Attractiveness and inventiveness in the public spaces

Getting started

For many, spatial attractiveness is one of the greatest sources of massive attention and civic agglomeration. In fact, this is what may have first drawn us to our favorite places. However, this —like any other situation— can be seen from two extreme opposed points of view. For instance, there are some who consider this need of attraction to be temporary and important only in the design process and beginning of the relationship between citizens and public spaces. From this perspective, after an urban space is introduced, material attractiveness should take a back seat to deeper and more intimate needs such as convenience and security. On the other hand, many other users keep asking for constant reinvention of those physical aspects that define places for open encounter. In any case, ordinary users, developers, authorities and designers are involved on this contemporary —and perhaps sporadic— dilemma.

Based on any statistic study —or extra sensorial intuition— we can presume that users with susceptible state of mind often prefer beauty than anything else; even if they never get enough comfort or safety to enjoy that loveliness. Correspondingly, it is doable that urban customers, which hold striking arithmetic intellect, over and over again choose to safeguard flexibility and speed of movements, in order to reduce as much as possible unpredictable risk of experimentation. However, this enclosure of twofold behaviors does not seem to reflect or correspond any longer to our cultural actuality in which technical innovation — probably as it did in the past— seems to be a medium or hyper-way to link and tie together contradictory senses of what attraction should mean, persuade and more importantly do.

Starting from an abstract, speculative, conceptual and maybe nonrepresentational conception, **attractiveness** is the bigoted perception of an individual, thing, place or idea as physically and/or psychologically beautiful by other people. For the purposes of this research we are going to focus our attention on those aspects of how a place is judged beautiful; aspect which are universal to all societies, while others are restricted to particular cultures or periods of time. The goddesses of beauty is an ancient topic which *Marlowe* explores with unequal splendor; the same kind of brilliance that *Calvino* give us on every single invisible street; supernatural female essences that make possible the experience of pleasure, through the perception of balance and proportion of stimulus.

How to understand the nature and meaning of beauty —natural and poetic— is a philosophical matter reserved to the discipline known as aesthetics[1]. What it makes relevant this topic here is the fact that morphological attractiveness have an enormous effect on how public spaces are judged, since the moment in which is recognized that beauty involves the cognition of a balanced form and structure that educes magnetism and appeal towards a person, scene, idea, place, etc.

Human sense of beauty is by definition dynamic; however, its effects can be studied by — how to avoid it— dividing its material characteristics on categories of visual analysis. Certainly, it seems to be more knowledgeable and experienced sit down and stay on silent by regarding the kind of ecstasy that beauty is; nevertheless, how could we enjoy the park if we would not built it?; is really nothing to be said about beauty? Could beauty still alive without anything been said? Blankness and inutility are impossible, impractical and unreasonable risks for those who claim to be responsible for shaping the spaces in which we live.

Deconstructing beauty —etymologically the term beauty goes back to the French *beauté*, which in turn is derived from a conjectured vulgar Latin *bellitatem*, formed after the adjective *bellus*, which neither originally nor properly designated something beautiful— is a lofty task worthy only in larger number of pages of text or none at all. That would be an extremely dense sample of literal surfaces of writing, just to cover an introverted behavior; manners

which revel a society terrified by the notion of limit and boundary. Then social order requires formulating sophisticated justifications of the truth where everything is uncovered but the truth itself; fear of imprisonment; panic of detention and perhaps other fears of confinement which citizens of a densely populated area such as New York City have repressed; the fear of restricted movement[2]. The notion of freedom is without doubt the first generic aspect in which we could think to address attractive aspect to any public space, particularly in Downtown Manhattan, where this research is taking place.

Coming from Germany Schopenhauer believed that the forms of the universe, like the eternal Platonic forms, exist beyond the world experience, and that aesthetic satisfaction is achieved by contemplating them for their own sakes, as a means of escaping the painful world of daily experience. According with him —and his followers — for the experience of happiness we need mastery of outer reality, which is represented in the search and mastery of the inner reality; reality that is symbolized in contemplation. For them beauty corresponds to the kind of life style that allows a sample space for **quiet contemplation** rather than eternal search.

In this sense, every single stimulus, incentive, encouragement, motive or code would produce clam, silence and stillness; the deeper inducement produced the stronger quietness observed. For example, memorial parks and waterfront revitalization projects usually follow up this kind of philosophical foundation to maximize feelings of peace, harmony and serenity. Nevertheless, does not this seem to be another kind of manipulation? Someone can argue that manipulation is to use that argument as a foundation of something else, but the main argument itself is a foundation of human beings that validates suppression of hope, expectations and optimisms to protect their supporters of pain. Evidently, this argument does not work for those who think that there is nothing wrong with pain. In fact, what they find attractive is to follow a line of investigation and life focused on new ways of pleasure which effects would neutralize and overwhelm pain by unveiling unlimited and unknown ideas and sensations.

Aristotle, for instance, suggests that happiness is the aim of life; he believed that the major function of art is to provide human pleasure throughout a **never-ending process** of research in which pain cleans up emotional barriers that systematize perceptions and restrict innovation. In the Poetics, his vast works on the principles of drama, Aristotle expressed that tragedy so stimulates the emotions of compassion and fear, which he considered melancholic and unhealthful. On this respect, he assumes that by the end of the performance the spectator is purged of its apprehensive way of thinking. In this regard, beauty has a therapeutic value that makes the audience psychologically healthier and thus more capable of happiness.

Aristotle did not determine the idea of the beautiful as a fundamental problem of art, he made a major contribution to this concern: he separated the beautiful from the good quality and linked on principle the beautiful with the creation of works of art; works that are evidence of the instrumentalization of the notion of freedom; the instrumentalization of the Senses; method of construction that makes accessible beauty to public coming from different levels of specialization and not only for those which internal richness allows them to keep themselves far away of constant experimentation without loosing deeper —perhaps intermittent— pleasure. Obviously, for whom opposes these terms a work of art anything can be twice removed from the truth of things, save for the image of a reality which fulfills nature's unachieved possibilities, objectives and meanings. The world of appearance which the artists or designers create is no longer judged by the values of the truth of being but is evaluated by the principles of the perfection of form[3]; notion of perfection based on the observance of basic rules of respect, justice, impartiality, independence and detachment.

This platform of reference has nothing to do with a discussion between objective or subjective conceptions of beauty[4]. It is not one additional banal confrontation of impotent academic bourgeois, which would pretend to be resolved in a third paragraph of metaphysical dialectics and fantastic metaphoric illusions; figments of imagination that simulate allegoric death of symbolism. This matter deserves an original answer which does not mean an ordinary answer written in an original way. It is not enough to enunciate the magical encounter. It is urgently required for our civilization —for my own subsistence and probably for yours— to understand what are the elements that may be included on the scene to make the *Angelus* real; it took time to build all the theoretical foundations that support the renewed logic of exotic metaphysical conjunctions. It is now time to make it happens.

Aristotle was smart enough to leave implicit in his ideas that creators who follow the norms of beauty and observe the formal relationships will create forms of beauty that correspond to objective criteria but not metaphysical. What should we do to create those forms of beauty that synthesize objective and non-objective prettiness? It is an open question, for which this limited space of dissertation only can suggest primitive strategies based on technologic innovations; series of sophisticated improvements that create beauty; beauty as an idea which promotes consensus by including multiple, opposite and parallel participations; by their participation in the idea, things are not only beautiful but more significantly attractive.

Is there an appropriate methodology to follow the mixture of subjective and objective, empirical and ontological elements? Did Hutcheson's Enquiry respond to this question? Possibly, it would be easier to adopt a radical —practically accomplished— position based on that is impossible to answer this question without begin to exercise our aptitudes and provide for our wants and desires; however, beauty is everything but a spontaneous or immediate feelings and to be efficient on this field we are not allow to forget, ignore or under appreciate the long history of formation of our ideas. Even the most uncomplicated sign of attraction, magnetism, fascination, enthrallment, and perhaps love, comes from extensive times consumed by discovering layers and layers of similitude and divergence.

For example, we call a place like our favorite one after we have been there many times and also once when it has been compared to other similar ones. The participative creative process of hybrid beauty requires plural operative artist's conscience; they must come across the vision of the beautiful to find the model and representation for his creation and even further and higher, by giving space for what is non-tangible and only intuitional perceptible; create souls within souls is a task and a pleasure which to skip or —even worse— pass over, a cause of very well knew internal and external frontiers, more than irresponsible would be miserable. Is this kind of miss opportunity a minor crime which does not deserve illegitimate judgment or sentence? In that case, we would take any position and this document would be just a piece of narrative —how depressing— exercise, rather than critical theory.

The term **critical theory**, in the sociological, philosophical and non-literary sense is very popularly exemplified by groups all sorts of work which have become more and more fashionable names for younger researchers. The Frankfurt School, *Michel Foucault*, *Pierre Bourdieu*, *Derrida* and some other feminist writers are attached by their emancipator interest, seductive use of grammar and social/cultural interpretation and critique. However, firstly, the original critical social theorists were Marxists, and there is some evidence of that in their choice of the phrase "critical theory of society" and secondly, they were openly connecting up with *Kant*.

Furthermore, in the context of both Marxist-Leninist and Social-Democratic orthodoxy — which emphasized Marxism as a new kind of positive science— they were linking by epistemological fights that claim a new kind of positive science. They declare to be different, but in fact, they are swimming in the same pool. For example, in the sixties *Habermas* raised

the epistemological discussion to a new level in his "Knowledge and Human Interests", by identifying critical knowledge as substructure on principles that differentiated it either from the natural sciences or the humanities, from end to end its orientation to social self-determination.

However, do we should care about their origin or favorite denomination? Personally, I hope not. In this context, some of those statements are relevant a cause of their value to identify liaison among notions of identity, attraction and inventiveness within the private sphere and within the public sphere as well[5]. Specifically, it seems to be appetitive to explore those ideas of how cultural institutions ranging from media to religion to scientific and academic work are used to shape identities, in order to visualize their levels of tolerance and their translation into possible political actions related to rebuilding public spaces process.

But not only cities need to be rebuilt and reconstructed. The effects of beauty in human society are highly evident with particular relevance in cities which economic base is not other than trade and commerce[6]. Madonna —one of our contemporary goddesses— has already said that everybody comes to Hollywood; everybody looks to look good. In other words, what night in your life could be more beautiful than the one in which you become the queen of the universe?

The expressions like "beautiful people" or "fashion people" are frequently used to refer to those who closely follow tendencies in fashion, physical appearance, diet, automobiles, training, music, literature, art, academic institutions, touristy trips, real estate, etc.; but there is not lunch free; the more refined is our choice the higher is the price that should be paid for it; to be and stay on the top of the hill has a considerable financial cost which may offer an image based and/or prestige which enhances their aura of success and power[7].

New Yorkers are globally known by their addition to commercial beauty and obsession of density. The City of New York is the most populous city in the United States, and is at the center of international finance, politics, communications, music, fashion, and culture. Every single professional related with the design field who has visited this place has something to say about it.

New York City is among the world's most important global cities, as it is home to a virtually unrivaled collection of world-class museums, galleries, performance venues, media outlets, international corporations, and stock exchanges. The city is also home to all of the international embassies to the United Nations, itself headquartered in New York City. It has a population of over 8 million people contained within 309 square miles distributed in five boroughs: Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island. Manhattan is the heart of the New York Metropolitan Area, which is one of the largest urban conglomerations in the world with a population of over 22 million.

Cultural diversity makes New York City attractive. The city serves as an enormous engine for the global economy, and is home to more Fortune 500 companies than anywhere else in the United States. The city is estimated to have a Gross Metropolitan Product of nearly $500 billion. If it were a nation, the city would have the 17th highest gross domestic product in the world, exceeding that of Sweden ($384 billion).

Goody Allen's island with a density of 25,849.9/km2 is by far the most densely populated county in the state of New York, as well as in the entire United States. The name Manhattan

("hilly island" or maybe "place of intoxication") is from the Algonquian languages of the earliest known inhabitants of the area. It is not a current matter to spend this narrative space in an impossible chronological resume, which can be consulted by each one on better bibliographic resources.

However, for the purposes of our shopping card of strategies to achieve attractiveness and inventiveness in the public spaces, it is important to remember that New York City, as many other American cities, registered an increase in population growth in the latter part of the last century due to a renewed interest in the urban lifestyle, a trend which began in the 1990s and has continued to present day.

It was thought that the September 11, 2001 attacks would initiate a new exodus from the City due to a fear of terrorism, but this has not come to pass. In fact, official statistic about population growth and rebuilding process indicate that residential activity is increasing, particularly in Lower Manhattan.

Lower Manhattan describes the southernmost part of the island. This area is defined as the area delineated on the north by Chambers Street, on the west by the Hudson River, on the east by the East River, and on the south by Battery Park and New York Harbor, also known as Upper New York Bay.

Lower Manhattan includes City Hall, the Municipal Building, the Financial District and the site of the World Trade Center. It is the third largest central business district in the United States, after Midtown Manhattan and Chicago's Loop. Currently, Lower Manhattan is rethinking and rebuilding not only its shapes but also its logistic structure including new activities that will bring vitality to the historic sites. The area contains many old and historic building and sites, including Castle Garden, Bowling Green, the old United States Customs House, the National Museum of the American Indian, Fraunces Tavern, renovated original mercantile buildings of the South Street Seaport, the Fulton Fish Market, Brooklyn Bridge, South Ferry, embarkation point for the Staten Island Ferry and ferries to Liberty Island and Ellis Island, and the Woolworth Building, once the tallest in the world.

Lower Manhattan is contained in the larger area, which New Yorkers know as Downtown Manhattan. What constitutes Lower Manhattan is partly a matter of perspective. In some cases, Lower Manhattan would be considered by some to continue somewhat further north than Chambers Street, to Canal Street, in which case it would include the Tribeca area, and parts of Chinatown and Little Italy; or to Houston Street, which would cover the gallery-laden SoHo, the former Five Points district, the Lower East Side, and the rest of Chinatown and Little Italy.

In general people form outside of Manhattan frequently thinks that there is nothing to be done in order to make the city more attractive. They believe that the city is attractive enough and even more than enough. Are they right or they are not? This question can be answer easily by using a statistic instrument and trusting on mathematic and arithmetic deductions. However, for our purposes would be more "attractive" to explore this question throughout physiological aspect connected with physical and morphological features such as visual perception.

Attractiveness and inventiveness

Visual perception is one of the senses, consisting of the ability to detect light and interpret it as the perception known as sight; visual perception takes into account not only patterns of illumination but also our other senses and our past experiences. Individual and group differences in visual perception, but most of the general processes of visual perception have been shown to be common, as opposed to being dependant on culture, although there are

specific instances where cultural variability appears to come into the game. It has also been shown that certain individual differences such as impairment of sight and spatial skills can also affect our visual perception.

The general goal of vision is to detect, as truthfully as possible, the features of our environment, particularly in urban scenarios where civic live happens. Urban peregrines need to find out what objects are present and where; vision is a matter of deriving an apparent understanding for unfinished data. Attractiveness is associated with how people perceive objects organized as patterns or wholes and also as collections of many separate parts. According to what kind of approach —collective or particular— followed it is possible to get very different readings. There are many factors that determine how we group or ungroup things according to visual perception.

Perception				
Collective	proximity	similarity	closure	simplicity
Particular	symmetry	regularity	smoothness	composition

Based on those aspects —and others — people judge spaces as attractive or not attractive for them. Even more, this process of judgment is changing continually and consequently, what it seems to be attractive today probably it would not be attractive tomorrow or in a couple of hours. However, it is important to create this kind of categorization to be able to operate in, and with the spaces. Truly, this assumption comes from the fact that this dissertation believes that culture is not more than symbolic systems and adaptive functions, which change from place to place.

Anthropologists conceive different cultures as defined by distinct patterns (or structures) of enduring, arbitrary, conventional sets of meaning, which took concrete form in a variety of artifacts such as myths and rituals, tools, housing design, urban design and city planning. They distinguish between "material culture" and "symbolic culture," not only because each suggests different kinds of human activity, but also because they represent different kinds of informations that require different methodologies.

Is cultural relativism important to understand the role of attractiveness in urban design as a discipline? Does our conception of culture something to do with the criteria that we use to distinguish beauty and beautiful things? These inquiry came to be answer positively after the World War II which implied that each culture had bounds and demanded interpretation as a whole, on its own terms; each one had to understand an individual's action in terms of his or her culture; that one had to understand a specific cultural artifact (a ritual or ceremony, for example) in terms of the larger symbolic system of which it forms a part.

Nowadays most "social scientists" reject, refuse and even repudiate this conception of culture, and the opposition of culture to nature. They recognize non-*élites* as just as cultured as *élites* (and non-Westerners as just as civilized) - simply regarding them as cultured in a different way. In consequence, social viewers contrast the "high" culture of élites to "popular" or pop culture, meaning goods and activities produced for, and consumed by, non-élite people or the masses.
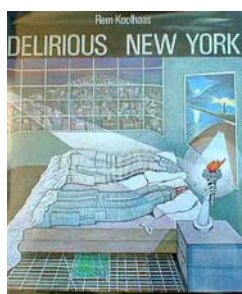
Nevertheless, academic in Germany, particularly those concerned with nationalist movements developed a more comprehensive conception of culture as "worldview". In this mode of thought, a distinct and incommensurable world view characterizes each ethnic group. Although more inclusive than earlier views, this approach to culture still allowed for distinctions between "civilized" and "primitive" or "tribal" cultures.

New York City can be seem as a city highly civilized (or completed uncivilized for those group that keep attaching themselves to romantic and nostalgic criteria of wholesomeness and even purity) It is possible to find ways of materialization stronger enough to attract both sides of the spectrum? That is the challenge.

In this respect, the sense of attractiveness is connected with three basic elements: standards, norms and artifacts. Standards include ideas about what in life seems important, those ideas that guide the rest of the culture; norms are expectations of how people will behave in different situations; artifacts and their use make up the technological subsystem. These three elements are relevant or not according to the belief of subsystem and who those systems govern interaction between people.

As a rule, archeologists focus on material culture whereas cultural anthropologists focus on symbolic culture, although ultimately both groups maintain interests in the relationships between these two dimensions. Furthermore, anthropologists understand "culture" to refer not only to consumption possessions, but to the general processes which bring into being such goods and give them meaning, and to the social relationships and practices in which such things and processes become embedded. The question is how we can formulate strategies of actions to achieve attractiveness into the public spaces; elements of attractions capable to operate in both level and dimensions of culture.

Moreover, they assumed that such patterns had obvious bounds. In the early 20th century, anthropologists understood culture to refer not to a set of disconnected products or activities (whether material or symbolic) but rather to essential patterns of products and activities. The 20th century also saw the popularization of the idea of corporate culture - distinct and flexible within the context of a workplace which is used to describe New York's social behaviors.

In general, New York's space offers social behaviors determined by presence of taller —perhaps athletics— body parts; desirable forms usually modified to enhance or disguise a feature —Apollonian operations— following the ideal shape of capitalistic power. However, each group, each urban area has its own consensus of ideas, beliefs, and behaviors and it is constantly changing over time; each sector has its own favorite song and people signs to associate themselves with the most successful groups within their society.

Delirious New York's cover,
By Rem Koolhaas

But what are the challenges of this creative process of cultural landmarks and symbols? Provably, we would argue that creativity and inventiveness occur when our world's great creative people have been able —consciously or unknowingly— to enter the portals of their higher consciousness.

Since the invention of the wheel to the jumbo jet, the novelty and inventiveness of the human spirit seem to come from a supernormal level of awareness found deep within people who are able to attune themselves, individually or in groups, to the higher consciousness. Even if you are one of those new "people on the go" when you find your way into your own higher consciousness, you will find yourself becoming much more creative, imaginative, inventive, and of course attractive.

The challenges of your life will find fresh answers and new, creative possibilities; possibilities you had not dreamed of prior to entering your higher creativity. This is the first strategy. We need to promote more and more our own creativity by understanding what the elements that make us rethink our conceptions are.

Nevertheless, the belief that culture comprises symbolical codes and can thus pass via teaching from one person to another meant that cultures, although bounded, would change. Cultural change could result from invention and innovation, but it could also result from contact between two cultures; two ways of thinking; two ways of feeling. Under diplomatic conditions, get in touch between two cultures can lead to people "borrowing" —really, learning— from one another —diffusion (anthropology) or transculturation—; it is hard to imagine any other kind of beauty more powerful than this one. On the other hand, under conditions of violence or political inequality, people of one society can "take" cultural artifacts from another, or impose cultural artifacts on another. In that case, it will be a diffusion of innovations and theory, a research-based model to present how, when and why we adopt new ideas.

Therefore diplomatic operations have very high prices, which make them an indicator of social and cultural status. For instance, "good" spaces present sophisticated details that can be strikingly attractive, even if they are superficially unattractive in appearance. But, this kind of discussion will drive us to the semiotics of ideal urban beauty. In instead of that kind of semiotic discussion, it seems to be important —at this point— to explore how inventiveness enhances quality of live, competitiveness and sustainability in public spaces.

Usually innovation is to be understood as having a wide range of outputs, including machines, devices, processes; but invention rests at one end of the spectrum of design and at the other end rests routine problem solving. Increasing specificity and predictability are associated with routine problem solving, and increasing boundary transgression is associated with invention. But, not only external transgressions; it is about transgression of every single certainty or security that each one seems to have.

Boundary transgression refers to psychological moves that cross the boundaries of past practice and convention, tying together academic disciplines in unexpected ways, redefining not only means but often the dilemma, and demanding deep-rooted beliefs about the limits of the possible. Innovation is the intricate practice of introducing novel ideas into use or practice. We live —again— in a historical moment regarding the development of invention and its influence on quality of life. Both opportunities and challenges present themselves; opportunities exist in our knowledge based and in our social fabric. We have a deepening understanding of the inventive care supported on accelerating research from a number of disciplines which have more and more flexible boundaries.

This moment of conflict is also a time of challenge. The first decade of the third millennium brings us into confrontation with problems of the environment, globalization, population, poverty, disease, and other areas. Invention can be seen in part responsible for some of these problems as well as for the benefits that our modern society enjoys. It is now our challenge to couple invention with a strong political spirit and to seek sustainable solutions to the problems confronting us. In other words, opportunities and challenges conspire to make this a period when it is increasingly possible and important to control human ingenuity. There is a journey ready to be undertaken more to be learned, directions to be discovered, and realizations to be pursued. Days or weeks or months may not matter, but decades will, and time on our human level is of the real meaning in a commitment to inquiry, instruction, and cooperation in the direction of a humane culture of invention.

Creative people, whether artists or inventive engineers, are often nonconformists and rebels. Indeed, invention itself can be perceived as an act of insurgence against the status quo — and status cool, which involves many other personal effects— required to have the social status that would validate and popularize easier and faster their ideas.

The creative use of knowledge is the quintessence of what is needed to achieve something as an individual or country in the contemporary world. Creativity and innovation depend on developing both individual and group aptitudes, with a constant tension and synergy between the two. These tensions here so that the choices can be intentional on the part of instructors and learners. Indeed, effective education about creation and inventiveness may involve a balance between both aspects of a particular dilemma during the course of the educational experience.

According with the Report of the Committee for Study of Invention, sponsored by the Emerson-MIT Program and the National Science Foundation is possible to visualize key relations where the tensions provide higher levels of inventiveness:

1. Disciplined vs. open-ended exploration: Inventive activity involves disciplined (convergent) and open-ended (divergent) thinking. They have potential to be both barriers and enablers for each other, and both are essential to creativity and innovation. There is no right or wrong way to resolve these tensions these all involve hard choices.

2. Cooperation vs. competition: Competitive forces can be potent motivators and powerful inhibitors for learning about invention and for invention itself. Cooperative processes are essential to design, engineering, and invention, which can be destabilize or reinforced by aggressive dynamics. Competitive pressures and cooperative partnership are both essential to innovation in the real world.

3. Reflection vs. action: Time and space to reflect are indispensable to creation, but so too is quick exploration and intensive experimentation.

4. Preparatory learning vs. just-in-time learning: Key principles and concepts need to be learned as part of a core curriculum in any domain, but exchange of ideas among inventors reveals that substantial learning happens just-in-time and just-enough basis.

5. Extrinsic vs. intrinsic motivation: Innovation is driven by both the extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Neither can be ignored. Extrinsic motivation related which audience, target, financial profit are attached to those intrinsic motives which usually are impossible to control, manipulate or ignore; they are what they are and in terms of invention our mission must be oriented to provide them freedom and real features.

6. Evaluative assessment vs. supportive facilitation: To promote inventiveness, supportive mentoring appears crucial, which points to the need to differentiate and balance forms of feedback given those who want to innovate. It is requiring a relationship where searchers could find both elements: judgment and sympathy.

7. Outcome focused vs. process focused: The plans to generate a final artifact and the importance of having a successful learning experience are frequently in tension particularly because there are time constraints on the experience. It is important to learn how we can preserve this tension but at the same time is important to experiment them separately.

In conclusion, the report identifies a dilemma as having three elements: 1) Clear choice; 2) The choices have important consequences; and 3) Decisions, once made, are in important respects irreversible.

Unscreened urban spaces

The terrorist attack of 9/11 in Lower Manhattan, the subsequent anthrax attacks, and the frequent alerts of imminent danger of more terrorist attacks have created challenges to urban design which are unparalleled in American history. These challenges have included

not only developing strategies of urban intervention to help people recover from exposure to terrorism but also helping then to learn to live with the daily knowledge that future attacks are almost a certainty.

It seems that what it means to be psychologically normal in New York City —which may have always been a bit different from everyplace else— has changed because it is a time of constant anticipation of terror. Of course, New York is not alone in its expectation of future terrorism. Almost every day public spokespeople tell the American people that terrorism will occur again in America and at a totally unpredictable time and place. It may be New York again or Washington. But it could be Chicago or Philadelphia, Atlanta or Dallas. Some day one of you may be faced with the kind of catastrophe with which the greater New York City area is still managing. Every body must be ready. Any design propose or urban master plan is clearly damage to unpredictable and instantaneous —which maybe is not new but is evident now— destruction.

How can we design a new playground but keeping in mind that could be destroyed at any time? Should we just keep living without thinking about this permanent possibility of death? Should we ignore the effects of destruction because they are unavoidable? Certainly, we should find inventive and attractive answers to this question, in instead of basic positive or negative assumptions.

Moreover, it is impossible to anticipated a disaster —particularly on the scale of 9/11—, but what we can do is to enjoy present times as much as possible. It is what Christo and Jean Claude called "emergency of experimentation". When the Gates opened in Central Park this year, they said that short-term permanence accelerates the desires of experimentation and consequently a deeper perception of the phenomena. It is urgent to learn how to operate on, in and from states of emergency where all the accidents happen, where coincidences make sense, where you would not have to speak any more and just feel. This kind of operation will produce not only attractive forms and inventive programs but also emotional landscapes of experimentation.

According with Rem Koolhaas, New York State of Mind is a kind of euphoric party, as if architecture had been squeezed vertically not by real- estate values but by the eagerness of people to get together on a small island and laugh it up: a champion of what he called "the culture of congestion". Koolhaas argued that the glory of the city lies in the exceptional, the excessive, and the extreme. These ideas are evidently expressed in "Delirious New York," a pleased love sonnet to Manhattan that challenged predictable thinking in urban design. What we can learn from disasters it was anticipated by Koolhaas. We need to learn how to perceive an opportunity to identify stories like every singular journalist, filmmaker, writer, musician or any other professional who works between reality and fiction.

Lower Manhattan lived a particular situation of chaos that generated and reveled new opportunities to think and do things. It would be a long way to describe the physical context of those spaces of opportunities. However, in order to avoid classical —and tedious— dissections of urban characteristic this part is filled with two images that give a sense of what they are and why they are unscreened opportunities of action.

Giraffe, Salvador Dali

Urban hermaphrodites,
Maria A. Villalobos H.

Strategies and actions

Restoring and Renewing Lower Manhattan's Transportation Infrastructure is one of the most important sections of the general vision for Lower Manhattan. The Department of Transportation leads the process which not only acts on local terms but also in global scale by rethinking regional and international system of connection.

The priorities for Lower Manhattan are the reconstruction of downtown's office towers and streets is the rebuilding of the area's antiquated and damaged transportation network. After September 11, 2001, state and city agencies, with the contribution and inventive vision of world-acclaimed architects, urban designer, artist and urban citizens, put on the subject of designing and planning a numerous of simultaneous construction efforts to improve transportation and lay the foundation for the community's future growth.

Firstly, it must be said that the followings considerations are completely impartial in terms of architectural judgment of the projects themselves. What it is interesting for this research, is the idea of system of action to improve a neighborhood in different level of interest. In this sense, the relations among the projects are absolutely open to each interpreter. What it is presented here corresponds to the menu of what it is going on in Lower Manhattan. All the relations between these actions and the previous theoretical background are going to stay invisible for methodological reasons.

World Trade Center Transportation Hub is the most famous one. This area includes local and regional actions. For example, the new PATH Terminal designed by Santiago Calatrava. This terminal will expand the capacity of this vital link between New York and New Jersey. Additionally, it will provide important transit access for development occurring on the WTC site; and finally, it will be a new architectural icon of Lower Manhattan's redevelopment. On this level of local actions, it is important to mention the New Fulton Transit Center, which rationalizes and improves current subway service.

Furthermore, The City and the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation are studying Airport Access to John F. Kennedy and Newark Airport. The initiative will guaranty not only regional and local accessibility but international as well. The plan is for a new tunnel to be constructed under the East River, where stations will be located in Lower Manhattan, Downtown Brooklyn and Jamaica.

Additionally, there are other local initiatives related to provide accessibility and openness. For example, firstly, the Whitehall Ferry Terminal, this terminal will accommodate 70,000 daily ferry riders in order to improve transit access and pedestrian circulation and provide important inter-modal connections to subway; secondly, the Battery Maritime Building will be a new gateway to Governor's Island. The restored façade will reflect original exterior and architectural character; and finally, the South Ferry Subway Station will upgrade of problematic subway platform and Staten Island Ferry.

Another important project in terms of accessibility is the reconstruction of West Street. As the residential population continues to boom in Lower Manhattan, the New York State Department of Transportation (SDOT) has set its sights on improving pedestrian traffic flow at the busy crossroads of West Street (or "Route 9A") and Battery Place. The $70 million "Promenade South" plan revamps the basic configuration of West Street's wide lanes and Battery Place's car-centric layout to provide the community with wider sidewalks, pedestrian plazas, a bikeway, and plenty of greenery.

Other sub-actions related to new bus facilities and ferry service are being implemented as key means of linking Lower Manhattan to the region to induce **synthesis fragmentation** between existing and new system.

Another field of action to increase Lower Manhattan attractiveness is promoting Commercial Development. Lower Manhattan contains 229 commercial office buildings; 49% is rated Class A, 35% is rated Class B, and 16% is rated Class. Majority of the financial core built prior to 1960 and in addition to that there is a New Class A space underdevelopment on WTC site and in Battery Park City. In order to merge and promote the consolidation of the financial district the city is executing a program of streetscape improvements that would create a safe and inviting Financial District, upgrade lighting, paving, and outdoor spaces in the Financial District, implement a distinctive district paving and lighting plan, reclaim Wall Street for pedestrian use and introduce a water element along Broad Street to act as security and recall historic aspects of the district.

Technologic aspects are being taken under consideration in order to rebuild the existing neighborhoods and build new ones. Bellow Chamber Street there are 6,560 new residential units completed since 2000 and between now and the end of 2008 the city projects approximately 11,000 new units. The growth in residential development is changing the character of Lower Manhattan. New residential sub-districts are developing which will complement the existing commercial cores.

The City's urban design goals include: A) Connecting neighborhoods; B) enhancing east-west access; C) improving public open space; and D) revitalizing the East River Waterfront.

The East River Water Front project is particularly interesting. Lower Manhattan's waterfront is on of its most under-utilized assets; an unscreened spaces —one of those giraffe that I personally like to call "urban hermaphrodites"—; the East River has long been an under-utilized asset, major initiatives underway to improve access and reconnect to the water. This project will complete the Manhattan Greenway by connecting the Battery to East River Park and enhance access to the waterfront. These urban design plans propose to find new uses to enliven the city's edge.

The Urban Design Challenges of this project are: Provide connections from each community to the East River; reinforce the use of the water's edge; develop a clear and consistent waterfront strategy; provide a green link to connect the Battery to East River Park; enhance the future gateway to Governors Island; and link upper harbor parks together to form a network of open space around the river.


Reintroducing historic landmarks   Open access to the waterfront   Improving existing streetscapes   Adding new attractions
East River Water Front. Department of City Planning, City of New York

These urban master plan contents most of the aspect related with attraction and inventive mentioned before. This initiative will create a new waterfront destination where now is nothing to be visited. It is a discovery; it represents the visualization of beauty where others saw shadows and darkness. These beautiful spaces —for beauty itself— will bring now activities and dynamic to the city by using all the resources that technologic innovation provides to solve daily problems. It is more than urban design; it is poetry, but a practical one; the kind of poems that become "real" to serve and enjoy their own existences and the ones that others experiment through them; it will provide **cosmogony experimentations**.
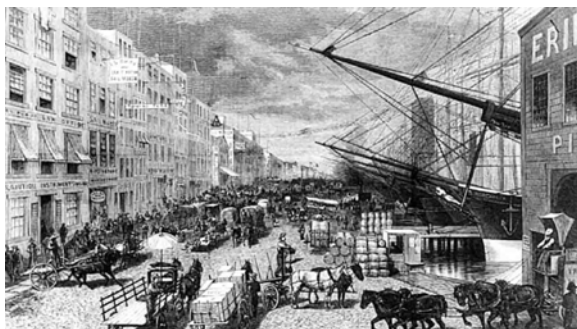
Yesterday   Tomorrow
East River Water Front. Department of City Planning, City of New York

Lower Manhattan's Future is unpredictable, because is still damage to destruction; nonetheless, should we sit down and set back to visualize and document how things are destroyed —or not built—just because it does not make sense to build something that it would be destroyed again? Unmistakably, I do not agree with that kind of passive isolation of human motivation that claim to be looking for perfection by describing perfection like something far ago from humanity.

We not only should keep building and rebuilding realities but also understanding that perfection is closer to action than inhibition. Lower Manhattan is vital to New York given its existing building stock, rich public transit, diversity of uses, and urban amenities. The success of Lower Manhattan in coordination with New York's other business districts is crucial to the health of the region as a whole. The exciting redevelopment initiatives underway in Lower Manhattan will ensure that New York remain a dynamic, world class city for decades to come.

Why we want to keep values of attraction and class in cities? Does it a matter of civilization? Well, the answer is absolutely personal. However, cities are collective systems. In that case, is not this process fatally susceptible to political moments and decision maker's interests? Of course, yes. But, perhaps, the third —and not less important— strategy —to keep in mind— is the significance of **skeptical faith**. Innovators may be smart enough to understand decision maker's ways of thinking, cultural behavior and background in order to manipulate them. Although, the designers and planners may believe on themselves without reason and act with as many reasons as possible on their hands.

Build, destroy and rebuild are very familiar processes for humans —not only in terms of urban design—; it is beautiful to see how every new reinvention tour, every update version of the process synthesizes previous exceptional artifacts; it is depressing to accept how exceptional stories and places disappear for incoming or overcoming actions; it will be —hopefully— extraordinary to see how new stories get built over the same time —which is the only constant element in this equation— and space —which is never the same—, even if we should still have to deal with the danger of destruction; destruction is just another opportunity to create logics and landscapes even more attractive and inventive than the previous ones, particularly exacting when you have experimented the urgent pleasure that fragile permanence induces. We should believe enough to act and we should not to design.

It is fair to recognize that this document is not a scientific exercise or fictional piece of work; it is possibly both; perhaps neither one. Should I include more numbers, dates and names to validate my conjectures? Technically yes, but, one megabyte would not be enough to show the bases that made possible this kind of speculative document. In this sense, I prefer to trust on your own astuteness which will tell you that spontaneity is something absolutely absence on the structure of this performance. Many other things can be said on this respect, however —due to logistic restrictions— this document stops here but, with a bit of luck, not in your mind, heart and hands.

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[1] Aesthetics (also esthetics) was described by *Robert Schumann* as the philosophy of beauty and art. Thinkers and sages have pondered beauty and art all over the world for millennia, but the subject was formally distinguished as an independent philosophical discipline in the 18th Century by German philosophers. Before this period authors viewed the study as inseparable from other main topics, such as ethics in the Western tradition and religion in the Eastern.

The term critical theory was first used by the Frankfurt School (i.e. members of the Institute for Social Research of the University of Frankfurt, their intellectual and social network, and those influenced by them intellectually), to describe their own work. Since then, it has become a broad term, encompassing work done across the disciplines grouped as the humanities. Among the fields grouped within the designation are Marxist theory such as the Frankfurt School, psychoanalytic theory such as the work of *Jacques Lacing*, semiotic and linguistic theory such as *Julia Kristina* and *Roland Bathes*, queer theory, gender studies, cultural studies, and critical race theory. However, the boundaries of critical theory are far from clear. Recently Critical Theory has also been defined as the field of Discourse Theory by *Kate Love* and *Anthony Waller*.

Others claim that this is an oversimplification for the purpose of having a clear beginning point to something that doesn't have one, and point out that *Michel Foucault* and *Jacques Lacan* had been writing for decades when *Derrida* presented his paper, and are clearly now considered part of critical theory. Still others point out that the roots of all of these works lies in the work of *Friedrich Nietzsche*, *Sigmund Freud*, *Karl Marx*, and *Ferdinand de Saussure*. Others go back even further. *Herbert Marcuse* in Reason and Revolution (London, 1941) argues that critical thought began with the "negative philosophy" of G.W.F. *Hegel*. Others see the origins in the thought of Immanuel *Kant*, or even in ancient philosophy.

[2] Take for example, the case of *Serras'* Tilted Arc, an aesthetically beautiful form. The public art controversy surrounding *Serra's* work revealed a dynamic tragedy, of which *Serra* himself could not recognize. In encountering the Tilted Arc, people were denied easy access to their place of "work", this expanded their love of freedom and mobility. In coming face to face with the fear of restricted movement, the people fought vehemently for their freedom.

[3] Plato's conception of beauty is at the origin of much of Western aesthetic thought; however, it often was not the original conception which exerted an influence, but the modified form which *Plotinus* and Saint Augustine gave to it. *Plotinus* dealt with the ideal of beauty, not only as a problem of metaphysics (as Plato did), but also as a fundamental problem of art (which Plato did not). His combination of the two perspectives considerably influenced the interpretation of Plato's ideas in the subsequent centuries.

The starting point of *Plotinus'* theory of beauty is the dualism of mind and matter, or form and matter. Matter is metaphysically described as a principle of privation; matter is undetermined, indefinite; it is non-Being. This negative definition is made, however, with regard to being; it implies that matter is the want of form, order, determination.

[4] In the domain of plastic arts J. J. Winckelmann's (1717-68) enthusiastic and eloquent praise of the exemplary beauty achieved in Hellenic art (it embodied the very norm of beauty) is a famous instance of the founding of beauty on the art works of classical antiquity, an instance which was all the more influential as Winckelmann wrote an epoch-making history of the art of that period. His perceptive, novel, and ingenious interpretations be came justly famous, and the two criteria "simplicity and serenity," which he added to the already established norms of beauty, were still echoed in nineteenth-century classicism. It was *Nietzsche* who later opposed the Dionysian element in Greek art to Winckelmann's Apollonian vision; and the expression of profound, universal emotion, as well as the sublime, to the beauty of appearance and illusion.

[5] A major focus of critical theory, which should be consider in future dissertations is the one related with the process through which dissimilar identities are developed. Major thinkers on this question include *Lacan*, *Louis Althusser*, and Martin *Heidegger* must be taken in consideration.

[6] A survey conducted by London Guildhall University of 11,000 people showed that (subjectively) good-looking people earn more. Less attractive people earned, on average, 13% less than more attractive people, while the penalty for overweight was around 5%.

Another recent study contends that not only are physically beautiful people perceived to be more intelligent than unattractive others, there is evidence to support the belief that they actually are more intelligent.

[7] Is power another generic notion that induces attractiveness? Certainly, it is. There is a not doubt about it. But we do not want to go that far for now; an anthropologic and morphologic visual study of the public spaces and their meanings in terms of politic power is a future mission that would come as soon as an experimental trial of exotic methodological and metaphysical conjunction gets started.