THE AMERICAN CONVERSATION

AN ARCHITECTURAL DEbate BETWEEN POLITICS AND THE PEOPLE
These American moments.
Moments that defined a nation.
Moments influenced by an idea.
1776
The Creation of America
1860
The Preservation of America
TODAY
Media: Technological Captivity
Lack of Traditions and Values
Lost Sense of Politics in the Public Realm
“Freedom and equality no longer exist in the traditional sense. They are fundamental illusions that prevent us from perceiving the truth of our technological captivity. The individual, freedom, and equality are vanishing right before our eyes; we are left with a hollowed-out image.”

-Richard Stivers, *The Illusion of Freedom and Equality*
“Shall we expect some transatlantic military giant to step the ocean and crush us at a blow? Never! All the armies of Europe, Asia and Africa combined, with all the treasure of the earth in their military chest, with a Bonaparte for a commander, could not by force take a drink from the Ohio or make a trach on the Blue Ridge in a trial of a thousand years. At what point then is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer. If it ever reach us it must spring up amongst us; it cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen we must live through all time or die by suicide.”

—Abraham Lincoln, Lyceum Address 1838
Our actions are consciously bound to the public realm. In the public realm is where politics is preformed and democracy could be realized.
“In politics, preservation and action, tenderness and the capacity to initiate come together.”

- Hannah Arendt
The Reichstag always remained a symbol of Democracy. Christo and Jeanne Claude in 1995 wrapped the Reichstag in 1,076,390 square feet of thick woven fabric to highlight its features and proportions of the imposing structure. The fabric, like skin, is fragile and “translates the unique quality of impermanence”.

Impermanence: Without exception, is transient, or in a constant state of flux.
The transparent dome, the cupola, also symbolizes that people are above the government. The structure, symbolic of rebirth, becomes a beacon on the skyline, signaling the vigor of the German democratic process.
American architecture embodies the ideas of democracy for which our revolution was fought and our Constitution created. Philadelphia embodies revolution and preservation of the political and public realm. That embodiment today is disappearing or a shell of the former.
Philadelphia, PA.