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MY OWN, PRIVATE, WASHINGTON

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ABSTRACT

Recent affairs in Washington D.C. are beginning to lay the foundation for a new exploration of architecture. The division line between national and corporate identities, their relation to public perception, and their spatial relationship to the public realm are beginning to blur. The expanding influence of private entities in public affairs necessitates and exploration of how public architecture is dealt with in response to the needs of two distinctive user groups.

In my proposed future for Washington D.C., this new influx of corporate influence in the American system of government will necessitate the investigation of the line of separation between government and private industry. This new entity of quasi-public, quasi-private distinction must instigate a rethinking of representation in terms of identity and in terms of spatial relationship in the public realm. As constructs of individuals, both government and private industry are, although differently, directly connected to the service of the public.

A reevaluation of a mundane, yet extremely invaluable program that contributes to the diminishing of public influence can be the vessel through which to explore greater ideas about the transparency of the system and how the public is exposed to it. Examining the definition of a “public” building through the lens of it’s intended users can reveal how transparency, both literal and phenomenological can be manipulated to expose a larger statement about public and private realms.

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MY OWN, PRIVATE, WASHINGTON

Public & Private Realms in the New Political Climate

by Adam B. Galletly
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Business as usual.
About Architecture, Politics, and creating Identities
Architecture has played an invaluable role as an artifact in the development of national and corporate identities. The historical precedents of political and national ideologies shaping urban and built forms traces back to the formation of the first governed republics. The role of buildings as a physical manifestation of identity is vital to the public reception of what lies inside. As our society has evolved, and the practice of business has imbedded itself firmly in the operations of our everyday lives, corporations, like governments, have turned to use architecture as a means of expressing identity. The success and operations of corporations and governments are similarly tied to their public perceptions and their ability to control their own identities. Interestingly, stylistic associations to architecture have begun to emerge throughout the years that differ greatly between how governments and corporations choose to represent themselves.

Although, these two entities may go about defining a public identity through separate architectural languages, they ultimately have similar goals in mind. The American landscape, in particular, is an interesting place to look at the evolution of these languages over time. The representation of a national identity through architecture has remained almost stagnant for centuries after America’s architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe harnessed the imagery instrumentality of a new classicism in creating a new, American identity for a young nation. This stagnancy can possibly be attributed to the foundation of our government operations, which has built in protections preventing the necessity of new, iconic architectural branches. Conversely, privately owned corporations have only recently begun, by comparison, to finally clearly articulate a strong tie between identity, and architecture.

However, the style that has become newly associated with the private sector could not be an more dissimilar architecturally. Rather than a reliance on the permanency, materiality, monumentality and imagery of neoclassicism as a representation of a strong identity, corporations found themselves in the clean facades and stark lines of modernism, most notably and perhaps primarily represented by Mies van der Rohe’s building for Seagram in New York in 1957.

Now, interesting happenings in Washington D.C. are beginning to lay the foundation for a new necessity for architecture. This particular event begins to blur the division line between national and corporate identities and their relation to public perception, and also their spatial relationship to the public realm. However, before conjectures towards the future can be made, we must first begin to understand the motivations and associations of establishing identities through architecture.

“No society is without its contradictions, and no building wants to celebrate them – least of all a government building” (Vale viii).

The relationship between architecture and government is purely about representation. How can the ideologies of a nation and the conveyance of utopian possibilities be physically expressed? Politicians have long turned to architecture as a physical representation of political ideas in relation to human emotions. “A building may mean in ways unrelated to being an architectural work—may become through association a symbol for sanctuary, or for a reign of terror, or for graft” (Goodman 643). While this statement may be crucial in the understanding of the relationship between a government
building and its political history, the meaning of buildings is very much tied to decisions made by architects and not so symbolically arbitrary. Architecture has the ability to be metaphorical or referential in the task of conveying the relationship of a specific political motive in its public comprehension (Vale 4). It is the manipulation of this symbolism architecturally that has been used by republics in history in essence to build governments and create public identity. “Design manipulation that promotes this dual sense of alienation and empowerment occurs at all scales of a country’s civic space, ranging from the layout of a parliamentary debating chamber to the layout of a new capital city. The design of a government building’s interiors holds many clues about the nature of the bureaucracy that works therein” (Vale 8).

Historically, we can look at prewar Germany to investigate some of these associations. Changing hands in government sought to separate themselves politically, but also unify the country’s identity. After coming to power, the Third Reich looked towards architecture as a means of fostering a new identity. What’s interesting is how the stylistic choices in architecture were used to create the idea of identity and national pride without deliberately calling out specific political ideologies. “Most architects...in this study thought that, in fighting avant-garde architecture, or in fostering a “German” style, they were saving the Fatherland from “Bolshevism.” For them, participation in a nationalist movement was more important than learning any Nazi catechism” (Taylor 9). Nationalism is ultimately the goal of public influence. The success of this particular instance was to utilize the frustrations of citizens and their perceived loss of national identity to create a government identity that overlooked actual policies. “...[T]hese buildings were supposed to appeal to German right-wing nationalism. Their style and symbols reflects a desire to affirm the values and to buttress the strength of a closely knit racial community. The government literally built on this concept. Fortunately for the government, many were willing to believe that German had been revived by an ideology that was traditional and nationalist, no revolutionary” (Taylor 14). Generating this pride is vital to creating an environment control and sustaining control of the government. “...[A] architecture had a special importance to the politicians, who, like most totalitarian leaders, sought to influence all aspects of human life” (Taylor 11).

This representation also has implications at a scale larger than that of individual elements of a building. “Not limited to matters of interior configuration and architectural expression, decisions about urban design may also foster mutually reinforce alienation and empowerment by magnifying hierarchies in the outdoor public realm. The source of potential meaning for a government building extends far outward from its facades. A government building’s spatial relation to other important structures sends additional complex messages about how the leadership wishes others to regard the institution it houses” (Vale 9). These larger, urban spatial arrangements also begin defining and delineating different zones of privacy and creating areas of public interface. To view buildings in terms of how they create these spaces allows for a method of judging the success of architecture in a larger context (Vale 9).

“...[T]he emphasis on corporate surfaces can be seen as a purposeful adaptation to postmodern society with its emphasis on appearance and mass communications. What counts today is as much the appearance of
an organization – and thus its credibility – as its performance” (Gagliardi 43).

Similar actions can be seen between government and the private industry when it comes to the importance of controlling public perception. Both entities operate to serve the public, however different their motives may be, and they both rely heavily on their images. Understandably, like governments, private corporations have looked towards building as a means of representation. Relative time differences in the adoption of this has significantly impacted how it is done though.

Motivations also begin to define the way in which corporations perceive the need for representational building. Corporations, somewhat unlike governments, build with a sense of vanity and a need to control internal perceptions as well as those of the public. “While the individuality of organizations, presumably to a large degree unwittingly, is expressed in their physical settings, the phenomenon of corporate vanity signifies a greater intentionality in the choice of physical expression” (Gagliardi 42).

“Corporate culture manifests in many ways. Beside values, norms and behavior, artifacts are seen as part of the market oriented corporate culture. While values and norms are not clearly visible, behavior and artifacts are observable because even people with no close relation to the company can see and understand them. This indicates that also the architecture of the corporate buildings, as and artifact, is of high importance for every company” (Andresen 2).

The interactions between the private and public realms in America have been constantly evolving. The construction of representative democracy in the United States allows for individuals to make campaign contributions in support of political candidates. Similarly privately owned entities could also make contributions, although under the control of regulations put in place to control the scale and impact of these contributions. While corporate involvement in government affairs is clearly nothing new, a recent United States Supreme Court ruling (Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission) has recently legitimized corporate purchasing power in Washington D.C. As corporations have now been granted what is essentially the unparalleled rights of individuals, uncapped and unregulated campaign donations can and will easily overshadow those made by individual citizens. As political success is closely associated with a large stockpile of campaign funding, the Supreme Court has, one could presume, paved the way for the corporate buyout of elected officials. One could argue that the involvement of private companies in inner-workings of American law making is nothing new, and in fact the right of corporations to lobby the government is protected by the United States Constitution. This may be the case, but we really must see this ruling as a change in the visibility of these operations.

In my proposed future for Washington D.C., private corporations no longer need to hide behind the guise of lobbyist groups and think-tanks to exert their influence in our system of government. The foundation of the American representative democracy has typically held up against the necessity of new government building typologies since it’s original drafting. This new influx of corporate influence in the American system of government will necessitate the creation of a new entity
that blurs the line of separation between government and private industry. This new entity of quasi-public, quasi-private distinction a rethinking of representation in terms of identity and in terms of spatial relationship in the public real of Washington D.C. As constructs of individuals, both government and private industry are, although differently, directly connected to the service of the public. This of course is represented physically in different forms, and we can begin to see certain ties in how these different entities interface with the public. The National Mall in Washington D.C. is unique in being a public space that is in direct connection with the government. It is simultaneously a National Park and a direct interface with the federal government. As a site, the National Mall is the single site that creates the possibility for an architecture to negotiate directly between federal and public identity. This has many implications which would have to be mitigated architecturally, such as access and transparency. As it stands, I am proposing a corporate takeover of our Nation’s most iconic public space. The placement of a corporate government center on the National Mall would begin to question the relationships between the public domain, private corporations, and the federal government while also exploring the role of architecture of a means of expression of identity.
The New Political Climate
Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission

“In invalidating some of the existing checks on campaign spending, the majority in Citizens United has signaled that the problem of campaign contributions in judicial elections might get considerably worse and quite soon.”

-Sandra Day O’Connor, former Supreme Court Justice

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The construction of representative democracy in the United States allows for individuals to make campaign contributions in support of political candidates. Similarly, privately owned entities could also make contributions, although under the control of regulations put in place to control the scale and impact of these contributions. While corporate involvement in government affairs is clearly nothing new, a recent United States Supreme Court
let's go ahead and get rid of this

architecture & identity
- government
- private industry

nationalism pride permanence neoclassicism
- vanity reputation adaptability modernism

public image
- public interface
- stability
- regulation

profit
- NOI
- law

iconography
- the storefront
- the forum

this needs more power!

Washington D.C.
- k street

lobbyists
- Congress

new typology?
- private
- public

hidden

transparent

ideally

the proposal
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A reevaluation of a mundane, yet extremely invaluable program that contributes to the diminishing of public influence can be the vessel through which
to explore greater ideas about the transparency of the system and how the public is exposed to it. By reinventing a lobbyist headquarters with the addition of a public government program, a financial archive, I hope to examine how transparency, both literal and phenomenological can be manipulated to expose a larger statement about public and private realms.

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corporations → lobbyists → influence → lawmakers → legislation
organizations → lobbyists
think-tanks → lobbyists

potential employment opportunity
The Changing Form of Public Buildings

This recent United States Supreme Court ruling (Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission) has legitimized corporate purchasing power in Washington D.C. As corporations have now been granted what is essentially the unparalleled rights of individuals, uncapped and unregulated campaign donations can, and will easily overshadow those made by individual citizens. As political success is closely associated with a large stockpile of campaign finances, the Supreme Court has, presumably, paved the way for the corporate buyout of elected officials. Clearly, the involvement of private companies in inner-workings of American law making is nothing new, and in fact the right of corporations to lobby the government is protected by the United States Constitution. This may be the case, but we really must understand this ruling as a fundamental change in the visibility of these operations.
Rethinking Perception
The specificity and simplicity of basic programmatic functions requires not a complete rethinking of form, but a re-imagining of its relationship to the public. This can be done by changing how program interface operates and how it is integrated into the public realm.
Barriers
The Changing Form of Public Buildings

The concept of a public building has changed over time as the influence of the private sector has grown. The traditional notion of government owned and operated buildings as true public space is a largely outdated one. It is more common that the perception of public space lies within buildings that are privately owned. There are contradictions in both cases with what a public building should represent in terms of accessibility, use and ownership.
The Proposition

In order to keep tabs on the investments of the companies that have been granted unprecedented access to our political candidates, the process of acquisition of these candidates, a process that normally operates behind closed door and under restricted access, must now become public. To ensure the continuation of our democracy, the public must have unrestricted access to any financial records that could potentially inform of the political agenda of any serving representative, and reserve the right to be company to any meeting between candidate or representative with a private institution where the exchange of money could be used to influence agendas.
The Site
Washington D.C.
Site located in the center of the Washington lobbying district
Downtown location provides central access to government offices
Existing site condition and underground Metro Station location
Panoramic view of McPherson Square
Existing site lines and access boundaries

Site Section
Washington D.C. Metro Expansion Plan

The Silver Line has two primary goals. The first is to link the District of Columbia by rail to Washington Dulles International Airport and the edge cities of Tysons Corner, Reston, Herndon, and Ashburn. The second is to spur urban development in Tysons Corner and reduce overall reliance on vehicle traffic in the business district, Virginia's largest and the 12th largest in the nation. The area is comparable in size to downtown Washington, D.C., but is rather insulated from its surrounding neighborhoods and has no existing grid pattern in its streets.
Office for Lobbying

An office for lobbying can serve as a setting to investigate larger issues of growing disparities in our democracy through an exploration of phenomenological transparency and the interface of private industry and the public realm. The separation of influence necessitates the need for interface to be re-examined as a system of checks and balances. Washington D.C. being the central location of our National Government serves as an obvious benefit for the numerous amounts of lobbying firms in the city. The number of lobbyist registered in Washington D.C. has more than doubled in the past five years as the industry continues to see remarkable growth. K Street, a major corridor running from Georgetown through downtown D.C. is largely recognized as the home of the lobbying industry due to the large collection of major lobbying firms, think tanks and advocacy groups along the way.
Centralizing Public and Private Interactions

The growing influence of private industry in lawmakers through lobbyists marks the importance of such iterations in the future of Washington. Presently, the interaction between lawmaker and lobbyist happens almost exclusively in the public realm. However, these interactions avoid exposure through the exclusivity of their location. Creating a centralized municipal space that harbors the conditions for these interactions in a heavily trafficked and conveniently located public facility makes a place where private influence in lawmaking can happen more efficiently, but also under increased scrutiny.
Examining Programmatic Relationships

The program exploration for the project focused on examining a series of publicly oriented programs and pairing them with private counterparts. This juxtaposition enforces the unique separation that between spaces that are designed for accessibility to many and spaces that are accessible to few. The relationship can be described by exclusivity. Spatially these places can operate similarly, but there is a clear distinction in the intended user base and user perception that creates architectural differentiation.
Connections
A layered system of program adjacencies generates opportunity for a system of multiple interfaces. The different program elements to be contained in the project allows for variation in the placement and proximity of specific program pieces, be they complimentary or combative. The amount of different permutations present in this arrangement grants the ability to test a variety of conditions ranging from different user interfaces, barrier variations, physical transparencies and material interactions.
Desired Conditions for Program Elements

With the program divided into three main user categories, different pieces of the project can be explored through layout and circulation. The first explored was looking at the rigidity of the grid as an organizational device for a repetitive element. The second exploration was using unique program pieces to manipulate a path through space. The last image looks at utilizing a single program as a larger organizing device that dictates the operation of the other program elements.
Connections

Different organization strategies have a direct relationship with the physical structures that create them. The first system is a regulated skeletal system that can be used for organizing repetitive elements. The second is an independent and internally structured system that is more adaptive. The third system is a regulating mega-structural system that is can be used to contain other secondary systems within it.
Design Strategies
Massing Iterations
Linear Coils

Three separate interlocking coils could explicitly control movement of user types while maximizing overlapping surface area.
Continuous Public Core

A continuous vertical public core can serve to organize the different typologies around a central circulation core, and maximize the variations of connections.
Public Loop

A public circulation and program loop could serve as a way of separation user groups while organizing the placement of programs around it.
Push-Pull

A volumetric pushing and pulling of the office and retail programs could create and interstitial volume of public spaces that blurs the boundaries between programs.
Public Divider
A public layer that divides programs tailored to the two main user groups creates a series of interlocking volumes where the public space is always a mediating interface between other programs.
Final Design Proposal
Design Conditions and Considerations
The first design consideration was to preserve as much of the exiting square as possible so it could continue to serve a greens pace in the downtown area and a public forum in the heart of Washington D.C. The second consideration was to preserve all access through and across the site. Not only does this apply to pedestrian access, but also to the visual access from the view corridor running down 15th to the White House. The third consideration was to compartmentalize the different user paths into three separate but intertwined loops. These loops can then be subdivided into different program pieces that interlock together to create different spatial and visual conditions.
Building in surrounding context
Building Organization
Individual strands of programmatic elements are combined to create three individual circulation loops. The weaving of the three loops allows for maximum visual adjacency while maintaining physical separation.
Program strands create user loops
Floor 1 Plan (Office Level)

Floor 3 Plan (Typical Multi-User Floor)
Logitudinal Section

[Diagram image]
Transverse Section
Connection to Park Level and Metro Station
Expanding/Contracting stands allows for circulation
Controlled lighting for interior strands
Strands act as support services at larger program cores
Layered spaces creates different material effects
Park Elevation
Interior Strands
Street Elevation
Lobbyist Narrative
Office Narrative
Public Narrative


