

THE BUILDING OF AN EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL FACADE

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LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

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Wikimedia.org. 23 April. 2010. <<http://commons.wikimedia.org>>.

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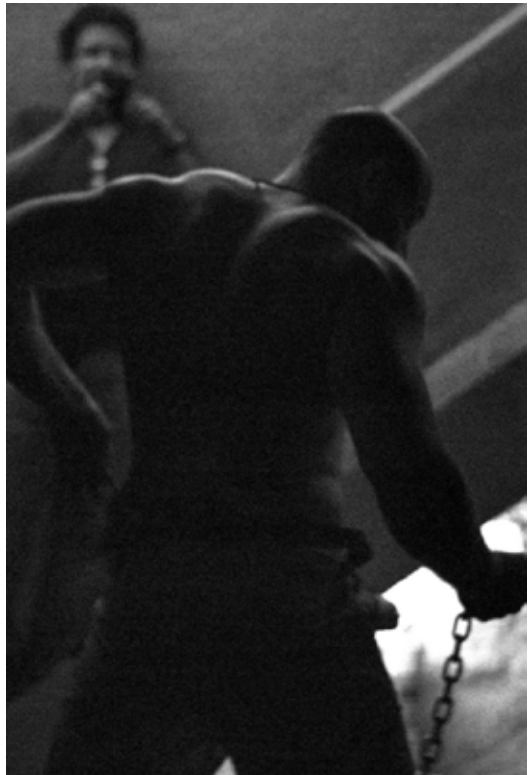
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CHAPTER ONE
Transition



I entered the graduate program at Rutgers already with the beginnings of a successful career as a graphic designer. Aside from my design work, most of my work at the time was primarily drawing.

At Michael Graves, I had the great opportunity of working with many industrial designers, graphic designers and architects. I really enjoyed being in a position to be able to learn from such smart people and from so many different disciplines. This experience further emphasized my world view and more specifically my artistic practice; learn as much as possible from every given experience, from every given situation, and from every person.

After two summer internships and two years of being a graphic designer I decided to leave Michael Graves to pursue my own artistic endeavors. What I took with me from my experience was extremely valuable in helping to shape my understanding, knowledge, and appreciation of all things within the realm of design.

Because of my knowledge not only in the world of art, but also in design, it felt only natural for me to eventually explore installation, sculpture and performance. Previous experience as a designer has taught me how to solve problems and to ask questions. So why confine myself to one way of doing something? What fun would that be?

"More figuratively, it means eluding habit in all forms, and eluding the constant repetition that habit forces on us (Duchamp didn't want to spend a lifetime painting the same canvas over and over, which is what he thought most painters, slaves to the remembered hand, had to do)." ¹

"To forget the hand and let things happen made him happy the way that Hermes is happy bumping into the turtle and Ajaolele is happy returning to his village. It is the happiness of being released from the known and meeting the world freshly, the happiness of happenstance." ²

During my transition from Michael Graves, I became more interested in the work of Joseph Beuys and Matthew Barney. Both have had an approach to making which had been relatively broad and have encompassed drawing, performance, sculpture and video without limiting themselves to one specific medium.

Barney's early work, specifically *Drawing Restraint 1* and *Drawing Restraint 2* helped to challenge my thoughts on singular approaches to painting and drawing. It opened up a whole new world for me and brought new energy into my studio.

Being a weight-lifter and an athlete for the majority of my life I was drawn not only to Barney's investigation of the body, but also because of my Jewish upbringing, his use of

1. Hyde, Lewis. *Trickster Makes This World*. Pg. 122

2. Hyde, Lewis. *Trickster Makes This World*. Pg. 122

myth and fable.

I had also spent many years in the underground house music scene in New York and was part of and observed all of the theatrics that went into the marathon after-hour parties. I became friends with a lot of the performers and also ended up becoming close friends with the legendary performance artist Vivacious.

Because of the combination of these events it was really only a matter of time before I would experiment with different ways of visually transforming ideas into new areas of investigation.

CHAPTER TWO
King David's Harp



Growing up as a Jew in a locale that was both conservative and orthodox has had a profound effect on me as a person.

I have studied Torah off and on for the majority of my life yet it wasn't until graduate school that some of this information came through in my work.

King David's Harp was the first actual project that had some Judaic underpinnings.

One of the ten things that were created on the first day were the four winds that blow from each direction each day. More specifically, the north wind blows from midnight into day break and is the strongest of the four winds. This wind brings with it health and healing for the sick. There is even a blessing for this wind that should be said if one is to experience it.

King David rigged up a harp on-top of his bed that would wake him when the wind would blow so he could recite psalms.

I set out to build an artifact of some sort that seemed to be "communicating" with another world. The artifact was made of foam that was worked to look like stone. Four pillars surrounded the center "altar". Each pillar represented one of the four winds which are under the direction of an angel. Each pillar had a laser set on-top that was directed towards the ceiling mimicking the invisible transformation of a prayer from our world to the next world.

In short, the Kabbalah teaches that the human body is made of 248 organs / limbs and 365 veins / sinews paralleling the 613 Commandments. When one Commandment is observed that part of the body begins its direct spiritual connection with the next world.

The lasers included in my "religious relic" served as visual representation of that connection.



CHAPTER THREE
Introduction to a facade



Wikimedia.org
"Modell der Neugestaltung Berlins ("Germania")"

The definition of a facade has two meanings:. The first meaning is a French translation which can mean either “front” or “face”. The second meaning is figurative; the “face” that people show other people. ¹

A facade in architecture is responsible for setting the tone for the rest of the structure and is the “face” of a building. Given the historical significance of architecture in relationship to a country or ruling power, one could argue that architecture in itself can act as a sort of facade for an entire nation.

The Nazis believed architecture played a key role in creating their new order. Architecture had a special importance to the politicians, who like most totalitarian leaders, sought to influence all aspects of human life.²

Given his life-long admiration of the opera and theatre it’s not difficult to see how Hitler was able to create a convincing and well executed multi-faceted production utilizing design and architecture for his dramatic large-scale rally’s that complimented his talents as a powerful and convincing orator.

At sixteen, Hitler traveled to Vienna for two weeks : “The purpose of my trip was to study the picture gallery in the Court Museum, but I had eyes for scarcely anything but the Museum itself. From morning until late at night, I ran from one object of interest to another, but it was always the buildings which held my primary interest. For hours I could stand in front of the Opera, for hours I could gaze at the Parliament; the whole Ring Boulevard seemed to like an enchantment out of *The Thousand-and-One-Nights*.” ³

In addition, Hitler was no stranger to the performing arts. The opera had a profound influence on him as a young boy. “At the age of twelve I saw *Wilhelm Tell* for the first time, and a few months later my first opera, *Lohengrin*. I was captivated at once..... Again and again I was drawn to his works, and it still seems to me especially fortunate that the modest provincial performance left me open to an intensified experience later on.”⁴

He was also an admirer of Wagner’s music and saw in his operas an embodiment of his own vision of the German nation. ⁵

The entire Nazi operation was an example of a very successful theatrical play, orchestrated and acted out by its members.

1. Wikipedia contributors. “Facade.” Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 8 Apr. 2010. Web. 23 Apr. 2010.

2. Taylor, Robert. Word in Stone: The Role of Architecture in the National Socialist Ideology.

3. Hitler, Adolf. Mein Kampf. Pg. 20

4. Hitler, Adolf. Mein Kampf. Pg. 16

5. Wikipedia contributors. “Richard Wagner.” Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 22 Apr. 2010. Web. 23 Apr. 2010.

The well executed "play" was able to teach Jews to "trust us and we will provide sustenance and survival to you and your family". It was especially effective in the beginning and middle parts of the war when people were confused between rumor and reality. The Nazi party was able to carry out its horrific plans with ease because it was able to take advantage of its cultural heritage and its standing in the world as being one of the "cultural elite". This was in the 1940's and people could not fathom the possibility of something like this happening in the modern world.

In building a facade, propaganda is its best friend and partner.

Hitler understood the role of a facade early on. "In every really great world-shaking movement, propaganda will first have to spread the idea of this movement. Thus, it will indefatigably attempt to make the new thought process clear to the others, and therefore to draw them over to their own ground, or to make them uncertain of their previous conviction."⁶

Because of all of this, it made it almost too easy for Germany to disguise its true intentions. Behind innocent looking showers and ambulances were killing machines.

6. Hitler, Adolf. Mein Kampf. Pg. 583

CHAPTER FOUR

Introduction to the successful methods of handling
from two different handlers of two different time periods
with two different victims while creating a similar result

Modern day livestock handling facilities attempt to lower the stress and fear of an animal en route to being slaughtered.

“(d) Movement is enhanced if the physical environment—the equipment and penning—is attractive to the animal and does not provoke fear.”¹

I found that the design and shape of each livestock facility helps to mitigate an animal's fear and temperament. For example, when cattle walk into a curved chute instead of a straight chute it tricks the cattle into thinking that they are returning to the place from which they just walked, calming any doubts they may have of the road ahead. The facility has to “feel” safe and non-threatening. Floors are unobstructed, hallways are free of debris, natural lighting is used, noise is muffled, there must be a smooth transition from one color to the next, and people must also be nearly invisible when operating certain parts of a facility.

The goals of current livestock handling techniques are eerily close to the goals that Germany had in dealing with Jews. They are both similar, but applied differently. The analogy is quite clear - at the time, a Jew was reduced to the status of an animal.

The weak and the old were culled leaving the healthy alive just long enough for the next train load of people to arrive.

To start, the selection process that would occur quite frequently made the “selected” Jews feel as though they were chosen for specific work details and that their families would be taken care of as well. This was not true. The famous quote that welcomed the next wave of victims to Auschwitz was part of the facade and declared, “Work brings freedom”.

“Before the Jews undressed, Oberscharfuher [Hermann] Michel [deputy commander of the camp] made a speech to them. On these occasions, he used to wear a white coat to give the impression [that he was] a physician”²

In Belzec a similar event took place:

“I heard with my own ears how Wirth, in a quite convincing voice, explained to the Jews that they would be deported further and before that, hygienic reasons, they must bathe themselves and their clothes would have to be disinfected. Inside the dressing barrack was a counter for the deposit of valuables. It was made clear to the Jews that after the bath their valuables would be returned to them. I can still hear, until today, how the Jews applauded Wirth after his speech. This behavior of the Jews convinces me that the Jews believed Wirth....”³

1. Gonyou, H.W. “Behavioral Principles of Animal Handling and Transport.” p. 15

2. Arad, Yitzhak. “Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The operation Reinhard Death Camps. Pg. 76

3 Arad, Yitzhak. “Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The operation Reinhard Death Camps. Pg. 70

It continues with a statement by SS Unterscharfuhrer Schluch:

My post in the "tube" was close to the undressing barrack. Wirth briefed me that while I was there I should influence the Jews to behave calmly. After leaving the undressing barracks, I had to show the Jews the way to the gas chambers. I believe that when I showed the Jews the way they were convinced that they were really going to the baths. After the Jews entered the gas chambers, the doors were closed by Hackenholt himself or by the Ukrainians subordinate to him.⁴

This is an account of how Belzec would look to someone entering the camp:

The camp looked "peaceful"; no graves, pits, or gas chambers could be seen by the victims. They believed that they had arrived in a "transit camp," and an SS man strengthened this belief by announcing that they should undress and make their way to the baths for cleaning and disinfection. They were told that afterward they would receive clean clothes and be sent to labor camps. The barbed-wire fences and the armed guards that were around also kept the victims submissive and calm.

The separation between the sexes, the undressing, and even the haircuts given to the women convinced them even more that they were going to the baths. At this stage they were hurried along and beaten so as to prevent any thought of escape or resistance. For reasons of security, and also to prevent escape and resistance, the men were taken to the gas chambers first, before they grasped what was happening. Afterward, the women and children were taken.

The gas chambers resembled ordinary baths. When they were closed and the victims were packed inside, they still did not know what was happening. Even if they finally realized that they were being gassed, it was too late. The building and doors were strong enough to resist any pressure from inside. Within minutes those inside the gas chambers lost consciousness, and a few minutes later, their lives.⁵

The first mobile killing vehicle was conceived by Artur Nebe and in 1941 the first shipment of vans were delivered to the Einsatzgruppen and to the Chelmo death camps. The idea of gassing people in a van is quite similar to gassing people in "showers". The victims are disarmed because the vehicle looked like an ambulance.

In both instances, great pains are taken to ensure that each operation runs as smoothly, inconspicuously, and unthreatingly as possible. A carefully built facade was constructed by two different types of handlers, in two different time periods, with two different victims.

4. Arad, Yitzhak. "Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The operation Reinhard Death Camps. Pg. 70

5. Arad, Yitzhak. "Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The operation Reinhard Death Camps. Pg. 69

The problem with Germany is that many people, including Jews within Europe could not conceive of the idea that Germany would create actual death camps. Germany was looked at as being the pinnacle of what a cultured civilization aimed to be. In the minds of many, even throughout the world, Germany was too cultured a civilization to do anything even remotely close to the "rumors" that were circulated. The Nazi party knew this and used it to their advantage. Because of this, the Third Reich was able to exploit the situation further.

This put people throughout Europe in a very difficult position that created mortal and ethical challenges because the truth was extremely hard to fathom.

CHAPTER FIVE

The building of an external and an internal facade



Intent

I needed to create two different experiences in one project; an external facade and an internal reality to that facade. The external facade consists of a multi-layered system that includes the entryway and the inside of the room.

In *Tier 4* I attempt to create an environment of metaphor which is similar to the systems used by the Nazi regime, contemporary cattle handling facilities, and also from personal experience from my time in the underground house music scene of New York City.

Tier 4

The name *Tier 4* is short for Tiergartenstrasse 4 which was the street address for Hitler's secret organization T4. T4 was the first euthanasia program to institute the use of carbon monoxide gas to kill undesirables.



Entrance



The entry way into *Tier 4* could be the entrance to any high class club in New York. A red rope was placed in front of an entryway that was constructed with high-gloss acrylic black paneling. This would be the start to my analogy of the selection process.

I asked my friend Tommy to be a part of this performance. He had worked the door at many legendary clubs and fit the bill perfectly. He stood outside and accepted tickets for entry. In hindsight I possibly should have asked him to turn people away at the door to further emphasize exclusivity.

If you were waiting on line to enter you would hear the bass from a contemporary house music song combined with music from the early 20th century.

The playlist that I assembled features actual songs that the Germans forced the Jews to sing either on their way to the gas chambers or when they were



Top left: Tommy

Bottom left: Ticket stub from Tier 4

Previous page: Doorway of Tier 4

digging their own graves. These songs were also sometimes played by an orchestra consisting of prisoners pieced together by the camp commanders. The goal of this orchestra was to drown out the screams of the victims.

Upon entering the room, viewers found themselves in the middle of a multi-faceted room which created partial confusion. Brightly colored flowers decorated parts of the room. An LED sign is placed on a wall to the right and disco lights move about the room in cadence with the music.



LED Sign from Tier 4

In Belzec, flowers decorated the exterior of the courtyard in front of the gas chambers. Outside the corridor that lead into the gas chambers of Treblinka a ceremonial curtain that was looted from a synagogue was hung at the entrance, it read: "This is the Gateway to God...Righteous men will pass through."¹

The Gamemaster

After the initial response to one's surroundings, activities can be noticed through the lattice in the ticket window on the left side of the room.

¹ Arad, Yitzhak. "Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The operation Reinhard Death Camps. Pg. 120



Left: Installation of Tier 4

My friend Vivacious who is a legendary drag queen and performer in New York City agreed to be in the performance with me as the Gamemaster.

To reinforce her role I asked her to wear one of her costumes with a checkerboard pattern. Her job was to accept tickets and to administer the task that was written in invisible ink on the back of each ticket.

For the performance I constructed a pull-up bar, and brought in weights, a rower, and treadmill. The tasks that I would perform were physical tasks.

Not being aware of their roll in all of this, the viewer is placed in an awkward position. Groups of 4 were let in. After the first person handed in their ticket and Vivacious told me to do another exercise the other 3 people in the group became privy to the operation and now had a choice.

Some people decided not to give a ticket, but for the most part a large portion of people handed in their ticket.

We are all very aware of the mortal challenges that faced the citizens of Europe. But, what has surfaced since the war is documentation of specific police brigades called the order police that were at times



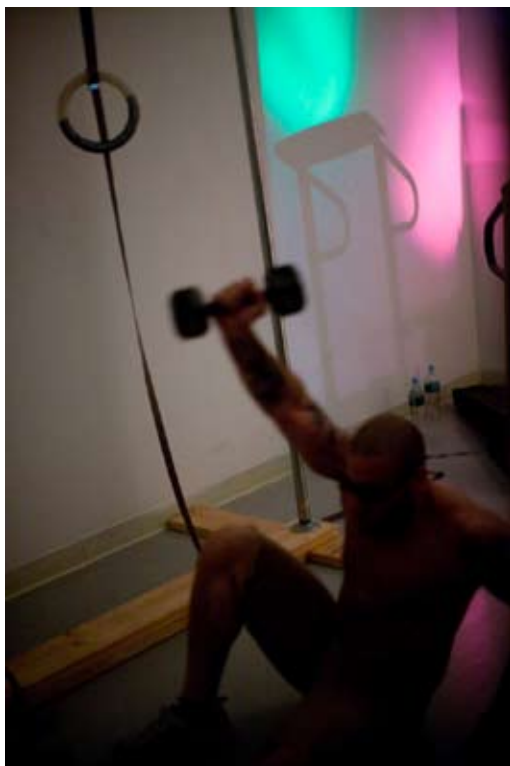
*Vivacious as the Gamemaster
Bottom left: Ticket window*

given horrific tasks similar to the Einsatzgruppen. One well known investigation involves the reserve police battalion 101.

They were middle-aged family men of working- and lower-middle-class background from the city of Hamburg. Considered too old to be of use to the German Army, they had been drafted instead into the Order Police.²

As their role in the Reich grew, their services became more in demand with a broader role. They began to take on liquidation missions and men in the group were given a choice on whether or not to partake.

². Browning, Christopher R. Ordinary Men. Pg.1



Everyone, but a few opted out of these missions and to ease the minds of the men the commanders were instructed to pass out liquor before, during and after the mission.

I have always been pretty physically fit, but since I was a kid I always wondered how I would fair in a concentration camp.

There are a lot of variables that were not part of the piece. I obviously wasn't starving nor was Vivacious pointing a gun to my head and the performance was only two hours. Given these constraints I still felt the need to be a part of this somehow.

If I were to do another performance similar in idea it would have to be longer in duration. I would also want to simplify it. Why should I be doing all different exercises? Most of the time prisoners had only one job to do and they did it everyday, all day.

CHAPTER SIX
Tow



The *Kissmask* was performed by Jill Magid and Chelynne Tetrault in 1999.

During the performance an intimate exchange between two people was formed. Both participants each wearing a mask were connected to the other by a flexible rubber tube. Exhales of hot air were exchanged by both participants and a microphone sewn in the fabric recorded any sound.

In *Tow* a bond between two people is also made, but this time two people are bound together and separated by a wall, each trying to pull away from the other.

I was in Israel a few years ago and had the opportunity to talk with a group of Israeli teenagers. As pleasurable as the conversation was, I quickly found that we had come to an impasse as I broached the subject of the Palestinian / Israeli conflict. I had asked if any of them had any Palestinian friends and the general consensus was no and that they hated the Palestinians. I then proceeded to say that they have every right to exist just as much as they did, but they started to get a bit rowdy so the conversation pretty much came to a close and we moved on.

Even though they were just a bunch of teenagers it was still a pretty jolting experience to hear those things from my fellow Jewish brothers and sisters.

In the performance of *Tow*, I was joined together with fellow artist Basem Hassan by a chain that was attached end- to-end to harnesses that we both wore. The chain was threaded through a pipe that went through a wall that separated us. The wall that I constructed was a replica of the wall Israel is building that some have referred to as the "anti terrorist fence" or the "racial segregation fence".

During the performance we both attempted to pull away from each other to create distance which in turn created friction. Fake glass vases were placed on a shelf that was part of the wall. If one vase moved from the movement of the altercation, it had the ability to hit into others sending them crashing to the floor. On both sides of the conflict, innocent and fragile lives are involved.



Two surveillance cameras were placed on either side of the wall to keep watch on the other. This goes on for the duration of the performance without either side making any sustained progress, to illustrate the repetitive nature, aggressiveness, and fragility of the conflict.



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