Architektur Markt/Marked Architecture:
A New Marketplace for Dresden

by

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This thesis is an investigation into the design and ideology of public space in the historical core of Dresden, more specifically, public space as it is related to history, commerce, and the monumental in architecture. The design of cities and buildings is always ideological, and the spaces within within which they sit and which they design—various physical, textual, electronic, media, and cyberspaces—are always marked and tainted by this ideology.

In the West, the design of cities is also linked to violence, and their construction always also represents their destruction. An astute awareness of this fact can produce Architectures and Spaces that can communicate some of what is invisible in any ideological action and representation, as architecture is both.

An essential part of this thesis is the research into the history of Dresden in Saxony in the former East Germany. After an intense investigation into the changing and evolving spatial and architectural make-up of the city, a site was chosen that was a locus for all the issues addressed.

The final component of the thesis is a programmatic theme that revolves around functions of the market space and the monument in cities. Historically, they both serve many different functions for all aspects of life in a city. The investigation will involve a design in which its conception, functions, and form are the direct result of and responses to the various types of spaces that cities occupy.

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The history of Dresden, the principal city of Saxony, is a tumultuous history. The founding of the first settlement on the site of the modern city known as Dresden might have been as far back as the early twelfth century A.D., and since that time scarcely a century has passed without the occurrence of a major upheaval to thoroughly alter the spatial character, configuration, and/or size of the city. It has known one destruction after another, due to fire and war; at least three revolutions, due to advances in technology and to changes in ideology; and the fancy of many leaders each with a desire to leave his own mark and imprint on the city with countless building programs and rebuilding programs. As a result of this sort of repeatedly interrupted development of the city, it has taken on various identities throughout the centuries in which its past has been consistently inundated by the present.
Modern Dresden occupies a valley along both banks of the river Elbe: Alten Dresden on the south bank, centered around the Neumarkt and the Altmarkt; and the Neustadt to the north with its focus around the market along the river bank. Interestingly, however, and belying their respective titles, the Neustadt is actually older than the Dresden lying to the south with its Roman grid, its orientation around a rigidly organized central market (Altmarkt) within a walled compound, and founded with a tollhouse that controlled access across the bridge along a busy trading route. What is now the core of the city, therefore, actually began as a device used for territorial and economic control which necessarily requires embattlements to protect its stake in such an imposition on the landscape. The city’s core and its original walls, however, originally excluded what came
to be known as the Neumarkt within which resided the Frauenkirche. This site which housed an even earlier church is thought to have been the location of a settlement existing earlier than that which came to be known as the Neustadt. This part of Dresden was later incorporated within the city, as was the Neustadt, with the erection of newer larger walls around the settlements in the late sixteenth century.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, much of the city was destroyed, having been occupied by the Prussians. It was shortly thereafter that the city embarked upon a very ambitious building program that saw the erection of a number of important Baroque edifices along or near the southern bank of the Elbe, the Zwinger most notably, establishing a monumental face as an entrance into the city from the river. From its multiple origins around the bend in the Elbe, Dresden had remade itself from a provincial trading outpost into a symbol of magnificence for all of Saxony.
fig. 9: map of Dresden from 1706, prior to the imperial building program and the Prussian bombardment and occupation of the city at mid-century. The old Rathaus (city hall) stands toward the north end of the Altmarkt in the city's core.

fig. 10: detail of 15th century etching of Dresden gatehouse through the city walls much like the tollgate at the river used to provide or deny access to the city and the exact payment thereby controlling trade through the region.

fig. 11: painting of Dresden (1650) by Untertteil von Abb from the Neustadt across the Elbe and showing the new city walls and embattlements along the river's edge which included the Neustadt as well as a settlement previously outside the walls around what is now the location of the Neumarkt and the Frauenkirche.

fig. 12: map of the block structure of Dresden from 1651 just after the processional wall (yellow) was added to the schloss along the corridor path leading from the Bridge to the Neumarkt. The Rathaus (red), reputedly an outstanding Medieval civic architecture, in the Altmarkt.
fig. 13: 1813 map of Dresden Neustadt and Alten Dresden just after the end of the French occupation and the removal of the walls around the city core. Shown is the figural ground of the city, including the Baroque architecture along the water's edge including the Zwinger (1), the Sophienkirche (2), and the Frauenkirche. This early nineteenth century map predates the railroad and the extensive changes wrought on the city as a result of rapid industrialization.

fig. 14: This 1706 map of the Elbe's south bank shows the Schloss (center) prior to the erection of the Sophienkirche (1), the Zwinger (2), and the Frauenkirche (3).

fig. 15: Painting by court painter from Italy, Bernardo Belotto, of the bridge leading into Alten Dresden; Sophienkirche in the foreground, the Frauenkirche in the background.
The nineteenth and twentieth centuries were also as thoroughly transformative as previous times in Dresden's history. With the rapid industrialization and growth that eventually took place in the last century and the early part of this one which brought, perhaps most significantly, the railroad through the city, it became something else yet again. Clearly, however, no one single time changed the physical reality as much as World War II and the firebombing of Dresden's inner core. It was an event that completely eradicated what had been known as Dresden up until then. The history and traces of the past still live on in the new city built upon the soil of the old, both in the newly constructed and reconstructed buildings as well as in the collective memory of its past. It does not disappear, but instead layer upon layer accumulates, fragment upon fragment, trace upon trace. All evidence may disappear and remain invisible, but absence still marks the surface.
The Altmarkt lies in the center of the city’s core and is the historical heart and essence of its existence. From Dresden’s inception as a post constructed to defend economic, political and geographic interests, it marked the center of a certain power asserted onto the landscape and its inhabitants. It was an ideological space that marked and controlled a river crossing and a crossroads. It is here in the middle of the city’s core that is the target site of this project.

By initiating the rebuilding of many of the city’s cherished baroque, nineteenth century, and medieval buildings, as well as through its reorganization of the city’s spatial make-up, the DDR struggled to monumentalize its approach to history in order to naturalize its ideological connection to it. As such, the state was able to not only...
fig. 23: map of prewar core of Dresden with the tightly gridded structure of the blocks and the narrow streets showing the two main wider roads crossing at the Northwest corner of the Altmarkt.

fig. 24: late 16th century Dresden

fig. 25: Dresden 1700

fig. 26: mid 18th century Dresden with monumental Baroque architecture in its place

fig. 27: postwar map of Dresden indicating the severe alteration in spatial character due to the complete erosion of the block structure and the streets.
physically restructure the daily lives of those living in Dresden and their relationship to its physical existence, but also to affect and invoke a new notion of space as infinite and flowing. Architecture existed within it, no longer defining it. Its radical re-shaping of the city's infrastructure around the automobile and the rapid construction of quick and cheap housing for those who had been left homeless by the war and the bombing left little of the original spatial character of the old city core in tact.

The emphasis had shifted from urban spaces to more sub-urban experiences; from the pedestrian to the car, from spatial sequence to movement through space. It became an ad-hoc agglomeration of incomplete housing schemes. Wherever the newly planned architectural,
fig. 31: Aerial photograph of the city’s core and the Altmarkt. The North-South axis is clear, running from top to bottom. Here, the Altmarkt is shown being used as a parking lot and prior to the construction of buildings marking the edge at the south of the market. Very little block structure and street edge can be discerned.

fig. 32: The primary axes still exist in the city’s historical core, but now widely expanded spatially, especially the east-west Wilschrufer Strasse, the crossroads that lie to the Northwest of the Altmarkt.

fig. 33: Here, a photograph of the North-West axes from the southwest of the Altmarkt, with a new building being constructed and which begins to confine space in the street and market by defining a clear edge, not a popular or common modernist technique.
much less defined and abstracted version of what had existed prior to the bombing. Attention shifted, partly of necessity, to a more generalized and thereby abstraced notion of collective provision, and away from the specific individual experience. As such, the Altmarkt is remade into a much more monumental space for mass demonstration instead of a smaller place for religious, commercial, and civic activity. The state sought to construct an entirely new architectural and spatial experience that, like its North American counterpart alienated the individual in the name of providing for his/her needs.

Redevelopment in Dresden in the re-unified German Republic in the 1990's continues on some of the moves begun by the previous regime, namely by continuing the reconstruction of the monuments of the past and initiating...
additional reconstructions. Moreover, like the previous attempt to completely remake Dresden anew, this new regime's own building programme proposes and attempts to remake the city but this time by (re)covering the past. The attempt is twofold: first, by utilizing New Urbanist planning techniques that recover the past's traditional building and spatial strategies in a renewed commitment to spatial definition for the individual experience; second, by (re)covering the recent modernist socialist architecture and planning, and thereby obscuring the past once again, but this time not in the clothes of something new and revolutionary. Rather, its presentation of itself, as are its strategies, is also covered by tradition and on the past. Such attempts, thus similarly alienate the occupants from history and the past.

Embarking on a programme of infill, the modernist spatial and architectural ethos is concealed and, moreover, bolstered by a predominance of architectural references to
fig. 42: siteplan of the project/intervention with the screen apparati arranged around the central (re)covered excavation.

fig. 43: siteplan with a disassembled configuration of the apparati no longer addressing the excavation in the center or self-consciously addressing themselves in the arrangement as a coherent spatial edge.

fig. 44: East-West site-section through the Altmarkt showing the excavation and the apparati here assembled at its edge.
THE FINAL PROJECT

styles of the past centuries. This historical alienation, furthermore, is twofold: The programatic functions of building developments newly constructed and proposed for the city’s core are overwhelmingly commercial and corporate. Owing to a reduction in population, and motivated to pursue development in the pursuit of residents and especially capital, the large majority of new development concerns itself primarily with the retail industry, tourism, or commerce. Rather than the traditional mix of residential, accompanied by the requisite retail and services, and commerce supported by industry, the newly configured and proposed core operates primarily as a tool to generate capital for remote corporate interests.

Viewed from this perspective, the newly refilled core is a hollow shell and the historicised architecture and and spatial
agendas as images to sell the past. The monuments reconstructed with the darkened and weathered original stones and masonry as well as pristine unweathered units, instead of representing a complicated approach to a more complete history (replete with its destructive goals), dutifully serves to authenticate this new version of history, seemingly to seamlessly connect past to present. This, like the previous epoch, in these great buildings, architecture, and urban planning of the present are monumentalized to represent the past.

Within the core of my proposal for a project in this site at the heart of the city of Dresden lives a similar urge to monumentalize, and thereby to edify and authenticate a particular history. It is a similar attempt
fig. 46: view of exterior L.E.D. screen, smaller ionized glass projection screens, and dimly, the interactive computer screens inside the second level.

fig. 47: oblique exterior view of L.E.D. screen, smaller ionized glass projection screens, and stair to second level.
to (re)cover the past with architecture and planning of the present by architecturally, programmatically, and symbolically redefining Dresden's central open space, the Altmarkt.

Like all previous architectural reconstructions and restorations, the primary and most permanent architectural motive of the project is the desire to recover a piece of history, here in the form of the original Rathaus (home of the Medieval civic institutions) in the Altmarkt. Reported to have been a fine example of Medieval non-ecclesiastical architecture, the ruins of this structure (having once been part of an
The heart of this project, therefore, would be to recover these ruins. But in order to avoid and criticize the 'official' appropriation of these ruins and in order to resist iconographic exploitation of them on the scale of the Zwinger or the Frauenkirche by the current and successive regimes, once the ruins were re-excavated and recovered, they would once again be re-covered with a new ground surface. Unlike a conventional earthen burial, capped by a symbolic and descriptive marker with a continuous spatial, textual, symbolic
relationship with the present, this site would remain unmarked, partially in order to avoid any romantic or nationalistic association with some mythic past a la Wagner.

Above ground, and surrounding this burial site on three sides is a series of apparati used, in part, to view ruins that now lie below grade and obscured by a layer of concrete. Defining the edges of the ap, these apparati also define a new central space of the city, a space within a space, an object within an object, as this core space had once been as a walled medieval city in the landscape with its central open space. They screen this new space from the rest of the now much larger space of the Altmarkt, and really all of suburbanized Dresden, by allowing passage below and sightlines through.
When assembled around the core, these apparati form a monumental building edge with an historical artifact composing the facade. All sides and parts of this ruin, however, are simultaneously visible, yet these apparati must substitute video systems for the real artifact, an image for the real object. The recovered ruins, historical evidence, is just out of reach and out of sight, yet always within reach and sight. It remains visible, yet mysteriously invisible, lacking presence. For all the monumentality of the assembled objects around the central space, what they signify is but a series of images, verifying only the presence of a now conspicuous absence, the historical truth. These apparati, then, are only meant to demonstrate this absence of historical verification. Unlike the Medieval and Baroque monuments reconstructed in part to grant an historical connection to the past, this
new monument refuses any facile reassurance that the present space bears any affirmative relationship to history. It assures us only of history's destruction and disappearance, denying any iconographic exploitation for our own peace of mind. The ruins themselves cannot be exploited for their reality and truth as all that is present are images.

Although they may be shown with the objective "eye" of the surveillance camera, no one may bear witness. They merely state and it is with this statement that we become aware of the real power of these images. It is not for their iconic value, their symbolic value which may be used to affirm the verity and validity of history, for we are made acutely aware here that history is a conglomeration of such images of the past somehow unified into a single vision. Rather, it becomes clear to us that the
true power of these images is not what they represent or say but that they represent or say at all. Here the architecture is made completely separate from its image and the image, evacuated of any content, betrays its freedom from itself and thereby only its capacity to speak, leaving that conspicuous silence. And such a silence here represents only this central space, an absence of monument with only an image of history to show.

With the apparati assembled at the central space constructed by their alignment becomes a space of recognition. It becomes a space of absence filled only by those who occupy the new surface. This new surface, then, operates as a hypothetical tomb, a possible burial ground meant only for desecration. To occupy the Altmarkt is to desecrate it and the
past, to act out a blasphemy of the sacred. The moment we observe or commemorate the history here, is that moment “History” is soiled and tarnished.

This space of daily life is a monument to history in the very instant it denies its own monumentality. Any romantic reassurance in some idyllic pre-fascist era as these ruins may seem to promise is now made even more remote by the knowledge that “History” always belongs to someone. Disassembled, however, the space becomes less coherent an object and begins to decompose. Once an object in itself, the space itself now begins to compose objects, where it was once composed, as the apparati separate themselves from the alignment and assert their own individuality as objects. Intended partly as shelters and anchors for vendors, each apparatus extends over a large area to offer
room for various vendors and activities beneath. In addition to providing a covered outdoor space, for marketing purposes they may be moved by the vendors beneath to any spot along its track to some ideally suited location in the Altmarkt. Moreover, each apparatus is supplied with four smaller video projection screens to be used for advertising purposes both by the vendors and to be sold to other businesses and services throughout Dresden. Alongside and slightly below the images of the ruins, therefore, will be the images of commerce.

The third programmatic function of the apparatus is more didactic in nature. Due to the growing tourist interests in Dresden since reunification, and the retail and commerce that serve, advocate, and promote its growth, each apparatus
may serve as part of a tourist center to educate and offer information to tourists of Dresden's architectural and artistic heritage. On platforms twenty feet above ground level which provide the shelter to the vendors below, each apparatus is to be furnished with an additional large L.E.D. screen. On these screens, however, the various architectural attractions of the area would be displayed inwards on the opposite facade of the apparatus as a sort of virtual tour of Dresden. If further historical or cultural information were required or desired, additional desktop computer-sized interactive screens would be available on each platform accessible by a stair attached to each apparatus. When aligned, a singular linear virtual tour passage from apparatus exists around the central (re)covered excavation.
On one face lies a service to tourists meant to be followed and affirmed by visits to the actual site of historical, architectural and artistic interest and further backed-up with historical data and information; and on the other face lie the silent ruins surmounting the more colorful, active, attractive and engaging smaller screens for advertisements: history and commerce on one side, entertainment and education on the other. On the inside lies the verifiable and legitimated past, the "history of the victors" as Benjamin would note, and on the outside lies the image which only promotes itself and its own proliferation, the images of the ruins and of commerce.

Amid this spectacle of images wander the city's inhabitants and tourists alike, one moment segregated and the next intermingling in the open market space. At any time one may
view the other among the images and realities of history and commerce. The daily life of the inhabitants mixes here with the consumption of the tourists. Time passes, days progress, and the present retreats into the past becoming history. All that remains constant really are the memories and the traces of the past in our minds. The passage of time is only evident upon the changing objects and people, what it means and represents however lies only in our collective knowledge and consciousness of the past. The only mistake of this knowledge is believing that it contains all experience, every history.
fig. 60: view below looking across and northeast in the Altmarkt.
Fig. 61
view from
south east
looking
across the
central
space.
Daniel Libeskind has something interesting to offer on this subject of the invisible.

I think one should not be too impressed by what is called ‘physical space.’ Physical space is good for physics: it’s not an architectural space and it is interesting that most architects still talk about architecture as if it were grounded in physics—not just Euclidean physics but also physics of the building. It’s clear that a building is not made out of glass and bricks—but is constituted by something else. It might be grounded on these
Hierarchies of material reality but that would be to say that human beings were based on fish or protozoa; of course they are but there is a difference between foundation and formation. And the foundation and meaning of architecture and space is not merely upon some image of the past or of commerce, the exploitation or consumption of that image, but upon ALL those who occupy it. Moreover, it is also the recognition that to construct architecture and space, as history, is always to desecrate it, to fragment it and all of those to whom it belongs.
Bibliography


Figure Credits


15. Bernardo Bellotto genannt Canaletto, 1758.


17. Bernardo Bellotto Gennant Canaletto, 1758.
