

The Housing Studio: Different States of Housing
Extract: Displaced / Replaced / Value
GSAPP Architecture
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Mario Gooden, Professor of Practice
and Carson Smuts, Assistant Professor Adjunct



Displaced / Replaced Mass 3, Michael Heizer, Ace Gallery, Venice, CA (1982)

...*"What if meaning, instead of preceding experience, occurs within experience..."* Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, p. 27.ⁱ

*"The size thing is not some gimmick or attention-getting trick but a genuine undercurrent of the work," Heizer said. "Frank Gehry for instance likes to imagine his buildings as sculptures. I like to imagine my sculptures as architectural." Michael Heizer interviewed by Jori Finkel, LA Times, 2012.*ⁱⁱ

The sensual architectural reality is not experienced as an abstract object already transformed by consciousness, but as an immediate and concrete human activity: as a praxis with all its subjectivity. Bernard Tschumi, *The Architectural Paradox* p.28-29.ⁱⁱⁱ

Context: Questions of Affordability

The U.S. housing market crash that began in 2006 and culminated in 2008 with the global financial market crash may one day be noted with an asterisk in the history of real estate development in New York City. Six years later, today's real estate values in New York City stand near record highs. Encouraged by zoning law changes during the Bloomberg administration, real estate development has led to increased property values throughout the five boroughs. In particular, increased values in Manhattan neighborhoods have steadily crept north from Tribeca and Greenwich Village, to Chelsea, to the Upper West Side and into Harlem. Today, young affluent white professional families and singles are just as likely to live in Harlem as Park Slope, Brooklyn. Increasingly, the long time population and businesses of the area can no longer afford to remain. While new residents to the area cite location and affordability as a primary reason for their relocation to Harlem, the issue of affordability cuts both ways regarding displacement and replacement.

Such gentrification is not only occurring in upper Manhattan but it is also occurring geometrically within neighborhoods that epitomized the real estate boom of the late 2000s. A recent Sunday *New York Times* Real Estate article chronicles the plight of two professional couples no longer able to afford to live in Williamsburg, Brooklyn and forced to move to Jersey City on one hand and to Sunnyside Queens on the other. Adding to this geographical formulation of value and real estate, the New York based cable news station, NY-1, noted during its recent week long focus on the Bronx that the Port Morris area along the Harlem River is fast becoming the "Williamsburg" of the Bronx.

Questions of affordability are exacerbated by the widening income disparity among New York City residents. According to a 2014 study of local income trends by the Brookings Institution, a high-income family in New York City might earn nearly 15 times more than what a low-income family earns with the average income of those wealthy families in the 95th percentile being approximately \$225,000 per year.

While private / public initiatives like the Housing Marketplace Plan, first outlined in 2002 by then Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the New York 80 /20 Housing program sought to create new policy models for the development of affordable housing through leveraging public assets in order to maximize private investment; income mixing in order to provide for deconcentrations of poverty; and the creation of new populations in desirable locations throughout the city the results such initiatives have been mixed at best as the disparities between wealthy and poor New Yorkers has significantly increased over the past decade. Furthermore, the design of most of the new housing has not much progressed beyond the stigmatized typologies and only apparently so formal solutions to urban morphologies. Yet context is defined not only by morphology but also by the politics of space, socio-cultural relationships, and technology. For example, how might the design of a housing proposal in the Bronx along the Harlem River engage the full discourse of context?

Data: Questions of Value + Power

Value is alternatively defined as the relative worth, utility, or importance of something, as the numerical quantity or monetary worth determined by a calculation or measurement, or as broad preferences regarding an appropriate course of action or outcome. Online real estate databases such as Zillow.com and Trulia.com trade in all definitions of value. These databases not only supply real estate listings and market

trends but also they provide community information regarding crime (including type and description), demographics, and household income along with data visualization tools to spatialize the values. However, embedded within the data are not only sets of relationships among values but also relationships of power: economic, class, and social power.

According to Michel Foucault, "... The relation of power is an inequality...Relations of power are not in themselves forms of repression. But what happens is that, in society, in most societies, organizations are created to freeze the relations of power, hold those relations in a state of asymmetry, so that a certain number of persons get an advantage, socially, economically, politically, institutionally, etc. And this totally freezes the situation. That's what one calls power in the strict sense of the term: it's a specific type of power relation that has been institutionalized, frozen, immobilized, to the profit of some and to the detriment of others."^{iv}

Domestic Body: Questions of Space

The abstraction of data and the rational play of language versus the experiences of the senses is an inadequate confrontation of the mind and body dialectic that is often pursued in the design of housing. Tschumi states "... the paradox is not about the impossibility of perceiving both architectural concept (the six faces of the cube) and real space at the same time, but about the impossibility of questioning the nature of space at the same time making or experiencing a real space." In space the translation of the concept, the overcoming of the abstraction in reality, involves the dissolution of the dialectic and an incomplete statement. The effect of the great battles of social progress is obliterated and so is the security of archetypes. Hence, this opens up the possibility for new questions of space and for the pleasures of architecture.

ⁱ Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, New York, Viking Press, 1977; 7th reprinting, Cambridge, Mass., and London, MIT Press, 1989, pp. 26-27.

ⁱⁱ "Michael Heizer's calling is set in stone", Interview by Jori Finkel, Los Angeles Times, May 25, 2012.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bernard Tschumi, "The Architectural Paradox," from *Questions of Space*. New Edition. London: Architectural Association, 1990 pp. 28-29.

^{iv} Interview with Michel Foucault, "Power, Moral Values, and the Intellectual", November 3, 1980, Michael Bess, University of California Berkeley. <http://www.critical-theory.com/read-me-foucault-interview-in-a-sense-i-am-a-moralist/>