There is no security

Antonio Zedda

there is no security ... one stop(-ped) bank(-ing) ... text(-ure) ... memory mask(-ed) ... monumentality renders little

Antonio Zedda is a recent graduate of the University of Manitoba. This project was part of his Master's thesis which questioned the relationship between the cemetery as a place of death within the city and the death of the city itself (through abandoned architecture). He is currently working in Vancouver for an architect who lets him use the fax machine.

Summoned one evening by a message from two young men attending outside (Castor and Pollux, to whom he had just dedicated a lyric poem of praise), the Greek poet Simonides retreats from a banquet and its guests, only to witness their untimely death with the sudden collapse of the hall's roof. The destruction is so severe and the bodies so mutilated that family members are unable to identify those killed. Simonides, by recalling the seating configuration of the guests, reconstructs the order of the bodies for identification. The tragic absence of the face and its recollection: the image of the no-longer relevant and yet still relevatory body ensues as Simonides evokes a "place" and faces no longer present. The present smoulders in the ruins of the banquet; what remains beneath becomes encoded through a fragmentary collection of image and rubble (memory) to become the foundation for a prosthetic, mnemonic body: a new structure whereby recollections are deposited for safekeeping
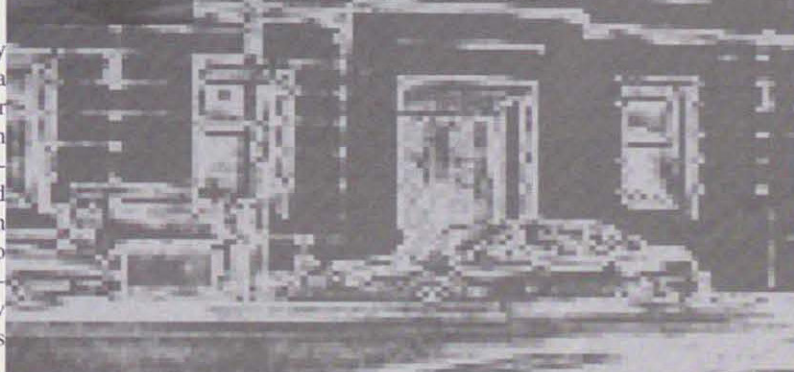
Diary entry
...phenomena of the visitor, viewer, and voyeur informing the building's representation through individual interpretation. The installation could encompass the foyer between the two facades. The mandate of an exterior portal then becomes more clearly defined. The original, almost ceremonial passage through the foyer, is fragmented to become both the space of a reduced bank(-ing) and as an intermediary (between the street-presence, and the banking hall-absence.)

In October of 1993, four fragments where inserted within or on the former Bank of Commerce building in Winnipeg, which has been vacant since 1969. The bank was opened for five days, with the intent that its discovery would infect the public with a memory behind the facade.

En octobre 1993, quatre fragments furent insérés dans l'enceinte de l'ancienne Banque de Commerce de la ville de Winnipeg inoccupée depuis 1969. La banque fut ouverte cinq jours durant avec l'espoir que sa redécouverte sensibilisa le public en lui infusant un souvenir des lieux derrière la façade.

Diary entry.
...consider somehow re-presenting the monumental bank through the vehicle of an automated banking machine.... A didactic video monitor as mimicry of the virtual teller screen? Its intent: to limit access to the building, suggesting that its grandeur, texture, and monumentality are no longer a relevant means of communication. One's experience is reduced to mere passings with a virtual teller. The visitor, entering with expectations of grandeur, is faced with only a small, smooth space at whose terminus is found a babbling screen.

Absence refutes memory as it embraces oblivion.

An emptied architecture dominates a street impotently: the (bank) building succumbs to the image of its skin, while its misplaced corpse lies vacant within.

portal:1

Monday A note on my table reads... "...need some photos of downtown Winnipeg for a studio brief; shots of architecture, preferably modern: Portage & Main, etc...."

The rather simple *portal* becomes a foil for the bank. Its intention is never to compete with the overbearing Main St. facade, but rather to reveal, through adjacency, its richness and complexity. 'Suspended' in front of the existing facade, the portal calls attention to both itself and to the bank facade which surrounds and frames it. The muted form, texture, and detailing of the portal draws the gaze from its own banality to the richness of the surrounding facade. The reduced opening, a three by six foot doorway, alludes to the 'standardized' passage-way (a standardization independent of occasion or function). The single-width doorway reifies the accepted convenience of autonomous and anonymous banking: no longer is interaction neces-sary to city/banking. Behind the intervention, heavy, and ornate bronze doors stand heavy and redundant. Entry is reduced to mere function. The original signifier recedes: its significance dictated instead by a contin-gent, somewhat less illustri-ous character.

outdoors, below and around, is an artifact from the history of this house, a tiny child's chair with a straw seat. To the right is an inner door leading to an entry behind an extremely heavy door, ornate and windowed to the rickety

There Is No Security

...(postponed parking lot) past ... monumental
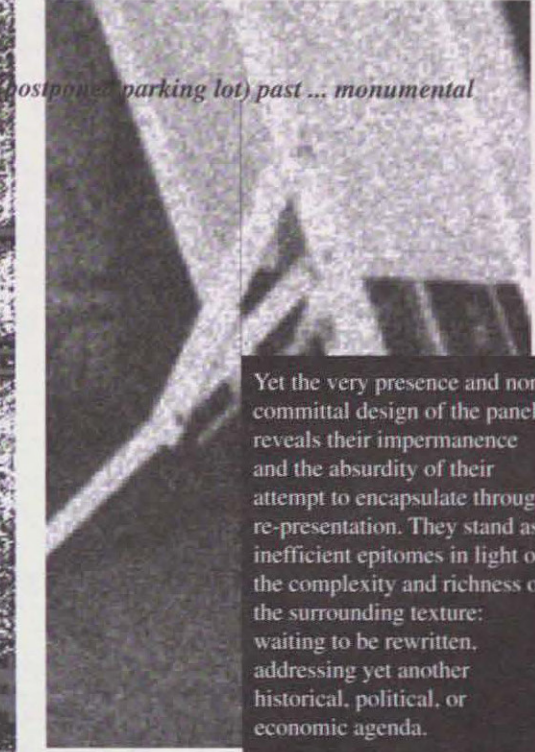
The *text panels* inhabit the foyer as arrogant, yet relevant, sentinels. Of the four fragments introduced within the bank, the panels stand alone, independent. They represent the phenomena of the bank as experienced. They are an insertion which proposes to redefine the bank in terms of a historicist agenda. One reads the text in the hope that its revelatory interpretation can provide an understanding of the surrounding text(ure). The *Flaneur* no longer confides in experience as a valid means of interpretation. The visual sense dominates as the means of interpreting a readily prescribed denotation. The foyer no longer guides one along its axis in preparation for entry into the banking hall. Instead, the panels mimic and (naively) encapsulate experience, as if there were no perceivable bank, by suggesting a meaningfulness arising only through a history as text

Yet the very presence and non-committal design of the panels reveals their impermanence and the absurdity of their attempt to encapsulate through re-presentation. They stand as inefficient epitomes in light of the complexity and richness of the surrounding texture: waiting to be rewritten, addressing yet another historical, political, or economic agenda.

But they also unfold the tenuous myth of the bank building, of the experiences and times no longer present. They bridge the unknown past with the experienced present. Perhaps the building is capable of preventing the text from dominating the phenomena of its reality (past or present). The 'fragmentation' is here reversed: no longer is the building reduced to a salvaged column or cornice, appropriated by historians who bestow upon the fragment a new totality through a denoted text. The *text panels* placed within the bank become fragments (of an already fragmented architecture): the information offered (text, photographs, and drawings) builds upon the phenomena of experience but never are they permitted to dominate.

...the words 'Modern' and 'Architecture' seem to occupy only a small portion of my thoughts this morning as I think about Winnipeg's centre. 'Dormant' and 'wise' are perhaps better suited.

In an absence of occupancy, a building continues to accumulate presence. Its volume and materiality absorb the invisible time of the city. A photograph of one's lover reveals no action, no direct use. The value lies within its ability to attract the gaze; for the gaze attracts a different temporality....

Thursday Driving north on Main Street, empty lots and 'for lease' signs pronounce a new era of growth. The words of my grandfather echo within: "...In those years [1927] we would walk from the Canadian Northern up Main Street to the Canadian Pacific. *Nella differenza di un paio d'anni, la citta.....* In the space of a few years the city witnessed the cycle of death and rebirth with every demolition, with every new construction. *Era un citta non pensavo esisteva....* It was a city I did not know could exist in such an unforgiving land. *Mentre che camminavo sul marciapiede....* Walking on the east side of Main, the streets were filled with bank clientele as the grand stone facades were content to withdraw and deposit..."

instant teller:3

The *instant teller* draws visitors from the other three fragments with a desire to dominate. It clearly understands the intentions of the facing *text panels* (sentinels). It places itself firmly within the frame of a doorway. The bank's monumentality is challenged and eventually effaced by the tellers assuredness and the unwavering attention of the spectators. One's experience is reduced to limited interaction with a virtual teller. But rather than presenting a language of monetary doublespeak, the screen reveals a different *account*. It gives voice to a bank which was concealed for 24 years. The device so maligned for its propagation of a virtual environment at the expense of a real one, is suddenly subverted. It provides a voice where one had been absent: *There is no security....* The double meaning of the phrase points both to a bank which no longer functions and an 'economic' reality which threatens the very security associated with the monumental stone (structure).
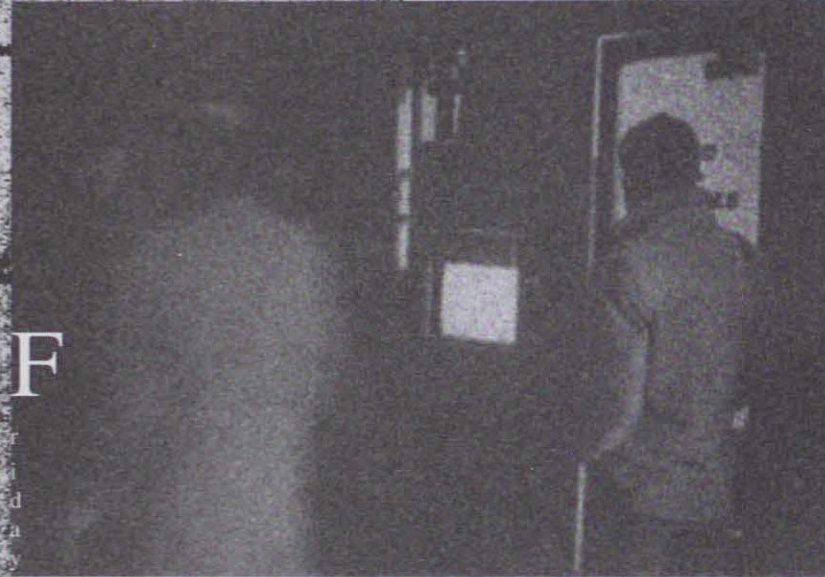
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My camera neatly records, reworks, reality. The snapshot is a naive embodiment thrust by completion into another kind of time: the unconscious, a time forever replaying the gaze one discovers in the yellowed prints of one's grandparents or a forgotten first communion. In an alley behind Main Street, a middle-aged man hauls plywood from a brick building. Conscious of my stare, he wants to know why I am taking pictures. I explain. He pauses, unsure what to make of the camera or my response, and then moves closer. His name is Walter. He abandoned his farm, in the Interlake, 15 years ago to find work in Winnipeg. He is neither 'modern' nor 'architecture,' yet I accept his invitation to experience a different type of architecture behind the facade and photographs.... Walter worked the land for fifteen odd years; washing, combing, and cutting the green grass of the prairie. Time stretched out horizontally for Walter as he toiled with tractor and thresher; always on the surface: never above. The painted sky melted daily, as blues deferred to a hue of reds: staining the edge of a retiring canvas. Surveying the sky, Walter felt a gravity to its horizon, to a surface he assumed venerated his tenure. How could it not with all the caresses, now but shadows of farmers' footsteps and tractor treads. One autumn day just as falling leaves parted for a destination far from home, Walter left for the city. Winnipeg becomes his new lover. The flat land traded in for vertigo, vertical towers, and an elevator. He secures employment as a building superintendent in an old bank building on Main Street, working the passenger elevator, up and down, up and down within the walls of facades, faces, and fate. His office in the damp, crowded basement protects the fingered postcards sitting pinned in the corner of a translucent mirror: memories of a prairie past. Yet it is the elevator which becomes his new landscape, his prairie of four corners. Well dressed bank employees visit often, somewhere on their way up to offices. When the vertical movement ceases and everyone has finished work for the day, Walter sits on his wooden chair, the darkness of the elevator his only companion. Staring into the corner, he watches for the next thunder storm to paint the sky.

porch outside. The relative opulence of this doorway provides it with a presence that prevents its frequent use. The cool and crisp entryway houses a silence of ancient greetings and farewells. Almost hidden in the darkness, heaviest of

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This *gazing container* is a vehicle, a viewing apparatus, and a fragment. Similar to the *portal*, but unlike the *text panels* or *instant teller*, the container acts more as a perceptive vessel than as a readable, re-presentative text. It carries the public from the lobby area (between the two facades) into the grand banking hall. The reduced opening, half of the original, reifies the accepted convenience of autonomous banking and autonomous perception.

The container perpetuates the absence of the banking hall by concealing its revelation only until one passes through its boundary and experiences the enormity of the hall. The floor, walls, and hood reveal the space as the viewer traverses the ramp, enters and passes from one end to the other. The container demarcates a line between what the museum patron occupies and the framework in which the artifact is presented. Though the container encourages perception of the banking hall, it prevents one from leaving the confines of its perimeter: from stepping onto the floor or walking across the space. The public's vantage is always fixed about one point. One feels the separation that exists physically, temporally, and historically, even in the phenomena of real experience. It presents the banking hall as a 'reduced' museum piece:

there is no security ... one

commodified and appropriated; a representative of an era past.

Yet again, as with the *portal* placed in front of the facade, the traditional understanding of museum and fragment are subverted. Both the container and the viewer held within are framed by the overwhelming context of the banking hall. They become the representatives of a heterogeneous and fragmented modernist city, under 'surveillance' by the surrounding context of a supposedly 'homogenized and denoted' past. And yet the viewer permits the power of the experience to transcend both the limitations of the container and the categorization of a prescribed history. The *portal*, the *instant teller*, and the *text panels* recede as mere re-presentations of the bank. They, as the viewer suddenly realizes, become pale in comparison to the potency of the

direct experience. The facade, the foyer, and finally the banking hall are left to direct interpretation by the public. The viewer is left to extract, re-write, and re-construct an understanding of the bank as perceived.

...nothing can compare to the experience of the banking hall- peaceful and powerful.

Visible only from the edge of the *gazing container*, text is projected onto the floor. The words and phrases are but contingent distractions: naming the bank, not with stone and marble, but with a virtual and temporal text(- ure). They make naive assumptions

based upon the readily apparent modern perception which sees place and function as revealed solely by a text of denotation. The seductive and familiar quality of a projected text begins to codify and delimit the banking hall. And yet, within the context of the banking hall the text is itself re- appropriated; its significa- tion alters: it suddenly gives identity to the building's subcon- scious. In

five second intervals the words change; the absent other is instanta- neously given a voice, a pres- ence, and an audi- ence.