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Truth, Beauty, and the Reflection of God: John Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice* as Palimpsests for Contemporary Architecture

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Abstract

The guiding lights of modern architecture mainly focus on form and function. However, historically, architecture has been guided by a deeper sense of calling. John Ruskin, a 19th century critic, used the Gothic style of cathedrals as an example to his contemporaries of the transcendental and moral ideals of architecture, which he categorizes as seven lamps or laws. Just as Gothic architecture served as a palimpsest to Ruskin, Ruskin's work is beginning to serve as a palimpsest to a new generation of architects whose designs and structures incorporate various aspects of his seven lamps.

1 Introduction

Architecture is invariably shaped by both its creator and the landscape from which it emerges. These elements are inextricably intertwined to produce a structure that is aesthetically pleasing, philosophically erudite, and fully functional. Nowhere is

this more clearly established than with John Ruskin, a noteworthy Victorian art and social critic. His *Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice* serve as palimpsests for contemporary architecture. A link to the past is forged based on foundational moral, ethical, philosophical, and religious principles that are reflected in the structures themselves. For Ruskin, when first principles are applied, aesthetic integrity is maintained, truth and beauty are manifested, and the reflection of God is contained in the building itself. The architecture may also point beyond itself to something else, complementing it, expanding it, or transforming it (such as in Gothic architecture). Applying these Ruskinian laws and virtues to today's architecture provides a framework that grounds the discipline in meaningful theological and philosophical underpinnings from which inspiration and creativity may emerge. Contemporary examples include Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum Berlin that opened in 2001 and Peter Eisenman's Holocaust Memorial built in Berlin in 2004. Daniel Libeskind is also an architect for the One World Trade Center scheduled to be opened in 2014. The approach taken by these men to design these structures demonstrates their philosophy that architecture should arise out of history and landscape. Therefore, the principles of Ruskin function as a palimpsest for the inspiration, creativity, and designs of architects like Eisenman and Libeskind, as they seek to recapture and maintain the past through structures that promote their own interpretation of memory and beauty, and also reflect truth, power, and life.

2 The Seven Lamps of Architecture

In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1845), John Ruskin defines architecture as "the art which so disposes and adorns the edifices raised by man [. . .] that the sight of them may contribute to his mental health, power, and pleasure"(Ruskin, 1920, p. 8). He asserts that good architecture must exhibit seven lamps that represent spirits or laws: sacrifice, truth, power, beauty, life, memory, and obedience. Ruskin sees these as the framework for architectural creation and design. He believes that good and beautiful architecture must conform to these laws, and the observer should see that "there is room for the marking of his [man's] relations with the mightiest, as well as the fairest, works of God; and that those works themselves have been permitted, by their [the architects'] Master and his [man's], to receive an added glory from their association with earnest efforts of human thought"(Ruskin, 1920, p. 73). According to Ruskin, architecture that reflects these seven lamps will draw the builder and the observer toward an experience with the Master Builder, God.

In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Ruskin explains the meaning of the seven lamps. The illustration below (Figure 4.1) shows the connections that exist among these seven laws (Baljon, 1997, p. 402).

1. Sacrifice – Architecture is an offering to God demonstrating men's "love and obedience and surrender of themselves and theirs to His will"(Ruskin, 1920,

p. 16) as evidenced by the building of beautiful, ornate churches.

2. Truth – Builders must use honest and true materials—crafted by human hands, not machines—respecting them and rejecting false ones.

3. Power – The construction of buildings must focus on mass, quantity of shadow, breadth, sense of surface, size, weight, and shadow; the efforts of the builders through their imagination should point toward the sublimity and majesty of nature.

4. Beauty – Architecture should point individuals toward God and reflect the design and decoration found in nature.

5. Life – Buildings should bear the mark of human hands, celebrating the irregularity in design to show that the ornamentation is not mechanical and demonstrating the joy of the builders as they construct with freedom.

6. Memory – Architecture should respect the social, historical, and cultural character of its milieu, distinguishing between essential and inessential forms.

7. Obedience – Originality must recognize and be restrained by obedience to tradition, especially connecting with the English architecture that has preceded it.

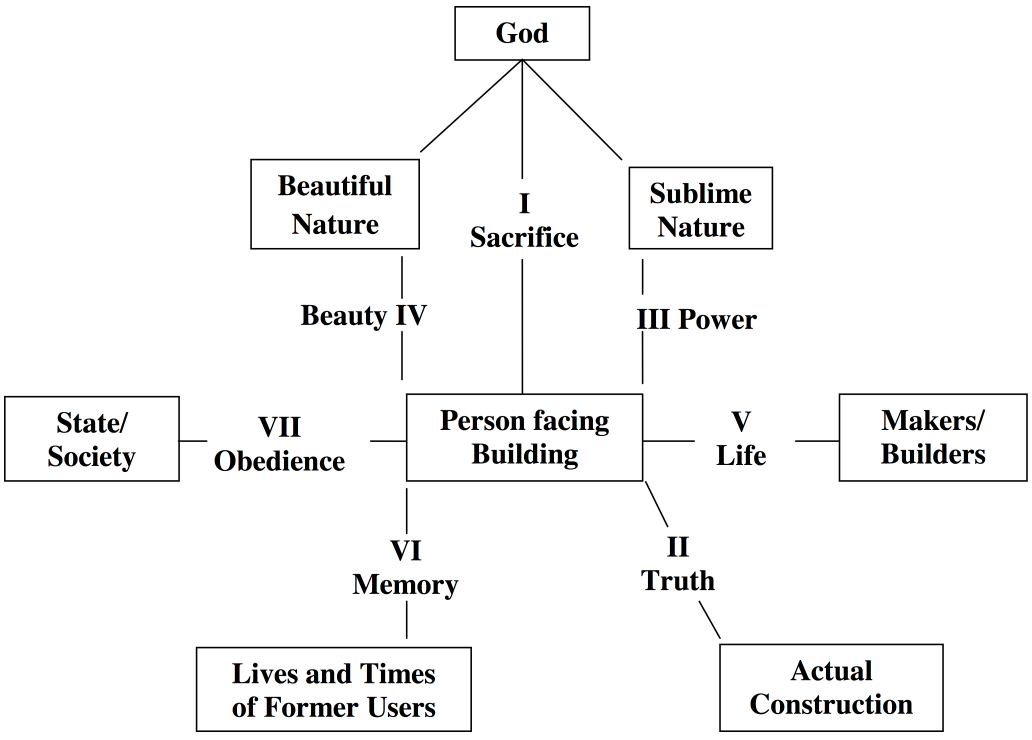

Figure 4.1: Conceptual Scheme of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*

Ruskin ties beauty to human beings and their experience with nature in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. In one diary entry dated April 19, 1846, Ruskin describes a day in Champagnole, France and then comments on how nature affected him:

> I felt it more than usual, but it struck me suddenly how utterly different the impression of such a scene would be, if it were in a strange land and in one without history. How dear to the feeling is the pine of Switzerland compared to that of Canada! I have allowed too little weight to these deep sympathies, for I think, if that pine forest had been among the Alleghanys, or if the stream had been Niagara, I should only have looked at them with intense melancholy and desire for home. (Ruskin, 1956, p. 325)

This observation of creation enables Ruskin to embrace the theory of associationism, especially its connections to history, which influences his aesthetic appreciation. George Landow (1971) points out that Ruskin's emphasis on beauty seems to emerge out of these historical associations that assist his criticism of contemporary architecture. Ruskin finds the homes and public buildings of his England constructed without style, without regard to permanence and without meaning for the men who inhabit them. Since he wishes to correct these deficiencies, he places great emphasis upon historical associations, whose presence, he says, will insure both that an edifice will influence the life of the inhabitant and that it will be solidly constructed — this latter because if a building is to endure long enough for historical associations to accrue, then it must be well made.

Thus, Ruskin's establishment of memory as one of his seven laws—with its focus on the social, historical, and cultural milieu—becomes essential to his philosophy of architecture.

3 Ruskin and *The Stones of Venice*

In *The Stones of Venice,* Ruskin's vivid description of St. Mark's Cathedral (Figure 4.2), a most magnificent structure in Venice—"the most precious building in Europe standing yet in the eyes of men and the sunshine of heaven"(Ruskin on St. Mark's, 1880)—and his detailed sketches of the same (Figures 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, and 4.8) demonstrate the ability of the author to pen with passion and eloquent style, and the artist to draw with precision and color, the beauty of its architecture:

> A multitude of pillars and white domes, clustered into a long low pyramid of coloured light; a treasure-heap, it seems, partly of gold, and partly of opal and mother-of-pearl, hollowed beneath into five great vaulted porches, ceiled with fair mosaic, and beset with sculpture of alabaster, clear as amber and delicate as ivory —sculpture fantastic and

Figure 4.2: St. Mark's Cathedral, by John W. Bunney—Public Domain

involved, of palm leaves and lilies, and grapes and pomegranates, and birds clinging and fluttering among the branches, all twined together into an endless network of buds and plumes; and, in the midst of it, the solemn form of angels, sceptred, and robed to the feet, and leaning to each other across the gates, their figures indistinct among the gleaming of the golden ground through the leaves beside them, interrupted and dim, like the morning light as it faded back among the branches of Eden, when first its gates were angel-guarded long ago. And round the walls of the porches there are set pillars of variegated stones, jasper and porphyry, and deep-green serpentine spotted with flakes of snow, and marbles, that half refuse and half yield to the sunshine, Cleopatra-like, "their bluest veins to kiss"—the shadow, as it steals back from them, revealing line after line of azure undulation, as a receding tide leaves the waved sand; their capitals rich with interwoven tracery, rooted knots of herbage, and drifting leaves of acanthus and vine, and mystical signs, all beginning and ending in the Cross; and above them, in the broad archivolts, a continuous chain of language and of life—angels, and the signs of heaven and the labours of men, each in its appointed season upon the earth; and above these another range of glittering pinnacles, mixed with white arches edged with scarlet flowers,—a confusion of delight, amidst which the breasts of the Greek horses are seen blazing in their breadth of golden strength, and the St. Mark's Lion, lifted on a blue field covered with stars, until at last, as if in ecstacy, the crests of the arches break into a marble foam, and toss themselves far into the blue sky in flashes and wreaths of sculptured spray, as if the breakers on the Lido shore had been frost-bound before they fell, and the sea-nymphs had inlaid them with coral and amethyst. (Ruskin, 1885, vol. 2, ch. 4, sec. 14)

Figure 4.3: The South Side of St. Mark's from the Loggia of the Ducal Palace, Venice, 1851, by John Ruskin—Public Domain

Figure 4.4: Archivolt in St. Mark's, 1853, by John Ruskin—Public Domain

Figure 4.5: Basket and Lily Capital, St. Mark's Basilica, Venice, 1849–1852, by John Ruskin—Public Domain

Figure 4.6: Northwest Angle of the Façade, St. Mark's Church, 1851, by John Ruskin—Public Domain

Figure 4.7: North West Porch, St. Mark's, Venice, 1877, by John Ruskin—Public Domain

These words and drawings reflect the magnificence that resonates in the actual architecture, authenticating the lamp of beauty, for Ruskin clearly believes that architecture should reflect the design found in nature and point towards the ultimate Master Builder.

With a philosophy based on aesthetics, place, and history, Ruskin appeals to a moral architecture, encouraging builders to reject the techniques discovered in the Renaissance and developed in the Industrial Revolution and to embrace a time when the best buildings were constructed—the medieval Gothic cathedrals of England and Venice. In his later book, *The Stones of Venice* (1851–1853), Ruskin describes the elements of the Gothic that became foundational for the kind of architecture he proposes, and he provides many examples to illustrate. He points out the three virtues of a building: (1) "That it act well," (2) "That it speak well," and (3) "That it look well" (Ruskin, 1885, vol. 1, ch. 2, sec. 1).

In *The Crown of Wild Olive*, Ruskin explains the purpose of his writing:

> The book I called "The Seven Lamps" was to show that certain right states of temper and moral feeling were the magic powers by which all good architecture, without exception, had been produced. "The Stones of Venice" had, from beginning to end, no other aim than to show that the Gothic architecture of Venice had arisen out of, and indicated in all its features, a state of pure national faith, and of domestic virtue; and that its Renaissance architecture had arisen out of, and in all its features indicated, a state of concealed national infidelity, and of domestic corruption. (Ruskin, 1866, p. 53)

For Ruskin, moral feeling, states of temperament, and architecture cannot be separated. He sees the "moral elements of Gothic" as follows: (1) savageness, (2) changefulness, (3) naturalism, (4) grotesqueness, (5) rigidity, and (6) redundance,

Figure 4.8: Part of St. Mark's, Venice, Sketch After Rain, 1846, by John Ruskin—Public Domain

when "belonging to the building," and (1) savageness or rudeness, (2) love of change, (3) love of nature, (4) disturbed imagination, (5) obstinancy, and (6) generosity, when "belonging to the builder" (Ruskin, 1885, p. 155). Thus, Ruskin was not arguing for a new style of architecture. He was lamenting the plainness and the soullessness of the architecture designed and built since the Gothic cathedrals of the medieval period. He "found certain styles (e.g., Baroque) unacceptable because they exploited illusions, and therefore were not 'truthful'"(Curl, 2006, p. 669). Therefore, according to Ruskin, in order for architecture to be sincerely honest and truly beautiful, it must be connected to nature, rooted in right history, and constructed by human hands.

4 Review of Ruskin's Reputation

The appeal of Ruskin's philosophy of architecture was paramount during the Victorian period. Professor Robert Kerr, a contemporary of the art critic, had previously espoused the same ideas as Ruskin, but he had left them behind after working twenty

years in the field. He encouraged experienced architects to deter younger apprentices from the idealistic and romanticized views of Ruskin, for Kerr viewed the architect as "a servant of the public for the efficient design of buildings, precisely like the engineer." When he presented a lecture entitled "Architectural Criticism" at the Royal Institute of British Architects, he severely criticized Ruskin saying that "Mr. Ruskin's thoughts soar high enough in the poetry of visionary art, because poetry is his business, but they cannot stoop down to the plain prosaic details of the structuresque, because building is not his business" (Collins, 1998, pp. 259–260). In an October 1849 review of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* published in the *Journal of Design*, Matthew Digby Wyatt admired "the excellent spirit" that was present in "this thoughtful, eloquent book." However, he quickly points out that Ruskin "either puts his back against [. . .] further development, or would attempt to bring back the world of art to what its course of actions was four centuries ago!" (Mallgrave, 2009, pp. 121, 438).

Ruskin does not hesitate to move from art critic to social critic, demonstrating how the architecture itself can become a commentary on the denigration, deterioration, and degradation of society. Even as he praises the majesty of St. Mark's in *The Stones of Venice*, he also notes the ironic contrast that takes place in its shadows as the masses ignore its beauty and the poor grovel in their poverty.

> And what effect has this splendor on those who pass beneath it? You may walk from sunrise to sunset, to and fro, before the gateway of St. Mark's, and you will not see an eye lifted to it, nor a countenance brightened by it. Priest and layman, soldier and civilian, rich and poor, pass by it alike regardlessly. Up to the very recesses of the porches, the meanest tradesmen of the city push their counters; nay, the foundations of its pillars are themselves the seats—not "of them that sell doves" for sacrifice, but of the vendors of toys and caricatures. Round the whole square in front of the church there is almost a continuous line of cafés, where the idle Venetians of the middle classes lounge, and read empty journals; in its centre the Austrian bands play during the time of vespers, their martial music jarring with the organ notes,—the march drowning the miserere, and the sullen crowd thickening round them,—a crowd, which, if it had its will, would stiletto every soldier that pipes to it. And in the recesses of the porches, all day long, knots of men of the lowest classes, unemployed and listless, lie basking in the sun like lizards; and unregarded children,—every heavy glance of their young eyes full of desperation and stony depravity, and their throats hoarse with cursing,—gamble, and fight, and snarl, and sleep, hour after hour, clashing their bruised centesimi upon the marble ledges of the church porch. And the images of Christ and His angels look down upon it continually. (Ruskin, 1885, vol. 2, ch. 4, sec. 15)

Ruskin observes that society and architecture are invariably connected.

Figure 4.9: Crystal Palace, Sydenham, by Achille-Louis Martinet—Public Domain

John Matteson makes this observation concerning Ruskin the social critic: "The architecture was sublime; the human activity around it was an obscene mockery. What good was the building if it could not transform the debauched children who cast lots on its very steps? After *The Stones of Venice*, it was no longer enough for Ruskin to criticize art. It was hierarchies of human beings, not structures of wood and stone, that begged most loudly for his attention"(Matteson, 2002, p. 302).

5 Ruskin's Relevance to Contemporary Architecture

Clearly then Ruskin spoke to the Victorian period, but the question inescapably arises, Can the aesthetic and moral philosophies of a Victorian art and social critic be applicable to design and construction today? Is Ruskin relevant to contemporary architecture?

John Matteson discusses this very question. Citing the building of the Crystal Palace (Figures 4.9 and 4.10), whose "prefabricated components heralded a revolution," which was occurring at the same time as the publication of Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, Matteson asserts that "Ruskin's ideas were already destined for quaintness in the 1850s" (Matteson, 2002, p. 300). He points out some of the difficulties of applying Ruskin's first principles to contemporary architecture:

> Since Ruskin's time, populations have grown and economic systems have expanded with once unimaginable speed. Construction in our time has to be fast. It must be efficient. It must avoid unnecessary expense. If Ruskin foresaw the further mechanization of physical labor, he was at least spared the sadness of seeing how far that mechanization

Figure 4.10: Queen Victoria Opening the 1862 Exhibition (inside view of Crystal Palace), by Joseph Nash—Public Domain

Figure 4.11: Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Wide Angle View—Copyright © 2011 Kirpaks and licensed for reuse under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License

> would eventually extend. Ruskin also did not anticipate that the alienation that he saw as poisoning the life of the worker might someday encompass not only the process of construction, but also those of conception and design. He could never have imagined on-line catalogs of design components or the idea that an architect might one day resolve decisions of ornamentation, not with painstaking manual drawing or model-building, but with the click of a mouse. Neither could he have expected that modern buildings would often be commissioned and designed, not by individuals at all, but by impersonal organizations. It would have been strange, indeed, for Ruskin to discover the myriad ways in which architecture could divorce itself from the simple human acts of drawing and carving. (Matteson, 2002, p. 300)

Yet Matteson does not completely reject Ruskin's writings about Gothic architecture, citing the construction of St. John the Divine in Manhattan (Figures 4.11 and 4.12) as an exemplar of Ruskinian ideals. In 1972, after no construction had occurred on the building for thirty years, the dean of St. John the Divine proclaimed that it was time to once again begin work and that "the stonework [would] be done by our own unemployed and underemployed neighbors. We will revive the art of stonecraft"(Matteson, 2002, p. 300). Matteson observes that both the process and the product were "profoundly Ruskinian":

> The spirit of the new construction was profoundly Ruskinian: it entrusted a sacred Gothic edifice to hands that would begin the project raw and untutored, in expectation that, as the structure grew and took shape, so, too, would the skills and souls of the workers. That the cathedral actually did become a literal synthesis of stonecutting and soul-making, an exemplar of Ruskin's demand that the work must affirm the passion of the worker, seems to be confirmed in the words of Simon Verity, one of the master carvers employed in the project: "To be a carver, you have to have a passion for it, to love it with all your heart. It's a desire to create order out of chaos, to seek harmonies." (Matteson, 2002, pp. 300–301)

For Matteson, unskilled human hands touching and carving stone so that both are built together reflect the perfect aesthetic and moral for the Ruskinian model, celebrating Ruskin's laws of life and truth. He concludes, "Surely, Ruskin would have applauded this method of construction, a combination, someone has said, of outreach and up-reach. And yet his applause might have been tempered by the knowledge of how deeply the impersonality of technology and profit had insinuated themselves into the building of the cathedral" (Matteson, 2002, p. 301).

Figure 4.12: Cathedral of St. John the Divine, The Western façade, including the Rose Window—Copyright © 2008 William Porto and licensed for reuse under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License

6 Architecture as a Palimpsest

During the Victorian era, Thomas Carlyle (1830), like Ruskin, also demanded that attention be given to history. In his essay "On History" (1830), he says that meaning in the present and the future can be known only as the past is studied. He writes: "For though the whole meaning lies far beyond our ken; yet in that complex Manuscript covered over with formless inextricably-entangled unknown characters,—nay which is a *Palimpsest*, and had once prophetic writing, still dimly legible there,—some letters, some words, may be deciphered" (author's emphasis) (Carlyle, 1971, p. 56). Uhlig concurs with Carlyle and maintains that in the intertext, which he likens to the palimpsest (Figures 4.13, 4.14, and 4.15), "historically conditioned tensions come to the fore: tensions not only between calendar time and intraliterary time but also between the author's intention and the relative autonomy of a text, or between the old and the new in general" (Uhlig, 1985, p. 502). The presence of the past coexists with the text; thus, "any text will the more inevitably take on the characteristics of a palimpsest the more openly it allows the voices of the dead to speak, thus—in a literary transcription of our cultural heritage—bringing about a consciousness of the presentness of the past" (Uhlig, 1985, p. 502). Deciphering the present moment of the text as it relates to many past moments reveals the intertextual meaning the text seeks to convey and the critic to uncover.

Figure 4.13: A Georgian palimpsest of the 5th/6th century—Public Domain

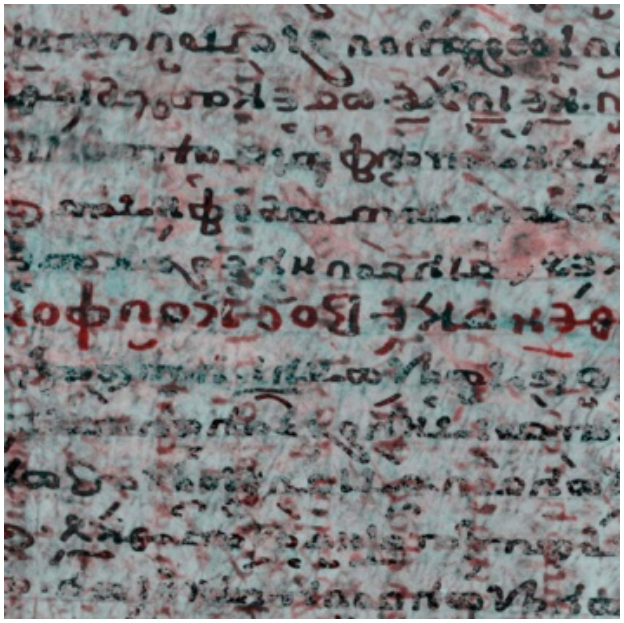

Figure 4.14: Archimedes Palimpsest—Copyright © Rochester Institute of Technology, Equipoise Imaging and Boeing LTS and licensed for reuse under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License

Figure 4.15: Archimedes Palimpsest—Copyright © Rochester Institute of Technology, Equipoise Imaging and Boeing LTS and licensed for reuse under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike

The word "palimpsest" derives from $\pi\alpha\lambda\acute{\iota}\mu\psi\eta\sigma\tau o\varsigma$ (*palimpsestos*) which is Greek in origin and means "scraped again" (Liddell & Scott, 1990) and can be defined as "a papyrus or other kind of writing material on which two or more sets of writing had been superimposed in such a way that, because of imperfect erasure, some of the earlier text could be read through over-writing"(Darville, 2002, p. 309). When used in the field of archaeology, "the term is often applied to landscapes in which traces of earlier arrangements can be seen amongst and below the modern pattern"(Darville, 2002, p. 309), and in architecture palimpsest means the shadow of a past structure that is in some way incorporated as part of an old one that has been remodeled or a new one that has been built. Michael Earle describes the concept as follows:

> Architects use the concept of palimpsest to imply a ghost, an image of what once was. Of course, in the built environment, this occurs often, whenever spaces are shuffled, rebuilt, or remodeled, shadows remain. Tarred rooflines remain on the sides of a building long after the neighboring structure has been demolished and long ago removed stairs leave a mark where the painted wall surface stopped. Dust lines remain from a relocated appliance. Ancient ruins speak volumes of their former wholeness. Palimpsests can inform us of the realities of the built past. (Earle, 2012)

According to Peter Eisenman, an architect and theorist, the palimpsestic connection of site history with contemporary design and construction is essential: "Any site contains not only presences, but the memory of previous presences and the immanences of a possible presence. The physical difference between a moving thing (dynamism) and a still one (stasis) is that the moving one contains the trace of where it has been and where it is going." He then connects the history to the city itself,

seeing it as an integral part of the site: "The introduction of this trace, or condition of absence, acknowledges the dynamic reality of the living city" (Eisenman, 2004, p. 207). Eisenman describes an architectural palimpsestic text as follows:

> In my proposal for rhetorical figures, architecture is no longer elements but an *other* grammatical counter, proposing an alternate reading of the idea of site and object. In this sense, a rhetorical figure will be seen to be inherently contextual in that the site is treated as a deeply scored palimpsest. [. . .] This text suggests that there are other meanings which are site specific by virtue of their pre-existence, however latent within the context. (Eisenman, 2004, p. 206)

He explains that the word "text" when used in relationship to architecture

> can be used for any and all strategies and conditions which dislocate architecture from its authorial or natural condition of being; that is, the detaching of what architecture looks like from the need to represent function, shelter, meaning and so forth. It is not so much that the look of architecture will change (architecture will always look like architecture) but rather the style and significance of its look will be different. The idea of text is not in opposition to the reality of architecture, just as the imaginary is not the opposite of the real; it is an *other* discourse. Text surrounds reality at the same time that it is internal to reality. (Eisenman, 1988)

Eisenman, like Ruskin, sees that architecture communicates a text beyond its outward beauty: "Thus in architecture it is possible to say that text is what always exceeds the immediate response to a visual or sensory image, i.e. that which we see on the surface as the story, or that which we see as the beautiful. This is the heart of the matter"(Eisenman, 1988). Thus, a palimpsest can be defined as that text which underlies another text (an ur-text)—a present text with origins in a past one (palingenesis) or at least shaped by an underlying one (ananke)—or a text that influences something not of its own genre—art, music, architecture (Uhlig, 1985, p. 503).

7 Peter Eisenman and *The Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe*

Finished in 2004 and inaugurated on May 10, 2005—sixty years after the conclusion of World War II—The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Figures 4.16 and 4.17), also known as the Holocaust Memorial, was built in Berlin by Peter Eisenman, an American architect (Brunberg, 2009). Encompassing five and a half acres

Figure 4.16: Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Peter Eisenman—Public Domain

Figure 4.17: Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Peter Eisenman—Copyright © 2005 de:Benutzer:Schreibkraft and licensed for reuse under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License

(Ouroussoff, 2005), it is designed with "2,711 pillars, planted close together in undulating waves, represent[ing] the 6 million murdered Jews" (Quigley, 2005). The memorial is open every day year round and can be entered on each of the four sides (Quigley, 2005).

True to his architectural theory, Eisenman is focused on incorporating the memorial into its site and to the city itself (Quigley, 2005), "acknowledge[ing] the dynamic reality of the living city" (Eisenman, 2004, p. 207). Nicolai Ouroussoff explains:

> At first, you retain glimpses of the city. The rows of pillars frame a distant view of the Reichstag's skeletal glass dome. To the west, you can glimpse the canopy of trees in the Tiergarten. Then as you descend further, the views begin to disappear. The sound of gravel crunching under your feet gets more perceptible; the gray pillars, their towering forms tilting unsteadily, become more menacing and oppressive. The effect is intentionally disorienting. (Ouroussoff, 2005)

The construction arises out of the city's history, bringing it into the present: "The memorial's grid, for example, can be read as both an extension of the streets that surround the site and an unnerving evocation of the rigid discipline and bureaucratic order that kept the killing machine grinding along. The pillars, meanwhile, are an obvious reference to tombstones" (Ouroussoff, 2005). Yet observation alone is not enough; one must experience the site "as a physical space" in order to truly understand it:

> No clear line, for example, divides the site from the city around it. The pillars along its periphery are roughly the height of park benches. A few scattered linden trees sprout between the pillars along the memorial's western edge; at other points, outlines of pillars are etched onto the sidewalk, so that pedestrians can actually step on them as they walk by. (Ouroussoff, 2005)

Sarah Quigley, a novelist and critic, describes her encounter with the memorial:

> Even on bright sunny days, the stones look sober and drab. Standing on an uneven piece of land, the stelae almost fall into the centre of the site, rising up again towards the edge, forming a myriad of uneven stone corridors. Walking down one of these passages is disorientating, and scary; you can't see who is approaching you, nor who is behind. The tilting ground and lack of vision offers some small idea of the Jewish experience from WWII: your past snatched away, your future insecure, little hope of escape. (Quigley, 2005)

In this memorial the past haunts both the present and the future.

Somewhat unexpectedly, Eisenman rediscovered his Jewishness in this architecture: "[With this work] I came back to the heart of my identity" (Quigley, 2005). Even so, Eisenman is not interested in viewing the Holocaust with sentimentality. He does not "want people to weep and then walk away with a clear conscience" (Ouroussoff, 2005). He wants all who visit to realize their culpability, to understand "the process that allows human beings to accept such evil as part of the normal world - the incremental decisions that collectively lead to the most murderous acts" (Ouroussoff, 2005). Eisenman "leaves you standing on the edge of the abyss. In so doing, he suggests that the parameters of guilt are not so easily defined: it includes those who looked the other way, continued with their work, refused to bear witness. It is true of Americans as well as Germans, Roman Catholic clerics as well as Nazi secretaries" (Ouroussoff, 2005).

In contrast to Ruskin who believed that architecture should reflect beauty and point upward to the ultimate Maker, Eisenman's design is plain and its purpose is to cause the viewer to look inward. Although Paul Spiegel, a leader of the Jews in Germany, felt that the memorial was "incomplete" because it did not shock those who saw it with its history, Eisenman's desire was to promote and elicit a response that concerned more than just the Holocaust; he wanted people to focus on anti-Semitism in general and civilization's response to it. This discussion would broaden the appeal of the memorial and make it a part of the daily life of the city (Quigley, 2005). Perhaps this statement encapsulates Eisenman's attitude most of all: "I think people will eat their lunch on the pillars. [. . .] I'm sure skateboarders will use it. People will dance on top of the pillars. All kinds of unexpected things are going to happen" (Quigley, 2005). Eisenman's prediction has already come true, for Nicolai Ouroussoff writes, "The day I visited the site, a 2-year-old boy was playing atop the pillars - trying to climb from one to the next as his mother calmly gripped his hand" (Ouroussoff, 2005).

The palimpsest of the Holocaust surrounds the site. Nicolai Ouroussoff asserts, "The location could not be more apt. During the war, this was the administrative locus of Hitler's killing machine. His chancellery building, designed by Albert Speer and since demolished, was a few hundred yards away just to the south; his bunker

Figure 4.18: The Jewish Museum Berlin, to the left of the old Kollegienhaus. Designed by Daniel Libeskind—Copyright © 2008 Daniel Libeskind and licensed for reuse under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License

lies beneath a nearby parking lot" (Ouroussoff, 2005). Although criticized by some well-known Germans for its abstract symbolism, its dreary atmosphere, and its sparse construction (Quigley, 2005) (e.g., no names are etched into the pillars [Brunberg, 2009]), Eisenman insists that The Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe "is both perfect in its symbolism, and a necessary aid to atonement. 'It stands there, silent,' he says: 'the one who has to talk is you'" (Quigley, 2005).

8 Daniel Libeskind and His Architecture

8.1 *The Jewish Museum Berlin*

Opened in 2001, The Jewish Museum Berlin (Figure 4.18) showcases 1700 years of the history of the Jews in Germany. Two buildings house the exhibits, the old *Kollegienhaus*, once used as a courthouse, and a new one designed by Daniel Libeskind. The museum covers 166,840 square feet (Libeskind, 2011) and is constructed as a twisted zig-zag to remind museum-goers of a warped Star of David (Mueller-Kroll, 2011). It is entered through an underground tunnel. A "Void"—a space with nothing in it except 10,000 iron faces that are called "Fallen Leaves," created by an artist from Israel, Menashe Kadishman—is part of the memorial (Installations, 2012). One visitor describes his experience in this manner:

> On the floor, thousands of pieces of heavy metal cut into shapes of the faces of screaming holocaust victims. The visitor is encouraged to walk across the void. Clank, clank, clank echoing up into and all around the void. The noise rings in your head but there is no escape because as you are tempted to look down the screaming faces stare into your psyche. Very simple, very effective. Haunting. (Gold, 2004)

The memorial has three intersecting tunnels that are said to represent three pathways of German life for the Jew: the Axis of Continuity (with German history), the Axis of Emigration (from Germany), and the Axis of the Holocaust. Then the participant moves into the Garden of Exile with its 49 pillars that reminds visitors of the people expelled from Germany, which according to Libeskind, is designed "to completely disorient the visitor. It represents a shipwreck of history." Even so, Russian willow oak trees that represent hope have been planted on top of the stelae (Libeskind Building, 2012).

Libeskind's design entitled "Between the Lines" was chosen from a world-wide competition of 165 entries (Levenson, 2005), and, of course, the architect was ecstatic when he won: "It was a thrilling moment when I was selected. The jury recognized that my plan was neither dogmatic nor glib; that it served as an individualized mirror, which each visitor could read in a different way. They valued its authenticity and celebrated its originality. I felt honored and elated" (Libeskind, 2004, p. 85).

Because of his own personal background and experience, Daniel Libeskind knew that the architecture must first connect the place to its history and then take visitors from the past to the present and propel them to the future, experiencing a sense of alienation:

> You struggle to find the most immediate way to get at the truth. What was needed, as I saw it, was a building that, using the language of architecture, speaking from its stones, could take us all, Jews and non-Jews alike, to the crossroads of history, and show us that when the Jews were exiled from Berlin, at that moment, Berlin was exiled from its past, its present, and—until this tragic relationship is resolved— its future. (Libeskind, 2004, p. 83)

At this museum, Daniel Libeskind believes history and architecture are joined, for this place "thematizes and integrates, for the first time in post-war Germany, the history of the Jews in Germany, the repercussions of the Holocaust and spiritual displacement. It is also just a museum with exhibits on the wall" (Mueller-Kroll, 2011).

8.2 *The One World Trade Center*

Winning the design competition in 2003 out of 13,683 entrants with his Memory Foundations plan (titled this, per Libeskind, "because it's about memory and at the center of it is a foundation for 21st century New York" [Nessen, 2011])—originally known as the Gardens of the World (Hirschkorn, 2003; Swanson, 2011; NY1 News, 2003), Daniel Libeskind was chosen as the architect to create the Ground Zero Master Plan for the reconstruction of the World Trade Center (Figure 4.19) (Libeskind, 2011). As he put together the design, he realized, "We have to be able to enter this hallowed, sacred ground while creating a quiet, meditative and spiritual space" (Studio

Figure 4.19: Ground Zero Master Plan (2006)—Copyright © Silverstein Properties

Libeskind, 2012). He was very sensitive to the site and to New Yorkers, desiring for his plan to fully memorialize what had happened there:

> When I first began this project, New Yorkers were divided as to whether to keep the site of the World Trade Center empty or to fill the site completely and build upon it. I meditated many days on this seemingly impossible dichotomy. To acknowledge the terrible deaths which occurred on this site, while looking to the future with hope, seemed like two moments which could not be joined. I sought to find a solution which would bring these seemingly contradictory viewpoints into an unexpected unity. So, I went to look at the site, to stand within it, to see people walking around it, to feel its power and to listen to its voices. (Studio Libeskind, 2012)

For Libeskind, this project was personal: "What happened on 9/11 was not something abstract, it happened to me" (qtd. in Earle). In fact, on the day Libenskind opened his Jewish Museum in Berlin, the Twin Towers in New York were attacked and then collapsed. As soon as he received word around 2:30 p.m., he left for the States. He still remembers that day, "I turned to all my colleagues [. . .] and I do not know where it came from, but I said, 'I'm returning to Lower Manhattan'" (Needham, 2011).

Because of disagreements among all those involved, the project was eventually removed from Libenskind (Needham, 2011). Even though many architectural changes were made, the WTC Masterplan (Figure 4.19) as delineated by Libeskind was still basically followed:

> The WTC Masterplan serves as both the conceptual basis and the technical foundation for the entire complex re-development of ground zero. The Masterplan defines the spirit of the approach to re-building and creates a meaningful conceptual framework for the site. It also defines the spatial organization of all elements of the development within the site with an emphasis on the human experience and the public realm. The Masterplan dictates the location and massing of each program element, building height and relative size, as well as proximity and relationship to one another. The WTC Masterplan also supplies the framework for the site's infrastructure, transportation, sustainability standards and security strategy and lays out the functional relationship between all the site elements with respect to the surrounding context of the immediate neighbourhoods and the surrounding city. (Libeskind, 2011)

Michael Arad, the final designer, credits Libeskind as the one who "'established the broad parameters' of what is now the new World Trade Center and 'acted as a guidestar. If you're going to build something, you need to start some place.'"

Libeskind acknowledges his part in the process: "I'm so happy to be able to design a piece of this city." He observes, "If you're a conductor or a composer, Stravinsky or Copland, and the New York Philharmonic is performing your piece and you're conducting it, do you regret that you're not playing the first violin? That you're not playing the tuba? Of course not" (Needham, 2011). Therefore, he asserts confidently, "In the end, the public will see the symbolism of the site. [. . .] Of course, compromises had to be made, but a master plan is not about a few lines drawn on paper. It's about an idea, and how to express that idea through the turmoil of politics and the creativity of all the other architects. In the end, the result will be pretty close to my original rendering" (Davidson, 2007).

Libenskind's original plan reflects his intense interest in symbolism. He wanted the foundations of the former buildings to be part of the memorial site ("We need to journey down, some 70 feet into Ground Zero, onto the bedrock foundation, a procession with deliberation into the deep indelible footprints of Tower One and Tower Two"), and he emphasized their connection to the nation itself.

> The great slurry walls are the most dramatic elements which survived the attack, an engineering wonder constructed on bedrock foundations and designed to hold back the Hudson River. The foundations withstood the unimaginable trauma of the destruction and stand as eloquent as the Constitution itself asserting the durability of Democracy and the value of individual life. (Studio Libeskind, 2012)

Libeskind imagined "the sky" as "home again" to "vertical gardens" on "a towering spire of 1776 feet high" (symbolic of the founding of the country, the year when the Declaration of Independence was signed)—the "Gardens of the World," filled with plants from all parts of the earth (Studio Libeskind, 2012; NY1 News, 2003; Nessen, 2011). He explains, "Why gardens? Because gardens are a constant affirmation of life. A skyscraper rises above its predecessors, reasserting the preeminence of freedom and beauty, restoring the spiritual peak to the city, creating an icon that speaks of our vitality in the face of danger and our optimism in the aftermath of tragedy" (Studio Libeskind, 2012).

Reminiscent of the Statue of Liberty, the tower would be off-center in its northwest corner, designed to pay homage to the Statue of Liberty's torch which Libeskind remembers seeing when he was 13 years old in 1959 when he came to the United States from Poland (Swanson, 2011). Indeed Libeskind's ideas emerge out of his experience as an immigrant. He explains in his proposal for the reconstruction of Ground Zero: "I arrived by ship to New York as a teenager, an immigrant, and like millions of others before me, my first sight was the Statue of Liberty and the amazing skyline of Manhattan. I have never forgotten that sight or what it stands for. This is what this project is all about" (Studio Libeskind, 2012).

The Wedge of Light piazza and the Park of Heroes open spaces were significant places in Daniel Libeskind's plan (Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, 2003).

Libeskind explains how his design remembers the ones who died: "Those who were lost have become heroes. To commemorate those lost lives, I created two large public places, the Park of Heroes and the Wedge of Light. Each year on September 11th between the hours of 8:46 a.m., when the first airplane hit and 10:28 a.m., when the second tower collapsed, the sun will shine without shadow, in perpetual tribute to altruism and courage" (Studio Libeskind, 2012). Once again, the symbolism is paramount.

The construction of the lynchpin building finally started in 2006 and is scheduled to be finished in 2014. The One World Trade Center, or the 1 WTC, previously called the Freedom Tower (Figure 4.20), will occupy the place where the original 6 World Trade Center stood. When completed, the 1 WTC will be the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere rising 1,776 feet as originally envisioned by Libeskind (Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, 2012). Like Ruskin and Eisenman, Libeskind's design is inextricably linked to history. As Michael Earle observes, "In terms of design, his best buildings are connected strongly to history and are deeply influenced by it." His masterplan is "a palimpsest of the site itself"(Earle, 2012). The past coexists with the architectural texts, and thus reaffirms that "any text will the more inevitably take on the characteristics of a palimpsest the more openly it allows the voices of the dead to speak, thus [. . .] bringing about a consciousness of the presentness of the past" (Uhlig, 1985, p. 502). Earle acknowledges the changes made to the masterplan but affirms its influence: "While some other parts of the masterplan have been eliminated or changed in political wrangling, the design remains true to itself. As I write this, we are 4 days from the 10th anniversary of September 11th 2001 and the plan that Libeskind created has enough remaining power to make the place where so many people perished, a historical site whose architecture proudly defends its memories" (Earle, 2012). As demonstrated through his symbolism, the design has been connected to memory, one of the seven laws of architecture delineated by Ruskin, as he affirms that architecture must respect the social, historical, and cultural character of its surroundings. Earle concludes, "The design stands as a true description of palimpsest. As this important anniversary comes and goes, we can appreciate the work of great architecture and design which helps to commemorate that awful moment when the world changed forever" (Earle, 2012). The One World Trade Center stands—arising from the palimpsest of September 11, 2001—and reflects both the tragedy and the triumph of the site.

In architecture, site and design are inseparably linked to produce a structure that focuses on the lamps of truth, power, beauty, life, and memory, as delineated by John Ruskin. These ideals have in some profound ways become the palimpsest for contemporary architects, such as Peter Eisenman and Daniel Libeskind, demonstrating that "any site contains not only presences, but the memory of previous presences and the immanences of a possible presence" (Eisenman, 2004, p. 207). In these structures built to commemorate the Holocaust and the tragedy of 9-11, history haunts the visitors—the past informs the present that prepares the participants for the future.

Figure 4.20: One World Trade Center design released in May 2012—Public Domain

They experience the horrible events that happened there and are forced to embrace what lies ahead.

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