

Utopia and the Dirty Secret of Architecture

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Utopia is not a state, not an artists' colony. It is the dirty secret of all architecture, even the most debased: deep down all architecture, no matter how naïve and implausible, claims to make the world a better place.¹

–Rem Koolhaas

New York skyline, complete with the black towers of the World Trade Centre. These were so intensely peculiar-looking, in retrospect, so monolithically sci-fi blank, unreal, that they now seemed to Milgrim to have been Photoshopped into every image he encountered them in.²

–William Gibson

In the theorization of Utopia in critical theory two paths of development have been widely acknowledged. On the one hand there is the Utopian plan, or project, identified by Fredric Jameson (among others) as a sweeping design that claims to solve and negate a social and political situation, in favour of an actually built, and better one. On the other hand, we find the

Utopian impulse, a markedly different affair, having to do not with building a brand new society or revolution, but with a displaced, striving desire or “wish” to be something else under limited conditions, and a hint at a different future or unresolved present, an idea Jameson borrows from Ernst Bloch. This paper is invested in both varieties, from the already complicated and complicating perspective of architecture.

Of the arts, architecture does not function without a concept of progress, which is naturally linked to Utopian discourse. Architecture may indeed be the strongest site of imagining the future, because the discipline of building, the raw material of construction and the consequent unavoidable configurations of social space, are always focused on the world to come, as opposed to a mere literary or SF speculation. The Japanese architect Minoru Yamasaki’s career is revealing in this context because of the curious parallel dialectics of Utopia and dystopia we may read in two of his major works, namely Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis (1951-1972) and the World Trade Centre in New York (1972-2001). These works have both witnessed a profound reversal of their initial Utopianism, and in turn have problematized the meta-narrative of progress itself. Both works have become famous twice; first, for their individuality and originality, late modern projects that were Utopian and daring in scale, and second for the demolition or outright destruction of the very same works, for vastly different reasons.

The intention of this paper is not to provide an overview of the situation of architecture in the aftermath of the despicable twin events of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent Anglo-American invasion and occupation of cities in Afghanistan and Iraq, which characterise the current era. In fact, such an overview is virtually impossible. I do, however, aim to renew the critical context for the way in which the event of the rebuilding of lower Manhattan is conceived in public discourse, by reflecting on Yamasaki and, later, the critical architecture of Lebbeus Woods. The Silverstein-Libeskind project exemplifies colossal lack of imagination, a return to tradition using the form of a huge tower (a superstitious 1,776 feet high), difficult to justify economically, to effectively express power, prestige and American national history. My argument results in an opening onto a situation that is radically incomplete, messy and incommensurate. Dialogic, I hope, not monological.

The architectural development of Ground Zero, the site where Yamasaki’s twin towers once stood, has no choice but to be publicly justified in progressive terms, however misleading. Developer Larry Silverstein’s compromised adaptation of Polish American architect Daniel Libeskind’s design for the site provides us with a structure that is not Utopian, nor dystopian exactly, but radically nostalgic for the near-past (that temporality that is said to be least accessible to us). Nostalgia may be here understood as the in-

verse of Utopia, a groping for what was rather than what might be. The paper goes on to argue that in the work of Woods we find a critical architecture which proposes a fresh distance on the reality of construction that is going ahead. His refusal to think in already existing terms allows for a questioning of the deployment of architecture and restoration today. His own unofficial proposal for the site provides a rethinking of the mega-tower as a form, harking back to the avant-garde cognitive renewal of what architecture might be. In the spirit of Friedrich Kiesler and the Italian Superstudio group, above all we find a demand in Woods' "anarchitecture" that architecture be thought otherwise, theoretically endless, and perpetually unfinished and always negotiating a novel relation to the present.

Razing Radiant Cities

The "frontier of the sky" was one of modernity's great architectural conquests in the form of the tower and the high-rise, forms that have constituted the Ur-form of the late capitalist skyline. In his *Delirious New York*, Rem Koolhaas reflected on the Utopian value of these forms: "the Skyscraper as utopian device for the production of unlimited numbers of virgin sites on a single metropolitan location."³ Floor upon floor of identical rooms could now be created on a small land plot, the mass production of vertical space. Previously anything above level two was considered unfit for commercial usage and floors above the fifth uninhabitable. And it was a developer's dream come true, as is well known, to be able to multiply value so economically with the arrival of the inventor Elisha Otis' elevator in the 1870s, to turn empty air into real estate in the theoretically endless addition of floors that required no tedious legwork.

From the beginning this internal transportation machine lent itself to a community in immense layered grids floating above the city. Combined with the arrival of air-conditioning, its residential future was the state mass housing solution, on the one hand, and designer luxury apartments, on the other (the latter, tall and skinny, almost as if to reflect the model people supposed to live there). From this combination of technologies, what emerges is the possibility of a "street in the sky," a hermetic community columned high above ground, and a new form of congested existence. The most marvelous have shopping streets suspended inside, such as Le Corbusier's *Unite d'Habitation*. For the cognitive life of the residents it was a specifically "modern" experience that combines, in a sort of paradox that Baudelaire would have liked, intimacy and anonymity in the same space. Residents are close but apart, within touch but out of reach, physically present but emotionally absent. The characteristics of the modern street and modern

crowd are transferred into the sky.

Critics frequently associate the end of Utopia in modern architecture with the end of modernity itself, such as Charles Jencks and the numerous uncritical repetitions of his all too brief analyses. The modernist vision has been turned upside down in both real architectural projects that deployed the highest principals of Corbusian modernity and wonderfully dramatised as a “dystopia” in fiction, for example in J. G. Ballard’s novel *High-Rise* (1975), a narrative with a building at the centre which provides the means or possibility for the descent of young professionals into barbarism, and the social disintegration of the luxury tower they have collectively, initially enthusiastically purchased. Another dramatic example, complete with modern high-rise residents turning on one another in alarming and horrifying ways, is David Cronenberg’s *Shivers*, also known as *They Came from Within* (1975). The luxury tower will not be emphasised in what follows, however, as I shall endeavour to examine instead its opposite, the state mass housing solution. In particular, the fate of Yamasaki’s attempt, in Corbusian terms, at a “radiant city” of “machines for living,” in the immediate post-war years.

One of the many optimistic designs for mass housing of poor people after the Second World War was Yamasaki’s Pruitt-Igoe plan in St. Louis. Yet, it was a recognised disaster only a few years after its completion; there was evidence of disrepair, vandalism, and crime, and people who could afford to do so began moving out (most were forced to stay).⁴ When the project was finished in 1956 it was hailed as a great advance and even took home an award from the American Institute of Architects. But in 1972 it became a symbol of the separation of plan and Utopia in architecture. The five million dollars the Housing Authority spent to improve it did not really help (not enough money, even then). Then images of Pruitt-Igoe giving way to dynamite were aired as a “live” event on national American television. Progress came to mean – in the well-known reversal – demolition not construction. (Footage of the demolition can be seen in luxurious slow motion to the sound of Philip Glass in the 1983 film *Koyaanisqatsi: Life Out of Balance* directed by Godfrey Reggio.) The televised event was given iconic status by Charles Jencks: “Modern architecture died in St Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972 at 3.32pm (or thereabouts) when the infamous Pruitt-Igoe scheme, or rather several of its slab blocks, were given the final *coup de grace* by dynamite.”⁵ First three of the buildings were demolished, the following year all thirty-three of the flat-topped apartment blocks were razed. Looking at photographic stills of the event, today’s contemporary viewer may discern eerie retrospective overtones of the more recent spectacle of annihilation: the same architect’s later achievement crashing this time to

the streets of Manhattan on 11 September 2001. This was of course a destruction conducted by quite different parties for quite different reasons on a rather different kind of tower (that story will not be reconstructed here).

In Pruitt-Igoe Utopian plan became slum construction. The plan's demolition has been for over thirty years now the example of the failure of Utopian planning in architecture. (Countless other examples could be drawn from Eastern Europe, especially where such housing towers have not been torn down.) It is not a closed discussion. For years, at least since Jencks presented his argument in *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* in 1977, this moment has been deployed in articles, countless student lectures on modern architecture, and textbooks as *the* defining moment of the "death" of modern architecture. It has attained a cult status among architects and non-architects. The project was designed to create community through design. For example, Yamasaki combined open horizontal "galleries" on every third floor with "skip-stop" lifts (elevators that stopped only at gallery floors and that required residents to go up or down stairs to get to their apartments) with the intention of community construction, so that design would perform forced encounters between residents going about their lives. But it was not long before these innovations were widely known nuisances and danger zones.⁶ In addition, to save funds and house more people, services such as gyms, a green grocer, and playgrounds were removed from the plan, with the sole remaining artefact a community centre (which merely kept the Housing Authority rent collectors).

The most visible Utopian element of Pruitt-Igoe lies in its ideological association with the classical modernist vision, which had to do with abstract space and universal geometries, as opposed to the radical specificity of place, the identity and complexity of population, and situated need. The teleological belief held that the modernist aesthetic "proceeded triumphalistically from the new to the newest."⁷ The ever enlarging secular and technological enlightenment suggested "progress toward a perfected world was inevitable, making the past obsolete."⁸ For Yamasaki the teleology of Pruitt-Igoe was meant to distil down into the very bodies of its inhabitants: "[I]ts Purist style, its clean, salubrious hospital metaphor, was meant to instil, by good example, corresponding virtues in the inhabitants ... intelligent planning of abstract space was to promote healthy behaviour."⁹ But all this occurs within the structure of class society, so it is not necessarily tenable to compare the highest ideals of architectural modernity with Pruitt-Igoe, which was a state adaptation of such ideals, which meant poorer quality materials and often whole elements of the plan left out to save money. The Lakeshore Drive modernism of Mies van der Rohe in Chicago, which used the best of everything, including real estate and views, does not compare.

At Pruitt-Igoe low cost and low services were the primary design considerations.¹⁰ Therefore any association with “modernism” was ideological, because modernism, deployed neutrally, really meant “bourgeois modernism.” A deeply structural anti-Utopia was at work.

To be sure, any respectable analysis will seek to examine not just the design process but also the precise socio-historical moment of Pruitt-Igoe. It is the latter that has gone under-discussed in accounts of this phenomenon of architectural history, according to Elizabeth Birmingham, whose long essay tries to shift the old emphasis on design and the modes of reading, or inability to “read,” as was the case, that Jencks interpreted, onto another plane of thought. The complex had many problems that were not simple “design” issues, but social planning ones: “The final plan designated the Igoe apartments for whites and the Pruitt apartments for blacks. Whites were unwilling to move in, however, so the entire Pruitt-Igoe project soon had only black residents.”¹¹ Birmingham writes:

[T]he ascendant myth that traces the failure of high modernism to the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe by asserting that the focus on poor people’s inability to “read” high modernism, and hence Pruitt-Igoe, is not simply shifting the grounds of an argument that needs to be about race and poverty. It is also simply wrong. The residents of Pruitt-Igoe read and de-coded that housing project perfectly, recognizing it for what it was—an urban reservation which had the effect of containing and segregating those residents from the rest of the city and the city’s resources.¹²

Birmingham brings the notion of “structural racism” into the debate to contradict the comfortable picture Jencks had drawn that concluded with the high cultural problem of how different groups “read” architecture. In other words, the project did not fail because its users were not trained in reading architecture. Jencks posits the principals of modernism as primarily cognitive rather than lived, bodily, socio-economic, and racialised. Furthermore, as Birmingham reveals, “community never materialised” but not because of failed design but rather because of the actions of the Housing Authority, which rewarded tenants for informing on the activities of other tenants. Moreover, the commonest “crimes” reported were having an income or living with one’s husband.¹³ Without wanting to apologise for the architecture each building must be cast in light of a complex to do with processes that are at once social, racial, and ultimately linked to the realities of capital, ownership and distribution that lie at the secret centre of Utopian desire.

Freedom Tower or Sword of Empire

The critic and curator Okwui Enwezor was quick to critically connect architectural form and politics after the World Trade Centre twin towers were destroyed: “the skyscraper is today obsolete not because of its lack of functionality and efficiency, but rather, as a modern emblem of progress it has entered into a stage of uncertainty.”¹⁴ He writes, “today it may in fact appear not only conservative but also reactionary,” signalling a final end – theoretically, socially, practically – to the once marvelled “frontier of the sky.”

It is timely to note that Minoru Yamasaki’s WTC buildings were premised on a Utopianism of the West, the grand narrative of North America, New York in particular, as the centralisation point of world trade and emerging globalisation. Its full-blown destruction was a sure symptom of the West’s waning power, its openness to question. If today the tower as a form is heralded in terms of “progress” or “freedom,” as witness the rebuilding project, it is conceivable that the current regime has begun to exploit in architecture the collective, emotive impulses and reserves of pre-“war-on-terror” times that are still collectively at work, however unconscious, in the present. The rebuilding of Ground Zero in the image of a big tower is, to borrow from Ernst Bloch, a fascist technique, not to create anything new but to falsify or pervert an older (modernist) tradition. It is the mark of what Bloch called “non-contemporaneity,”¹⁵ and a refusal to confront the contradictions of the present, contradictions that question the definition of “architecture” understood as mere built object.

The “abstract and structurally daring” towers of Yamasaki’s WTC brought modernism to its apotheosis in New York upon completion in 1972 (incidentally, the same year Pruitt-Igoe was demolished). The edifices were twins so large they dominated the skyline but did not really “participate” in it, as Koolhaas remarked many years later.¹⁶ They exemplified what that theorist called “Bigness,” a condition of the large in which architecture competes with the city rather than contributes to it. Enwezor has argued that the events of 11 September 2001 took the comfortable West by surprise, with the strongest shift of the margin to the centre in our time. Of course the centre responded by invading two countries, Afghanistan and Iraq, and declaring a ubiquitous, absurd war on an emotion, namely “terror,” which has resulted in far greater bloodshed than the no less despicable New York and Pentagon attacks that left approximately 3,000 dead. Elizabeth Grosz is one theorist who encourages us to “*think* architecture otherwise,” which is at stake here, when architecture has strangely become America’s metaphor for returning to a solid ground that is likely gone for-

ever. It is a question

that cannot and should not be answered but must be continually posed, rigorously raised in such a way as to defy answers, whenever architecture ... sinks comfortably into routine, into formulas, accepted terms, agreed upon foundations, an accepted history of antecedents, or a pre-given direction.¹⁷

Trade remains the West's naturalised future (however complex and problematic the "West" may have become). The WTC was originally conceived as a kind of achieved Utopia of conspicuous elite trade, and gave strong, practical architectural form to the contents of the emergent global capitalism. Pruitt-Igoe has not been thought of as an antecedent for the new WTC. Yet, can we conceive of Pruitt-Igoe as an antecedent here? "World trade" would have to be radically rethought to connect, in Anthony Vidler's terms, to "the housing question that still haunts architecture and development on a global scale."¹⁸ The WTC – unlike that other great invention of the Cold War years, the Internet, focussed on dispersed information that could survive a nuclear attack on the US¹⁹ – was a big centralisation machine and thus prone to attack from its conception; arborescent, not rhizomic. Yamasaki:

[T]he legislatures of the two states [New Jersey and New York] directed the Port Authority to construct a World Trade Centre, to bring together the activities of private firms and public agencies engaged in world trade in one central location, thus facilitating international business contacts among the members of the foreign-trade community of this country's major port. The centre's intent is to provide communication, information, proximity, and face-to-face convenience for exporters, importers, freight forwarders, customs brokers, international banks, and the many other enterprises involved in world trade.²⁰

If the skyscraper as an emblem of progress has entered a stage of uncertainty it should be alarming that the winning design of the Port Authority of New York's competition held quickly after the event of destruction included a rhetorically strong (and very big) Freedom Tower. The name alone embodies an oxymoron, or the reification of "freedom" as architecture. As Koolhaas has suggested, the competition was not intended "to restore the city's vitality or shift its center of gravity, but to create a monument at a scale that monuments have never existed (except under Stalin)."²¹ It is an attempt to symbolise control, or a substitute for control in a situation of uncertainty.

Unavoidable in any discussion of these matters is the (now significantly altered) plan adapted from Daniel Libeskind's original design, which is in construction now: the Freedom Tower plus a circle of related buildings. His circle motif was supposed to contradict New York's famed modernist grid, a mere formal game that is a far cry from Grosz' call for "thinking architecture otherwise," which means going beyond planning a mere built object. His design won in a furore of praise for its rhetoric of memory and trauma and narrative of freedom, light, and memorisation.²² Indeed, there is also a visual rhetoric of the design that has to do with a refusal to acknowledge the heaviness of structures coming down into the street and city. The artists' impression of the Freedom Tower, widely circulated in the media, is a colourful, shining, almost floating installation, looking more like a giant hologram than an actually built, everyday mega-tower of glass and steel standing apart from the city. The narrative of an aggressive phallus has also been gently silenced, so too its function to perpetuate the hegemony of US global trade, which retains an aura of inevitability.

The Freedom Tower, with its monolithic spike stretched aloft, was apparently designed to mirror the nearby Liberty's torch, but rather recalls Kafka's imaginative perversion of her torch in the opening pages of his novel *America* that sees it replaced by a sword.²³ Symbolically, one might say, the spike reflects less the torch of enlightenment than it does the sword of empire, which reveals the project as a symptomatic one.

Building on the Existential Remnants of War

The intriguing and multifaceted, yet oddly under-discussed career of architect Lebbeus Woods has been characterised by a refusal to accept the continuation of architecture as it is. This subversive aspect is consistently so strong that his designs refuse the conventions of engineering, offering images that stand alone in the scene of architecture, as sites of impossibility. Woods is not a Utopian, however, and is less interested, as I see it, in jostling multiple or totalised futures into view, a task perhaps better suited to SF film and the novel as forms, than he is with indirectly indicating what he calls "indigestibility,"²⁴ an aesthetic based on the resistance to being consumed by a system. His drawings, models, installations and writings gravitate one towards the emergent and the new, but also the turbulent and difficult to consume past. One is aware of a deep effort to maintain the difficulty of the past, its complexity, a field of frictions that do not permit nostalgia to take hold.

Woods has been preoccupied with his own vocabulary of architectural thinking, mostly involving the oft-unstated connections between architec-

ture and war, which he bases, after the tradition of the “social body” and the “body politic,” on the human body in various states of damage and repair, the city as a kind of “war body.” In his many writings he claims the tabula rasa structure of modernism as a serious loss to society, arguing against the commonsense notion of restoration, which is a version of erasure. More complex states of time in architecture are possible. He writes: “Wherever the restoration of war-devastated urban fabric has occurred in the form of replacing what has been damaged or destroyed, it ends in parody, worthy only of the admiration of tourists.”²⁵ He proposes that ruins be deployed rather than swept up and cast aside, challenging the idea of always building on a clean surface, a modernistic absolute new beginning. Jencks expressed a similar sentiment for Pruitt-Igoe: “Without doubt, the ruins should be kept, the remains should have a preservation order slapped on them, so that we keep alive a memory of this failure in planning and architecture.”²⁶ Woods further notes that it would be comforting to find pleasant metaphors to describe the processes of “building on the existential remnants of war” but this would betray the work’s character. He proposes an architecture of “scabs” and “scar construction”, of “abrasions” and of healing as a deep process, not a “cosmetic” one. He writes in *War and Architecture*:

Ragged tears in walls, roofs, and floor structures created by explosions and fires are complex forms and figurations, unique in their history and meaning. No two are alike, yet they all share a common aspect: they have resulted from the unpredictable effects of forces released in the calculated risks of war. They are the beginnings of new ways of thinking, living, and shaping space.²⁷

The site of Ground Zero was quickly recoded as an “empty” space in the long, difficult clean up project in 2001. So, for Woods, the preliminary tabula rasa has already been realised, and the initial potential for embodied memory erased, meaning his proposal for the site departs from his rhetoric of “scar construction.” It was too late for that (the temporary tourist apparatus at Ground Zero notwithstanding). Yet, Woods has proposed an alternative to the Freedom Tower; diagnostic or critical, rather than symptomatic. The remainder of the paper will examine its pseudo-Utopian efforts.

In Woods’ own “intentionally abstract ... architecturally incomplete”²⁸ design for the WTC site he poses a provocation to a culture that cannot think Utopically, and whose only foreseeable historical future is the “more and more” structure of consumer capitalism, with its regime of celebrity and competition. The architect has been critical of the whole approach of architecture after 11 September 2001. He writes:

When the World Trade Centre towers fell, the only question obsess-

ing architects was who would be commissioned to rebuild them. What could have been a great moment of debate about the relationship of architecture to the city, indeed, of the state of architecture as an idea and practice, was lost. In its place was a media spectacle to which many of the best architects docilely submitted, sacrificing substance to celebrity. But that is it: in the emerging monological culture, one deprived of dialectic and dialogue, dissention does not count. You are either with us or against us. You are either in the game, or you are out.²⁹

It is no accident that Woods' own design – so intellectually stimulating, a bit playful – was not part of the competition and had to be independently published. It is a purely imaginative vision, not a “plan” or “finished form” but a concept.³⁰ In Jameson's terms, we could say it embodies the Utopian impulse, “that monumental part that cannot be the whole and yet attempts to express it.”³¹

Woods' proposal for Ground Zero exemplifies his anti-anti-Utopian position: it is a building that is in a state of incompleteness and “remains perpetually under construction, and its ultimate height is not yet known.”³² Again, connecting architecture to the realm of the living, not static, he deploys the rhetoric of “growing.” The architect proposes less a discrete built object than an organisational structure. Woods names it the “World Centre,” packed with rentable space: offices, public and private housing, as well as shopping malls, commercial facilities, sports and recreation, and so on, with several interlocking systems of internal mass transit that link to Manhattan horizontally underground. The main feature is a “vertical memorial park” called the Ascent that not only permits four experiences, but offers a complete rethinking of how architecture relates to the city:

The Pilgrimage (one month) is for the devout and consists of traversing a difficult vertical path through a series of stations, ordered by a narrative of the events and aftermath of 9/11. The Quest (one week) is for the ambitious and consists of a series of climbs up near-vertical faces, ledges, resting places, and camps ... The Trip (two or three days) is for the vacationer, with or without family, and consists of a series of platforms, lifts, escalators, interactive displays, hotels, restaurants, vistas, and educational entertainment ordered by the story of 9/11, and the histories of New York City, the skyscraper, and urban life. The Tour (half a day) is for day tourists and consists of a rapid elevator ride to the summit of the park.³³

Woods organises his vision/super-structure into a series of existentially distinct experiential layers. They range from the slow and difficult (“climbs up

near-vertical faces”) to swift intensities of experience (“elevator ride to the Summit”). The pattern of slow and difficult to rapid and satisfying would reflect the classical models of modernist and postmodernist critical experience, both experiences of which are embedded simultaneously in the building and that further register a collapse of critical distance of both. It is a subtle critique and does not propose a radically new system, but defiance of the singular temporality involved in the actually existing quick competition and reproduction of the site, which has been product focussed from the beginning. Most significantly, Woods remains an architectural thinker, not succumbing to the way out of the “expanded field” of today’s contemporary art. His work seeks an altering of conditions from within the discipline of architecture.

In a sense the project is an elaborate spoof on the conceptual limitation of designs submitted into the competition – the images in his proposal are high concept, gestures not plans, evocative rather than suggestive of the next practical step toward construction. The obvious exclusion of the word “trade” from the name of the building – the World Centre – inherits a strong sense of the globalisation of the late twentieth century but tries to remove the association of imperialism that Lenin, for one, connected to international trade in its highest form. However, as long as the so-called World Centre – as much as the United Nations headquarters – is located not simply in New York but in the United States at all, one has to seriously question its effectiveness as a contributor to a different kind of world, as architecture sunk in a quagmire of neo-liberalism.

This ambiguous proposal recommends the continuity of the (now reactionary, according to Enwezor) skyscraper to mega-dimensions. It recommends a critical state of perpetual becoming, reminiscent of Kiefer’s “endless house,” or Superstudio’s “continuous monument,” a brutally epic concrete structure that wraps across the oceans joining distant cities, but in the same thought recommends impossibility. The failure of Woods’ invention lies in its structural complicity with the skyscraper form itself, a continuation of the myth of Western society’s phallic superiority. Indeed, the World Centre is intended to grow perpetually and always be the tallest building in the world. The World Centre, then, like the Anglo-American “war on terror,” is conceived as having no end. The Centre is a monument therefore to the ideology of permanent contemporaneity, unlike, for instance, a monument to WWI that always has a delimited time period (1914-1918).

Earlier in modern history, we may conclude, we erected monuments retrospectively, when events ended, rather than when they began, prospectively. Possessing a definite beginning (2001) but no end the Freedom Tower resembles monuments to Stalinist leaders (think for instance, in the

Korean example, “Kim Il-sung, 1912-Infinity”). Woods, in line with the architects in the competition, has not conceptualised the “waning power of New York” (Koolhaas’ phrase) as the centre of contemporary culture in its properly global dimension, but he has offered a complicated relationship between architecture and time, notably from within the discipline of architecture, not outside of it in the freer, more autonomous and less commercial discipline of “art.” The subversiveness of his project is enhanced by its lack of seriousness on a highly serious topic. As the first stones of the new WTC building are laid, challenging the continuation of things as they are is imperative – which means finding ways to think architecture otherwise. Woods’ work emerges to show us that a rethinking of how things are, no matter how implausible, is still a possibility.

Finally, it must be asked, but not answered in simple terms, in discussions of the quick rebuilding of lower Manhattan, of the so-called “Freedom Tower,” where is the reciprocal debate, and reciprocal design proposals, about architectural reconstruction in Kabul, Baghdad, Falluja, and the other brutalised Afghan and Iraqi cities that have seen a kind of daily 9/11 on their streets in the past half decade? The best-resourced global building and architectural firms – the ones busily redoing the WTC, or creating the consumption-paradise called Dubai – have not been redeployed to rebuild the war-torn cities, to create fresh infrastructure, nor above all to propose architectural solutions to the “housing crisis which, unless addressed as a matter of urgency, could well assume catastrophic dimension.”³⁴ The funding of repression that is American military occupation has not transferred to the funding of new growth. The ancient question, the decision to build housing or munitions, weaponry or “livingry” (Buckminster Fuller’s coinage), remains a staple for any dialectical understanding of this severely asymmetrical architectural situation.

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NOTES

¹ Rem Koolhaas, “Utopia Station,” *Content*, eds. Rem Koolhaas and Brendan McGetrick (Cologne: Taschen, 2003), p. 393.

² William Gibson, *Spook Country* (London: Viking, 2007), pp. 96-7.

³ Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (New York: Monacelli, 1994), p. 83.

⁴ Alexander von Hoffman, “Why They Built the Pruitt-Igoe Project,” Joint Center for

- Housing Studies at Harvard University. Internet resource accessed November 2006 <<http://www.soc.iastate.edu/sapp/PruittIgoe.html>> (Unpaginated).
- ⁵ Charles A. Jencks, *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* (London: Academy, 1981), p. 9.
- ⁶ Hoffman, "Why They Built the Pruitt-Igoe Project," (Unpaginated).
- ⁷ Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity* (London: Verso 2002), p. 1.
- ⁸ Elizabeth Birmingham, "Reframing the Ruins: Pruitt-Igoe, Structural Racism, and African American Rhetoric as a Space for Cultural Critique," *Western Journal of Communication*, 16.3 (1999), pp. 291-309.
- ⁹ Jencks, *Postmodern Architecture*, p. 9.
- ¹⁰ Birmingham, "Reframing the Ruins," pp. 291-309.
- ¹¹ Hoffman, "Why They Built the Pruitt-Igoe Project," (unpaginated).
- ¹² Birmingham, "Reframing the Ruins," pp. 291-309.
- ¹³ Birmingham, "Reframing the Ruins," pp. 291-309.
- ¹⁴ Okwui Enwezor, "Terminal Modernity: Rem Koolhaas' Discourse on Entropy," *What is OMA: Considering Rem Koolhaas and the Office for Metropolitan Architecture*, ed. Veronique Patteeuw (Rotterdam: Nai, 2003), p. 107.
- ¹⁵ See Ernst Bloch, "Non-Contemporaneity and Intoxication," trans. Neville and Stephen Plaice, *Heritage of Our Times* (Oxford: Polity, 1991 [1932]), for Bloch's own account of the theory.
- ¹⁶ Rem Koolhaas, "White Briefs Against Filth: The Waning Power of New York," *Content*, eds. Rem Koolhaas and Brendan McGetrick (Cologne: Taschen, 2003), pp. 236-9.
- ¹⁷ Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside* (Cambridge: MIT, 2000), p. 59.
- ¹⁸ Anthony Vidler, "Architecture's Expanded Field," *Artforum*, April 2004, p. 147.
- ¹⁹ See Bruce Sterling, "A Short History of the Internet," *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, February 1993. Internet resource accessed November 2006 <<http://www.library.yale.edu/div/instruct/internet/history.htm>>
- ²⁰ Minoru Yamasaki, *A Life in Architecture* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1979), p. 112.
- ²¹ Koolhaas, "White Briefs Against Filth," *Content*, eds. Rem Koolhaas and Brendan McGetrick (Cologne: Taschen 2003), p. 239.
- ²² Nadir Lahiji, "Une Architecture Autre? Architecture in a Time of Terror," *Architectural Theory Review*, 9.2 (2004), p. 5. This article explores the destructive role of the image in current architectural culture through the notion of "architectural auto-immunity."
- ²³ See Franz Kafka, *America*, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir (London: Penguin, 1981 [1927]), p. 13.
- ²⁴ Lebbeus Woods, *Anarchitecture: architecture is a political act* (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), p. 142.
- ²⁵ Lebbeus Woods, *War and Architecture* (New York: Princeton, 1993), p. 10.

²⁶ Jencks, *Postmodern Architecture*, p. 9.

²⁷ Woods, *War and Architecture*, p. 19.

²⁸ Lebbeus Woods, "Taking on Risk: Nine Experimental Scenarios," *Lebbeus Woods: Experimental Architecture*, ed. Tracy Myers (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Museum of Art, 2004), p. 34.

²⁹ Lebbeus Woods, *The Storm and the Fall* (New York: Princeton, 2004), p. 19.

³⁰ Woods, "Taking on Risk," p. 34.

³¹ Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 4.

³² Woods, *The Storm and the Fall*, p. 77.

³³ Woods, *The Storm and the Fall*, pp. 77-8.

³⁴ UN Habitat press release, "Decade of Shelter for All in Iraq," October 2004.

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<http://www.womenwarpeace.org/iraq/docs/housingsymposium.pdf>, pp. 1-14.