

## INTRO CRITICISM

The vision of public domain has been abandoned. The environment that we built around us is no longer a sufficient medium for us to grow as public human beings. This has been because of a digression of hundreds of years of public inactivity. In the era we live in, we see more public domain in the multi-use buildings that a majority of us operate in day to day. The people that dwell in them are forced to think of themselves as “in public” even if they are just in the elevator on their way to work. This unfortunately is a majority of the public activity that most people endure anymore.

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As well, most people think of the ground level of public buildings as a dead space. This is because of its attachment to the street. Richard Sennett describes in his book “Fall of the public man” that the space on the ground level is only being used as a passage to other levels in buildings where in the past, the streets were places that flourished with activity.

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**Under utilized, un-kept up, unsafe.** These words describe downfalls of most densely populated urban areas today. Whether it's a change in mindset away from the tragedy of the commons or adjustment in public safety, something has to change in order for us to inhabit these public urban spaces again.

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### **(SEPARATIONpublic/office)**

We fail to create this permeable fabric between our buildings and the public. We cover our buildings in glass to make it appear like we are connected with the public from the inside, yet there is still so much separation between the two environments from happening. Another Quote from Sennett states, “...we experience an ease of motion unknowingly to any prior urban civilization, and yet motion has become the most anxiety-laden of daily activities.” Stating that the most stressful part of our day could be our morning and nightly commute or public travel when it is faster and easier than it ever has been before.

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### **(Cosmopolitan stuff)**

I found that it does take a certain conditioned individual to interact in public with anybody. Sennett introduces the word “cosmopolitan” which was a quality used to describe a person, or a “cosmopolite” which was one that moves comfortably in diversity.

They are comfortable being linked to or being a part of situations that have no prior meaning to him.

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In the 18th century a Cosmopolis grew as a place where people would most likely meet in public and began to grow with one another, face to face. This is all also while being faced with the unknowingness of what may loom out in the public along with other people. Interactions of the modern time periods do not influence the cosmopolite to thrive. When we don't interact day to day with people we are losing our sense of interaction as human beings. The environment that is built for us goes underutilized. Thoughts aren't provoked and sharing of Ideas have been dismissed.

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## **John Hejduk's Critical and Poetic Architecture/Mask of Medusa/Victims**

### **(Mask of Medusa/ In Between business)**

When we begin to ask ourselves why it may be important for one to become a public individual it is necessary to view works from John Hejduk to self analyze what we are restricting in ourselves to do compared to the preconceived ideas of how to act. "The imperative of efficient technological control has isolated the architect from the act of making." a quote from Alberto P-G within its theme of criticism is transposed throughout Hejduk's works. Alberto states that the masques designed by Hejduk can be seen as a criticism of all evils because it improvises the emotional eloquence of urban environments.

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Hejduk however emphasizes the narrative. He argues that these works are constructed as built environments of the "in-between" world. These works are the space between the Mask and the face, hence the name "Mask of Medusa" or what he had named a collection of his most thought provoking works. The spaces that he describes and designs using literary language is the opening between hypothetical built worlds and what is real. The in-between of reality and what is imaginary.

The Mask of Medusa was a collection of projects that used language meant to lead the viewer to a greater comprehension of the citizen's role in the creation of ~"community". The use of models, sketches, and plans were also used to demonstrate

interaction with people and their environment. Some of which were for certain projects or for competitions.

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### **BERLIN MASQUE VICTIMS**

Italo Calvino, writer of the famous fictional urban spaces in his collection "Invisible Cities" A design competition opens with a description of one of the "Invisible cities" called Maurilia. This was to inspire the project for the Berlin rehabilitation project. This description was given to each participant before designing

*"In Maurilia, the traveler is invited to visit the city and, at the same time, to examine some old post cards that show it as it used to be: the same identical square with a hen in the place of the bus station, a bandstand in the place of the overpass, two young ladies with white parasols in the place of the munitions factory. If the traveler does not wish to disappoint the inhabitants, he must praise the postcard city and prefer it to the present one...."* This description of a city transformed is what gave Hejduk the idea for the Berlin Masque. Hejduk sets out to create a plan for a reconstructed site.

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When we begin to view the answer to the description that Hejduk provided, we can start to understand how his design process is carried out. In Mask of Medusa the first groupings of images provided are these two adaptations of site plans. One semi-axonometric view, and another plan with what appears to be a legend laying out the buildings that make up this township.

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We start to understand the project more when we read the list of elements and structures and see the sketches that proceed them in the following pages.

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Moving to a much deeper project but in close proximity, the entry for the 1984 Albert-Palais competition for the construction of a memorial park. The site of intervention is a former Gestapo headquarter adjoining the Berlin Wall, which contained a torture chamber employed during WWII. He titled the project Victims because he did not entirely wish to demolish the site to show its importance to its connection to the past.

The whole project is described by Hejduk as "a construction of time" with some of the structures he designed literally embodying the subject of the passing of time like the clock turntable, the pendulum and the cantilevered hourglass. The plan presented for the

competition is just one of the possible configurations among a large range of variables. Each structure, in fact, is not fixed in a single position, but can be contacted at three points becoming part of “a sort of pointal-connective tissue floating within a natural-grid”.

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We continue to see Hejduk's breaking down of the site plan with a list of the objects by name and number in relation to where they are on the site. The name is important because that makes the reader assign what it is used for within its site because for Hejduk, typology is reimagined in a more surreal way.

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“Hejduk has produced work that refers to the ‘world-as-lived’ our primary source of meaning.” Alberto says this because Hejduk's work is a figure to ground poeticism. Where-in as now we create a formula of architectural relation to the universe as a scientific prose and less like poetry. The literary imagination has been replaced. We have since smashed these cosmos and created a void of a technological utopia. The use of architectural elements in a poetic manner is the way we have attempted to connect that literary imagination back to what we have imprisoned so long ago.

“Everything that is, is known through language.” Hejduk's magical proprietary architectural technique introduces fear and admiration in a multitude of his projects. The masques have a mysterious sense of being to them because of the language he lays out for us. This form of architecture becomes a mimesis of a transcendental emotion.

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## **LANCASTER HANNOVER MASQUE**

Another demonstration of Hejduk's proprietary Architecture is The lancaster hannover masque located in Pennsylvania which instead BEGINS by listing subjects. Places like the “Hotel” and the “watch tower”, things that we can put our own images to in our minds. These are the objects that Hejduk relates to us by use of LITERARY LANGUAGE. Although it's possible to directly connect some of the drawings to their associated sketches, for the most part this is an involved process of dissection. It also bears mentioning that there is no comprehensive site plan for this masque from which to determine the overall layout of the project and the relation of the various elements to one another. This again emphasizes the meaning of the prior knowledge of these events described by literary language.

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The imagery is created in a poetic manner because it uses characters with purpose and a list of times that chronologically relates the subjects to its characters. This list of events is followed by scene sketches of these events. This is what makes this successful. It's as if we are walking in the Masque seeing people and being able to listen in on each conversation, each scenario, and everybody's doings. These Masques are meant to lead the viewer to a greater comprehension of the citizen's role in the creation of community.

'6:30AM to 6:30PM'

Events ranging from the specific and mundane

"The Summer Visitor holds up her mirror (1)... The Bargeman pulls in the rope (2)... The Transient sits on the edge of the bed (3)..."

To the deep and unseen...

"Lies are sealed (36)... Quiet (44)... Suspended (46)... Hollow guilt (58)..."

Hejduk's description of events proves to provide a deeper urban environment. I wish to also provide a deeper urban fabric for one of the great american cities.

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### **Site Information**

Chicago, a metropolis of culture, pride, and diversity.

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The culture, business, and activity throughout the city intrigues my project because the niche urban fabric that is downtown Chicago. This has potential to be an intensive, but a very rewarding study in urban community relationships.

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More of the metropolitan complex offers the ability to be more daring and eccentric as well, especially in a city such as Chicago that embraces the diversity, and artistic endeavors of its inhabitants.

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### **Site Specifically**

Ogden Plaza located at 429 N. Columbus Dr., named after Chicago's first Mayor, consists of a small plaza and stepped green spaces located north of the loop in downtown Chicago.

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The sculptural floor clock was designed by a Brooklyn Artist Vito Acconci a sculptural artist that focussed on the human experience of existential unease. His intent was for people to be able to sit with the numbers and interact with a minute hand that would float radially around the site, which unfortunately no longer exists. The scale of the large clock was important to instill drama when we reference the human scale.

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Though there are all of these positive attributes that are laid out for the site specifically, the site is also not very popular amongst people who would sit and visit but instead most just use it to walk through. Many people view the park as distasteful and unkept.

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In fact there is a video about it in which a local news team interviews the original landscape architect and they walk through mostly the negatives of the site and the regrets that they have about its downslide over the last two decades. Where problems of issues such as the misuse, and back and forth finger pointing due to faults of the neighboring businesses, slowly but surely, the site had gotten to the point it is currently at.

At this point, I'd like to discuss my project artefact

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### **Artefact**

My project artefact was heavily focussed on the "perception" of time. Each person perceives time at any given moment differently than one another. What makes that difference in perception between time is the relation of one event to another event. The way an event can feel longer or flash by quickly in the moment is our brains doing a good job at comparison to prior knowledge. Each event has a certain weight to it emotionally as well that can leave a mark in one's life. When reading events from Hejduk's narratives we can assign those perceptions in our own minds.

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When the artefact was performed, I played two regular yet different clock sounds ticking at different frequencies. The audience then read a list of objects and subject events based on what would happen in my project. As each event was read, there was a corresponding bag on the artefact that was cut open, releasing the weight of sand inside

and creating a third noise. The addition of the light, rain-like drizzle from sand hitting the ground added my third frequency of audible time. The focus was shifted to the sand falling under the dim light when each event was read.

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After the artefact was performed, what was left was the aftermath of the fallen events. With that pattern left on the floor, we were able to see what mark was left from the events. Blended together, one was not able to see which bag the sand had originally come from. All we saw was the collection of each event to create an environment at our feet. This is how the artefact came full circle back to my building site. Because of the site's current condition, we began to know now that it wasn't one thing that made the block undesirable.

### **The Manuscript**

For my project, and I can't emphasize this enough, to gain a more complete understanding, it would be important for one to read my project Manuscript. The manuscript contains novelesque writing that provides a basis on literary reasoning and understanding based on certain objects that operate within my site. The writing is the architecture. The reader's perception is the architecture.

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The Manuscript was written during the design process as my primary architectural study for the project. The writing was dissected as follows,

**The Block** - (The block was what I called the site throughout the whole thing, I focussed on writing about the existing conditions and what I had found when I visited the site and used those findings to influence my fictional writing.)

**Site Elements** - (Descriptive elements of the site, what was good, what wasn't good)

**Objects Before the Change** - (existing objects and subjects that operate within the Ogden Plaza block, perhaps my most important piece of writing. These characters provide the framework to give importance to my architectural images based on descriptive qualities and mental imagery)

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**The Spark** - (pivotal moment of change, what it takes to inspire change in a community)

**The Change** - (An Avalanche of descriptive changes that were made physically that would lay groundwork for the next events)

**Objects After the Change** - (How the objects changed the block, and how the block changed the objects. This is sort of the answer to the elements changing as we proceed. The answer to the architectural questions I was looking to answer)

**Results** - (The Coexistence and Resilience of Community and what it can provide for its inhabitants)

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As I said before (similar to Hejduk), my writing focussed on certain subjects that each provide their own qualities to the story and sometimes even some underlying narrative instilled meaning that is triggered by the reader. The stories that they told used their own personal observations to describe what the block had turned into. Where my project includes few of those elements in a visual format, the intentionality of language was the main tool for my design.

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At this point I would like to address the portion I had sent to everyone. The Child was an object in the story made to represent youth and light heartedness. Again the story was short and that was because of the child's overall life experience. It was pretty straight forward and black and white as far as what he described and what happened. I chose to share this story specifically to you all also because of its ability to be digested quicker by each of you.

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Again to gain a more full understanding of my project it would be important for one to read the manuscript which I would be happy to provide to anyone. **When we see that architecture is made possible by language, we begin to see what kinds of possibilities that architecture has through language.**

Thank you, everyone

*“The answer was meant to be answered through understanding”*

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**SOCIAL LIFE OF SMALL URBAN SPACES - WILLIAM WHYTE (1980)**

**+Fragment of comparison of works from Hejduk and Kiefer. - Wischer**