irony of Postmodernism, re-embracing the formal emptiness of the UN, allowed the organization to be re-invigorated. As Francois Debrix explains, after the Cold War nations started to “mobilize the appearance of collective security in a world that still looked disorderly.” In hopes, that the “undisciplined international landscape with its new threats, [would] fall for this play of reconstructed reality, and finally, [would] be deterred and [virtually] tamed.”

With the end of the Cold War the UN’s role in simulations has continued. New threats, like terrorism, have in ways reinvigorated the system with purpose. Like never before, the UN’s physicality has become involved, and endangered as well. The World Trade Center stood less then 4 miles away from the UN Headquarters on September 11th. In Baghdad, the UN’s own headquarters was severely bombed, killing several top directors. The United Nations in New York has counteracted these threats with increases in perimeter security. As physical accessibility has been hindered, the UN’s ‘accessibility’, through the internet and television, has been strengthened. Finding itself within this push and pull, this proposal tries to problematize both security and media in order to keep them progressive.

“I think that what the Dutch have to teach is that if you think of reality as artificial, that we as human beings have made collectively, that we have to understand, we have to research, we have to map, we have to mirror. And we can then in mapping and mirroring it begin to reorganize it, reuse, and re-conceptualize. Then you can get, I think at a more fundamental way of making architecture.” – Aaron Betsky

ARCHITECTURE’S SOCIAL REALM

Although all fields are engulfed by the social realm, due to its spatiality, architecture is particularly inclined. As the ideas of simulation and artificiality surfaced, in the 1960s, philosophers and theoreticians flocked to the field of architecture to think through their ideas. With its inherent spatiality, they noticed that a complex
web of interdependent social aspects allowed architecture, to resist collapse from simulation. As Michael Hays explains, “architecture becomes a kind of precipitate of vapor that we used to call the social.”² Architecture is therefore, a tool for studying and producing “concepts whose ultimate horizon of effect lay outside of architecture “proper,” in a more general socio-cultural field.”³

Before artificiality can be brought to the forefront, architecture is dominated by the strong social realm in front of it. Unlike art and pop culture, which Duchamp proved can be quite self-referential; architecture is unable to break away from its inherent spatiality. However, as a system of symbolic exchange, architecture creates, shapes, and translates of our existence through simulations. How it struggles against the social realm, as it engages in these simulations and seductions is fascinating and telling, and adds depth to the symbolic exchange.

Architecture is not capable of re-evaluating itself in real-time adaptation, like digitalized data, press, film, CNN, and telecommunications. Unlike, art and media, which must bring space and politics upon themselves, in order to have something to work against, architecture continues to work upon itself by marginalizing its inherent politics. Although its social realm has still been pushed by technology, architecture’s spatiality still provides a large challenge for the discipline to think about.

Baudrillard, asked if architecture could ever be self-referential, responds, “I cannot say whether a Duchamp in architecture has occurred, maybe architects should know. However, at first sight, I have not got the impression of a change. What might have happened is difficult to say, because in this field one cannot move an object, subtract it from its aesthetic context and, all of a sudden,
destroy it. It cannot be done in architecture since it still has a useful, instrumental function… nevertheless, I am convinced that in some way, it has happened…slowly, in homeopathic doses.”

Present across all fields, the social realm’s dominance in architecture provides a strong limit, for a postmodern study, to work against. Thus, architecture becomes a complex model where our need to push for the absurd and evoke the nothing can be experimented upon. Even though politics will prevent architecture from collapsing, allowing for the social realm to be untouched is unbearable. Therefore to be progressive, architecture must engage in a system of marginalization, pulling the social realm to the forefront, in order to understand the limits of seduction and architecture. By at least, attempting to provoke the social realms erasure with scripted simulations, we learn something about our existence.

COLLAPSING SOCIAL REALM

“You look for a destiny…which is already there most of the time. You’re invent the alterity, to invent something risky, to rediscover at least a kind of ideal freedom, not a realized form, because that really is unbearable. The absence of destiny is itself a fatality! So what can the architect do with this freedom?” Jean Baudrillard

Against this edge of the social realm, architecture adds a step to the methodology. Before engaging in seduction, architecture must first try to collapse the social realm; a web of economics, commercialism, power, ethnicity, gender, race, poverty, individualism, and ownership, which stands before it. Understanding what the social realm consists of is an impossible feat. Each attribute is linked to one another in an indescribable network, impossible to make sense of as a whole, let alone unraveled. “It’s precisely the lack of a possible
definition of the social that should produce an architecture of the indefinable, in other words, a real-time architecture, characterized by randomness and the uncertainty that drives social life.”

Therefore, although, they can never be eliminated the social realm of architecture becomes a device, which, through the use of visual and spatial manipulations, can be brought to the forefront. Amplified it allows us to act as if we can control it.

By escalating the attention of architecture’s social realm, the hope is to intensification them to such a degree, that they start to collapse into void once more. Once the first signs of collapse are perceptible, from here, the methodology can be applied once more. Seductions, working from within, continue the eminent collapse by pushing simulation even further. The distance and space re-created by these seductions, allows architecture to re-evaluate itself on its own terms. Baudrillard agrees, “architecture should anyway always manage to hold this emptiness, to be somewhere inside it, in the sense that it should not always be a ‘full’ architecture, a functional one, a space-destroyer.” Therefore, in order to convince itself of not being full, architecture brings emptiness, or meaninglessness, back into play through the use of amplified seduction.

By marginalizing the social realm into potential collapse, through amplification, architectural simulations can start to teeter on the edge of self-reference. Once here, seductions can implode the system of signs even further, in order to create a space for critical distance. It is only here, with architecture, that we can start to re-evaluate its symbols, re-conceptualize its meaning, and provoke a limit to the unknown. “The only suspense which remains is that of knowing how far the world can de-realize itself before succumbing to its reality deficit or, conversely, how far it can hyper-realize it
Therefore, unlike the original distance present in architecture, an architecture of seduction has a greater understanding of its limits, by having worked to marginalize its social realm and then rebuilt distance in its own terms.

INDIVIDUAL / INDIFFERENCE

“What happened to social and political data, to everything that can constrain things, when architecture is tempted to become the expression...it will never succeed because it is confronted, fortunately, by something that is also a black hole... so even is architecture wants what is wants and tries to signify what it wants to express, it will deflected. You, however, strive for this deflection and destabilization, and you’re right. And as we discussed, it’s true of other categories as well.”

Jean Baudrillard

However, even if the social realm of space is able to be liquefied, architecture still is unable to erase its singularity, due to the intimate relationship it has with its users. Each individual, who engages with architecture, even if predominantly on a visually basis, still brings to the simulation their personal experience which is impossible to duplicate and marginalize. This individual perceptive is no different then the indifference Baudrillard has spoken about earlier. In architecture, like in all simulations, the ambiguity concerning whether an individual has been engaged into a symbolic exchange, jumpstarts the system into creating new seductions, in order to readjust to the possibility that they might have not.

Thus, we cannot forget to take “into account the way the individual’s singular perception divides the world. There are no standards, there are no formulas, there’s no aesthetic or even
functional matrix you can apply. The same object can satisfy all the functions we assign to it. That doesn’t prevent it from possessing this extra quality.”

Therefore, even if we figure out how to de-stabilize architecture from sociological, political, spatial, and aesthetic interpretation, it will always be fractured up again by the individual and their possibility for indifference.

The individual, with their indifference, brings to the system of architecture and all systems of symbolic exchange, the need for more seduction. Distinguished amongst others, architecture brings an even larger amount of politics due to its spatiality. For exaggeration amongst architecture’s spatiality, the United Nations complex, a tense and politically charged program and site in itself, was chosen as parallel. By combining Baudrillard’s methodology with the UN, the manipulations, seductions and chosen implosions come to the forefront of the project.

**SEDUCTION = TROMPE L’OEIL**

Pushed by technology, simulations fail due to their inability to keep the artificiality of our existence uncovered. Plagued by reproducing the original perfectly, they create only new realities which provide us with no meaning. Seductions, on the other hand, engage in the simulation in front of them, but at the same time keep the nothingness which defines us, ever present. Compared by Baudrillard, “perspective is an art of simulation and fullness, while trompe l’oeil is an art of seduction and emptiness. In trompe l’oeil, we get a glimpse— as though seeing for a moment the ‘wrong’ or ‘reverse’ side of things— of what allows the simulated space of perspective.” Therefore, trompe l’oeil, or seduction, does not only undermine simulation by adding distance to is copy, but also exposes...
the fact, that all these plays of appearance are possible due to the underlying void.

SEARCH FOR THE SINGULAR OBJECT

The pursuit of this seduction in architecture is delicately explored by Jean Nouvel and Jean Baudrillard, in an interview entitled The Singular Object. Purposefully kept hazy, both do not want to jump to any conclusions. Although, we sense that they are speaking of the same, and we agree that there is something out there, they purposefully leave it open for interpretation. Since we know that reality will always be void, and our work is only a fiction running along it, we must remember that from the beginning these studies are fruitless. Nevertheless, although they result in nothing, the methodology and theory remains a commanding instrument for understanding the fundamentals of our existence, and creative process. No matter how hard the two authors try to pin down their principles, the Singular Object remains illusive. Invisible, Jean Nouvel states “I know it is here, but I can’t see it”. Nevertheless, what matters is that we try, "the important thing is we tried".\textsuperscript{12}
1 Betsky, Aaron. Interview. www.archinect.com
Although few formal architectural interventions have taken place at the UN complex since its creation in the 1950s, its more stealth manipulations, such as ‘temporary’ barricades and security tents, have been quite powerful and useful in keeping the UN from collapse. Many of these manipulations have been created in the name of ‘security’, the most visible, of course, being the white security tents in place at 44th and 46th. Put up after the September 11th attacks, they capture a poignant change in attitude, or perhaps new inability, to rely on subtle security additions at the UN.

With our Baudrillard perspective, we understand all ‘security’ measures as being reactions to protest against the UN. Protests are forms of seduction, providing critical distance to the organization. Since ‘security’ measures, similar to technological advances, are attempts to obliterate protest, they should not go unnoticed. For in their desire to become absolute and perfect, they have the power to

“I envy you being part of this. I would love to turn such confusion into concrete!”

Saarinen in conversation with Soreson
In his introduction to the book, The U.N. Building, Aaron Bettsky suggests that the UN’s security increase has been harmful to the UN’s identity. He writes “new security measures have made the experience of the U.N. Building something one attains only after being confronted with the realities of a world that is indeed still not at peace. Much is off-limits to the public and much of it also has been altered to the point where it has lost its original verve.”

For the most part, this thesis agrees with Betsky’s reading of UN Security. Security has become more evident and confrontational, as the world has become more dangerous.

However, it is through the act of having to go through the simulation of security, with all its inherent contradictions, that the realization that peace has not yet been attained is possible, and makes UN and its purpose still valid today. Although the complex’s use has been manipulated considerably since the international committee’s original design, this thesis argues that the UN’s ‘original verve’ has not been lost, but has actually been heightened in order to combat the perfecting of technology and security.

The UN’s architecture, since its inception has been supporting the simulations, and seductions which validate the UN as a frame. Resting on this base, all the manipulations which have taken place at the UN since the 1950s, such as guard rails, snipers on the roofs, security tents, and the closing off of the main lawn and garden, can be viewed as in line with the organization’s original design scheme. They have allowed the building to remain useful in setting-up contradictions amongst simulations, by providing material to destabilize it.

Therefore the security interventions, which Betsky believes have taken away from the UN, have actually provided opportunities
“Abramovitz was realistic: “There are few people on the river to get that scenic view” [seducing here]- and implied there were few across the river in Queens who cared. Disagreeing, Walker sketched an overall plan of the site: “The view is important from downriver; there’s quite a bit of river traffic….From all views the U.N. must be distinguished from its background.”

George Dudley. from The Workshop for Peace.

“How can the United Nations permit its view to be a thing like this!”

Le Corbusier, referring to the sign

for validating the UN. By imploding these security simulations with exaggerated, supportive interventions, the UN’s user is still, yes, “confronted with the realities of a world that is indeed still not at peace,” but at least comforted, with the knowledge that the UN is still valid and provides hope.

SELECTING THE LOCATION

After keeping all areas of the site open for consideration during research and concept development, the design decided to focus its interventions on the west side of the complex along First-Avenue. The dominance of the west view of the UN has been a point of debate, since the complex’s inception. Even the committee of architects, lead by Harrison, had to keep reminding themselves of the UN’s ‘equal importance’ on all sides. Although the committee’s official artist, Hugh Ferris, spent much time exploring ideas of riverfront traffic, in the end, the UN’s East River elevation and approach was made much less accessible and developed than the west. For the purpose of, this thesis, the east side of the UN kept aside. Its several poignant symbolic exchanges, like hidden satellites, and the Secretariat’s ability to become billboard, are left untouched, simple and abstract.

The west side of the complex, on the other hand, with its façade of flags and First Avenue address seems to be engaged in an intense system of symbolic purpose. Amongst the rich text present, this proposal will add two interventions which will amplify existing simulations regarding the UN’s access and image. The first node, around 46th-Street, will examine the security progression of the UN from approach to ‘entry’. The second will investigate the role of the UN flags as iconic images, and their ability to be digitalized, and at the same time manipulated by space. In both cases, the architectural
interventions purposefully heighten the level of seductions present, in order to allow users and the UN to communicate and understand one another within a richer palette of realities.

If the UN’s ‘need’ for a security center entrance is viewed as an attempt to suppress the ‘protests’ which keep the UN afloat, an investigation is needed to suggest how security can be thoughtfully imploded. Supported by its understanding of Baudrillard’s writings, this thesis believes that by adding greater discrepancy to the sequence of attaining ‘security,’ a greater ability to ‘access’ and understand the UN’s identity is possible.

SECURITY CENTER

For the UN employees and tourists, the west side of the complex sets up a progression of access; a complicated approach informed by view and spatial relationships to the UN flags and building, as well as other users, whose level of security-scanned status differs from their own. With these already present misalignments, physical access is manipulated to inform its users with layers of symbolic exchange between it and the UN.

Therefore, the entry sequence into the UN must heighten the symbolic exchange process, by propagating its agenda for more simulation. If the UN were an uncomplicated partnership, the access into the complex would lack meaning, and therefore be a pointless nothing. However, in order to justify the UN’s purpose as an example of partnership, the approach must push its simulation past their one-to-one relationship and into seduction. In result, these moves are a form of protest. Although they have noble intentions, they themselves create counter-reactions in the form of security measures.
Supported by Baudrillard’s call for destruction of singular readings, this proposal suggests a designed approach of access into the UN along First Avenue (extending approximately between 42nd-Street and 46th-Street). Employing seduction and implosion, the design emphasizes three current “unsafe” situations, which are already present on the site. The first, created in the original design, remains today. Namely, along the East River side of the complex, FDR Highway runs underneath the most important part of the UN complex, the Security Council Chamber. This obviously, seriously exposes the building and its delegates to terrorist car-bombs. Second, tourists, who have not yet gone through a metal-detector, come physically closer to the General Assembly and Security Council (at 46th), then do UN employees at 42nd Street; which means suicide-bombers, can pose as a simple tourist and be at a strategic spatial advantage by proximity. Third, when UN Staff, Diplomats, and Delegates enter into the building, they are scanned at some entrances, and not scanned at others; creating great contradictions in message of partnership between different types of users and how the UN treats them.

Basing the design off of these three real situations, the Security Center tries to problematize the idea of security through targeted amplification. Strengthening the simulations of risk by proximity to traffic and/or un-scanned people, the building first allows First Avenue traffic to drive through its middle. Second, the center is designed, so that the not-scanned public/protestors/tourists can infiltrate the building’s top viewing level platform, while the “scanned” people cannot. Therefore, during all hours of day and night; the public can gain access to premium parts of the building, and enjoy views of the UN’s flags, and city skyline.
Using visual and spatial manipulations, architectural filters amongst the symbolic exchange present, blur the distinction between in and out, safe and unsafe, and partner and threat. By applying these manipulations from within, the project is so exceedingly supportive of the UN’s purposes they start to polarize. Security becomes so ‘secure’ it is dangerous, while protests become so ‘complaint’ it is almost objective.

MEDIA CENTER

The UN complex’s west side also plays a critical role in the proliferation of the UN’s identity as a provider of information through images. In this age of simulation, visual manifestations create as much legitimate identity as do spatial configurations. With technology becoming so agile, the images of the UN and the ‘UN’ have become identical. Since as mentioned earlier, all texts must duplicate, and reverse amongst levels of believable-absurdity, digital image’s ability to collapse is frightening. In other words, a tourist photo of the UN, a live webcam shot of the UN, and a CNN report have become replaceable today. Able to translate its proceedings in real-time, rather than with the lag of interpretation, the UN as an information provider for the social world is rendered useless.

UN Design Thesis

The security access is able to question the partnership and spatial access into the UN, through the use of visual miscommunications. The media center is however more of a challenge to seduce. With images of the UN having become so digital, real-time and perfect, the UN’s role as an information provider is collapsing. Therefore, in order to breathe life into this purpose
once more, architecture, which its inherent space, will be used to problematize the media’s lack of substance.

Located facing the heavily trafficked east-bound 42nd street, the media center will have large screens facing 42nd-Street traffic. Heightening the simulations of information, the media center’s product will no longer be confined to television screens, but will now have the opportunity to create their own projection of the UN, ‘on-axis’ with the UN’s most traveled cross-street. The design sets-up its playing field with a bold statement, that projection is now considered equal to physicality. Intentionally placed where no view of the physical building exists, in the first place, the statement is undermined with logistics from its inception.

In order to problematize the UN’s easy of media projection, even further, architecture is added to the configuration. With anchor-stations, as foreground, and their digital green-screens, as background, the media center separated into layers, arranged perpendicularly to the East-West axis of 42nd-Street. In this arrangement, tourists and UN employees can walk between the layers of the media center in the North-South direction of First Avenue; superimposing themselves amongst the relationship of anchor-and-backdrop. With this architectural move, user’s become included into the ‘UN media image,’ which projected across the world. They are now the ever-changing middle ground, which reminds those viewing around the world that the media’s center depiction the UN is just a projection, a replaceable simulation.

With this design, the UN’s role as an information provider is undermined two-fold. First, it allows the media center to exaggerate its ability to create projections of the UN. The center now, no longer pretends to be filming in front of the UN flags, it is obviously not
filming in front of the flags because it can’t from its position on 42nd. Nevertheless, at 42nd the media center is also able to create a projection which stands in for the UN along its most traveled path. Secondly, these projections are undermined even more, by allowing the public to walk in front of the media center’s projections. The stream of passing-through public, which gets super-imposed into the UN projection, is a constant reminder to the media’s audience of the nothing beneath all these simulations.

THE MEDIAN

Although broken up into a Security Entrance (exploring the UN’s role as a partnership) and a Media Center (exploring the UN’s role as an information provider) the projects are not separate. Both interventions are viewed as ways of ‘accessing’ a greater depth to the UN’s identity, by adding more realities to its existence. Grounded in their common goals for the UN, they work together in order to undermine and strengthen one another’s legitimacy.

In general, the security center is designed to play with its tourist’s and employee’s spatial and visual understanding of being safe and being threatened. On the other hand, the media center is designed to solidify the UN projection’s slipperiness by superimposing passer-bys, amongst its layers of virtuality. However, the formal configuration of each intervention thinks ahead in order to help and undercut the other. In the end, an untraceable and healthy web of destabilized symbolic exchange is created amongst its players; user and security center, security and the UN, UN and the world, world and media center, media center and the user.
UN Design Thesis

In order to start creating this mesh of symbolic exchange, the two buildings are in line with one another on top of First Avenue. Strung together with a common thread of public circulation, a bold new green median overtakes several of First Avenue’s middle lanes, as a north-south axis. Beginning with a bus stop slightly south of 42nd-Street. The median, allows pedestrian users, to slice through the media center’s “layers” and become part of the projection. Continuing north, the median then cuts through the security center, providing an opportunity for tourists/protestors/public to infiltrate the upper level of the building, while by-passing security, in order to get there.

Next, the two interventions work together by imploding each other’s leading purposes. Delegates, not having to go through ‘security’, have their picture taken when they walk through the media center at 42nd-Street to get to their entrance at 42nd. This picture is then projected onto the West façade of the Security center, amongst a collage of 192 other nation’s representatives. On normal work days, where delegates are not usually in the building, the 46th-Street Security entrance faced is mostly transparent. However, for the two months the GA is in session, the glass façade becomes filled with images. Therefore, symbolically suggesting that the more the ‘world’ collects at the UN, the more opaque, and less void, the UN becomes.

Likewise, the formal arrangement of the security center starts to inform the workings of the media center. In general, the security building plays with the user’s realization of safety and threat, by manipulating the not-scanned and scanned user’s proximity to the building and its flags through reflections and separated circulation
paths. Interestingly enough for the media center, which is stuck at 42nd-Street looking north at the UN, the 46th-Street Security center’s façade, reflects the media center’s most desired real-time “iconic view” (45th-Street southeast) of the UN flags back to the media center. Preoccupied with this very image, the media center can use a live-feed of the reflection off of the security building up the street at 46th, to fill-in their newsroom green-screens at 42nd. The only catch is that this façade reflection is already a processed reflection, which was created, in the first place, to speak of the ability of the public and the “scanned” to feel safe and/or threatened.

In order for architecture to take part in seductions, it must try to marginalize its inherent spatiality. Brought to the forefront, these aspects of architecture’s social realm are visually and spatially manipulated, on a case by case basis, in order to feign their lack of perfection. The body, in particular, limits the multiple readings of space, by taking in single experiences. In an attempt to erase the individual experience from the equation, one can emphasize the user’s dependence on visual reading. Therefore, simulations and visual techniques, such as “panopticism, visual suture, clinical witnessing, (and) photojournalistic displays of the other’s gaze,”¹ are closely linked.

Trying to limit the body’s reading of one, we depict the symbolic landscape with more incomprehensibility, and thus reality. The flexibility which results from multiplicity, gives users critical distance to reprocess and reinvent their understanding and
perceptions. In other words, to understand our existence, we no longer rely on empirical truths, but on visible simulations. For these simulations, to stay current and defy collapse for the time being, they must be contradicted with visual and spatial manipulations. Highly-processed and fabricated, simulations and seductions are constantly re-write themselves into the void we live in.

The following, is a collection of visual and spatial manipulations, which have been investigated in relationship to this project. Although, they are by no means a comprehensive collection, each of the techniques has lasted the test of time in regards to this thesis. Therefore, as the proposal currently stands, the following manipulations continue to be valid and useful for creating seductions among the UN Security/ Media entrances.

OPACITY

Definition
. A material which does not allow light or vision to pass through
. Opacity can be manipulated by secondary circumstances, such as events (for example reflections, lighting changes) and data

Precedents
. OMA’s Prada Dressing rooms, mirrors become reflective when person enters
. The Cartier Foundation building during the day and night

Investigations
. Three entrances are oriented north-south, so that people going through security are sometimes in silhouette due to backlight, or in the sun, and exposed.

UN Design Thesis

In the Security Center, the diplomat’s images cloud the West façade’s glass curtain wall. In the Media Center, the existence or lack of projections onto the news anchors box sets up various narratives.

Prada Dressing Rooms

Silhouette Study Model

Silhouette Study Diagram

Projections start to make glass opaque
AMPLIFICATION

Definition
. to expand in statement or description
. add more details or illustrations

Precedents
. scanning machines in the movie, Total Recall

Investigations
. Circulation based model bridges over the Delegates circular drive. The building’s envelope, part media screen, expands to the north and to the south, creating two “billboards” which amplify the security happening inside.

UN Design Thesis

Similar to the ideas of implosion, amplification can be read in the security center’s shifted floor plates and folded façade. As well as, in the media center’s moveable and scriptable curtains.
REWITING BACKDROP

Definition
. backdrops provide settings

Precedents
. Greenbrier Hotel, West Virginia. The hotel was prepared to be used as a bunker for the US government in case of attack after WWII and into the Cold War. The Media Center was outfitted with various backdrops of the US Capitol during different seasons, so that news reports could be filmed “on-location” in Washington D.C.

Investigations
. CNN Video Installation. Played on the eight television screens in the DAAP Aronoff building. A CNN template is combined with looping stock photo and videos of a celebrity. Fictional “headlines” are switched every 8 seconds. After 8 seconds, the audience realizes that photos and video are simulations the headline is the ‘nothing’, or as Hitchcock would say, the MacGuffin.

UN Design Thesis

Ideas from the CNN video installation are used at the 42nd Street entrance. The vehicular traffic is feed the projection the public has created for them. At the UN media center, the public has the last say, for the further most projection is a curtain on the west. The media center has the ability to create their own backdrop in relationship to the passing-by public. They also have the most control over how this media is later edited for world media consumption.
SPATIAL RELATIONSHIP

Definition
- a projected estimation of distance between two objects or situations
- used to investigate proximity to being safe or unsafe

Precedents
- Magritte, painting, Broken Window

Investigations
- Sectional Model. Explores how scanned and not-scanned people can visually see each other, but be separated from physical interaction.
- Circulation diagrams. Investigates the need for more time complexity and time, in order to create these seductions. Brings about questions regarding, what is the satisfaction for the user from this extra time.
- Concept model. Wraps the city program through the UN program, and the UN program through the city program; the street (pink) runs through both of them.

UN Design Thesis

In the final proposal, the looped concept model will be flipped 90 degrees. Contradictions in relationship to other users will happen in section, while contradictions in relationship to the UN building and flags will occur mostly through the shifted floor plates in plan.

As mentioned, the Security Center at 46th-Street is based on two shifted floor plates. The top level is moved more East (towards the UN building) and is accessible to the public, but inaccessible to people who have already gone through security. The lower level of the building is located slightly more west and therefore closer to the “unsafe” city. This floor is designated for those who have passed through security.

The seductions continue in section, first, with vehicular traffic passing over top of the scanning device mechanisms below. Secondly, with scanned and un-scanned users riding parallel escalators to one another, but not being able to get off at the same floors. Finally, the public ceremonial entrance stair, which takes un-scanned people into the building, has glass floors, in certain areas, allowing views of scanned people to be seen crossing underneath it.
The search for general spatial and visual contradictions at the United Nations complex is not hard. The challenge comes, not from their discovery, but from their selection, dissection, and appropriate re-application. If focusing in on the complex’s buildings, the investigation becomes particularly involved due to the blurred edges between intention, and logic, conflict, and over-exaggeration. “The interior of the heart of the United Nations activities combines a sense of elegance, openness and grandeur with a confused complexity that seems- though it is unclear whether this was ever the intention- to reflect the nature of the institution.” Aaron Betsky’s impressions of the interior of the building certainly hold true to its exterior, as well. Although it is unclear whether done on purpose or not, the orientations and placement of the building groups creates a rich narrative.
From George Dudley’s documentation of the design process, we learn that the committee believed the GA to be ‘less important’ amongst the grouping of buildings, and the Secretariat to be the ‘King’. This seems at odds with general opinion, where one would think that the Assembly of Nations would want to be expressed first and foremost. However, even though their opinion about the GA’s secondary status is mentioned often, the building’s final placement and orientation seems to default back into a romantic stance. In the end, the GA is pushed to the front of the complex. Along First Avenue, the building sits on-axis with the north. The ‘King’, or the Secretariat, however is pushed to the back, with its façade facing the city.

The preference of orientation was made clear, early on in the design process. In one scheme the committee placed the Security Council in the northwest corner. Although, this scheme was quickly overwritten with myriads of others, their discussions revealed that they concerned the north the most worldly and important direction in the project.

Therefore it is interesting and telling that in the end, the actually final design and the committee’s opinions regarding the building and orientation hierarchy became quite jumbled. The General Assembly, the so-called less important building, was placed closest to the street. The Security Council and the Secretariat, were pushed back, and allowed to literally sit on top of the east side’s FDR Highway. The GA’s orientation continued a one-lined narrative by orienting its glass entry façade, in the worldly axis of north. Its bold limestone and marble trimmed geometry closes of the GA from Manhattan on the west and Queens on the east.

The Secretariat followed suit, facing the “less important direction” of west, its glass façade looked out on to the city. Even
though west, might have been the ‘less important’ orientation, Lewis Mumford still was enamored by the Secretariat’s exchange with the city, claiming “No building in the city is more responsive to the constant play of light and shadow in the world beyond it... No one had ever conceived of building a mirror on this scale before, and perhaps no one could guess what an endless series of pictures that mirror would reveal.”

Matching the Secretariat, time would slowly enliven the General Assembly’s massive stone façade as well. Today it could be argued, that maybe the north orientation was never the more ‘worldly’ orientation and might in fact be the proper orientation for the less important, GA.

As Harrison mentioned during the design process, “the Public . . . comes in from the north side and the Delegates from the Secretariat Court.” Today, however most delegates driving up along side the GA’s west side, and enter through the west, and straight into the General Assembly around 44th-Street. The original Delegate’s entrance, on the GA’s south façade is no longer in use. In a way, foreshadowing this switch from south to west is the south end’s architectural treatment. The bold west-east sides of the GA, which frame the south’s deeply inset 53.5’ tall glass wall, have apertures through them. The thesis design will use a similar technique at the security center, where the heavy north and south facades are undermined with apertures which allow unscreened pedestrians and traffic to pass through the middle of the building.

On the back cover of his book Mutations, Rem Koolhaas, has written “World = City.” This simple equation seems to be supported by the UN building’s design as well. In the words of Le Corbusier, Manhattan is a volatile city, a metropolitan city like no other. The UN’s placement amongst the confusion can not be dismissed. Made
of stone, glass and most importantly space, the building is unable to be completely liquefied logistically. However, since unable to engage with the world as intimately as with its site, the building simulates a worldly relationship with New York. Seeking out more opportunities for this symbolic exchange, the UN building’s language has opened up to the city more over time. It is maybe in some part this inherent complexity of New York, which keeps the organization useful.

As explained, further symbolic exchange with the “world” is needed at the UN to keep it valid. For this the east-west Manhattan orientation, arguably now the worldly orientation, becomes a priceless asset; prime for manipulation. However, creating all new forms with glass facades oriented east-west is also too simple, and becomes another singular narrative.

UN Thesis Design

Learning from the original design session, the committee intentionally, or unintentionally, placed their buildings opposite of their noted important axis. By creating these contradictions, the team added discussion to the project. This thesis proposal continues with this spirit. The security center, highly seductive and controversial, plays to the current idea of the city’s dominance in symbolic exchange. Having overtaken First Avenue the message is boldly taken one step further; its bleak stone façade stands in the middle of north bound traffic, its two glass façade face east and west. Yet, contradictions still remain. Although the glass faces west, it is an un-penetrable glass screen, often made opaque by security projections of entering delegates. Although the security center’s north and south wall slabs stand perpendicular to First Avenue, they also allow the car and
pedestrian traffic, which undermine the security center, to travel through them.

The media center, on the other hand, trying to breathe life into the flattening of the UN image with its real-time counterpart, pushes the previous approach further. Media has become too good and too much of a spectacle. In line with the methodology, the simulation is pushed further; more spectacle is added yet this time, the spectacle is more interactive and spatial.

With the media center, the UN’s original architectural language of all-stone or all-glass facade disintegrates. Wanting to become even more of a nothing, the media center is made up of layers of curtains. Running north-south and embedded with LCDs they project their desired UN image, whether it is news-report, a shot of the iconic flags, or even the East River behind the curtains. Effected by the wind and weather the curtain projection is never the ‘stable’ version it would be on a television screen. Furthermore, as pedestrians walk past the curtains, they can interact with this projection of the UN on their own; by pulling the curtain back completely and revealing the view behind, or pulling back some of the curtain and cropping the image of one curtain, onto another the curtain of another, behind it. Scripting is now made spatial, and the image has once-more become volatile, crude, imperfect, and ever-new for the cars driving towards the UN on 42nd street.

“This review is good but I wonder: Where is the spectacle?”
Le Corbusier

Towards the end of the concept design phase, Le Corbusier complimented a scheme which would closely resemble the final design. With the GA and Secretariat compressed between the interior edges of 46th and 42nd-Street, he stated, “It’s good to have the Secretariat at the 42nd Street end since it places the daily activities (operations and services) at the south, away from the worldly elements (those concerned with the public and world affairs) at the north.” This compacted plan would result in a variable approach to the complex from the city. Standing a block away, on Second-Avenue, some cross-streets frame views of the flags and building, while others do not. The flags and the East River are seen at 47th, and 46th; the flags and the GA are visible at 45th, and 44th; just the Secretariat is seen at 43th (the street is raised a level, therefore obstructing the flags below); while at 42nd Street only the East River is present.

Adding to this mixed visual approach from city to building is the city’s traffic patterns. All even numbered streets around the UN are strictly east-bound, including 42nd, 44th, and 46th. The odds numbered streets, 43rd, 45th, and 47th are westbound. Two significant observations must be made here. Although, east-bound 42nd-Street is the most accessed route to the UN, it also is one of the streets which does not frame a view of the complex (unlike 47th, it does not even have flags in front of it). Therefore, in line with the complex’s
42nd-Street vehicular traffic sees only the East River as they approach from the city. Secondly, the ceremonial UN plaza, and ‘designated’ UN protesting area during the GA, also does not have a view of the building. Furthermore, to add to the irony of being a ceremonial entrance, 47th-Street’s vehicular traffic is west-bound.

George Dudley’s book A Workshop for Peace captured these circulation path discussions in the moment, writing, “They accepted an entrance at 42nd as inevitable [mainly for pedestrian traffic from Grand Central], requiring widening the tunnel under Tudor City... When Moses agreed and ruled that New York City would also widen 47th, he initiated the fifth design thread: the primary vehicular, and thus ceremonial, entrance would be at 47th. Harrison was the first to pick this up. He said, “47th Street will become the access and an important street of New York. It needs an Arc de Triomphe- or just nothing at all; a great space left open- for something very beautiful: la marque d’UN.”

This Harrison’s comment regarding how the UN should be marked on-axis, remains a question today. Oscillating between monument and nothing, toward the end of the original UN design phase, the subject was brought up again by the official artist Hugh Ferris. Interestingly enough, it was decided that the artist himself decide! In the end, an abstract bronze statue stands timidly on axis with 47th Street, its bronze color blurring itself into the busy intersection’s surroundings.

UN Thesis Design

The thesis’ interventions will take over First Avenue with a green median which extends the unused and contrived UN Plaza on southern edge, 42nd-Street vehicular traffic sees only the East River as they approach from the city.
Hugh Ferris: “What symbol should I use where the 47th Street axis comes in?
Le Corbusier: “I suggest a simple shaft”
Bassov: “For example, an obelisk”
Brunfaut: “These perspectives leave the impression of a project not yet terminated.
In homage to Ferris, we leave to the artist to terminate things!

47th Street, 45 degrees onto First Avenue and into a less controlled, more engaged, public axis (or parallel axis) with the UN. From this median, the public infiltrate and enliven the security and media buildings as they please. Informed by the site-survey of vehicular traffic and framed views above, the nodes or buildings along this median choose their cross-street placement carefully.

The security entrance is located south of 46th and north of 45th, in line with the original GA entrance platform. Off-axis of a cross-street, with its impenetrable glass façade towards the city, its users must approach from the building from its median entrances at the north and south ends. In order to play with the users understand of in/out, safe/threatened, the build lifts off on its First-Ave median, and starts to shift its plates closer and further away from the UN complex. Adding to the richness, the most eastern part of the Security Center, jutting past the row of UN flags and almost touching the original building, is held up with a field of metal columns. From below, these multiply the singular row of the original design. Although not flag pole, but structure; the columns for a second, trick the eye, disorienting the user in regards to which column is flag, and whether they are to the east or west of it, safe or unsafe, scanned or not-scanned.

Investigating the ideas of partnership and threat with the security entrance, the media center, on the other hand, looks into how informational access into the UN can be manipulated. As explained before, with the increased use of digital media, such as the internet, television, and movies, the UN’s visual identity is becoming more and more collapsible, replaceable, and therefore nothing but void. This ability to copy the UN’s image infinitely, is made more ironic, by the situational fact that it is often the same UN image, taken from a similar vantage point which is being copied. Facing southeast along First Avenue, roughly across from the 45th-Street cross-street, a postcard vantage point unfolds, with flags in the foreground, swooping GA in the middle-ground, and Secretariat in the background. A search for the “United Nations” on Google reveals the popularity of this photo for tourists and media.

UN Thesis Design

Interested by the popularity of this iconic shot, this thesis’s security center engages in a passive play with its reflection. A closer look at the Google top UN searches reveals that each image towards the southeast is slightly different; whether it is due to different weather conditions, slightly different location and/or different human height, there are in discrepancies. However, this difference is mostly revealed, when copies of two images can be compared side by side. Similarly, the security center’s façade tries to save the much sought
after UN image, by splintering its southeast view with multiplicity. Since most pedestrians will be walking north towards the security entrance, the building’s façade will reflect this southeast image towards them. Taking advantage of the center’s shifted floor plates the building’s envelope is made up of subtle folds; each reflecting their own interpretation of the iconic shot, for the pedestrians and the media center down the street.

Projections of UN flags on CNN

Two Tourist photos, next to each other reveal a difference
UN_ Existing Seductions
INCONSISTENT SCANNING

As of September 11th, Affiliates are no longer allowed to enter their work at 42nd-Street, put have been downgraded to a private ‘fast-lane’ in the Visitor’s Security Tents at 46th-Street. When UN Staff, Diplomats, and Delegates enter into the main Secretariat at 42nd-Street, they have to go through metal detectors. When the same people go through the library entrance at 42nd-Street, they do not go through metal detectors. When Staff, Diplomats, and Delegates enter at 46th-Street, they are once again, allowed to by-pass security, and the visitors tents, by walking into the UN without being scanned. This creates great contradiction in how the organization interacts with its Affiliates in the name of partnership. Many affiliates feel they are no longer trusted, even though they have loyally worked at the UN for over thirty years.

UN Thesis Design

Delegates, staff and diplomats are still allowed to enter at 42nd-Street, and they do not have to go through security. However, when delegates pass through the gates at 42nd, a snap-shot of them is projected onto the Security Center’s west façade at 46th-Street; starting a discussion about whether video is a more effective, and/or more intrusive means of ‘security’. Secondly, between the plates of the security entrance, scanned and un-scanned users often ride parallel escalators, or walk past each other in section and plan, however are not able to mix. Here, drama through their proximity of different paths is added.
FDR HIGHWAY RUNS BELOW SECURITY COUNCIL

FDR Highway runs underneath the most important part of the UN complex, the Security Council Chamber. This obviously, seriously exposes the building and its delegates to terrorist car-bombs.

UN Thesis Design

The safety of the Security Center is undermined by First Avenue traffic running through the center of it. The new First Avenue median allows an un-screened public to infiltrate (security center) and manipulate (media center) the buildings.
TOURISTS COME CLOSER

Tourists off of the street, who have not yet gone through a metal-detector, come physically closer to the General Assembly and Security Council (at 46th), then do UN employees at 42nd Street; which means suicide-bombers, can pose as a simple tourist and be at a strategic spatial advantage by proximity.

UN Thesis Design

The Security Center’s shifted floor plates bring the un-scanned people closer to the UN complex, then the scanned people. The most eastern part of the Security Center, the above viewing platform, is held up with a field of metal columns. From below, these multiply the singular row of the original design. Although not flag pole, but structure; the columns, for a second, trick the eye, disorienting the user in regards to which column is flag, and whether they are to the east or west of it, safe or unsafe, scanned or not-scanned.
“one of infinite possible clones or chimeras spun out of a software package, seems to become altogether virtual, for an audience that is everyone and everywhere—not so much an architectural readymade (in the sense of Duchamp) as an architectural already made, a transparent cutout that is its own template.”

Michael Hays, referencing Gehry

"Liberated from the obligations to construct “architecture” can become a way of thinking about anything—a discipline that represents relationships, proportions, connections, effects, the diagram of everything."

Rem Koolhaas

"was already, in the 1960s when the towers were built, an anticipatory sign of the computerized, genetically networked, cloning society that was emerging.”

Michael Hays, referencing WTC

Chapter 9
ARCHITECTURE PRECEDENTS

All simulations must create seductions in order to stay afloat against our artificial existence. What makes the following architectural systems of symbolic exchange unique, however, is their ability, in a Baudrillardian sense, to marginalize their inherent social realm with strong reason and voice. Post-modern architecture, in general, tries to marginalize various aspects of the social realm, either consciously or subconsciously. However, amongst this pool of candidates, the following precedents are particularly relevant to the issues of the UN Security Entrance and Media Center. Even if the purpose for their anti-hegemonic acts is to create the opposite, they are still useful and positive in their cause. Not only do they push past the erasure of the ‘Singular’, the new space created from their seductions, reinvigorates the system with flexibility, perspective and narrative.
Built in 1884, Berlin’s Reichstag as a jumble of Victorian, Renaissance, and Baroque styles, it was severely burnt during Hitler’s World War II reign. Rendered immobile by its symbolic ties to German’s ghastly history, the building remained fairly untouched until its reconstruction in the 1960s, however even then, it remained unused for almost another 40 years. In 1995, British architect, Norman Foster was hired to create a $600 million addition to the building. In 2000, the German parliament moved back into the building, and Foster’s proposed glass cupola was finished in 2004.

Design

The glass dome’s main design element is its funnel-shaped light diffuser, which reflects natural light and provides fresh air into the chamber below. The funnel is encrusted with 360 individual mirrors (4.2 x 0.6 meters each). A double-helix walkway circles the main funnel, allowing tourists to look into the workings of government, as they enjoy the panorama of Berlin.

Simulations

As will be explained in the discussion of Christo’s ‘Wrapping of the Reichstag, the building’s situation after the Second World War has grave. Destroyed by the perfection of its own demise, the Reichstag had become nothing but void; un-useable, un-occupiable, and unbearable. Terrifying to its people and government in this state, seductions, such as Christo’s project, brought discussion to the Reichstag once more. Once it was decided that the Reichstag should be revived for occupation, Foster’s dome contributed to its much
needed play of appearance by adding distance and contradictions to the simulation. As critic Lutz Koepnick explains, the Reichstag Addition’s “recoding of the monumental is fraught with instructive tensions and deliberate contradiction, with ironic inversions and surprising self-cancellations...It enables diverse uses and competing interpretation.”

The Reichstag and UN share a close parallel. Although the UN is not completely obsolete, many would argue it is succumbing to its own demise. In order to prevent the tragedy of the UN becoming useless, the UN must engage in creating seductions by support its original ideas with manipulations of contradiction. In parallel, the simple response to the purpose of Foster’s dome would be that it provides views into the German government’s parliamentary chambers. With these views, it symbolically portrays the government as transparent, and the people of Germany as above their government. The mirrored funnel supports the idea, by alluding to the voice of the people being brought into the chamber below. However, stopped there, the reading becomes a one-lined simulation, and thus void. Like the UN, whose original goals of protecting against war and poverty, must be misaligned through seductions in order to keep them relevant, so too, must the Reichstag’s ideals, about the transparency of its government, be skewed in order to keep them pressing.

Implosion

Purposefully or not, Foster’s design adds a much richer reading to the purpose of transparency. In line with Baudrillard’s thinking, seductions/contradictions are created through implosion, intensification. In other words, there is so much support for these “original” goals, that their reading becomes helpfully ambivalent.
For example, although the glass cupola is seated on top of the chamber, in result, the dome’s most intriguing programmatic element becomes the panoramic view of Berlin rather than the proceedings below. Although the floor of the dome allows people to voyeuristically look into the chamber, the necessary bulletproof glass of the ceiling obscures the ‘transparency’ of the sessions below, with intense reflections of tourists peering in. (Ironically, at night, when the parliament is not in session, the view inside is crystal clear.) Heightening the problem of visual transparency, is the mirrored funnel, which put in place in the name of sustainability, multiples the reflections in the chamber glass infinitely.

Voice

However, like with the UN thesis proposal, what is gained from all these contradictions and seductions in political architecture? Lutz Koepnick offers up one suggestion, believing that, as humans, we have the need to remind ourselves of our scarred past. Such symbols, as the contradictions in the Reichstag, are put in place so that we stop ourselves from rewriting our past. For Berlin, this is especially meaningful; as it continually deals with the bipolarity of not forgetting its role in the Holocaust, while at the same time not becoming paralyzed by it. In his words, “by showcasing the plenary chamber as the foremost symbol of the entire political process, Foster’s dome clearly obscures the fact that political deliberation and decision-making today take place in lobbies and at back-office telephones rather than in idealized zones of interest-free argumentation. . . . (Foster’s dome) insinuates a form of political and national autonomy long overturned by the internal complexity of modern society.”

Another gain from these contradictions, is less ideological, but
maybe no less important. For Baudrillard, simulations give meaning to our life amongst its void, and seductions keep these simulations going. Without these misalignments, our existence becomes, once more, unbearable and uninformed. Therefore, with the multiplicity of readings they create, they are simply supporting the idea that reality is void. In support of this Koepnick concludes, “(the glass) in fact means and does so many things at once that it is tempting to argue that it doesn’t mean anything at all anymore.”

UN Thesis Design

More than any example, the Reichstag and its history of interventions serves this thesis as a precedent for voice. A parallel between the Reichstag’s fate, after WWII, and the United Nation’s potential future fate is often made throughout this document. Although the dome’s architectural manipulations are clever, they become truly powerful when applied to the Reichstag’s heavy context. Although the Reichstag’s collapse proved not to be terminal, the world may not be able to afford collapsing its UN in such a manner. Therefore, although they may seem pessimistic and anarchic, for the sake of being anarchic, they are created for positive means. As the Reichstag has shown with Christo’s Wrapping intervention and Foster’s Cupola, seductions and contradictions are needed in order to breathe light and optimism to the current situation.

Located along the Seine in Paris, the Cartier Foundation building was designed by French architect Jean Nouvel and completed in 1994. Built as part contemporary art museum, and part Cartier offices, the price of the structure grossed around $18 million. Characteristically, the site came with a historic, 200-year old Lebanese cedar. Planted their by Chateaubriand (1768-1848), Nouvel needed to work around the tree with his design. Deciding to incorporate it amongst his game of space, Nouvel designed three oversized glass front screens, which sandwiched the trees on site, and extend beyond the building proper in length and depth. Strategically transparent, yet reflective, the screens created an indistinguishably deep façade for the building.

Simulations

Although, not nearly as engulfed in the political social realm as the Reichstag or the United Nations, the Cartier Foundation still serves as a useful precedent. The project’s relatively simple architectonic moves poetically and admiringly work towards marginalizing the inherent mass, space, and human body in architecture. As discussed in the architectural methodology, manipulations such as these help destroy the non-progressive illusion that the world is complete. Baudrillard in his conversation with Nouvel explains, “illusion serves as a sign for anything else . . . it seems to me that everything you do, and do well, is another architecture “seen though a screen.” Precisely because to create something like an inverse universe... you must completely destroy that sense of fullness, that sense of ripe visibility, that over signification we impose on things.”

1
Implosion

In order to create seductions, or destruction of 'fullness', as discussed above, Nouvel relies on the one tool available implosion. The project’s program is simple, almost too simple; art museum and offices in the heart of Paris. Therefore, the building, it can be argued, wants to be nothing but glass in order to maximize its views. With this modest base, Nouvel nevertheless starts to play with subtle architectonic contradiction of inside outside. Where does the building begin, where does it end? Through these misalignments, richness is added to the straightforward program.

As Jean Nouvel explains, “If I look at the façade, since it’s bigger than the building, I can’t tell if I’m looking at the reflection of the sky or at the sky through the glass...If I look at a tree through the three glass panes, I can never determine if I’m looking at the tree through the glass, in front of it, behind it, or the reflection of the tree. And when I plant two trees in parallel, even accidentally, to the glass plane, I can’t tell if there’s a second tree or if it’s a real tree.”

Thus, in the spirit of implosion and intensification, by over-extending the front planes of glass, Nouvel starts to dissolve the buildings edges. Ironically, the building erases itself, by using its glass self. Secondly, Nouvel sandwiches the existing trees on the site between layers of façade screen. With this move, the user’s outside realm, connected with the trees and nature, starts to dissolve into the interior realm of the building. The user is no longer indifferent or passive to these simulations, but rather actively engaged. Projecting their body amongst the layers of contradictions, the user tries to determine where they would stand amongst its depth. Therefore, the multiple reflections, within the layered façade, create a vigorous and intentional multi-narrative for the user to engage in.
Voice

Although, the project is not overtly political, it still takes a stand; claiming that it is worth designing a building which marginalizes its physical limits (the edges of the building) and the body in space (the relationship of user and tree amongst the layers of facade). With these manipulations, Nouvel overcomes the limits of architecture’s materiality, albeit for a brief instance, allowing it to become a projection, a ‘peel-able, removable, re-stick-able surface.’ As Baudrillard explains continually, such seductions are appropriate, for they continually remind us of the nothingness of our reality.

UN Thesis Design

Applying the concepts of Jean Nouvel’s Cartier Foundation, the UN Thesis Design attempts to create a richer understanding of inside and outside. In the Cartier Foundation, the readings of in and out are blurred by encasing the user’s outside realm, or trees, amongst various screens. These screens, which traditionally would separate user from the inside, now project the outside realm [of trees] past themselves, and into the inside. Similarly at the UN, in order to confound the readings of being off and on UN property, the image of the city will be projected beyond the line of the flags in the east direction, while at the same time the UN will be projected back onto the city in the west direction.

The technique will be used in the Media Center as well. The building will be created from penetrable layers, through which the public can walk through. Layers of cameras, anchormen, backdrops, and passer-bys will confound where the filmed, filming, and physical presences are.

The Centre Pompidou, designed by Renzo Piano and Richard Rodgers is a contemporary art museum in Paris completed in 1977. The building’s most striking features are its exposed mechanical, structural and circulation system along its façade; this exoskeleton originally allowed for a free-plan gallery space within. Winning the Pritzker Award in 2007, the jury claimed that Rodger’s Pompidou Centre ‘revolutionized museums,’ ‘transforming what had once been elite monuments into popular places of social and cultural exchange, woven into the heart of the city.’

Implosion

The Centre Pompidou is one of Jean Baudrillard’s favorite examples of implosion. He writes passionately about it in his essay ‘The Beaubourg Effect’, ‘Make Beaubourg buckle! A new revolutionary slogan. No need to torch it or to fight it. Just go there! That’s the best way to destroy it.’ For Baudrillard, the Centre Pompidou captures the whole cycle of simulation to hyper-reality. In order to create its free span gallery space, colorful tubes move people to its various exhibits along the facade. Inhabiting the exterior and highly visible to the city, people come to the museum in order to engage in the spectacle. Tickets, now sold for the watching of self, rather than the viewing of art, annihilate the project’s reason. Baudrillard explains, Center Pompidou “signals the catastrophic finishing off of mass culture by the masses themselves: a new breed of cultural consumer who is also, along with the paintings and the cash, both the raw material and the product of the new museum.”

With the added critical mass of tourist, the model intensifies,
and the building gets thrown into a hyper-real loop. The more that come, the more exciting and deeply conflicted the experience becomes for all, and the more the building implodes. Due to its crowd of people, interior partitions have been put up by fire code; nullifying the original free span of the project’s inception. Therefore, although simulations must be revived by implosions/seductions, Baudrillard does not want us to forget, that they too will collapse. Simple but powerful, the Centre Pompidou serves as a reminder that our apocalyptic failure will forever remain.

UN Thesis Design

For this thesis, the Center Pompidou is a telling example of how symbolic exchanges continually re-write themselves. Although, architecture facilitates seductions (the circulation tubes), at the same time, it transforms itself (the firewalls). In the Pompidou Center, the building’s purpose, as art museum, becomes overtaken by an implosion of interest, which in turn cancels out its purpose and architectural parti. Likewise, in the UN Design Thesis, the Security Building is nullified of its “security purpose”, first by an infiltration of protestors into its upper level and secondly, by the passage of First Avenue traffic through it. The Media Building is nullified of its “information purpose”, first by making the fact at it is creating its own projection/image even more obvious, and secondly, by superimposing the UN’s users with the projection as the walk in front of it, showcasing its simple ability to be rewritten.

The gravity of the Reichstag, after World War II, was incredibly somber. Although, renovations had made the building useable once more, its actual occupation still, however remained unfathomable due to its symbolic weight. In the Baudrillardian sense, if we read the German Parliament, as a framework, the Reichstag is a theater for its simulations. After World War II, its stage had collapsed. Destroyed by the perfection of the government’s own demise, its simulations had become void; the building, nothing more then real. Rightfully, terrified of this reading, the German government separated itself from the building for more then half a century.

Sitting unoccupied, the Reichstag’s silence was also unbearable to watch. In 1971, Jeanne-Claude and Christo started to think about their artwork in relationship to the Reichstag building’s
void. As Christo explains his desire to see the Wrapped Reichstag project followed through, “This is why Jean-Claude and I want to do this project in that space, because it is so resourceful, so unpredictable, so complex, so real, there is no make-believe, nothing in this project is theater, it is the real fear, real forces, real angst, and this is why we would like to do the project. This is so different from safe playing and so called art mileu.”

After a turbulent bureaucratic process and an unprecedented parliamentary vote (295 for / 226 against / 10 gone), the building was finally wrapped in 1995.

RESISTANCE

Those opposed to the project believed it was an unnecessary ordeal for such a scarred building. However, Christo thought otherwise; the project was at the same time seriously solemn, as well as seriously light. Having raised the money for the work themselves from sold art work and prints, there would be no financial burden to the German taxpayers. Amongst a field of only more depressing options, the project deserved a chance. As Christo stated before the wrapping, “Is it not worth the effort, by way of a short-lived variation, to transform this “artificiality” into the beauty of canvas flowing in the Berlin air?...And would such a temporary wrapping not be more humane than the only other means of getting rid of unpopular, awkward buildings that have lost their function- that is demolishing them?”

GREATER PURPOSE

Wrapping the building did help bring spectacle and conversation back into the building. As critic Wieland Schmied said.

“Are people aware that Christo is only veiling something which we have missed for a long time and which we only possess as an empty shell?

Are they going to react with sensitivity, humor, courage, ingenuity, and spontaneity, the qualities which are specially attributed to the people of Berlin?

Are thoughts being activated or only emotions provoked?

Here lies the risk in this artistic experiment, but at the same time its importance and its chance.”

Wieland Schmied.
hypothesized, "The Wrapped Reichstag is going to draw attention to the isolated urban situation of this building on the fringe of the vital life-stream of West Berlin, and perhaps it may provoke later architectural and planning ideas."  The dialogue created by the re-animated seduction served as catalyst for the large architectural and functional re-workings soon after, such as Norman Foster’s cupola addition.

However, more importantly, the re-birth of the Reichstag also symbolically meant a sort of re-birth of the German government and people, with its guilt and innocence. Having distanced themselves from the void at first, artists, writers, and architects would help reactive it through interventions. Their actions would show that the Reichstag was worth the effort. The multiplicity of perceptive created by their proposals, helped re-enact the building’s original role, as stage for plays of appearance.

“If today neither managers nor bureaucrats are held in particularly high esteem, and some doubt the efficiency of the United Nations itself, this building still stands as a beacon of hope that somewhere in the systematic and reasoned arrangement of people, things and their relations we might be able to find a better and more beautiful world.”

Aaron Betsky. The U.N. Building

The United Nations’ complicated hand in global politics can not be ignored, and it can be argued, that the UN’s efforts against the erasure of singularity, or multiplicity, which so-far have been described as impartial, are also a pursuit of maintaining power. A reading of Baudrillard’s texts on power help explain these goals further; “As Baudrillard has repeatedly stated, the strength of power, its incommensurable energy, comes from the fact that is can never be materialized, and that, at its core, it is perhaps nothing more than a play of appearances.” Therefore, in order to retain its authority, the UN must validate itself with texts which maintain its illusiveness, through splintering, manipulating, and amplifying international politics.

Therefore, it is this stance on power, and the UN’s highly political and global engagement in politics, which make Baudrillard’s methodology of seduction even more applicable to this thesis.
Having explained why simulations must be saved through implosion, through this proposal, we now turn to the role of ideology in the process of seduction. In his essay ‘Seductions,’ Baudrillard defines this critical word as an act of rebellion; “Seduction: an ‘ironic’ alternative form that provides a space, not of desire, but of play and defiance.” 2 No longer just simply oppositional to technology, we know understand seduction having purpose beyond the specific situation it amplifies.

Aligning itself with Baudrillard and Francois Debroix, this thesis supports the idea that seduction speaks to something greater. Debroix suggests, “The UN’s strategy of simulation was intricate ties to ideology; reinventing or reorganizing international reality around notions like global order, international governance, multilateral peace.” 3 He continues “strategies of simulation are never innocent. They may never be completely self-referential either. . . The United Nations is not simply an empty spot where self-referential plays of images take place. It is the place where, in a post-cold war era, transnational and global ideologies are mobilized by means of simulation.” 4

ARCHITECTURE

Most important to this thesis, however, is an understanding of the role of architecture within these politics. In his talks with Baudrillard in The Singular Object, Nouvel pins politics and the architecture together; “although architecture may be unable to influence politics to change the world, politics has a responsibility to make use of architecture to achieve its social, humanitarian, and economic objectives.” Baudrillard supports this standpoint, when
“I think that project had some kind of subversive dimension and this is why we have so many problems. Probably all the opposition, all the criticism of the project is basically that issue. If we spend three million dollars for a movie-set there would be no opposition. They can even burn the islands to be filmed and there would be no problem. The great power of the project is because it is absolutely irrational. This is the idea of the project, that the project put in doubt all the values.”

Christo. Surrounding Islands

he writes, “since Machiavelli, politicians have perhaps always known that the mastery of a simulated space is the source of power, that the political is not a real activity or space, but a simulation model, whose manifestations (in this case, architecture) are simply achieved effects.” Therefore, helping to set-up these plays of appearance, architecture, in the Baudrillardian sense, is an anti-hegemonic tool. Within this methodology, rather than a final product, architecture is designed so that power can be created, manipulated, and maintained.

If authority is garnered from its incomprehensibility, as Baudrillard suggests, then this purposeful absurdity become controversial and at times, threatening to the general public. Some look at such interventions as detrimental, as against culture and architecture. However, their very creation is actually a sign of hope. Rather than be malicious; these interventions believe that their subjects are worth the effort.

IN CONCLUSION

“There is, however, no grand scheme beyond such anti-hegemonic critiques of the “virtual world.” There is no grand narrative, no telos either. It is rather, in a situationist spirit perhaps, a matter of contingent creativity, one that uses the energy of what it opposes to express its virulence, its difference.” Francois Debrix

In the name of keeping the UN afloat, this thesis proposes an examination of the UN beyond its representational symbolism, and amongst the inherent spectacle of visual and spatial simulation. Starting by applying Baudrillard’s 3 orders of simulacra to the United Nations, we come to understand the organization as a
complex interpreter, which produces misalignment in order to diffuse absolutism. Through an observation and amplification of current situations and simulations, the project tries to help keep the protests of the UN alive. As Debrix suggests, “this new spirit of criticism reintroduces a healthy dose of uncertainty, instability, and, more importantly, irreverence,” letting the UN gain and regain its purpose in the context of war, information, translation, and partnership. Through juxtaposing these simulations with similar, but not equal signs, the UN thrives on the increase of drama and spectacle. The more ‘waste’ produced from this process, the more riveting and more alive the UN becomes.

With the pull of hyper-reality, the UN’s simulations, at times, hinge on the edge of perfection. In order to prevent its elimination, the UN rearranges its relationship to its mission and causes. By examining the current situation and its dangerously collapsible elements, we can start to design an intervention which begins to implode these simulations through intensification. However, the physical manifestation of this architectural intervention is not the thesis goal. Rather, with its inherent spatiality, architecture is used as a device; helping re-spark the UN’s pattern of simulation-perfection-opposition-seduction-simulation. As Jean Baudrillard and Francois Debrix allude in their writings, the outcomes of these seductions are not naive, but anti-hegemonic. By aligning itself against practices which push for an apocalyptic ‘real’, such as media and security, the project wishes to be a hopeful investigation in saving the UN from the erasure of its singularity, through added avenues of interpretation and misalignment.

Baudrillard, Jean. Seduction. pp. 21


-------- “Redeeming History? Foster’s Dome and the Political Aesthetic


