

Architecture, Branding, and the Politics of Identity

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On May 31, 2000 the critical satire newspaper *The Onion*, ran a story titled “You Can Tell Area Bank Used to Be a Pizza Hut” (*The Onion*, 2000). This, of course, requires a few pre-loaded pieces of knowledge to piece together for a reader to get the joke—the first of which is what a “Pizza Hut” is supposed to look like. If someone was to ask a typical American what a “Pizza Tent” or a “Pizza Yurt” would look like, they could likely piece together an approximation of what you think it *might* look like, but not what it *must* look like—as for these fictional places there is no correct answer. A “Pizza Hut” however, is a different story, if you grew up in the United States, particularly in the 1970s or 1980s; odds are you know *exactly* what a Pizza Hut is supposed to look like. A Pizza Hut is a one storey building, with a perversely pitched mansard roof, painted bright red. Its perversity, or strangeness, is what makes it recognizable against a backdrop of multitudes of roof types, particularly on the American suburban landscape. Quite simply, it is identifiable because there is nothing else like it—or because it is strange. It is identifiable because, for Pizza Hut, the architecture is used to not only contain, but establish the brand identity of the company.

The use of architecture in the equation of branding has become far more complex and sophisticated since the housing of the hut, as a proliferation of new forms of media, sensible matter, ubiquitous computing, social media, starchitect statuses and sheer corporate advertising prowess have utterly transfigured the landscape, literally, of branding relative architecture in a mere decade. This text is about this contemporary state, how it emerged, what it means, where it’s headed, and how architects can supercharge the profession with new forms of engagement through producing more intense and immersive entanglements of spaces, objects, technologies, and brand identities.

Resistance to these ideas will be levied by proponents of Marxist-cum-critical projects (Hays, 1998) in architecture that insisted, for much of the twentieth century, that architecture act as an equalizing force in the service of social justice and equality—and usually against accumulations of power. This text assumes as an axiom that this is a legitimate and worthy ideological concept, but there are now better tools than architecture available to address such injustices. In a world of Facebook, Instagram, Vine, WhatsApp, Tumblr, Pinterest and Soundcloud, to name a few, and the ecologies of communication they do and will

undoubtedly produce, architecture's power is diminishing, or at least being eclipsed, as a tool for producing sociological equality. Instead, architecture can now be liberated to pursue other endeavors to which it is better suited and, in fact, more productively influential. What we are now encountering in terms of corporations, marketing, and the wholesale acceptance of world economies into the powerful universe of free-market branding, particularly by the American population, demands a new form of action-aggressive, opportunistic, and vigorous engagement by the architectural design community. As we will see, if architecture is to have any power in this new world order it needs to be from a more essential position than rehearsing recent scripts of throwing Marxist rocks from Ivory Towers, or of sticking arrows on diagrams to justify our work to the gullible, or of convincing ourselves that good ways of saving energy necessarily equal good architecture. Architecture no longer needs to be justified by its social performance, or simplistic narratives (the building looks like a mountain against a backdrop of mountains), or by its carbon footprint, or by dumb diagrams that show that its shape was derived from sun angles or zoning envelopes. These are simply weak positions from which to practice, and they relegate architecture to a being a *result of something else important* rather than architecture *itself* being important. The contemporary branded landscape of the global free-market economy offers potent opportunities for a new generation of architects savvy enough to know that the most effective way to influence any system is not from sniping from afar, sleight of hand distractions, or lame metaphors—but rather accumulating and exerting actual power through producing immersive marriages of fresh architectural ambitions with the explosively emerging technologies of the twenty-first century. All of this this requires architecture to more intelligently and intensely engage with, and capitalize on, the global economic systems of the new millennium, which are increasingly governed by one of the most powerful forms of dictating human behavior—branding.

The lack of money is the root of all evil.

(Mark Twain)

Before we get to the contemporary scene of branding we need to know that there is a difference between “branding” and “identity.” Identity is “the distinguishing characteristics of an individual or community” (Gove, 1993). “Architecture has been inexorably linked to “identity” from its very beginning. In order to better understand how architecture might operate today it is important to understand the massive historic momentum that it needs to quickly overcome. All great and profitable stories have creation myths, from Bruce Wayne's traumatic experience in a well of bats to Bill Gates notorious garage start-up. Architecture's identity backstory is far, far older than most, perhaps less dramatic but no less interesting or significant. It largely owes its “officially sanctioned” founding narrative to the eighteenth-century Jesuit priest and architectural theorist Marc-Antoine Laugier, who, on the frontispiece of his 1753 “Essai sur l'Architecture,” pictured his personal version of the progenitor of all architecture—the “primitive hut.” The concept of returning to the primitive hut as a source for disciplinary clarity has guided architects and thinkers ever since. For us it will also be used as a means to better understand the roots of “identity” in architecture. While the exact tectonic or component details will likely be endlessly debated, one thing is for sure, which is that when the “ur-architecture” of the primitive hut was built, using trabeation, tensile structures, found objects, wood, fabric, or any other materials or tectonic methods (as the details don't matter for our inquiry) it was likely improved for one of two reasons—to better protect its inhabitants from the surrounding environment, or, to communicate something about these very inhabitants. The latter is the use of architecture to establish identity. There

obviously are no references, artifacts or stories of architectural identity that take us back fifty millennia to this moment, but one can at least speculate that once two or more of Laugier's "primitive-huts" were placed in any sort of proximity, that physical community was born, and the one with the highest peak, the tallest entrance, perhaps the longest span, the most foliage for waterproofing, or the brightest colors inherently conveyed some sort of status to the inhabitant. At this point architecture stopped being about merely shelter and became about identity—that is to say about power, and ultimately about influence. Fifty or more millennia after the formation of our first fictional community this still holds true, perhaps even more so. George Bataille perhaps most directly encapsulates this in his text "Against Architecture," where he writes "Architecture exists only to control and shape the entire social arena. It is constituted by this impulse propelling it to erect itself as the center and to organize all activities around itself" (Hollier, 1989). This "shaping of the entire social arena" now needs to expand more intensely into the territories of branding and identity, and that this invasion should not be abhorred as it is from architecture's default Marxist vantage point, but should be embraced as a new source of architectural empowerment.

Architecture is inherently a discipline about power. In the context of any form of architectural construction, there are limited available resources, and those able to accumulate the most of said resources are those who wield the power to do so. This is an undeniable characteristic of humanity—resources are finite and their expenditure is an act of power. For architecture—the discipline that requires the greatest quantity of sheer resources, the requirements for consolidated power are significant. Powerful, however, is only significant if it becomes influential. A king that gives no orders can be rendered as insignificant as the jester that performs before him. Architectural history is a history of power, and yet in the contemporary landscape of practice, the profession exerts a nearly imperceptible amount of actual influence. The profession of Architecture, by assuming that the forms of influence of operating yesterday are still the forms of influence operating today, has, in short, been neutered.

The weaker you are the louder you bark.

(Masashi Kishimoto, *Naruto*, Band 11)

For Laugier's legacy, the *image* of the primitive hut from his frontispiece became at least as influential as the words within. The plate shows a wood structure complete with vertical tree trunks and sloped branches meeting at a peak, which, for Laugier, formed the meta-basis for the architecture of Greek Antiquity. The move from the primitive hut to the systematic development of proto-Doric classicism replete with free standing columns, sloped pediments, entasis and references to wood detailing as found in components such as triglyphs and metopes, was the story of millennia in the development of an identity (Gove, 1993). By the time Laugier's theoretical trajectory from the primitive hut mutated into the emergence of pseudo-canonical classicism, the method of construction had become the de-facto identifier of, for instance, the nation states of Greek Antiquity. Ancient Greece, now as a civilization, is almost entirely represented in the minds of architects and non-architects alike through the architectural identity of the acropolis. This language was an expression of Greek power, precision, religious practices, aesthetic sensibilities and material preferences. That is to say it had become an identity for a community, and therefore architectural identity had become political.

The exact relationship between identity, architecture and politics is a subject for a different essay, but by means of summary it is a story of power—a story of community, of identity,



Figure 19.1 Jacques Aliamet after Charles-Dominique Eisen, Frontispiece, in Marc-Antoine Laugier, *Essai sur l'architecture*, Paris 1755.

and at times the wholesale erasure of that identity through violence. War is, at its very root, about the systematic erasure of identity, the bombing of buildings that hold that identity and ultimately the creation of new ones that erase it. While these topics such as war, politics, murder and destruction are typically removed from the narratives of architectural history—they nonetheless have and will continue to exist as part of the backstory of architectural identity.

The contemporary economic landscape, however, and unfortunately for architecture, has rendered this local production of community identity largely mute. Globalization, efficient means of transporting materials, online exchanges about methodologies and techniques, and increasingly mobile workforces have simply erased the establishment of diverse individualized identities in regions, countries and cities. That is to say the world has become increasingly architecturally generic. A speculative complex of apartments is much the same in Dublin as it is in Houston, as it is in Beijing. Globalized methods of construction and design, though one of very few software programs, has assured a consistently inexpensive, reliable, functioning system of building production used around the world. These gains in accessible shelter for all forms of use have come at the expense of more individualized architectural identity. Architecture's power to produce identity in communities, therefore, has been replaced by an efficient global identity of the generic. As such, architecture no longer has the means to produce regional identity in communities of people, and therefore no longer exerts the same form of power which it has for millennia since Laugier's hut's primitive beginnings.

Branding, however, is the Wild West for architecture's future. Branding is not synonymous with identity, and I propose that it offers the profession the ability to reclaim the cultural influence that architecture once had. Where architecture historically used identity to produce *local* identities, branding allows architecture to go *global*. Branding is relatively new to humanity. It is focused, strategic, and plays many of the same notes as "identity" albeit for solely financial reasons. Terminology for this subject is important; as the word *branding* can be as slippery as the undefined multitude of activities it describes. So we need a clean terminological start: Branding is a concept entirely contingent on commerce and more often than not global corporate entities. Individuals, even architects, can, of course, be brands or branded to some degree (Paris Hilton, Zaha Hadid), but the overwhelming force of influence in the world of branding is exerted through commercial products. As such we will focus exclusively on the latter. A brand, then, as Merriam Webster simply defines, is "a class of goods identified by name as the product of a single firm or manufacturer" (Webster 2014), and "branding" is defined by the same organization as "the promoting of a product or service by identifying it with a particular brand." Contemporary readers will hold that this is self-evident, so infused is the activity within our lives, and yet the very concept of branding was not developed until relatively recently—only 250 years ago in a recorded history in a civilization that predates its emergence by, as previously stated, fifty plus millennia. As we will see this trajectory from being a seemingly innocuous process of identifying products has mutated into a force of unimaginable power in the shaping of human events—and architecture is, has, and will continue to need to adjust to address to the rise of branding in much the same way it did with the rise of humanism, or modernism, or as it did with the invention of steel, or the elevator. As branding becomes more strategic, more scientific, more influential—so too will its influence on our built environment.

As was the case with architectural identity, the concept of branding requires some historic positioning. The man often credited as establishing the world's first "brands" was a potter named Josiah Wedgwood, (whose antiques my mom actually collects). In 1759 Wedgwood developed a new form of cream-colored glaze for his products that differentiated them from those of his competitors. Queen Charlotte, wife of King George III, was an admirer of this product and used it in the royal court. Wedgwood, in a brilliant first act of branding, re-named this product "Queen's ware" in honor of her patronage. This was not only a name; it was the world's first branded celebrity endorsement. As members of British society at the time sought innovation and novelty in new, rather than inherited, possessions, Wedgwood became relatively affordable luxury—and one that was not only novel but implied a closer relationship between its owners and the Queen of England. In 2005, readers of *Forbes* ranked Wedgwood as the nineteenth most influential businessman of all time. This was due to his contribution to branding, not his products (Millman, 2012).

This new and even more potent recipe for branding met its most fertile ground in the later industrial revolution. This revolution brought about not only the oft-celebrated sweeping changes in manufacturing methods but also in how products were purchased and consumed. For the first time in history a factory could make identical products in numbers never before conceivable. In order to sell these sheer numbers of goods, consumers needed to be found from much farther afield. This presented a problem for owners of the factories whose products and their reputations were unfamiliar to these new and distant customers. Something needed to be invented that conveyed a sense of not only the quality of the products, but what they were associated with, what they saw themselves as, and most importantly, what they said about the people who bought and used them. From this cauldron of production, distance, skepticism, desire, and identity, our modern concept of branding

was born. One could now know about a product without knowing anything about its maker, or method of making, or location of production. Instead, branding was enlisted to replace the story of a product *actual* making, history and purpose with a true or even *fictional* story that could be conveyed across vast distances. The activity that was developed to span these distances between producer and consumer was later called advertising. In order to distill these brand identities into signs and symbols, a new language of “logos” was also developed. And to protect logos, a process of trademarking was invented—all in effect today much as they were in 1876—when the world’s first trademark, for Bass Brewery’s red triangle, was recognized and registered by the British government.

Branding in the early twenty-first century requires some different handling from our historic precedents, primarily because it has mutated from being in an understandable and stable state of postwar consumerism to a nearly indecipherable global industry of influence, power and political will. That is to say twenty-first century branding is a new and ravenous form of historic branding, empowered the emergence of social media, handheld communications, and a globally networked society where distance has become nearly irrelevant. Accordingly, branding is no longer local, regional, or national, but all brands can be instantly global. Branding today, in this contemporary late-capitalism, corporate strain, is occupying a history-changing force on human individual and social behavior—a territory once reserved, in different times throughout history, for religion or empire. More plainly stated branding is emerging as one of the most powerful forces of the twenty-first century.

A brief online survey of architecture schools globally revealed that there are effectively *zero* courses dedicated to the subject of branding relative to architecture. Mentally compare that to the number of courses dedicated to the Renaissance (rise of humanism), or Modernism (rise of the mechanical age). Architectures respond to, and can even nourish social movements, such the rise of Humanism or Modernism, and yet for reasons unfathomable and mysterious, the academies of architecture are not only late to the game of branding, but are not even on their way to the field. Naturally there will be naysayers that declare what does architecture have to do with branding? (Likely not to have gotten this far in this particular text), so it is important to illustrate the vast swaths of economic and cultural territory that “branding” and its communicatory face, “advertising” occupy in the world today.

Power and influence in contemporary society are largely measured, for right or wrong, by money—so some analysis of the economics of branding as a global activity may help to illuminate the extent of its influence on the behavior of society. According to the economic tracking firm Plunkett Research Ltd, the spending on global branding/advertising, for 2013 topped US\$517 billion (Plunkett Research, Ltd. n.d.). The last reported annual budget for the Chinese Military was US\$166 billion, meaning that if “branding” were a country, it could have a military nearly three times larger than that of China, and be second only to that of the United States. Or to describe it in more rarified religious terms—according to a 2012 investigation by the financial publication *The Economist*, the Catholic Church had a 2013 expenditure of US\$170 billion. If branding were a religion, it would exert three times the global economic influence of the Catholic Church. Or to take the comparison closer to the academic context, in which this text exists—on October 25 2011, Dennis Cauchon of *USA Today* reported that the amount of student loans taken out in 2011 crossed the US\$100 billion mark for the first time and total loans outstanding will exceed US\$1 trillion for the first time this year” (Plunkett Research, Ltd. n.d.). The annual global resources spent on branding could, by extension, not only eliminate all national United States student debt in two years, but could annually pay for nearly 17 million students to attend private U.S. universities (College Data, n.d.). There are currently only 6 million college students in the

United States, meaning that the global expenditures on branding could, only *this* year, not only pay for each of the current 6 million U.S. college students' full tuition, nearly three times, but could hand each one of them US\$60,000 in spending money, some of which, naturally, to be spent at Pizza Hut.

In Globalization 1.0, which began around 1492, the world went from size large to size medium. In Globalization 2.0, the era that introduced us to multinational companies, it went from size medium to size small. And then around 2000 came Globalization 3.0, in which the world went from being small to tiny.

(Thomas Friedman)

To return for a moment to the original concept of "identity," we realize that the tools used by the branding industry are subtle mutations of "identity," to which architecture has always had a close relationship. Identity is about individual people and how they present themselves to the world—but far more powerful than this is the production of identity for communities of people—as previously covered, largely done, historically and locally, through architecture. While this practice has been, as we've established, neutered, communities are also formed *globally* through the branding of things—a territory where architecture can now be at its most influential.

What differentiates this act of forming community identity, which architecture has always done, from a contemporary landscape of branding is manifold, but at its root is that branding is done for the sole purpose of selling products. To brand something in the twenty-first century is to not only give it a singular identity, but to link it with a family of products to which it is related—and link the product to the people who use them, the users to each other, and link all involved into the fictional narrative set by the brand.

These families of products convey information about their quality, their use, and most importantly their users through fictional brand identities. These users of particular products then become related through these fictions, and become clumped into new forms of community not defined by geography, but rather participation in the narrative that the particular brand provides. There are Coke people and there are Pepsi people. Odds are you have, even surprising to you, rather strong feelings about this subject—most people do. This differentiation is one of loyalty, but more significantly participation in a community of like users of these products. Commercials show these communities the great life of being part of them—of drinking with celebrities, playing volleyball on the beach, of being young, in great weather, and enjoying it all the more because of a Coke. If you drink Coke, you are part of this life, this amazing, young, fulfilling, and perfectly constructed life. Register this number: 1.7 billion. This is how many servings of Coca-Cola are consumed daily. That deserves repeating—1.7 billion servings of Coke are served *daily*. If we assume that there are some who are drinking more than one of these servings then we have, by a conservative estimate, perhaps 1 billion *different* individuals who drink Coca-Cola every day. Those who buy and consume Coca-Cola have, globally, made the same decision, bought into the same story, and participate in the manufactured fiction of lifestyle sold by Coca-Cola. This is the formation of a new type of community—Coke drinkers—in this case one that spans continents, classes, genders, races, classes and every other possible means of human segregation. A community of 1 billion people would form the world's third largest country, falling in line just behind China (1,363,390,000), and India (1,241,690,000).

Even 40 years ago the Coca-Cola Company knew the extent of their global community when they launched their 1971 "Buy the World a Coke" campaign developed by the

advertising firm McCann Erikson—which became one of the most successful advertising campaigns in history. If you are over 40 at the time of this writing, you can likely recite the chorus of the song that accompanied the campaign.

There are as many communities as there are products, some larger and more clearly defined than others, but all determined through branding. There are MSNBC people and Fox News people, there are BMW people and Audi people, there are Yale people and Harvard people—all forming vast interconnected networks of varying size and strength—based on the fictional narratives of branding.

And so we recognize that branding is powerful. Very powerful, if not among the most powerful, for better or for worse, influence on the behaviors society today—not only in economic terms but human ones. As such you would imagine that the discipline of architecture would have developed some sort of relationship to the landscape of contemporary branding, seeing how it governs so much of the economic and social landscape across the globe—and architecture is inherently a discipline about identity. You would be wrong.

Branding is big business—a business that barely existed only 250 years ago, and architecture is late to the game. Our tardiness, however, does not mean that we are incapable of eventual engagement—as we’ve already covered, architecture has a long and storied relationship with brandings’ sister, “identity.” And branding is certainly about identity, only one that is re-read through a filter of products, loyalty, lifestyle and mass consumerism. Architecture’s oldest function, above and beyond that of mere shelter, is one, in fact, of identity—and if identity is so historically linked to architecture, then there must be some sort of relationship between architecture and branding, right?

So where does architecture currently exist in these equations? Unfortunately, the answer is more often than not, hiding behind the physical detritus of branding—printed or electronic advertisements. Because architecture is large, visible, generally found around larger numbers of people and built primarily from flat vertical surfaces—it, in the late twentieth century, became the ideal scaffold for advertising and branded content. That is to say architecture, historically and today, seems content to merely be *covered* by branding, through signage, but rarely engage it through other means. This mentality continues today with the invention of new LED and LCD technologies that are similarly plastered over buildings in extreme numbers. Environments such as Piccadilly Circus in London, to Shinjuku in Tokyo, to Times Square in New York anticipate a future that, if left unchecked, might devolved into a combination of Rem Koohaas’s “junkspace” married to a language of sophisticated technologies that cover buildings. It is inevitable that proceeding along current trajectories, architectures ultimate end-game is to be conservatively dressed head to toe in a burka of advertising, content to be seen only between accidental eye slits located between screens and signs. If we are not able to retool architecture to better engage the branded landscape, the profession runs the risk of becoming one of lowest-common-denominator construction, unexceptional space making, and a mere provider of the square foot content of cells of Excel spreadsheets.

Instead of selling our large, flat, urban façade surfaces to the brokers of content, architecture as a profession needs a new palette of spatial tools and tactics to enable new forms of participation in the new world order of branding. Fortunately for us, the tools exist; they are within reach, and we can access them—but only with a shifting mentality towards the very foundational root of the profession. In the same way we returned to the ur-architecture, the primitive hut, we must also return for a moment to architecture’s “ur-theory” in order to understand a significant disciplinary straitjacket prohibiting us from fully engaging in the newly interconnected and branded world.

And suddenly you know: It's time to start something new and trust the magic of beginnings.

(Eckhart von Hochheim (Meister Eckhart))

The oldest existing text on architecture, *De Architectura*, also known as the *Ten Books on Architecture* was written by the Augustan architect, Vitruvius in approximately 15 BC (Vitruvius & Morgan, 1960). This text has become a foundation for architectural disciplinarily, defining the extents of the discipline and codifying a series of points to which all architecture must aspire. The importance of this text cannot be overstated, as it later exerted tremendous influence on the Renaissance through Leon Battista Alberti, who sought to replace the Vitruvian text with one of his own. Vitruvius's canonical principles of architecture identified in this book are *firmness*, *commodity* and *delight*. These terms have been translated into contemporary terms as *permanent*, *useful* and *beautiful*—qualities to which architects rarely object.

In the twenty-first century brands change; people change; programs change and styles change—all at a far faster speed than architecture, or people for that matter, has ever before encountered. Therein lies a large component of our problem—our professional obligation to *permanence*, or in our Vitruvius terms, *firmness*. Architecture establishes, if not requires, an ambition for inherent stability over time. Branding is allergic to permanence. Branding today is fast, constantly changing, adapting and mutating. To complicate the equation brands are now transcending categorical barriers and co-branding in ways never before imagined. From fashion icon Karl Lagerfeld's designing a clothing line for the entry-level Swedish fashion brand H&M, then turning around and collaborating with Zaha Hadid on a spaceship for Chanel, to Nike co-branding with Apple to produce computerized sports equipment, branding is no longer even as stable as it was only a decade ago. Horror of horrors, Apple is now even collaborating with its once bitter rival IBM. The ground has shifted, dramatically. Branding has now even more ephemeral, mobile and instantly reconfigurable very difficult qualities for a discipline based on the concept of permanence to address.

Architecture's arsenal is, however changing, and challenges to a disciplinary insistence on permanence are emerging. From shifts in mentality to shifts in technology architecture need not be content to perform as a mere scaffold on which the excitement of the emerging twenty-first century should hang. Architecture is the discipline profession of space, and nowhere has anyone ever determined that a requirement for space is to be stable. Space can move, shift, flutter, breathe and do a vast array of actions it has only never been asked to perform. There are, and certainly will be more, shifts in architectural thinking and technology that offer ways for architecture, using these means, directly engage with the content of branding.

If architecture, whether a building, pavilion, pop-up store, installation, event space or residence, is no longer inexorably tied to the concept of permanence, then it can, without shame, be designed with a particular duration in mind. A standard criticism of this mentality is that architecture, among the most resource, intensive of human endeavors, must be useful to not only one generation but many, and accordingly must, quite simply, last. This time-honored sentiment is worthy of consideration, but so too is the fact that the way architecture functions in the twenty-first century, which may be to fuse material morality with brands, companies, and individuals that are increasingly nomadic and transitory. The average American, according to U.S. Census data, moves 11–14 times in a lifetime, and brands are no longer architecturally based as they have been in past incarnations where they formed buildings as significant as the Chrysler Building by William Van Alan or the TWA Terminal by Eero Saarinen. Instead the brands of today are cloud based, flowing through the veins



Figure 19.2 Nicola Formichetti Store with Lady Gaga Outfits, Mark Foster Gage Architects, 2011. Image Credit: Mark Foster Gage Architects

of networks, delivering continuously changing content to potential customers through a shifting and transitory landscape of eternally reconfiguring media.

These facts preclude the two largest markets for architecture, residences and offices, from investing in building in any permanent sense, as buildings requires location and society is increasingly locationless. These forms of real estate have become temporary financial transactions based on price per square foot and approximate location, whereas in the past they may have been based on architectural form, style and identity. Architecture must adapt to the new transitory landscape of contemporary life, and engage in rougher, rawer, faster and dirtier forms of practice and construction that may last for far less time than the buildings of yesteryear. They may not be buildings at all, or they may be the development of new design technologies that *overlay or fuse with* buildings, not just cover them up. It may be that the “Junkspace” of Rem Koolhaas is simply too nice, and expensive for a palette for such an endeavor, and new forms of construction need be enlisted to address the desire for disposable architectures.

The industry of branding, especially in fashion, has been a pioneer in this field of architecture and branded experiences through the increasingly ubiquitous typology of the pop-up shop. If the commercial flagship was the architectural project of the 1990s, then the pop-up shop is its twenty-first-century replacement. Pop-up shops are temporary, inexpensive, and frequently allow for the use of far more radical forms, technologies and experiences than a company would allow for in a typical retail environment. From Rem Koolhaas’s “pop-up museum” for Prada, to the aforementioned collaboration between Zaha Hadid and Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel to a pop-up shop my own firm designed for Nicola Formichetti that housed a collection of Lady Gaga’s outfits, the typology is revolutionizing retail experiences in venues from high-fashion to discount chains, and are designed by

architects ranging from Pritzker-prize winners to recently graduated students. This isn't a call-to-arms for architects to build using trash, in the form of discarded tires and shipping containers and to be cobblers of industrial societies junk—but rather we challenge the limited palette of standardized building components to which we have been largely relegated and become free to experiment beyond the disciplines inherited operational lore.

One area that architecture might become further invested in is that of what is previously referred to as the aforementioned architectural “overlay.” Sylvia Lavin in the excerpt of “Kissing Architecture,” published in the *Issue of Log* (#19) which I guest edited in 2009, describes such a possibility as “pouring mediums together.” It may be the case that in order to better address the shifting needs of branded spaces, architecture for a time, turns its attention to the overlaying and pouring together of possibilities including, to name a few, living materials, projection mapping, scent, physical interactivity, responsive touch surfaces, weight registers, infrared tracking, social media, changes in temperature, optical tracking, holographic lighting and other, even more ephemeral means to produce frequent change in architectural forms and spaces.

Another frequency on which the challenge to permanence might occur is that buildings may develop a language of actual movement and reconfigurability, currently championed by figures such as Greg Lynn. Architectural space is mostly unused. Churches sit mostly empty for six days a week. Homes empty for the nine-plus hours of the workday; offices empty for the 15 hours daily that separate workdays, the average car sits idle and unoccupied for 90 percent of its life, in a parking space that is also vacant for a large portion of its own life. Contemporary spatial life is largely one of emptiness and vacancy. Architecture purports to be for function, designed to accommodate the requirement of particular programs, and shelter, yet for a stunning percentage of its life, in most cases, it sits unused, inert, and empty. As urban densities increase and needs for space continually grow, physical motion and reconfigurability will inevitably emerge as a solution, and an opportunity for a shifting, updating and branding of responsive architecture. I am reminded of a joint co-branded space that I used to frequent in Osaka Japan. A local Toyota dealership joined forces with a popular coffee and business lunch chain. For most of the day the interior showroom of the dealership housed a range of Camrys and Corollas scattered around the showroom floor. At lunch the staff backed the cars against the walls, thereby clearing out a large space in the center of the space where the coffee shop would set up chairs to become a temporary restaurant that has apparently been there for years. After lunch the cars would come back and the restaurant would leave a few tables for afternoon coffee scattered throughout the potpourri of automobiles. In this equation the dealership gained as it could use its space to bring in additional people to see their products, and the café gained as it didn't require the overhead of a permanent space. The brand requirements of the spaces were sympathetic to a convergence that, through a logic of movement, allowed them to synergistically accommodate each other. This is, of course, a rudimentary example of reconfigurability, but opportunities for co-use, particularly through co-branding, will increase not only as brands become savvier to such opportunities, but as technologies from the robotic architectural movements of Greg Lynn's recent “Room Vehicle” projects to the collapsible structures of Chuck Hoberman continue to evolve. Structures at increasingly massive scales are also participating in the shift away from permanence towards movement. From Rem Koolhaas's “transformer” for Prada that flipped on various sides to accommodate different programs to numerous proposals for rotating towers, actual movement in architecture will continue to take us further from the Vitruvian firmness of yesteryear into new territories where architecture can better address the constantly shifting needs of our dynamically accelerating branded society. These forms

of motion, now used primarily for programmatic means will, perhaps, lead to other forms of architectural rippling, fluttering, shifting and twisting that can allow the profession to even better regain new powers of identity production in this branded landscape.

Architectural academia and much of the intellectual edge of the profession is allergic to the idea of working, without cynicism or critique, for corporations, the producers of brands. In fact many of architecture's most inventive and exciting moments have been through revolutionary proposals to counter the status-quo, that is to say "anti" power structure architecture. From Archigram's walking cities to Superstudio's endless grids, architecture will, and should, offer alternate forms of existing and challenges to our inherited notions of habitable space. These were successful in the past because the imagery was powerful, strange, and often haunting, even developing a new genre of "paper architecture" within the profession. In a world buried in limitless fantastic images found online, these moments will continue to have significantly less and less efficacy in the world. If architecture is to have a voice in the world of Facebook, YouTube, Vine and Google, it will be through its physicality. Physicality, and the impact such physicality has on the senses, is what makes architecture unique, what makes it desirable, what makes it important. To the extent that it can be imagined, the conveyance of constantly changing physicality should be a problem requiring a new form of architecture. There are not many things, including communication, entertainment, shopping and social interaction, that have not been almost fully absorbed into the digital universe—and architecture's defining characteristic of three dimensional actual space places makes it unique in the world once again, being resistant to digitization. In order to capitalize on this rediscovered uniqueness, and exercise it towards new forms of power, architecture must once again be bravely and radically physical, and not at all required to be permanent or stable. Images of built architecture can be powerful, renderings and speculations less so, but none can compete with the physicality that, increasingly, only architecture can require. If architecture is able to convert the use of emerging technologies into a useful identity-producing languages for branding, it will not only allow architecture to reclaim a new form, of an old form of influence, but as brands are, by their very definition, about differences, they ask architecture to be its most experimental, its most radical and its most speculative. The landscape of architecture can thrive like never before. It only takes a shift in mentality towards the extent of what architects produce, and the tools they use to produce it, to be given access to the wealth of spatial opportunities presented in the branded world.

This is no doubt heretical for previous architectural generations that spent decades removing architecture from physicality, consumerism and the reach of corporate business interests—but the truth is we have no other choice. The forces at play in the world are no longer even possibly affected by our utopian or critical speculations, and to think so is nearly comical given the statistics previously presented. We live in a world that operates according to a new economic physics, and architecture must adapt to the new laws or risk becoming a castrated art practice appreciated only by academics and the elite. We're already close.

Branding is among the most promising territories for architectural innovation. As we have already seen it is incredibly well funded, seeks novelty, and prizes creative originality as its existence, literally, depends on the ability to differentiate between products, forms, and spaces. Until now most branding has been two dimensional in the form of billboards, television ads, magazine spreads, computer banners, sides of painted buildings, hung exterior LCD screens and so on. Architecture is uniquely poised to usher in a new age of advertising and branding by taking it from a logic of stable 2D surfaces into one of 3D spaces that continuously change. With or without our engagement the future urban landscape will be

one of drifting between overlapping branded spaces—as the “public” realm increasingly shrinks. The future of cities is one of vulgar 2D signage unless architecture develops a more compelling spatial alternative. Whereas the spatial branding practices of the past were limited to rather conventional means of decoration—color, form, logos, and material palettes, architecture is now being armed with a new generation of technologies that allow us to activate matter in ways only now becoming realizable. Space without atmosphere is flavorless, and whereas architects of the past were limited to a miniscule palette of building materials (timber, brick, wood, concrete), the contemporary architect now has access to a multitude of exotic and smart materials that need to be studied for how they can be used towards the production of new immersive experiences. The creation of images is no longer enough. We must create choreographies of technology and effects in physical spaces that are anything but stable or permanent. Brands are begging for such originality, while the rest of the world seems content to exist on a diet of historic architectural downtowns surrounded by endless rings of the generic. Progressive corporations looking to expand the reach of their brands are the patrons of the immediate future for architecture, asking us to produce spaces that are alive, breathing, interactive, customizable and globally interconnected. The immediate future offers us the potentials of ubiquitous computing, sensors imbedded in matter; interactive gestures, facial recognition and choreographies of lighting, and sound so that the branded spaces of tomorrow may appear closer to biological entities than the decorated generic spaces of the twentieth century’s mechanical paradigm. Architecture could become among the most significant players in the emergence of a new genre of constantly reconfiguring human space, one funded by brands, interactively tuned towards individuals, societally connected to global communities, atmospherically and interactively charged, and, above all, spatial. The alternative is that architecture will, in the face of such massive commercialization expenditures, be increasingly collapsed into inert scaffolds for two-dimensional signage and screens ... and the occasional strange bright red pitched mansard roof.

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