

# 'Our'chitecture

JAYSON CLAUDE



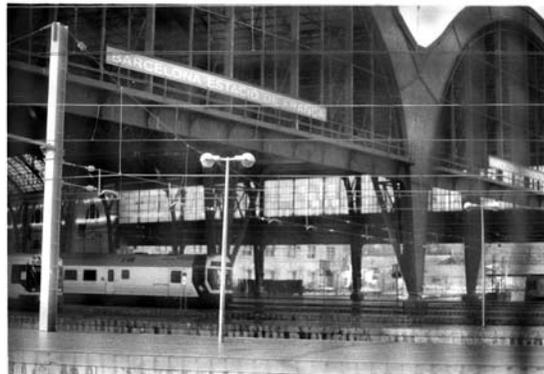
1.

“Again and again, actions, seemingly designed to help people, frustrate and bewilder them by alienating them from the context of their lives as they perceive it”.  
– Marris (1980), quoted in *Domicide*, p. 11

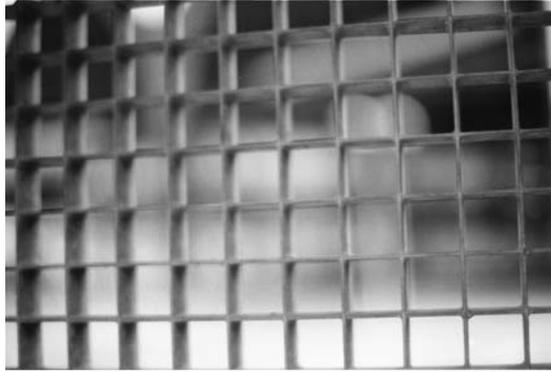
What could be considered a design rant? Does successful design require an exhaustion of resources to self-proliferate and add value to its own inclusive group? Can design and ethics once again be a highly connected system of communication without scapegoats, and can the same happen with design and economics, politics or construction? Can one's beliefs be fully manifested into 'architecture', or is there a necessary interconnectedness lost to other disciplines that was once enveloped by the word 'architecture'?

How can the professional assemblies of the architectural discipline disengage from their elitist tendencies to presume power and control? Does one have to be worth a certain amount of currency to be considered an architect, or if an architect is poor, can he/she still be successful? There is a rising need and momentum for subversive practices in architecture. Internal struggle within a system produces fear, for those who control the system have the most to lose. Internal struggle can also be welcomed as necessary for social evolution and can reveal the diverse and heterogeneous nature of the once controlled. Can personal extensions of self, local productions of shelter, intimate and spontaneous dwelling, and informal constructions help bring back self-worth for the excluded? Can subversive practices in architecture and urban existence help bring back ownership of public space and care for the public spectrum?

'A'rchitecture cannot address these issues alone, where 'A' stands for the elitist tendencies of the current regime heading the design discipline. Continued belief and reliance on star-architects and their mega-sculptures results in the squandering of potentially powerful public funding. I propose a new 'our'chitecture that will develop the infrastructure to allow design and construction to return to the people who really need it. Continuing a separation between those who can afford design and those who could really use it will only call for a collapse of an ethical architectural paradigm, if it hasn't done so already. Interestingly enough, the movement that will allow for the change in architectural thinking is dependent upon the body which it reacts to and lives off like a parasite. With the ability to compare paradigms and ethics to a greater body of knowledge, the subversive can take shape and momentum.



2.



3.

### **Inclusive/Exclusive Development**

“Designing the rule system took on a far greater significance than designing the dwelling plan itself”.

Nabeel Hamdi, *Designing without Houses*, p. 68

Inclusive development is the decision-making process which involves all of the parties affected by destruction and construction. Some examples of inclusivity include design/building projects, public enablement, post-occupancy architectural evaluation, and always, community involvement. A completely holistic view would include all of those being displaced by the construction as well as all of those who will reside within and use the spaces being created.

All too often, power is seized by city government officials and developers without an understanding of the real users of the spaces. The inclusion of all user groups – from displaced people to owners – would only enrich the quality of the space, and of society as a whole. Development standards would be based on bringing equality and diversity to the urban situation and would begin to create a heterarchy of design standards. The outcome from this decision-making process can involve economics, clean imaging, style even, and bring power to self-governing movements within a larger system.

Gated communities, inaccessible sites, retail speculation, chain stores and the death of the old European city centres are the results of exclusive development. Exclusivity has been one way in which Western cultures have expressed their levels of civilisation. In a world that is more mixed than ever with globalised economies and working populations, the exclusive levels of this century will reach unprecedented heights.

As cultures become more and more a melting pot of races, creeds and ideas, those who fear this will need to procure the greatest levels of exclusion to escape. It will become increasingly more difficult to find room in the cities of tomorrow for those who cannot afford exclusion. If a city wants to keep up with its social equality it will need make room for inclusive practices in codes, zoning ordinances, and design.



4.

“Man is born homeless; and the search for home creates him and destroys him hour by hour”.

– Herbert Reed Tindall (1991) quoted in *Domicide*, p. 45

#### REFERENCES

Hamdi, Nabeel. *Housing Without Houses: Participation, Flexibility, Enablement* (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1991). Hamdi outlines ideas for improving the working climate of those to create houses for people to live it, especially in low-income groups. He interrupts the daily grind with a look at housing from the outside.

Morton, Margaret. *Fragile Dwelling* (Aperture Foundation, 2000). Images of Bushville, New York City. This book shows, reveals, and embraces the existence of informal works of dwelling in America, and the city forces at work to bring them down. Where else could one say, “we all build our own homes”?

Porteous, Douglas J. and Susan Smith. *Domicide: The Global Destruction of Home* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001). This book does wonders in describing the causes and effects of large scale domicide, the intentional destruction of homes for gain. This is practiced prolifically in the world and in particular our nation, America.

**IMAGE LIST**

## 1. Berlin's underbelly

The city of Berlin has had a long history of a dichotomy which has prevailed as the two sides to the image of the city. One side is the massive monumentalism of Berlin's Third Reich architecture, and the other side is seen in this picture. This is the side that clings on to the necessities of real life, and exists visibly within the public spectrum. Currently, Berlin is attempting to lose this subversive side with hyper-capitalism of the former Berlin Wall grounds and the relocation of the political centre of Germany to the heart of Berlin. This system of massive scale development derails the dichotomy and the eternal progressive struggle for the 'underbelly' of Berlin.

## 2, 3. Estacion de Franco, Barcelona.

The French Train Station in Barcelona is a historical landmark, a beautiful building, and also nearly empty. The landmark has been in city debate for re-use or destruction. True, the station's railyards disconnect a population from the sea, but the station itself retains the ability to become the site of massive scale debate. The city of Barcelona also has a long history of pushing through projects of great scale (e.g., Forum 2004) without public consent or involvement. Barcelona has also decided to turn an old bullfighting arena into a shopping mall with the largest glass dome in Europe. Although any replacement to the maiming of animals is welcome, an exclusive shopping development is far from what people need. These two pictures reveal R.W. Emerson's idea of "the eye of the beholder", where what we see is naturally what we desire to see. Either we see the fence before us, or the grand scale public space on the other side.

## 4. Roof of Sam Wong's house, The Hill, 1991.

5. Margaret Morton's pictures of the community of Bushville in New York City (1993) reveal the record of a forgotten civilisation.