

White House Redux: NETworks
International Competition Entry

Interconnections among media, markets, and resources worldwide bring about a counteractive force against the super liberal environment it evokes. Particularly, there are democratic socialist movements that advocate social plurality in the global community. One of architecture's responses is the activation of international design competitions that spawn conflict around desires for historic hyper-preservation. The desperation to conserve cultural identity in a comprehensive environment places nostalgic value on aged buildings. The preservation of cultural identity by reverting to traditional forms and symbols is a predominate issue; hence the quadrupling of the endowments to the National Trust for Historic Preservation compared to those for the promotion of arts and design. The opening of intercontinental exchange by the globalizing economy forces the establishment of universal typologies. These structured methodologies are systems to deviate from and provoke the craving for inventiveness. Thus, this comprehensive fusion of nations is a catalyst new international design.

As a tool for reconstructing society architecture can aid the in redefinition of American society. Evident by the emergence of nation building, The United States shed its isolationist stance and began to reach out to its global neighbors. The sudden exigency for the nation building of Afghanistan not only questions what the American civil society is, but also challenges the conception of its own presence in the universe as a political authority. Coinciding with the change in Presidential administration 2008 now is the opportune time for inventing a new identity.

My design pursuit is to develop an architecture that is receptive of and provocative to a cultural context –one that is expressive of the fused world in which we live, while encapsulating a new identity through its iconography. In actualizing this thesis my plan is to compete in an international competition, specifically “White House Redux” (<http://whitehousereduct.org>). The historic prevalence and universal symbol of the current White House as a political authority make this particular competition relevant to my project pursuit. The 21st century White House invites the predicament of designing a cultural icon in a socially fusing world of erasing difference.

I will submit my new White House design by the competition deadline of April 27th, 2008. So my final research will not only discuss my evaluation of my final submitted material, but also explore how the international design competition challenged by personal theory. My plan is to investigate the ways architecture responds to a cultural context, given the environment of design competitions. Critical analysis of cultural iconography, pertinent to symbolic buildings, will aid my conclusions about the globalized environment's affect on design. The expansion of the architectural language into the comprehensive communities of political and economic world will open a new interpretation of an international design.

Jennifer McKenzie

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Honor's Project Proposal

The New White House: Competition Entry for the Home and Office for the
President of the United States

Interconnections among media, markets, and resources worldwide bring about a counteractive force against the super liberal environment it evokes. Particularly, there are democratic socialist movements that advocate social plurality in the global community. One of architecture's responses is the activation of international design competitions which spawns conflict around desires for historic hyper-preservation. The architectural issue of preserving diverse societies versus assimilating them appears when historic buildings are faced with formal alterations (Price). The desperation to conserve cultural identity in a comprehensive environment places nostalgic value on aged buildings. The preservation of cultural identity by reverting to traditional forms and symbols is a predominate issue, hence the National Trust for Historic Preservation having quadruple the endowments comparative to the Promotion of Arts and Design (Assistance to National Trust for Historic Preservation in D.C.). There are assertions that the specificity of contexts has been lost because of capitalism's global reshuffling (Davidson). However, renowned intellectualists have established universal typologies as structured methodologies to deviate from, thus provoking the craving for inventiveness.

First of all, the idea of the flattened global hierarchy is that this world consists of individual nations, which are indistinguishable at the universal level (Friedman). This

theory changes the conception of competition, and opens it to an intercultural exchange. The participative interconnection of communities that generates innovation, called “horizontalism,” is a specific factor of globalization that has spurred architectural design competitions (Friedman).

In addition, the phenomenon of the erasure of “social plurality” is evident in the field of architecture (Friedman). The formation of international practices and teams reveals that cultural and social boundaries are increasingly irrelevant. The advent of standardizations makes international relationships possible. For instances, norms, such as, the Euro and AutoCAD, are not limitations but rather a system to digress from. It is interesting that this unprecedented union creates a global knowledge or awareness in which to spark innovation.

Globalization is usually referred to in the economical or political sense to indicate influence of commerce overcoming national identities. Global levels of operation required the need for a universal communication. For instance, in 1995 the World Trade Organization emerged as a negotiating forum. WTO establishes rules and systems for economic development (World Trade Organization). Integration and assimilation are consequences of the globalizing economy and allows for intercontinental exchange. Thus, this comprehensive fusion is a catalyst of international architecture.

In the various fields of the arts music and film have long ago crossed national boundaries to share and contribute their creativity and innovation. However, for architecture there has always been the difficulty of experiencing a place without actually occupying it and rely instead on representations and interpretations in paintings, photography and drawings. The communicative difference between architectural

representations and the actual built space has hindered the ability for architecture to be recognized globally. However, the shift of a “local perspective” of a lived experience to a “global perspective” one is a specific factor of globalization that challenges the framework of knowledge and evokes global exchange (Ingold). This has changed architecture significantly in that the arrival of international competitions has increased foreign participation.

Historically, many public design competitions were created to evoke innovative projects that would improve the public realm, and actualized renowned civic buildings and public spaces. For example, the Spanish Steps, the British Houses of Parliament, and the Eiffel Tower were all products of successful architectural competitions (Collyer). As the globalized economy, grew the advent of competitions expanded into the realms of cultural, educational, and residential architecture. Over time social and cultural factors advanced competitions into the international domain. As a product of intercontinental economic and social correlation, competitions generated symbolic buildings of cultural value. For example, after the old Paris opera burned down in 1781, operas were staged at provisional venues at theatres (De Jong). Change in social circumstances required a more permanent solution. Napoleon III mandated the competition in 1860 for the L’Opera “to turn Paris into a city of imperial grandeur” (De Jong). The L’Opera constituted as a Parisian icon which came about by a desire to emphasize the emperor’s entitlement. Therefore, the final product represents a cultural icon of a new identity. How the image of the cultural specific icon manifests across diverse societies is a design challenge presented in the 21st century.

The effects of specific factors of globalization are directly related to international architectural competitions. As a post-World War II phenomenon architectural associations in European countries convinced their governments to mandate competitions for public buildings with a specified budget as an acceleration of design (Collyer). The desire for new identification streams from the devastated environment's desire for dramatic change, politically and artistically.

Architecture is a tool for reconstructing societies, evident by the emergence of nation building. The United States shed its isolationist stance and began to reach out to its global neighbors (Cabe). As a consequence of 9/11, foreign policy was exposed as a secluded system and forced political transformations. The sudden exigency for the nation building of Afghanistan not only questions what the American civil society is, but also challenges the conception of its own presence in the universe as a political authority. Coinciding with the change in Presidential administration 2008 now is the opportune time for inventing a new identity.

Internationalism blurs cross cultural boundaries, and it produces the antithesis of conservatism. Global interchange introduces the tension between historic preservation and cultural identity in design. For instance, in Washington, D.C. the designers must retain the original facades of old buildings downtown. Also additions must be differentiated from the historic building in order to produce an awareness of dissimilarity (Weeks). These conservative tendencies in design reveal the associations of culture to its forms. Restrictions prohibit contemporary architecture and deny the opportunity of new innovative forms and spaces.

Architecture is an idiom that expresses and explains cultural values, but also reflects the preferences of a given society. This includes the zeitgeist, or the reflection of present-day needs and prevailing tastes (Flagge). The prevalence of regression to a typical, conservative style in a diverse, technologically advanced society is not representative to the new age of world wide connectivity.

The competitive environment of international architects is generated by global communication. International architecture competitions signal social and political change, thus, are analogous with effects of an economically fusing world. This phenomenon makes international competitions an intriguing study of the change of architectural design.

My design pursuit is to develop an architecture that is receptive and provocative to a cultural context –one that is expressive of the fused world in which we live, while encapsulating a new identity through its iconography. In actualizing this thesis my plan is to compete in an international competition, specifically the “White House Redux.” Its historic prevalence and its universal symbol as a political authority make this particular competition relevant to my project pursuit. The 21st century White House creates a predicament of designing a cultural icon in a socially fusing world of erasing difference. Thus, how can the New White House proposal be designed in that the historic figure is de-authorized for the world today, while its composition reflects a lasting cultural symbol?

Considering my design proposition to de-authorize the White House means that I want to exploit its historic qualities by investigating its iconography. My plan is to develop the spatial, programmatic, contextual, and visual characteristics of the present

context in order to create a worldwide symbol that is responsive and provocative to American culture.

The new design will encapsulate the particular memorable qualities and relationships between the existing White House and the external spectators, the world's citizens. The President, the worker, the tourist have a different perspective to the redesigning of the White House. Fusing their points of views yields a collective quality and is evocative of a comprehensive community. How do visual impressions, spatial familiarities, and site relationships to other historic monuments combine to commence originality? New construction is derived from the original aspects of the White House yet expounded in a way that relates to globalized community.

The competition submission deadline for the "White House Redux" is April 20, 2008 and the Denman Research Forum, May 14th. So not only will the final research discuss my evaluation of my final submitted material as an investigative design, but also explore architectural competitions. My pursuit of research of international competitions will provide me with insight into the various ways architecture has responded to cultural context. The investigation and analysis will include case studies of the competitive environment of international architects, including competition briefs, submissions, selected projects and critical responses to the resulting built architecture. My plan is to research and critically analyze international design competitions in order to draw conclusions about the globalized environments informed social, cultural and political movements. The expansion of the architectural language into the comprehensive communities of political and economic world will open a new interpretation of an international design.

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