

proposal
addendum
transcript

Title:

The Incomplete Project: Exploring the Effects of the “Open Work” in Architecture.

Abstract:

Orphaned in the purgatory between conception and resolution, there is a category of architecture that remains incomplete. Architectural and engineering projects that are fragments, having been partially constructed and having a built presence and a visual impact, but that were never allowed to fulfill the visions behind them or their intended occupation. These projects such as incomplete portions of churches or sections of motorways that were supposed to serve as monuments to a civic ideal were left abandoned and adapted to other uses or altered beyond recognition. Some of these projects, incomplete for various reasons: their glacially slow progress; government corruption; or unsafe building practices are a constant reminder of the unfulfilled dreams of city fathers, designers, and the public at large. Projects like these have given both designers and historians a unique window into construction techniques of a different time that were frozen in mid stroke. In other examples, incomplete buildings taunt historians who are unable to clearly categorize and document an unfinished thought, assign clear authorship, or neatly distill the architect’s design intent and methodology.

As part of the Rotch Travelling Scholarship, this project seeks to understand the impact of architecture that is left in a state of suspension - incomplete building projects and fragments of infrastructure that left unfinished, speak to existential questions of the practice of architecture: What is the role of authorship? What does it mean for architecture to be resolved? And finally, what are the potential opportunities that are created both at the building scale and at the civic scale when a project is left unfinished?

The research will involve documenting the existing conditions of the incomplete projects listed below, categorizing them and formulating a method of representation through diagrams, drawings, and photographs that show these project’s effects on the cities that they are apart of. In some cases this effect will have been clearly architectural, in other cases the effect maybe more social. Before traveling to the sites of the chosen projects, research will be done to understand the underlying reasons for the projects abandonment or slow progress. Both parts of the research will culminate in a document that considers the causes, the urban effects, and the architectural implications of projects that have been left incomplete.

The three types of incomplete projects that I have tentatively categorized for the sake of discussion of the concept are:

1.The Case of the Pre-Architectural Archeology.

- a. The Incomplete Civic Projects and Infrastructure of Girare, Sicily 1956- present
- b. Cathedral of Beauvais 1225-
- c. San Andrea in Mantova 1471- & Tempietto Maletestiano, 1447

2.The Case of the Chimera.

- d. Brooklyn Museum of Art 1887- present
- e. Siena Cathedral nave addition 1339 -
- f. San Sebastiano in Mantova 1458 -

3.The Case of the Open Work.

- g. St. John the Divine 1892 - present
- h. Sagrada Familia 1883- present
- i. Igualada Cemetery -Chapel and Monastery 1988,1992-present

1.The Case Of Pre-Architectural Archeology:

In Italy, it can be said that incomplete projects are so prevalent throughout the country that they are a kind of architecture in themselves. In Sicily particularly, which has the most incomplete civic projects in all of Italy (156) , parts of infrastructure and civic monu-

ments speak not only to a culture of corruption, but also to the unfulfilled promise of the Italian Government to effectively rule the south. Projects have been abandoned for a number of reasons: poor construction; design errors; clashing political concerns; and the disappearance of funds. Evidence of this is most pronounced in the city of Giarre, where from 1956 to the present, a trail of incomplete construction sites that range in scale from stadiums to flower markets have been left abandoned. A temptation has been to treat Giarre as a sculpture park, as has been proposed by a number of artists and scholars, but this misses a critical distinction that must be made between how people respond to ruins and how people interact with incomplete architecture. In never having assumed the responsibility of use that a project that was occupied has, the incomplete project is unable to speak with the kind of gravity that a ruin does. It cannot be imagined in a former state of glory, it cannot tell us how people lived in it. Incomplete architecture can however, in ways that ruins cannot, speak to the failed aspirations and hopes of a culture by its inability to achieve its monuments. The other examples included in this category are San Andrea in Mantova, Tempietto Maletestiano both by Leon Battista Alberti and the Cathedral at Beauvais. These examples together share similar economic and political circumstances behind their incompleteness although the historical periods of their construction are very distinct.

2. The Case Of The Chimaera:

Alberti's San Sebastiano in Rimini, The Brooklyn Museum of Art by McKim, Mead, and White, and the Siena Cathedral Nave Addition are living testaments to architectural visions deferred. In the place of resolved monumental works, expedience and civic necessity created strange architectural hybrids, unfulfilled civic vistas, and a parking lot in the place of pews. Because of the grand scale of these projects and their imposing presence, over time people have come to see these buildings as landmarks, although their original architectural purpose was far from achieved.

McKim, Mead, and White's Brooklyn Museum of Art stands incomplete as both an albatross and a provocation: too resolute and grand to be demolished, yet too incomplete to accommodate the full breadth of the museum's collection as it grew. In its subsequent additions and remodels throughout the years, questions are raised that go beyond the architectural successes or failures of the alterations. In 1986 when a competition was held for the expansion of Brooklyn Museum, could an architect have seriously entered a proposal to "finish" the museum in the same manner at the turn of this century as when it was begun at the turn of the last century? The world had changed so radically in the intervening years that in the architect's view only radical changes were possible. These examples show both how fragile the conception of architecture can be and how provocative these incomplete buildings can be to designers to either take on the role of negotiator between the past and the present or to act as an instigator.

3. The Case Of The Open Work:

In Umberto Eco's essay "The Poetics of the Open Work", he uses the music of the composers Stockhausen and Berio, whose work depends on the continuing re-interpretations by future performers, to discuss the artist's relationship to resolution. In these examples, whose subject itself is an "autonomy given to the performer" he draws a line between the artist's need for complete control and the myriad unintended interpretations that great art is often defined by. Architecture has a similar "open" nature. The architect is seldom building, thus allowing for the autonomy of collaborators, builders and ultimately the audience. This is especially true of works that have had a glacially slow rate of progress. Projects like the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona. This work has necessitated an "open" procedure over time. Although the church is associated inextricably with Antoni Gaudi much more of the work on this project has and will be done outside of his supervision. This project's interpretation like that of St. John the Divine in New York, and the ongoing work at Igualada Cemetery also in Barcelona rely on an invitation to authorship and shared creative space whether it was intended or not.

Product:

The ultimate goal of this project is to find a method for documenting the incomplete work listed above through drawings, photography, and diagrams that adequately address the key aspects of incomplete building projects: the effect of time on the physical project as well as a timeline describing the process of building; the effect of incomplete monuments on the urban form; and the general influence and effect of the projects abandonment. The drawings, photos, and diagrams from this travel and research will be part of a future exhibit and or book.

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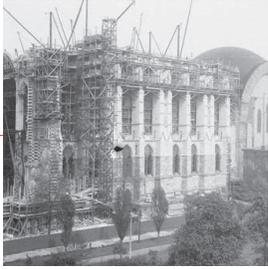
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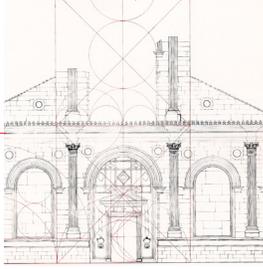
a.



g.



e.



c.



b.



d.



e.



h.



i.

