Screen Clusters:
Urban Renewal, Architectural Preservation, and the Infrastructures of Urban Media

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ABSTRACT

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As screen technologies proliferate in everyday and quotidian urban contexts, studies of screens placed on façades of buildings have largely focused on understanding how these media can contribute to the formations of responsive, immersive, interactive, and open publics. With these considerations, this thesis historicizes so-called urban screens, public screens, media façades and media architectures as products that are shaped, on the one hand, by the politics of urban renewal and gentrification, and on the other hand, by discourses of architectural and urban preservation. Each chapter focuses on the history of a key site prominently characterized by the presence of screen technologies: Piccadilly Circus in London between 1960-1980 (Chapter 2), Times Square in New York City between 1980-1995 (Chapter 3), Yonge-Dundas Square in Toronto between 1998-2018 (Chapter 4), and Quartier des Spectacles in Montréal between 2000-2018 (Chapter 5). Examining the histories of each site's development, the thesis comparatively highlights the ways LED screens and digital projections become part of the material infrastructures and legal frameworks of each respective city. Under considerations are the conditions that bring about and the regulations that maintain the infrastructures of urban screen technologies and cultures. Particular focus is given to the ways the placement, size, brightness, cleanliness, spectatorial spaces, maintenance, and contents of urban screens have been both variably as well as similarly articulated. Certain commonalities in the governing and discourses surrounding the four sites — such as, the formation of public-private partnerships, the privatization of public spaces, and the roles that architectural and urban preservation play in contributing to the symbolic capital associated with each site — indicate the presence of key fundamental conditions that shape the geographies, economies, regulations, and cultures of urban screens. Instead of a proliferation of screens in public spaces, it is demonstrated that a rather systemic and uneven organization of screen technologies into select economically and culturally promising clusters in cities exists.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BIA	Business Improvement Area
DCP	New York City's Department of City Planning
DYBIA	Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area
FAR	Floor Area Ratio
GLC	Greater London Council
LCC	London County Council
MAS	Municipal Art Society
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
QdS	Quartier des Spectacles
RFAC	Royal Fine Arts Commission
TEDNA	Toronto East Downtown Neighbourhood Association
THF	Trust Houses Forte
UQAM	Université du Québec à Montréal
WCC	Westminster County Council
YDS-Board	Yonge-Dundas Square Board of Management
YSBRA	Yonge Street Business and Resident Association Inc.

INTRODUCTION

THEORIZING AND HISTORICIZING URBAN SCREEN MEDIA AND CULTURES

In 2012, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) released a series of photographs that revealed Earth in a new light. In reference to NASA's earlier set of "Blue Marble" photos that captured the globe forty years prior, this "Black Marble" series sought to reveal what the globe looked like in its orientations away from the sun. The composited series of images compiled over twenty-two days gave a clearer, seemingly cloud-free picture of the artificial illumination of the planet's surface at night.[1] The Suomi National Polar-orbiting Partnership satellite that captured these images did so thanks to the day-night sensor of the Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite equipped aboard its craft. Sensitive enough to detect the glow produced by the light from even a single ship in the sea, this sensor was able to gather hundreds of images taken over three-hundred and twelve orbits around the globe. Though we had a very good sense of the images to come, the representation of the world as such was nevertheless revealing. At night, Earth is made up of a mesh-like network of yellow streams that connect bright white lake-like areas of light scattered on the planet's land surface and islands.

Though the sheer amount of artificial light emitting from these specs and barrages is astonishing, more astounding are the geographies of darkness that have been revealed. Upon release of the images many commented, for example, on the stark contrast that exists in the Korean peninsula. Whereas much of South Korea is lit at sundown, North Korea's capital Pyongyang, one commentator wrote, looks like "the sole blip of light" in an otherwise "sea of darkness."[2] The intensities of electronically generated glows revealed in the Black Marble imagery can generally be relegated to four regions — North America, Europe, the Middle-East,

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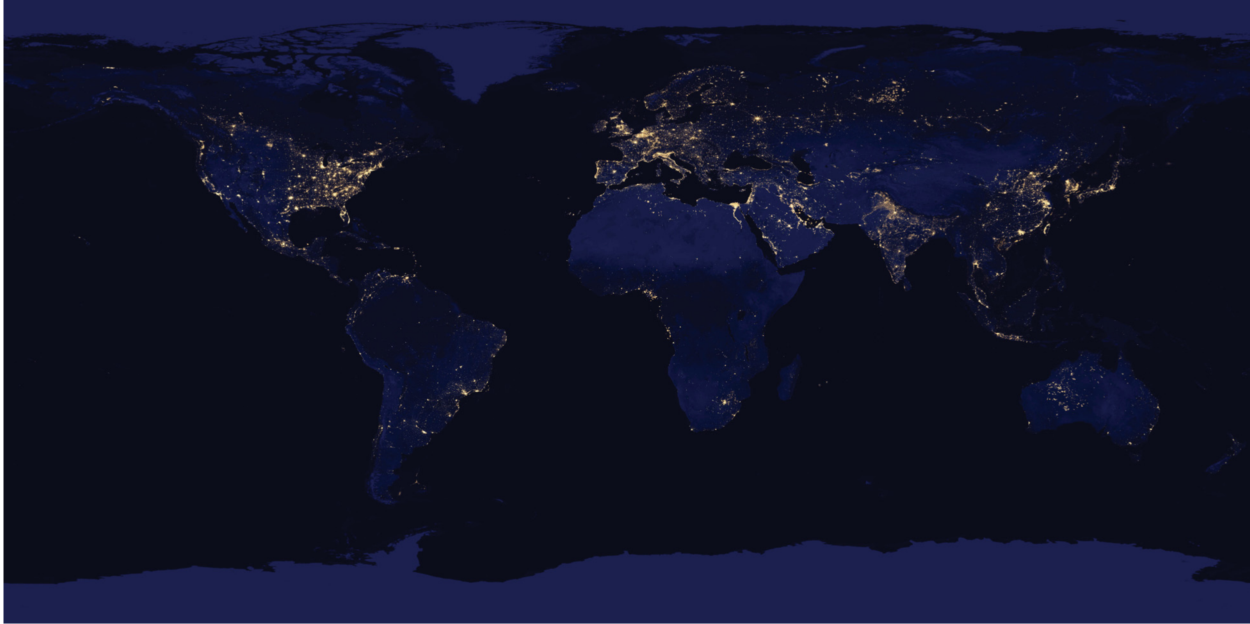
[1] NASA. "NASA-NOAA Satellite Reveals New Views of Earth at Night." *NASA.gov*. December 5, 2012. http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/NPP/news/earth-at-night.html.

[2] David Wogan, "North Korea by Night," *Scientific American Blog Network*, December 19, 2011. https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/plugged-in/north-korea-by-night-photograph/.



Composite map of the world assembled from data acquired by the Suomi NPP satellite in April and October 2012 for the "Black Marble" series. Credit: NASA Earth Observatory/NOAA.

and South-East Asia. But even within these regions, more precise geographies underline the ways that electrically generated artificial lights emit from clustered nodes and the paths that connect them. Not surprisingly, Earth's geographies of illumination follow the agglomerations and circulations of urban societies, their flows of capital, and their structures of governance. In addition to North Korea, most of Africa, South America, Asia, Australia, Antartica, the Arctic Circle, as well as western portions of the United States and northern Canada are decidedly as unlit at night as ever before. In its orientations away from the sun, the Earth has thus never been brighter nor more revelatory of the uneven distribution and management of electric light infrastructures that take place on its surface.

I begin with this rather macro perspective of the entire globe to discuss a much smaller manifestation of illumination media: digital billboards, digital projections, media architecture, media façades, or urban screens. While it is generally true that contemporary culture is evermore furnished with screens, this study emphasizes that the seemingly widespread expansion of screen media has a particularly narrow geography, one that is shaped by specific economic, political, social, technological, and cultural forces. Screen technologies have become typical objects found in ordinary and mundane locations such as waiting rooms, people's hands, offices, cafes, bars, subway lines, streets, and highways. It is important to remember, however, that the broad

identification of these sites alone does not signal that all sites like these are equally or similarly furnished with screens. Not all cafes and restaurants use screens to display their menus. Not all bars are surrounded with walls of screens displaying live sports events. Not all waiting rooms or hair salons have television screens to fill in the ambience. Not all city squares have screens in them. Simply put, the proliferation of moving image media in contemporary public landscapes has a relatively limited geography, one that doesn't signify an all-encompassing expansion of screens to all corners of the globe. Rather, this enlargement of "screenscapes," to borrow a term from film theorist Francesco Casetti, is characterized more by a screen-less majority of places rather than one that is screen-full.[3]

At the same time however, a relatively recent phenomenon defined by the construction of zones dominantly characterized by the display of moving images on architectural façades, has also increasingly been taking shape in multiple cities around the globe. Public squares, streets, and sites such as Piccadilly Circus in London, Times Square in New York City, Yonge-Dundas Square in Toronto, Quartier des Spectacles in Montréal, Shibuya Crossing in Tokyo, Bukit Bintang in Kuala Lampur, Federation Square in Melbourne, Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, Open Sky Gallery in Hong Kong, SESI-SP Digital Art Gallery in São Paulo, Greeting to the Sun in Zadar, the Medialab-Prado in Madrid, the Las Vegas Strip and Fremont Street in Las Vegas, as well as the nightly light shows that animate the financial districts of Shenzhen, Qingdao, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Hangzhou, Macau, and Dubai, are only some examples that point to this geography where urban screen media have materialized in significant ways. These spaces are commonly discussed as bold signs of progress, prosperity and unbridled growth. Representative of new kinds of a "media architecture," a term that I will further discuss in chapter 3 of this dissertation, these screen clusters are nevertheless also subject to a series of debates about the limits, purposes and effects of using electronically programmed moving images in public spaces. Even where screens are thought to be most advanced and celebrated, such sites too tell complex and diverse

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[3] Casetti uses this term in reference to Arjun Appadurai's "mediascapes." See Francesco Casetti, "Mediascapes: A Decalogue," *Perspecta* 51 (2018): 21–43 and Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

Aerial view of Piccadilly Circus. Credit: Jason Hawkes, 2018.

stories about the political economies of urban development, the convergence of electronic media with architectural heritage, and the addition of screen technologies into the fabrics of cities.

To attend to this production of urban screen zones, "Screen Clusters: Urban Renewal, Architectural Preservation, and the Infrastructures of Urban Media" provides detailed historical investigations into the regulation of moving image technologies and cultures in four key public places that are notably characterized by screens: London's Piccadilly Circus, New York City's Times Square, Toronto's Yonge-Dundas Square, and Montreal's Quartier des Spectacles. It asks how and why did screens become prominent elements of each site? What were the conditions and powers that helped shape these sites as screen clusters? What were the differences and similarities that have informed the presence of screens in these locales? What might these findings tell us about the conditions that shape the manifestations of urban screen cultures more broadly?

To be sure, screens do not appear or function in the exact same manner in these four examples. Whereas Piccadilly Circus, Times Square, and Yonge-Dundas Square are currently

Aerial view of Times Square. Credit: Cameron Davidson, 2018.

Aerial view of Yonge-Dundas Square. Credit: Norm Li, 2018.

and dominantly characterized by LED screens that display advertisements throughout the day and nighttime hours, in Quartier des Spectacles it is ambient, playful, interactive and participatory artworks that are digitally projected on the façades of buildings solely during the darkened evening and night hours. Moreover, whereas in Piccadilly Circus screens appear only on one corner of this intersection, and where the entire circumferences of both Times Square and Yonge-Dundas Square are surrounded by screens, in Quartier des Spectacles screens are scattered around the designated district thereby creating discrete pockets of screen interactions. In other words, not only is it the case that different screen technologies are used in these four sites, these examples also point to the varying patterns by which screen clusters are being arranged. Some are dense and monumental while others are dispersed and discrete.

Concentrating on periods wherein each site underwent redevelopment — roughly 1960-1977 in the case of Piccadilly Circus; 1978-1995 in Times Square; 1996-2015 at Yonge-Dundas Square; and 2002-2015 in the Quartier des Spectacles — this study traces the varied opinions circulated by city officials, real estate investors, architectural critics, civic groups,

Grand Bibliothèque (Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec) site in Quartier des Spectalces. Photo credit: Martine Doyon, 2016.

district coalitions, technical and building engineers, as well as dominant public opinions, to consider how they contributed to the establishment of regulations governing the uses of moving image technologies, the theorizing of urban pedestrians as spectators, and each respective site as a placeholder for clusters of screens. In doing so, my investigations reveal the ways various components of urban screen media — such as their locations on buildings in Piccadilly Circus (Chapter 1), their size and luminosity levels in Times Square (Chapter 2), the spectatorial spaces needed to view and interact with them in Yonge-Dundas Square (Chapter 3), as well as their maintenance in the everyday in Quartier des Spectacles (Chapter 4) — are similarly tied to projects that sought to displace crime, sex trade, homelessness, and illicit practices through the management of urban architecture and public spaces. Playing prominent roles in these projects are newly configured pseudo-public organizations, such as so-called Business Improvement Areas (or Business Improvement Districts) as well as Public-Private Partnerships, that promote business improvement and development.

In highlighting the distinct history of each site, my analysis also reveals a progression of changes that have taken shape over roughly half a century — between 1960 through 2015 — wherein the reorganization of the economies and governance of these select western and northern

cities have incrementally modified from those based on welfare state policies to those that give greater power to privatized services and market-based solutions. More than mere efforts to economically rejuvenate these locales through gentrification, this dissertation traces how screens have been instrumental in the production and normalization of spatial privatization in the neoliberal city. Based on my findings from these four sites, my main argument is that urban screen cultures do not simply spread across space. Instead, they cluster in particular, highly governed, speculatively profitable, and oftentimes symbolically charged places. Far from being a simple type of expansion of moving image cultures through the transformation of architecture and public spaces, as is generally described in scholarship about this media, these four histories of urban screen clusters illustrate highly restrictive systems of control that are informed by the economies of real estate, the bureaucracies of massive urban redevelopment projects, the regulation of cultural activities made for public consumption, the advertising and marketing industries, the categories of "desired" and "undesired" people, affects, and businesses, as well as the management of buildings, public spaces, and illumination technologies by and for neoliberal governing bodies.

The histories explored in this dissertation reveal a genealogy of the so-called "smart city" where data about objects, citizens, nature, and their interactions with one another is continuously gathered, processed, analyzed, and managed.[4] Though none of the sites I look at are direct examples of smart city formations such as New Songdo City in South Korea or the proposed Sidewalk Toronto project in Toronto, the developments of media architecture and urban screen cultures in sites such as the ones I investigate have helped shape the parallel political, economic, social, and cultural parameters that are likewise proving to be necessary for smart city discursive formations to also take place. As my findings show, the histories of Piccadilly Circus, Times Square, Yonge-Dundas Square, and Quartier des Spectacles speak to the creation of particular types of territories where multiscreen models of governance, cognition, communication, and storage — such as those used in smart city computation models — are mapped onto urban

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[4] See Paolo Cardullo et al. eds., *The Right to the Smart City* (Emerald Group Publishing, 2019); Shoshanna Saxe, "I'm an Engineer, and I'm Not Buying Into 'Smart' Cities," *The New York Times*, July 16, 2019, sec. Opinion.

structures of power via so-called Business Improvement Areas and Public-Private Partnerships. Through redevelopment, the discourses and conditions that have shaped the places and architectures of screens in each site have also articulated the economic and political parameters through which the roles of screens as technologies of interactive, immersive, and participatory culture can be enacted. Analyzed comparatively, these histories show how privatized models of governance have created, legitimized, and managed territories where multi-screen media, spectatorship, cognition, and interaction amalgamate with systems of financing and managing permanent architecture and public urban spaces. The histories offered in this dissertation, in other words, offer an understanding of the production of spaces where different theories about vision, subjectivity, cognition, and rationality are encoded into laws and calculated into the financing of architecture and urban development.

Theorizing "Urban Screens"

The phrase 'urban screens' emerged at a particular period during the mid-2000s, when a growing presence of screens in cities heightened already existing anxieties about the commercialization of public spaces. It was invoked in order to identify instances when screen technologies were used in ways that emphasized public and artistic engagements over those strictly tied to commercial-based interests. While shared among many scholars, this employment of the term is perhaps best exemplified by Mirjam Struppek's theorization of "the social potential of urban screens".[5] She writes,

> Urban Screens can only be understood in the context of the rediscovery of the public sphere and the urban character of cities, based on a well-balanced mix of functions and the idea of the inhabitants as active citizens. Urban Screens

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[5] Mirjam Struppek, "The Social Potential of Urban Screens," *Visual Communication* 5.2 (2006): 173-188. See also Justin Clemens et al., "Big Screens, Little Acts: Transformations in the Structures and Operations of Public Address," in Nikos Papastergiadis ed. *Ambient Screens and Transnational Spaces* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016), 49-58; and Sean Cubitt, "Defining the Public in Piccadilly Circus," in Papastergiadis ed. *Ambient Screens and Transnational Public Spaces* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016), 81-94.

> combines the function of public space for commerce and trade with a cultural role reflecting the wellbeing of urban society: digital moving displays with a new focus on supporting the idea of urban space as a space for the creation and exchange of culture and the formation of a public sphere using criticism and reflection.[6]

Struppek, who initiated the Amsterdam-based Urban Screens Network — one of the first research groups devoted to the study of urban screen media — theorizes urban screens as material and technological assemblages that emerge out of and as reactions to the configurations of cities as systems that are highly tied to the networks and flows of global capitalism. She proposes the term "Urban Screens" as a category of screen usage for creative, artistic, social, and communal purposes that defines its audiences not strictly as consumers but rather as participants in a cultural event that is mediated by a publicly situated screen.[7] She asks,

> How can the growing digital display infrastructure appearing in the modern urban landscape contribute to [the] idea of a public space as moderator and as communication medium?…How can the currently dominating commercial use of these screens be broadened to display cultural content? Can they become a tool to contribute to a lively urban society involving their audience (inter)actively?[8]

The kinds of positive examples that Struppek has in mind when thinking about urban screens include works by artists such as Krzysztof Wodiczko, Jenny Holzer, Dara Birnbaum, Pipilotti Rist, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Chris Doyle, Doug Aitken, amongst others, and through such projects as Federation Square (Melbourne), Open Sky Gallery (Hong Kong), SESI-SP Digital Art Gallery (São Paulo), Greeting to the Sun (Zadar), the Medialab-Prado (Madrid), Big Screens (England), Public Art Fund (New York City), Art on the Mart (Chicago), the Media Architecture Institute, the Screen City Biennial, as well as the Connected Cities network, to name a few.

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[6] Struppek, "The Social Potential," 174.

[7] See also Susa Pop et al. eds., *Urban Media Cultures* (Stuttgart: avedition, 2012); and Pop et al. eds., *What Urban Media Art Can Do: Why When Where & How?* (Stuttgart: avedition, 2016).

[8] Struppek, "The Social Potential," 173.

Conversely, the Midnight Moment project in Times Square, as well as Quartier des Spectacles in Montréal, are two examples of such organizations that will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 2 and 4. Such artists and institutions do not seek to explicitly sell products or brands, but instead to engage audiences and passersby through works that are more reflexive and critical of the orders of capitalism.

With these examples in mind, Nikos Papastergiadis et al. add that "legitimate concerns over commercial dominance of public space should not become an alibi for sweeping and hasty condemnation" of urban screens altogether.[9] It is in such a framework of analysis that a great deal of work theorizing urban screens has taken shape. Appearing in such diffused disciplines as Human-Computer Interaction, Advertising, Communication, Cinema and Media Studies, Art History, Architecture, Urban Planning, and Design, a majority of studies in this area of research has chiefly focused on analyzing the technological potentials of outdoor LEDs and digital projections to impact political discourse and social interactions in the city. For example, new media theorist Lev Manovich argues that the "overlaying of dynamic data over the physical space" through screens creates a "new kind of physical space…[an] augmented space."[10] Likewise, architecture and design scholars Alexander Wiethoff and Heinrich Hussmann write that screens are "a new, smart construction material that can…enhance…communication and enable a material dialogue between the city and citizens."[11] Similarly, in the field of Human-Computer Interactions, Kenton O'Hara et al. argue that the integration of digital displays represents "opportunities for novel forms of communication, coordination and collaboration."[12]

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[9] Nikos Papastergiadis et al., "Introduction: Screen Cultures and Public Spaces," in Papastergiadis ed. *Ambient Screens and Transnational Spaces* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016), 24.

[10] Lev Manovich, "The Poetics of Urban Media Surfaces," *First Monday*, 11 (2006).

[11] Alexander Wiethoff and Heinrich Hussmann, "Introduction," in Wiethoff and Hussmann eds., *Media Architecture: Using Information and Media as Construction Material* (Berlin: Degruyter, 2017), 1.

[12] Kenton O'Hara et al., "Introduction to Public and Situated Displays," in O'Hara et al. eds. *Public and Situated Displays: Social and Interactional Aspects of Shared Display Technologies* (Singapore: Springer Science+Business Media, 2003), xviii.

More than simply being alternatives to the hyper-commercialization of public spaces, urban screens are theorized in terms of responsive architecture and smart connectivity — that is, as key components in the construction of smart cities.

Not plainly regarded as the addition of television or cinema to architecture, urban screens are understood both as an aesthetic category as well as a novel system of communication that is programmable, networked, responsive, and interactive. By problematizing architecture and built environments as objects that lack capabilities to adequately interact and respond to everyday social realities, such scholarship identifies urban screens as a new type of media that can offer—sometimes utopian—solutions to problems of communication and dialogue in cities. But as this dissertation will show, the geographies of urban screens—as in, where they appear—do not thoroughly signal radical departures from the ways architecture and urban planning have and continue to be fundamentally practiced. Screens do not simply appear on the façades of buildings, or alongside highways, or in public squares; rather, they emerge out of specific, historically situated, systems of spatial production. As components of architecture and urban planning, they also involve questions about the ways land, buildings, and properties are funded, regulated, managed, and governed. Simply put, the presence and ongoing management of urban screens do not exist without ties to the economies and regulations of real estate.

We cannot simply analyze media technologies as solutions to social problems without first understanding the contexts out of which these technologies emerged, nor the continued interdependencies of such technologies with other phenomena, whether technical, aesthetic or cultural. Before we theorize "what urban media art can do," as Tanya Taft put it, we also need to historicize what urban media art actually do by questioning how urban screens became inextricable from and defined as components of architecture.[13] More than simply media of communication, urban screens are also fundamentally pieces of real estate. As such, urban screens cannot be thought about in isolation from municipal governance, real estate economies, architectural design, and operational questions of management, maintenance, and function. Needed, therefore, are analyses of urban screens that do not solely rely on buzzwords such as

[13] Tanya Toft, "What Urban Media Art Can Do," in Pop et al. eds. *What Urban Media Art Can Do* (Stuttgart: avedition, 2016), 50-65.

dynamism, augmentation, smartness, novelty, participation, and interactivity that so often accompany the promises of new media. Also needed are analyses that investigate how urban screens intersect with the more practical and pragmatic vocabularies of legal, bureaucratic, and funding frameworks of real estate and redevelopment. “Screen Clusters: Urban Renewal, Architectural Preservation, and the Infrastructures of Urban Media” contributes to this area of research by analyzing and historicizing urban screens not simply as novel media and architectural marvels, but as fundamental components of property management as well.

Urban Screen Historiography

To be sure, this dissertation is not the first historical investigation of urban screens. Whereas the aforementioned theorists have sought to identify the ways urban screens are either a new aesthetic category or a type of new media that can potentially be differentiated from more consumerist-based uses, historians have highlighted the deeper relations between urban screens and older media. For example, historians of architectural illumination such as David Nye, Dietrich Neumann, Scott McQuire, and Sandy Isenstadt have variably illustrated the fundamental roles that the electrification of cities, since the nineteenth century, have played in shaping important precedents to urban screens.[14] With the addition of electric grids and incandescent lights, the geographies of cities and towns were being marked by illuminated billboards and so-called “Great White Ways” — clusters of brightly illuminated roads and town centres. Highly influential, in this regard, has been Scott McQuire’s historicization of what he describes as the “media city” or the “electropolis”.[15] Unlike the logics of computation and control that characterize smart cities, McQuire explains, media cities produce a more ephemeral, fluid, and

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[14] David E. Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992) and *American Illuminations: Urban Lighting, 1800–1920* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2018); Dietrich Neumann ed., *Architecture of the Night: The Illuminated Building* (New York: Prestel Publishin, 2002); Scott McQuire, *The Media City: Media, Architecture and Urban Space* (Los Angeles: Sage: 2008); Sandy Isenstadt, *Electric Light: An Architectural History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2018).

[15] McQuire, *The Media City*.

ambivalent experience of time and space. Because of electricity and artificial illumination, night can become day; energy is not represented as weighty and solid but rather as something that flows effortlessly and ephemerally; landscapes are not stably fixed but instead are experienced as infinitely and ambivalently dissolving. Whereas cinema scholars such as Tom Gunning and Miriam Hansen argued that cinema helped normalize the stresses that accompanied mass society, speed, industrialization, mechanization, and alienation, for McQuire, the ontological relations of urban screens to electrical illuminations did not so much help remedy the experience of shock. Rather, understood within the genealogy of electrification and artificial lights, urban screens informed an increasingly indecisive and wavering experience of modernity. Instead of shock, for McQuire, electrical illumination underlined ambivalence as a paradigmatic experience in modernity.

Architectural historian Antoine Picon makes a similar argument to McQuire's, arguing that urban screens are not objects of the smart city but instead emerge out of what he describes as the "networked city."[16] Whereas the smart city "is based on the identification of millions of elementary occurrences" — such as recording and evaluating individuals' consumption patterns, impacts of weather on flow of traffic, measuring carbon pollution — Picon argues, these data inputs were first cultivated in a city that "accorded absolute priority to flow management" through the construction of roads, bridges, water supplies, sanitation systems, and electric grids.[17] Urban screens, according to Picon, emerged out of a city devoted to the transportation of people, products, energy, and information. Like broadcast television and radio, for Picon, urban screens are primarily informed by efforts to create systems of communicative flow. Placed on transportation routes, they augment efforts to affix, sustain, and benefit from networks of connectivity. Thus, whereas McQuire points to ephemerality as a dominant characteristic of the media city, for Picon it is the systematization of movement that defines the networked city and the history of urban screens.

Also disputing McQuire's ambivalence theory, media scholar Chris Berry likewise offers a narrative where the mediation of the built environment helped shape a more affirmative

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[16] Antoine Picon, *Smart Cities: A Spatialised Intelligence* (John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2015).

[17] Ibid., 51

experience of time and space. Looking at urban screen culture in Shanghai, Berry argues that a "long but varied local lineage of putting writing into public spaces" — a tradition of furnishing public spaces with logographic Hanzi as well as magical moving image and illumination technologies — has strongly informed the aesthetics of outdoor screen cultures in that city.[18] Due to the most recent phase of economic globalization, this centuries-old tradition has been coupled with aspirations to showcase the "lure of consumerism and its myriad pleasures".[19] Similarly, focusing on the American context, electrification historian David Nye makes a comparable argument to Berry's, explaining that electrification was instrumental in symbolizing the empowerment and modernity of American liberal democracy over the dominance of nature as well as European monarchies.[20] Less the production of ambivalence, Berry and Nye point to the ways urban screens belong to an ontology of regulation and instrumentalization that emerged out of and helped give structured meanings to particular ideological and geo-political relations.

However varying their conclusions may be, such histories similarly attempt to historicize urban screens through the lenses of electric illumination. Other media historians, meanwhile, have tied urban screens to the histories of street advertising and cinema. For example, in addition to the rise of electric illumination and searchlights in the turn of the twentieth century, media archaeologist Erkki Huhtamo, traces the lineage of urban screens to the signboards of Medieval Europe, as well as to the uses of advertising billboards, fireworks, hot-air balloons, and magic lantern shows in the United States throughout the nineteenth century.[21] Similarly, cinema historian Kristen Moana Thompson argues that the kinds of illusory movements that have appeared in electrical and neon signage since mid-century reveal a type of intertwining of the

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[18] Chris Berry, "Shanghi's Public Screen Culture: Local and Coeval," in Berry et al. eds., *Public Space, Media Space* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 111.

[19] Ibid., 122.

[20] Nye, *American Illuminations*.

[21] Erkki Huhtamo, "Messages on the Wall: An Archaeology of Public Media Displays," in S. McQuire et al. eds., *Urban Screen Reader* (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2009), 15-28; and "The Sky is (not) the Limit: Envisioning the Ultimate Public Media Display," *Journal of Visual Culture*, 8.3 (2010): 329–348.

histories of advertising with moving image media, such as cinema and television.[22] Variably, cinema scholar Francesco Casetti does not so much see urban screens solely as illumination media, but rather as being part and parcel of cinema's "relocation" in the digital age.[23] He argues that urban screens coincide with the emergence of movies on demand, "cinematic" aesthetics in video games and television shows, ubiquity of the language of movie trailers, screens in galleries, as well as the fluidity of sites for movie viewing on mobile screens, in cafés, bars, airplanes, etc.

These examples serve as correctives to an area of research otherwise focused on theorizing urban screens in terms of new media. By tracing the ontologies of urban screens to illumination, signage, advertising, and cinema, all of these aforementioned scholars point to much longer histories that began well before the emergence of digital technologies. The newness that often characterizes urban screens turns out to be largely misguided. Urban screens have not appeared in the last few decades, but instead have been in formation centuries earlier. In focusing on questions of medium specificity and remediation, such historical studies help outline the distinctions and similarities that might exist between different iterations of illumination or screen media, from city lights to cinema to media façades.

However, without disregarding these genealogical relations to older media, it is also important to take note of the ways that urban screens have been tied to specific uses, management, and control of the spaces and architectures upon which they are found. As real estate and property, urban screen media require that their technologies, materials, and spaces be financed, administered, and maintained. Such requirements necessitate governing bodies to preside over the day to day administration of these media. Since this is the case, the histories of urban screens are not only informed by genealogical ties to other media. More than narratives of shock, ambivalence, and remediation, urban screens also cannot be thought about in isolation

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[22] Kirsten Moana Thompson, "Rainbow Ravine: Color and Animated Advertising in Times Square, 1891-1945," in Joshua Yumibe, Sarah Street and Vicky Jackson, eds. *The Color Fantastic: Chromatic Worlds of Silent Cinema* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 161-178.

[23] Francesco Casetti, "Filmic Experience," *Screen* 50.1 (2009): 56-66.

from other major modern paradigms like municipal governance, real estate, architecture, and operational questions of management, maintenance, and function.

Significantly, as this dissertation highlights, though historically the management of urban real estate and infrastructures have been associated with either the public or private spheres, in the more contemporary context they have increasingly become tied to pseudo-public or public-private entities such as business improvement areas and public-private partnerships. Examples of such organizations include the Heart of London Business Alliance, the Times Square Alliance, the Yonge-Dundas Square Partnership, and the Quartier des Spectacles Partnership.[24] In other words, the production and management of urban screen zones point to a distinct formation and organization of property and capital, one that entrusts private companies with powers heretofore only held by organizations from the public sector. This type of configuration has been identified as "neoliberal." In the next section I will elaborate on certain definitions of neoliberalism in order to argue that the histories of urban screens need to be carefully assessed within such a context.

Neoliberal Context

Neoliberalism is an ideological framework that emerged during the 1970s due to rising doubts in the operations of democratic governments, on the one hand, and with the growing belief that the marketplace can resolve social issues, on the other. As Wendy Brown puts it, "neoliberal reason…is converting the distinctly *political* character, meaning, and operation of democracy's constituent elements into *economic* ones".[25] Before expanding on these insights, it is therefore

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[24] See also Audrey Yue et al., "Large Screens as Creative Clusters," *City, Culture and Society* 5 (2014): 157-164.

[25] Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 17.

useful to discuss neoliberalism as a historically situated term that emerged, in part, as a rejection of another liberalist ideology — namely, egalitarian liberalism.[26]

Taking shape largely during the industrialized 1930s through 1970s, though its legacy still persists today, egalitarian liberalism is defined by redistribution of wealth through the provision of welfare benefits. Its main ideological poles state that liberty should not only pertain to the protection of personal freedom rights but also to the expansion of welfare rights as well. Seeking to avoid deep economic recessions as well as totalitarian governments, egalitarian liberalism became a viable alternative to the communist and fascist models of governance that were on the rise in many parts of the globe.[27] In order to expand welfare rights, egalitarian liberalism adopted the economic theories of John Maynard Keynes who proposed that governments should work to protect and grow the middle class through a number of public programs, such as unemployment and disability insurance, labour unions, minimum wage, public schools, public space, public housing, access to healthcare, and food stamps, to name a few. This distribution of wealth in Keynesian economics was intricately dependent on a system that steadily maintained and grew the production of goods. In other words, though the expansion of welfare rights helped grow the middle class, it was also a system that heavily relied on a densely populated industrial city. As the middle class kept growing under egalitarian liberalism, so too did the geographies of cities began expanding outwards as well. However, as cities transformed into networks of suburbs, the manufacturing of goods in factories were displaced as the dominant indicators of social wealth. Instead of being dependent on a steady flow of production in a densely populated area, it was thus increasingly the patterns of consumption by a sprawling market that became the guiding index by which the wellbeing of the economy was measured.

The resulting impacts on the values and regulations of inner-city properties were especially felt amongst poorer and racialized groups, who were already in greater need of financial assistance. A classic example of these problematic challenges that egalitarian liberalism

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[26] See also Jason Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City: Governance, Ideology, and Development in American Urbanism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[27] Neil Smith, “New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy,” *Antipode* 34 (2002): 427-450.

faced played out in the construction and expansion of highway systems in the United States. Though welfare-state policies helped legitimize federal government funding of the interstate highway system on the logic that it would both help accommodate more private mobility and stimulate the economy for the middle class, the construction of new highways in turn also helped give shape to phenomena such as suburban sprawl and "white flight," wherein large portions of middle-class caucasian groups were leaving cities, thereby creating economic declines in the real estate values of inner city properties and neighbourhoods.[28] Examples such as this proved problematic for governments to manage, for they made it difficult to finance the welfare programs that protected and grew the middle class in the first place, arguably focusing only on one racial group over others.

As these major transformations in the strategies for managing flow in these cities were evolving, by the 1970s and 1980s a small but very vocal group of intellectuals — which included economists such as Milton Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, and Thomas Sowell, as well as politicians such as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan — called for solutions that were different from those tied to Keynesian economic models and egalitarian ideologies.[29] This group rejected the welfare state by arguing that its policies gave governments broadly reaching powers over all facets of society, both industrial, economic, cultural, even familial. Fearing the abilities of governments to take away political freedoms from individuals, these critics of egalitarianism called for a return to the protection of basic liberties, such as freedom of individual enterprise through the protection of free markets. Rather than an expansion of social safety nets, they wanted to see an expansion of entrepreneurial ventures that were free of regulations and control from governments. If egalitarian liberalism is defined by redistribution of wealth through acts of

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[28] See Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City*.

[29] Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944); Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); Friedman, *Market or Plan? An Exposition of the Case for the Market* (London: Centre for Research into Communist Economies, 1984); Thomas Sowell, *Knowledge and Decisions* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1980).

state (the provision of welfare benefits), neoliberalism became defined as the undoing of those kinds of controls and management over capital and resources.

As political theorist Wendy Brown writes, neoliberalism enacts "an ensemble of economic policies in accord with its root principle of affirming free markets" that include:

> […] deregulation of industries and capital flows; radical reduction in welfare state provisions and protections for the vulnerable; privatized and outsourced public goods, ranging from education, parks, postal services, roads, and social welfare to prisons and militaries; replacement of progressive with regressive tax and tariff schemes; the end of wealth redistribution as an economic or social-political policy; the conversion of every human need or desire into a profitable enterprise, from college admissions preparation to human organ transplants, from baby adoptions to pollution rights, from avoiding lines to securing legroom on an airplane; and, most recently, the financialization of everything and the increasing dominance of finance capital over productive capital in the dynamics of the economy and everyday life.[30]

Concisely put, neoliberalism is the undoing of the government policies that sought to protect and increase rights to welfare through the dismantling of the policies, institutions, and mechanisms that supported the management of resources and capital based on egalitarian principles. It replaces the ideologies of social democracies and the notion that societies should work to accomplish a collective good by elevating the idea that populations are made up of competitive individuals. Neoliberalism argues that government should only regulate markets in ways that do not disrupt, above all else, economic growth. At its most extreme, rather than arriving at solutions based on political or ethical rationale, neoliberalism uses cost-benefit analysis to legitimize decisions. As Jathan Sadowski and Frank Pasquale put it, "Its *summum bonum* is to improve the business environment and spread market logics to all dimensions of human life."[31]

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[30] Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 28.

[31] Jathan Sadowski and Frank Pasquale, "The Spectrum of Control: A Social Theory of the Smart City", *First Monday* 20.7 (6 July 2015).

In other words, neoliberalism seeks to monetize everything — whether objects, actions, affects, risk — so that all possibilities of exchange can fit into a capitalist financial system. Under neoliberalism, all solutions are based on calculations of financial growth.

Accordingly, as these major changes in the ordering of democratic liberalism took place, so too have the roles of cities transformed. As urban historian Jason Hackworth writes, "Cities have moved from a managerialist role under Keynesianism to an entrepreneurial one under neoliberalism. No longer are cities as able to establish regulatory barriers to capital; on the contrary, they are expected to lower such barriers."[32] At the core of this shift is a transformation that is commonly described as 'privatization.' Beginning in the 1980s, though more concretely in the 1990s and 2000s, services that used to be managed by the public sector — such as the sanitation and securitization of public spaces and public events — started being administered by private organizations. It is this shift towards privatization that this dissertation foregrounds in its historicization of urban screens.

Welfare state policies and the subsequent neoliberal responses to them impacted all four cities that this dissertation investigates in variable ways. As will be discussed in Chapter 1, efforts to transform Piccadilly Circus during the 1960s and 1970s into a more efficient intersection coincided with the construction of major highways around the city of London, intended to facilitate the growth of London and the growth of suburban development. Similarly, the forceful implementation of a highway system by Robert Moses in New York City during the 1960s also meant the bullish displacement and denigration of certain inner city neighbourhoods. The closely linked economic devaluing of properties in Times Square, informing my analysis in Chapter 2, served as one such example. Similarly in Toronto, during the 1960s, the Gardiner Expressway, the Don Valley Parkway, and the creation of several highway bypasses, also created economic tensions between the inner parts and outer satellites of the city. As will be elaborated on in Chapter 3, by the 1980s this antecedent management of flow was partially to blame for the economic decline in the area where Yonge and Dundas Streets meet. Finally, Chapter 4 will detail how throughout the 1960s and 1970s the egalitarian governments of Québec and Montréal helped fund the construction of new public transportation and education systems, energy

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[32] Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City*, 61.

infrastructures, as well as Place des Arts — a major cultural arts centre in the heart of Montréal. The chapter charts how these projects ultimately became the infrastructures upon which the Quartier des Spectacles was established by a neoliberal, public-private partnership, system of governance.

The screen zones of Piccadilly Circus, Times Square, Yonge-Dundas Square, and Quartier des Spectacles require the orchestration and curation of a great deal of economic and legal capital, people, spaces, and material resources. In addition to the management of content and decisions regarding what can or cannot be seen, these multiscreen environments also require mechanisms that govern when, where, why, and how this content is to be seen. This demands a degree of control over buildings to support the display of moving images, and thus ownership of real estate. It also requires access to electrical grid and funding for expenditures on energy, bylaws and building codes that allow both projections to be reflected outdoors, as well as for their presence to block the flow of light and air from indoors. Multiscreen environments also call for spectatorial spaces: open areas where spectators can look at the images with minimal interruptions and in secure locations. These spaces stipulate the presence of a security workforce, traffic control personnel, and sanitation crews. The equipment itself needs to be secured from vandalism and the wear and tear brought on by either environmental conditions or human activities. Screen technologies thus must be located out of arms reach, and also require the presence of technical maintenance crews.

Because they occupy such high-traffic and dense urban spaces, as well as require a great deal of resources to be put in place, urban screens technologies become the property of highly concentrated systems of governance. This ownership is often made possible by the orchestration of public and private partnerships that mutually seek the best possible returns on investments. As symptoms of neoliberalism, Business Improvement Areas (BIA) such as the Heart of London Business Alliance and the Times Square Alliance, as well as Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) such as the Yonge-Dundas Square Board of Management and Le Partenariat du Quartier des Spectacle—which are mostly made up of individuals representing businesses and institutions located in the vicinity of each site—are now also managing services such as sanitation, maintenance, usage permits, and security of these public areas. In other words, such partnerships

are replacing democratically elected models and systems of governance with market-based rulings. While their specific mandates do vary from site to site, at their most basic level all such partnerships function as for-profit organizations that primarily seek to produce a sense of place for their district, largely by tying the area to a branded experience. This sense of place is typically made cohesive through the themes of shopping or entertainment, branded by uniformly identifiable colour schemes, and is designed to give a sense of protected enclosures that exclude any activities that do not reenforce the motifs of leisure, amusement and consumption. As urban theorist William Mallett describes it, BIAs and PPPs aspire to create “malls without walls.”[33] That is, they seek to transform the mixture of public city life into a coordinated spatial experience that feels more like a shopping mall.

There are a number of reasons why BIAs and PPPs exist in contemporary city governance. The most convincing arguments declare that the existing structures in charge of the provisioning of public services—such as sanitation, security, regular upkeep, and the overall sense of place—in different areas of cities need not be distributed equally. Not all neighbourhoods require the same allocation of public goods. Areas where higher concentrations of commercial, cultural, and other mixed-use activities take place need more resources. BIAs and PPPs fundamentally argue that public entities cannot be sufficiently adaptive and responsive to specialized needs. As urban development scholar Rachel Meltzer put it, “if there exists heterogeneity in service demand, certain neighbourhoods and properties will be left underserved by the public sector. [BIAs and PPPs] allow local actors, such as property owners, business and community groups, to decide what services should be provided in their local area, and implement binding assessments to fund them.”[34] In order to resolve the negative implications of allocating more resources to certain areas than others, and to avoid showing preferential treatments to particular neighbourhoods, businesses, and cultural activities, BIAs and PPPs offer ways to raise the extra funds necessary to maintain or enhance more frequented neighbourhoods without

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[33] William J. Mallett, “Private Government Formation in the DC Metropolitan Area,” *Growth and Change* 24 (Summer 1993): 395.

[34] Rachel Meltzer, “Understanding Business Improvement District Formation: An Analysis of Neighbourhoods and Boundaries,” *Journal of Urban Economics* 71 (2012): 67.

taking away from the larger pool of funds and budgets allotted to all other areas in the city. Much like flexible production, BIAs and PPPs work according to the post-fordist logics of modulation and adaptability. This makes it easier to fine-tune the final product, which is in these cases, the experience of place.

While BIAs and PPPs emerged as a solution to the perceived inadequacies of how public entities managed public funds, they have nevertheless also created systems where select private entities gain more control over the ways their places of residence and commerce are governed. By intensifying spending on sanitation, security, and marketing, these concentrated orchestrations of power strategically realign resources, infrastructures and capital in ways that benefits their interests over others. Many scholars have addressed the ways BIAs and PPPs represent an undemocratic form of control of cities, demonstrating how they systematically institutionalize the displacement of the poor as well as businesses and activities deemed incongruent with the lifestyles of post-industrial consuming class. Sharon Zukin, for example, argues that in enabling greater access to the management of public funds, BIAs allow for more aggressive accumulation of economic and legal wealth as well as political power by the private sector.[35] Rather than resolving economic and social inequalities, BIAs and PPPs create pockets where commercial and real estate growth can take place, all the while marginalizing the poor and alienated through the privatization of public spaces.

As Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin point out, BIAs and PPPs signal a historical shift in urban development wherein existing infrastructures — heretofore organized by the policies and ideologies of welfare states — are fragmented and parcelled out to economically-defined organizations whose social goals are measured by financial self-sufficiency.[36] They call this shift a ‘splintering’ of the urban environment. Particular locales within cities are zeroed in on by both city officials, private investors, as well as non-profit organizations, and are made to be divided up out of, though not completely separated from, the infrastructures built by the welfare state. As Graham and Marvin observe, such a systemic mode of controlling the city produces new ways of

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[35] Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1995).

[36] Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

measuring social, cultural, and economic benefits. No longer evaluated in a manner that is equal to the rest of the city, it positions such clusters of branded spaces against both the rest of the city and other similarly controlled BIAs and PPPs.

This dissertation argues that screens zones are examples of such splinters in the contemporary city. Not plainly remediations of older media, the histories of the sites under investigation highlight how urban screens have been intricately shaped by the emerging political frameworks of neoliberalism. Not simply examples of commercialization, urban screens emerge out of and help contribute to the paradigms of privatization. The histories of urban screens in Piccadilly Circus, Times Square, Yonge-Dundas Square, and Quartier des Spectacles illuminate some of the tensions that have taken shape through the transition from egalitarian liberalism to neoliberal contexts. Both in the changing coordinations between private and public sectors, as well as the institutional management of architectural and cultural heritage, urban screens have played crucial roles in giving shape to privatization models of governance in each of these cities.

Objectives and Methodologies

The aims of this dissertation are threefold. First, it seeks to identify the cultural significance, meanings, and functions being attributed to moving image media by addressing the broader political and economic frameworks that inform the integration of screen technologies into public urban environments. Second, it traces how these frameworks culminate or become established as specific sets of regulations and guidelines by which the usages of screen technologies in public places abide. Third, this dissertation investigates the varied material infrastructures of urban screen zones in order to trace how certain ideological stances are being supported and applied. In addressing these areas of research, this dissertation identifies the frameworks that inform the regulations of moving image cultures, and by extension, of public conduct, in London, New York, Toronto, and Montréal by bringing to the fore assessments of the material and legal infrastructures necessary to integrate moving image technologies into public urban landscapes. It asks, what resources are being used to implement the spatialization and movement of bodies (audience, workers, investors, security personnel), things (screens, wires, electricity, projection

booths, open spaces, policies, temperature, investments), activities (commerce, art, politics), and affects (taste, fear, comfort, cleanliness)? How are these resources and efforts being addressed or not in these diverse outdoor urban locations where moving image technologies are found? Thus, as much as this dissertation investigates the policing of certain places through the facilitation of particular kinds of economies, practices, and behaviours, it also studies the technical equipment, the attendant economies, and the practical concerns that bind such political and economic aspirations together.

To answer these questions, I have looked at a wide-range of textual and visual evidence documenting the redevelopment of the four sites being investigated. A great deal of this evidence has been made accessible through municipal, corporate, local, as well as national libraries and archives. For my research on Piccadilly Circus, I consulted the London Municipal Archives, the National Archives, the Royal Institute of British Architects Library and Archives, as well as the Archives of the British Library. For my inquiries about the history of Times Square, I visited the New York City Municipal Archives, the Municipal Art Society Archives, the Archives of the Museum of the City of New York, as well as the Archives of the New York City Public Library. To better understand the development of Yonge-Dundas Square I visited the City of Toronto Archives as well as the Toronto Public Library. Lastly, to research the establishment of Quartier des Spectacles, I consulted the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, the archives of the Université du Québec à Montréal, as well as the archives of the Canadian Centre for Architecture. In addition to reading more than 500 files and thousands of official documents—including development proposals, planning briefs, developmental reviews, zoning resolutions, land assessments, press releases, internal correspondences, meeting minutes, design guidelines, project proposals, budget plans, proposal valuations, financial statements, crime reports — I also looked at hundreds of pamphlets, posters, pictures, board meetings, films and press clippings made or gathered by civic groups, property managers, governmental offices, real estate investors, architectural firms, urban developers, stakeholders, BIAs, PPPs, and technical firms, who either protested or sought to promote the redevelopment of each site. To help elucidate how these sites were discussed and shared in broader public discourses, I additionally also made use of hundreds of newspaper, magazine, television reports, as well as fictional and documentary films. Though I

did not rely on the latter as proof of official testimonies, I use these texts to help highlight how public support for, or against, redevelopment had been shaped and characterized in the aforementioned documents.

Outside of using archived records and publications, I also spent dozens of hours at each location performing on-site observational analysis. In these sessions I traced how screens are installed and maintained, how they are positioned in relationship to spectators, as well as how these screen zones are situated in relationship to the environments that surround them. This portion of my research helped me gain a better sense of the appearance of these sites, how they are serviced, how they address spectators, as well as how they fit into the surrounding environments. Furthermore, particularly regarding Chapter 4, my research has also made use of insights gained from interviews I conducted with technical personnel working on urban screen technologies in Quartier des Spectacles. Whereas understanding the economic and cultural discourses of redevelopment has revealed the ideological pulls that shape the desires to integrate screens into outdoor city centres, finding answers to more practical questions regarding the kinds of material and technical constraints that limit their usages and implementations has revealed the frameworks of functionality that shape the parameters by which these discourses have operated. Though I am unable to directly quote these conversations, my research has nevertheless been informed by some of the insights I gained through them.[37]

Because urban screens enter the urban environment through the registers of architecture, advertising, and urban planning by adopting a variety of technologies—including projectors, neon, LED, LCD, and CRT displays—a productive way to think about the particular junctures where moving image media and urban cultures meet, as Abigail Susik (2012) argues, should include both a "post-medium" as well as a more politically attentive framework of analysis.

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[37] As will be explained in chapter 4, although we had scheduled a number of sessions, for reasons still undisclosed, employees of the Quartier des Spectacles Partnership were not able to provide me with additional meetings. Furthermore, due to the fact that I was restricted to follow the Quartier des Spectacles Partnership's permissions-to-publish policy—which only granted me rights to directly quote from their employees once the organization has read my completed essay—this dissertation does not directly quote from my meetings. In order to fill these gaps, where possible I made use of similarly quotable statements that I found through other primary sources (pamphlets, trade publications, newspapers, and archived documents).

Outdoor moving images have become a nexus where ideological tensions and power structures in the city manifest in a variety of forms, techniques, and situations. When urban surfaces get transformed into information displays, she writes, they also become "keenly contested zone[s] of ideological debate" (109). Thus, rather than identifying qualities that are specific to outdoor moving image practices, Susik offers a more politically minded theorization, one that seeks to think about urban screens through the lenses of ownership and control. Being attentive to "the politics of the 'occupation' of various surfaces by images and the ethics of such an obfuscation of space and place," she writes, produces a better tuned framework for analyzing the employments of moving images in outdoor urban settings (107). Following Susik, this dissertation does not offer a technologically-focused narrative about the development of urban screen media. Rather, it emphasizes the ways that social actors, political frameworks, taste dispositions, legal protocols, discourses, and negotiations of power, collectively contributed to the shaping of spaces where urban screen technologies and cultures can take place.

To elaborate on these insights, I have employed a number of analytical frameworks generated in diverse fields, including urban geographic concepts such as "uneven development," "redevelopment," "gentrification," and "creative city" (Neil Smith, Sharon Zukin, Richard Florida); social theoretical concepts such as "neoliberalism," "privatization," "governmentality," "cultural capital" and "symbolic power," (Michel Foucault, Wendy Brown, Jason Hackworth, Pierre Bourdieu); as well as understandings of "façades," "preservation," "maintenance," "layers" and "media architecture" in the fields of architecture and media studies. My findings work in tandem with what geographer Neil Smith described as capitalism's production of nature and space through processes of "uneven development."[38] While Smith sought to explain the economic discrepancies shaping changes brought onto urban environments at large — from industrialization to post-industrialization, especially in regards to phenomena such as white flights during the 1950s through 70s, as well as the re-urbanization of cities through processes of gentrification starting in the 1980s — my project seeks to understand how such a production of space, likewise shaped by economic discrepancies, has brought about the production of particular

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[38] Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (New York: Blackwell Press, 1984).

zones where a culmination of screen materials are put in place. Conclusively, the clustering of screen technologies into highly orchestrated and strategically selected spaces within the geographies of cities, simultaneously also does the work of displacing lower economic classes from such areas as well. In other words, the urban landscape is being furnished with screen technologies because these media are utilized as real-estate that is shaped by the economic elite for that elite's benefits.

At the same time, my work is also influenced by Michel Foucault's theorization of the roles that liberal governments have in producing a system of self-regulating law-abiding citizens.[39] In their efforts to improve the economic values and safety of inner-city areas, city officials in London, New York, Toronto and Montreal worked to formulate ways by which screen technologies could variably be employed in order to combat chronic cases where rape, armed robbery, murder, gang wars, and homelessness occurred. As components of urban real-estate economies, screens helped produce zones wherein public conduct can be dominantly defined as spectatorial engagement with moving image advertisements and artworks; less in terms of illicit behaviours that damage the flow of capital. Moreover, through the establishment of business improvement districts and public-private partnerships since the 1990s — such as Times Square Alliance, the Yonge-Dundas Square Board of Management, and the Quartier des Spectacles Partnership — such preferred forms of social conduct have also become part and parcel of a system where the management of sanitation, maintenance, usage permits, and security services are exercised through private or pseudo-public organizations. In other words, screens were integrated into, and have been instrumental in shaping, what Foucault describes as system of "governmentality" — "the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and

[39] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977–1978*, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave, 2007).

apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument."[40] In the redevelopment of Piccadilly Circus, Times Square, Yonge-Dundas Square, and Quartier des Spectacles, screens have been made useful not only as conduits for economic exchange but also as instruments through which privatized models of governance can become essential components of urban infrastructure.[41]

While these two lines of inquiry — Smith's economic axiom and Foucault's political axiom — are absolutely crucial to understanding the integration of screen technologies into these sites, a third area of concern that this dissertation addresses involves the ordering of social relations through taste dispositions and what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu described as "symbolic power."[42] Whereas emphases on the logics of governmentality and uneven development illustrate how screen technologies have been shaped for disciplinary ends, they have also lacked illuminating an understanding of the ways issues concerning aesthetic values have also informed a multiplicity of formulations of urban screen technologies, spaces, and cultures. The redevelopments that occurred at each site also sparked different articulations about architecture and screens as aesthetic objects that either should or should not be preserved. Whereas in Piccadilly Circus signage was dismantled in order to preserve architecture, in Times Square it

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40 For Foucault, "governmentality" marks an addition to the art of governance developed in "sovereign" and "disciplinary" states. If the dominant focus of sovereign states is that of territorial acquisition, and of disciplinary states is that of molding populations into model citizens, governmental states maintain such techniques but shift the governing powers away from the institutions of government and into the hands of populations deemed "disciplined": "What is important for our modernity, that is to say for our present, is not . . . the state's takeover (*étatisation*) of society, so much as what I would call the 'governmentalization' of the state." Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977–1978*, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave, 2007), 108, 109.

41 On others works analyzing the connections between governmentality and screens, see also: Anna McCarthy, *The Citizen Machine: Governing By Television in 1950s America* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); Lee Grieveson, "Cinema Studies and the Conduct of Conduct," in Grieveson and Haidee Wasson eds., *Inventing Film Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 3–37; Grieveson, "Governmentality and Screens," *Screen* 50.1 (2009): 180-187; as well as Zach Melzer "Territorial Expanded Cinema in The Neo-Liberal City: Curating Multiscreen Environments in Yonge-Dundas Square and Quartier Des Spectacles," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 27.1 (2018): 88-107.

42 Pierre Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, Richard Nice trans. (Standford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

was the notion of signage that was ultimately protected. Variably, whereas plans to totally demolish Yonge-Dundas Square led to the preservation of a single sign, in Quartier des Spectacles a strategy of minimal disruption sought to harmonize the addition of a screen infrastructure onto the existing architectural environment. To explain these dissimilarities amongst the histories of these four sites, this dissertation makes use of Bourdieu's work on the homologous relations between systems of economic and cultural exchange in the production and reproduction of social hierarchies.[43] Focusing on institutional and political-economic power puts us in analytical positions where certain decisions about public conduct have already been established. Using a Bourdieuian approach enables us to look closer at the conditions that made such decision making, or position-taking in Bourdieu's vocabulary, possible.

What I ultimately aim to point to are three major conditions that helped shape the histories of screen technologies in each site: a gentrification process where the higher economic classes are seeking to displace and replace lower classes; the neoliberalization of public spaces through the development of private-public partnerships and business improvement districts that act as institutions with disciplinary powers; and the central role that the notion of urban preservation has played in tying notions of cultural heritage to screen technologies in these sites. I want to argue that these three pillars are shaped as three distinct, yet homologous, forces. An economic force in terms of gentrification; a judicial and political force in terms of neoliberalization; and a socio-cultural force in terms of cultural preservation.

Chapter Breakdown

The proceeding dissertation is organized into two parts. Part I, entitled "Media, Architecture, Preservation," looks at the histories of Piccadilly Circus and Times Square as examples of two popularly recognized urban screen zones that have been in formation prior to the prominence of neoliberalism in urban policies. In existence since the turn of the 20th century, these two sites share parallel histories as symbolic sites of commerce that have been transformed from hubs of

[43] Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Richard Nice trans. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984).

electric and neon signage to urban screen zones, their respective developments shaped both by welfare state policies and then neoliberal ones. Part II, entitled “Media Architecture Maintenance,” looks at the histories of Yonge-Dundas Square and Quartier des Spectacles as comparable examples from the central region of Canada. In existence as highly screened spaces since the turn of the 21st century, these two sites illustrate the formation of urban screen zones as the result of established neoliberal policies in urban governance.

At the same time, though this dissertation is organized chronologically, each chapter is also broken down in such a way as to explore how different components of urban screen media and cultures are regulated in these sites. Chapter 1 concentrates on the management of screens as real estate in Piccadilly Circus, providing a historical understanding that explains why screens are located on only one building in that site. While at midcentury signage was found covering nearly the total circumference of Piccadilly Circus, since the 1970s much of the signage was gradually removed from this locale. The history of Piccadilly Circus thus serves as a particularly unique example of the manifestation of screen technologies in this site, pointing to the disappearance, rather than the proliferation, of moving image media during a period we tend to think of as one of unbridled screen growth.

Chapter 2 traces the establishments of rules and regulations that govern the size, location, and brightness of screens in public places. Here Times Square serves as a unique case study where the establishment of special signage laws grew out of, and helped bring focus to, decades long efforts to redevelop the neighbourhood; efforts that at one point, in fact, substantially steered towards the removal of signage from the area. Concentrating on the controversy that was shaped during the 1980s — when a proposal by architects John Burgee and Philip Johnson sought to remove screens from the area, that thereby sparked public outrage from urban and architectural conservation advocates, the signage industry, and the theatre community — this chapter illustrates how refined ideas about illuminated signage, shaped by ideas about urban cleanliness, the policing of undesirable subjects, and the visual aesthetic of the information economy, ultimately resulted in the establishment of regulations about screen sizes, placement, luminosity, and content. Whereas in Piccadilly Circus much of the signage was ultimately removed, in Times Square signage became a legally-protected architectural aesthetic that must be

found on all buildings in the square. This chapter thus highlights how deeply institutionalized rules for regulating the basic physical characteristics of illuminated signage helped protect and ensure that screens play fundamental roles in Times Square's transition, from a symptom of de-industrialized decay to a symbol of a renewed and globally networked city.

Whereas Part I looks at the remediation of real estate from electric and neon signage into urban screens through distinct but related paradigms of preservation, Part II makes use of maintenance as an analytical framework for thinking about the amalgamation of media and architecture into a uniformed whole. Using Yonge-Dundas Square in Toronto as its case study, Chapter 3 looks at the regulation of architectures and spaces made for urban screen spectatorship by the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area — a non-profit organization constituted by business and property owners located in the Downtown Yonge area — and the Yonge-Dundas Square Board of Management — a public-private partnership whose members manage and maintain the signage in the square. The creation of Yonge-Dundas Square entailed the demolition of a building where the square is now located. Its governance signals the entrenched power that private companies and organizations now share with the public sector. The chapter charts how this newly formed governing configuration shaped the maintenance of screens and spectatorial spaces in this locale.

Finally, Chapter 4 focuses on the maintenance practices informing the uses of urban screen technologies in Quartier des Spectacles. Unlike the other four sites, the Quartier des Spectacles Partnership—a public-private partnership between the City of Montréal and participating organizations from the district—has exclusive control over the screens located within its domains. As one of its main mandates, this partnership decisively refrains from transforming the area into a hub for third-party commercial advertisements. Instead of using large LED screens, this partnership has employed digital projection mapping as a platform to showcase partnership-curated works of art. This chapter will address the economic rationalizations of such a development, contextualizing this formation of screen technologies and usages within a competitive knowledge economy, the importance of branding the city as a site for tourism, and the rise of the "creative class" in the neoliberal city.

In the concluding chapter, I point to multiple other sites and approaches that could be adopted in the study of urban screen technologies and cultures, but nevertheless also reinstate the importance in focusing on the geographical and regulatory dynamics that shape these media not simply as aesthetic categories but also as property—whether public, private or public-private. Whereas in Piccadilly Circus, spaces for screens were limited in order to protect concrete buildings, in Times Square it was the preservation of illumination that ultimately helped ensure screens became dominant features of buildings. And whereas in Yonge-Dundas Square the demolition of architecture played an instructive role in the building of screen architecture, in Quartier des Spectacles existing buildings played important roles in corroborating where and how the infrastructures of screens were going to take place.

I hope this dissertation raises awareness among urban, architecture and media scholars of the political conditions that have shaped and continue to shape the management of screens in public spaces. By investigating the histories of sites where screen clusters have arisen, I seek to point to the fundamentally architectural dynamics of construction, preservation, destruction, management, and maintenance that continue to inform how the materials, aesthetics, and practices of urban screen technologies and cultures manifest.

PART I

MEDIA, ARCHITECTURE, PRESERVATION

CHAPTER 1

URBAN SCREENS AS REAL ESTATE: PROPERTY MANAGEMENT OF MEDIA FAÇADES IN PICCADILLY CIRCUS, 1955-1980

In the spring of 1966, an electrical crew installed a "Thomson Newscaster" on the façade of the Criterion Building located on the south side of Piccadilly Circus. Like the "zipper" in Times Square, this sixty-six foot long by four foot high electronic device displayed low-resolution moving image messages of up-to-the-minute news and advertisements.[1] The addition of this multi-coloured electronic device, approximately fifty feet above street level, signaled the growing presence of illuminated signage in a site already synonymous with the marvels of brightly coloured large neon displays. Although images of the Newscaster show that it had a significant impact on the visual characteristics of this central hub, the display today belongs to a rather brief and nearly forgotten era in the history of Piccadilly Circus. Before the Second World War, both the Monico Building and the London Pavilion (located on the northern and eastern sides of the circus, respectively) were covered with neon and incandescent lights, making the area one of the brightest focal points in London's West-End. By the early 1970s, approximately six years later, the Newscaster was dismantled thereby revealing the Criterion Building's stone façade once again. More surprising than this device's short life, however, is the fact that since 1977 signage has also been removed from the London Pavilion as well. Not only were electronic displays removed from the southern side of the circus (Criterion Building), they have also been disassembled from its eastern periphery (London Pavilion).

What was once a colourful pillar of electronically animated illuminations, today stands as an architecturally pared-down construct harkening to a London of pre-electric times. As a result, the contemporary screen landscape in Piccadilly Circus is today only modestly brightened by the glows of the screens located on the bulging curvature of the Monico site and from the relatively smaller screen hanging atop the corner of Coventry Street and Haymarket. Unlike the contemporaneous developments in Times Square, where screens ultimately proliferated to

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[1] "66 ft. Newscaster For Piccadilly Circus," *Times*, 8 March 1966, 4.

occupy the entire circumference of that site (Chapter 2), in Piccadilly Circus moving image media have been restricted solely to two corners. This chapter explains how and why such a delimited arrangement of screen technologies in Piccadilly Circus came about by offering a historical inquiry into a time when the area was decorated not with light emitting diode displays, but rather with large neon tubes and incandescent lamps. Prior to the emergence of large LED screens, it was neon signage that dominantly defined the characteristics of properties in this area. Focusing on this earlier period reveals a story of containment rather than growth. This story is informed by the histories of property values and its management. In revealing how and why so many of these neon signs were removed, this chapter highlights how the spaces and locations of screens are fundamentally thought about and managed in terms of real estate and the many values that such an understanding embodies, including notably architecture's economic and symbolic aspects.

Urban screens scholar Dave Colangelo argues that in building upon "techniques and tools drawn from cinema studies," outdoor digital screens "extend the perceptual laboratory of cinema to public space."[2] Making use of formalist aesthetics, Benjaminian theorizations of shock,[3] as

[2] Dave Colangelo, "An Expanded Perceptual Laboratory: Public Art and the Cinematic Techniques of Superimposition, Montage and Apparatus/Dispositif," *Public Art Dialogue* 5, no. 2 (2015), 113-14. For similar comparisons between cinema and urban screens, see also Francesco Casetti, "Cinema Lost and Found: Trajectories of Relocation," *Screening the Past* 32 (2011); Annie Dell'Aria, "Cinema-in-the-round: Doug Aitken's Song 1 (2012), the Hirshhorn Museum and the pleasures of cinematic projection," *Moving Image Review and Art Journal*, 3.2 (2014): 208–221; Nanna Verhoeff, "Screens in the City," in *Screens From Materiality to Spectatorship – A Historical and Theoretical Reassessment*, eds. Dominique Chateau and José Moure (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 125-139, 294-297.

[3] See for example Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator," *Art and Text* 34 (1989): 31-45; Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991); Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

well as grand 'Apparatus Theories,'[4] Colangelo privileges modes of analysis cultivated in cinema studies in order to theorize the manifestation of moving image media upon building façades. While the cultural impacts that early and classical cinema have had on modernity are certainly not to be understated, such an approach historicizes urban screens strictly within a particular definition of cinema, leaving out a whole range of other visual media, architectural, political, legal, and economic influences that likewise have also shaped the embedding of moving image technologies into modern architecture. Urban screens, this chapter explains, also manifests through registers that are less explicitly tied to the apparatuses of cinema and more to those of the world of outdoor advertising, architecture, and real estate.

Urban screens do not only rework the techniques of cinema anew. They also depend on highly orchestrated and specific sets of political, economic, legal, urban, and architectural frameworks to take shape. Succinctly put, the architecture of today's digital screens in Piccadilly Circus grows out of the decades-long cultivations of neon and billboard signages on the one hand, and brick and mortar architecture on the other hand, not solely of expanded notions of cinema. Not unlike what Lisa Gitelman described as the 'scripts and grooves' that helped standardize how cultures of reading and writing take shape, the mechanisms and configurations put in place for neon on buildings in Piccadilly Circus between the 1890s through the 1980s also serve as important antecedents that helped shape where and how screen technologies appear in that site today.[5] This history thus points to the residual significance attributed to older social formations in shaping the emergence of urban screens in this locale. As Raymond Williams argued, though the residual "has been effectively formed in the past…it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective

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[4] See for example Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," *Film Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (Winter 1974-75): 39-47; Jean-Luc Comolli and Paul Nairobi, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism," *Screen* 12, no. 1 (1971): 27-38 and "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism (2)," *Screen* 12, no. 2 (1971): 145-155; Christian Metz, "The Imaginary Signifier," *Screen* 16, no. 2 (1975): 14-76; Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975): 6-18.

[5] Lisa Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

element of the present."[6] Like the "new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationships" that define emergent culture, elements of residual culture also play important and active roles in shaping the present.[7] Unlike emergent culture, however, "the social location of the residual is always easier to understand, since a large part of it (though not all) relates to earlier social formations and phases of the cultural process, in which certain real meanings and values were generated."[8] And though residual culture is defined by the meanings, values, practices, experiences "which cannot be expressed in terms of the dominant culture," they nevertheless contribute to dominant culture's definitions of present social formations.[9] In seeking to understand how digital screens and media architecture have become dominant yet highly restricted features in the makeup of Piccadilly Circus, it is important to pay attention to the ways that previously established meanings and values attributed to architecture and neon converged with emergent desires and goals of furnishing this locale with electronic moving image media.[10]

This chapter thus emphasizes how the histories of urban screen media fit into what Anne Friedberg describes as a history of "fenestration," where screen media are shaped by their genealogical ties to the figure of the architectural window.[11] As Friedberg observes, in addition to its functionality as a ventilation and illuminating device, the window also helped give shape to the construction of perspective and the fixture of relations between a viewer and a framed view. This is especially apparent in the conceptual methods of renaissance painters who made use of windows to better understand and recreate cartesian perspective in painting — i.e. "Alberti's

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[6] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 122.

[7] Ibid, 123.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid, 122, 125.

[10] For an adoption of Williams's analysis in media studies see Charles Acland, "Introduction: Residual Media," in Acland ed., *Residual Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xiii-xxvii.

[11] Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006).

window." The introduction of the camera obscura, according to Friedberg, further contributed to this fixed relation by emphasizing the use of a frame in order to create an image that did not rely so much on its verisimilitude to nature but rather on its relations to an imaginary "virtual" world of images produced through paintings as well as photographs. It was only when glass windows and steel posts began being used as construction material that moving image media, such as film and television, offered complimentary enhancements of that logic of perception by repositioning the view away from the window, placing it instead in front of a screen. Visual culture, as Friedberg points out, is not inherently divided into frames; rather, such a logic of perception is deeply shaped by a history that can be traced back to the figure of the architectural window. The histories of media façades reveal what happens to the genealogical ties that exist between media and architecture when screens serve not as figural or metaphorical windows, but replace windows altogether. To be sure, this chapter does not provide an ontological argument about the nature of media, perception, windows, architecture, or media architecture. Instead it highlights a history grounded in the legal and cultural discourses that shaped the materialization, preservation, and de-materialization — as in, removal — of these visual practices and objects in one particular site.

Following Yvonne Zimmermann's observation that the world of advertising has had significant influence in shaping the histories of moving image technologies, in this chapter I illustrate how the histories of architecture have likewise exercised similarly influence, far more than the canon of cinematic techniques and modes of spectatorship enshrined in the discipline.[12] More important are the perceptual logics and legal codes of conduct governing the practices and frameworks of outdoor signage and architecture. However, rather than a proliferation and expansion of moving image media into urban environments, as is commonly assumed in studies about urban screens, media façades, and media architecture, the history of signage in Piccadilly Circus illustrates a starkly opposite development. Since the 1960s, more square footage for

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[12] Yvonne Zimmermann, "Advertising and Film: A Topological Approach," in *Films that Sell: Moving Pictures and Advertising*, eds. Bo Florin, Nico de Klerk, and Patrick Vonderau (London: Palgrave, 2016), 21-39. See also Vicky Mayer, "From Sponsorship to Spots: Advertising and the Development of Electronic Media," in *Media Industries: History, Theory, and Method*, eds. Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perren (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): 69-80.

media architecture was removed than was added. After providing a brief historical account of illuminated signage in Piccadilly Circus throughout the twentieth century, this chapter will illustrate how discourses about electronic signage emerged during the welfare state period — during the 1960s and 1970s — among city officials, real estate portfolio managers and developers, as well as architects and architectural preservationists, ultimately delimiting the screened landscape of contemporary Piccadilly Circus. Although a series of negotiations and efforts to upgrade, demolish, and rebuild the famous intersection dominated discussions about this site throughout the 1960s and 1970s, calls to preserve much of the architectural buildings and the existing street layout ultimately shaped the architecture of screen technologies in Piccadilly Circus. This history serves as an example of the ways urban policies working in the frameworks of egalitarian liberalism shaped the place of urban screen technologies and infrastructures.

Four Phases of Piccadilly Circus

Piccadilly Circus is a road junction in London's West End — a major tourist, shopping, and entertainment area in the borough City of Westminster. Built in 1819, it is where Regent Street and Piccadilly Road become Coventry Street and Shaftesbury Road. More than simply a convergence of streets, Piccadilly Circus is also where the high-end fashion stores and hotels of Mayfair (western peripheries), the fresh produce markets of Covent Garden (eastern peripheries), the Houses of Parliament (southern peripheries), and the movie theatres, variety shows, restaurants, bars, music clubs, and sex trade of Soho (northern peripheries) meet. Though it is not a major commercial centre such as Oxford Circus (to its north) or a historic public market such as Covent Garden (to its east), or an entertainment hub such as Leicester Square (to its east), or a political meeting point such as Trafalgar Square (to its south) or Buckingham Palace (to its west), Piccadilly Circus has nevertheless functioned as a major junction where the polars of retail, commerce, entertainment, and politics have intersected.

A broad overview of the evolution of signage in Piccadilly Circus can be demarcated into four overlapping phases. In the first phase, starting in the 1890s, electronic illuminations began

appearing on the Monico Building located on the northern side of the circus. Almost immediately thereafter, illuminated signage started appearing on the London Pavilion as well. The purposes of the glowing signage served as augmentations of the shops located in the building itself. As the years passed, the signs began featuring advertisements for products not sold on the premises. By the 1930s, large, mechanically animated neon signs advertising Guinness Beer, Coca-Cola, Wrigley Gum, Schweppes Tonic Water, and Hollywood movies, became iconic staples of this busy hub, thereby combining the shopping and entertainment districts of London into one. This first phase thus highlights a period of proliferation, growth, and the cultivation of illuminated signage as intimately fastened features of Piccadilly Circus.

The second phase, between 1939 and 1949, is demarcated by the impact the Second World War had on illuminated signage in the circus. Because much of the country's energy and resources were allocated to help fight the bombing of the country by Nazi Germany, the illumination that characterized the livelihood of Piccadilly in the early decades of the twentieth century had to be completely eliminated both during the war and in its immediate aftermath. As German military-planes dropped bombs over London, country-wide forced blackouts meant that illuminated signage in Piccadilly had to be shut off. These blackouts were both strategic in that they meant to conserve resources, as well as tactical in that they were to keep German invaders in the dark. For extra protective measures, the City of Westminster also decided to cover the statue of Eros located in the centre of the Circus. When the war was finally over, Piccadilly's lights did not immediately get turned on. In fact, because England was both economically deflated and in ruins, it took nearly five years to return Piccadilly to its pre-war energy usage standards. It was not until the eve of Saturday 2 April 1949, when a crowd of thousands gathered to witness the relighting of Piccadilly's electronic signage first hand. Since much of the city still remained without power, *The Times* reported that the glow of the lights could be seen from across the River Thames located approximately a mile away.[13] As the lights of this hub switched on, actress Zoe Gail, standing on a balcony of the Criterion Building, was heard on loudspeakers singing "I'm Going to Get Lit Up (When the Lights Go On in London)." The song was written in 1940 by Hubert Gregg, just as the effects of the Second World War were starting to be felt. This

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[13] "The Lights Of London," *Times,* 4 April 1949, 2.

event, witnessed by thousands, broadcast live on radio to millions, and documented on film by British Pathé, illustrates the symbolic meanings that illuminated signage in Piccadilly Circus garnered before, during, and immediately after the Second World War. The forced darkening of the circus, both throughout and in the aftermath of the war, infused Piccadilly's electric lights with a kind of aura of an unforgotten past, a hopeful present, and a promising future. Defying the hardships of war and its impact on everyday life, the relighting of Piccadilly with electric commercial signage symbolically stood in for the recovery of the city's economy and its technological infrastructures.

Despite the celebrations, this second phase in Piccadilly's history also carried with it a note of defeat, standing in for the decline of, reminiscences about, and aspirations for a newly reconfigured Britain. Throughout the decades that followed, the country remained deeply economically indebted to the United States, and continued its long overdue processes of decolonization in key sites in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. In the three decades following the war, between 1949 and 1977, the third phase of Piccadilly Circus's history — the focus of this chapter — was hence marked by a slow economic recovery, the restructuring of British city governance, and the postwar rebuilding efforts. These shaped a discourse of redevelopment, where competing ideas about the look, feel, and cultural meanings of the Circus were enunciated. As the economic recovery started taking shape, growing concerns with urban traffic, architectural heritage, and later with the kinds of people that frequented the Circus — largely identified as problematic, unproductive, and unruly youth; first as non-heterosexual and non-cisgendered individuals, then as sex workers, hippies, and later as punks — became the main focuses around which discussions about the redevelopment of Piccadilly Circus took place. It is important to note, however, as will be further explored below, although no special laws requiring the usage of electronic signage in this site were written (as they were in the case of, for example, Times Square), illuminated signs ultimately did gain instructive roles in shaping the redevelopment schemes to come.

The fourth and current phase of Piccadilly Circus, since roughly 1977, was the result of the minor outcomes brought on by the redevelopment efforts and the rise of the preservation movement in Britain. The most noticeable changes to come about during this phase were the re-

positioning of the status of Eros, the transformation of a few streets into pedestrian plazas, and most importantly for purposes of this chapter, the removal of signage from the London Pavilion, leaving the Monico site as the sole space where large screens were found. Conversely, it was only recently that a screen was added atop the corner of Covent Street and Haymarket.

A great deal of work is left to be done on the cultural life of Piccadilly Circus during the first half of the twentieth century, when the symbolic capital the area garnered as a hub for commercial signage was being fomented. The nationalist symbolism that Piccadilly's electronic illumination acquired during this period is not to be overlooked for it helped shape the complex conversations about the materialization of signage in the Circus that took place in the decades following the war. Nevertheless, needed is a more specific set of understandings of the constrictions put on illuminated signage during the second half of the twentieth century. Working incongruently alongside instances where advertising was incrementally added to public places, the signage makeup of Piccadilly Circus saw a massive decline whereby more than fifty percent of signage was removed. Rather than a proliferation of signage, the history of Piccadilly Circus illustrates an insistence on its highly controlled, limited and in some instances diminishing presence. The following is an account of how and why an unmitigated screen proliferation was actually rejected in one of the busiest and most symbolically laden imperial and urban hubs in the world.

The "Dreary" Southern Side of the Circus

With the post World War II rebuilding efforts well underway throughout many parts of England, in 1957 a catering proprietor named Charles Forte acquired the leasing rights to the Criterion

Theatre located in the Criterion Building on the southern side of Piccadilly Circus.[14] In order to promote the venue, Forte sought to cover the façade of the building with the Thomson Newscaster briefly discussed above, as well as with illuminated signage advertising third-party brands such as Minolta and Carlsberg. He began advocating for such a transformation just as the strict regulations on energy resources, put in place during the Second World War and lasting into the early 1950s, were being lifted. Forte believed that electronic signage, similar to that found on the northern and eastern sides of the Circus — which at midcentury were found covering both the Monico Building and the London Pavilion, respectively — would be a natural progression in the maturation of the area, as a declaration of the strength, livelihood, and perseverance of the city after the war.

On two separate occasions, in both 1957 and 1961, Forte proposed to the owner of the building — the Crowne Estate — that the addition of signage would prove to be a cost-effective way of improving the look and value of the property. The Crowne Estate is a real estate statutory corporation made up of eight Board Commissioners who are approved of by the Monarch, upon advice from the Prime Minister, and whose task is (remaining to this day) to manage nearly all of the Monarch's estates in trust. To strengthen his proposal, Forte obtained the support of Cecil Clutton, a chartered surveyor, who in a letter addressed to the Crown Commissioners wrote: "The Criterion is such a dreary building externally that it would be an improvement rather than otherwise to have illuminated signs on it."[15] Since Piccadilly Circus was already associated with the proliferation of neon lights across the street, rather than rebuilding the Criterion Building

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[14] Forte was a restaurant and catering services businessman whose company already owned the Café Royal — known to have been frequented by the top of British high-society and international celebrities such as Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, George Bernard Shaw, Jacob Epstein, Winston Churchill, Brigitte Bardot, Elizabeth Taylor, Mohammed Ali — as well as the Cafe Monico which, by 1958, the company sold to Jack Cotton for the amount of £500,000. Both establishments were located on the northern side of Piccadilly Circus, thereby, along with the leasing rights to the Criterion, giving journalist Patrick Sergeant sufficient reasoning to nickname Forte 'Mr. Piccadilly.' Forte eventually became the most successful hotel magnate in London, only to see his business empire disappear before his death.

[15] Cecil Clutton to P. S. Bolshaw (Esquire Crown Estate Commissioners), 13 January 1961, CRES 65/476 Criterion Building, Piccadilly Circus, London: Use for Electrical Advertising, The National Archives, London, UK.

altogether, Forte proposed that the addition of advertisements would be an easy and more cost-effective solution.

The addition of electric signage, however, was a situation the Crowne Estate wanted to avoid at all costs, especially considering that located just nearby the Criterion was Regent Street, one of the Crown Estate's highly profitable sources of income. Like it is today, Regent Street was at the time leased, to a large extent, to high-end fashion shops. In an internal memorandum to the Crown Estate Commissioners summarizing the situation between the statutory corporation and Forte, an Assistant Commissioner wrote that "the question was not one of money, primarily, but of what was appropriate for buildings on the Crown Estate."[16] He added, "The introduction of electrical advertising [was thought to] be detrimental to the use and amenities of the buildings and would tend to reduce the rental value of them for their existing purposes; it would also detract from the value of neighbouring Crown property."[17] Whereas Forte asserted that the presence of screens would positively impact the Crowne Estate's portfolio, the commissioner felt that screens would in fact negatively impact the Crown's interests. In order to simplify the management of its properties, the Crowne Estate commissioners followed a guideline which stated that aside from signage directly related to the specific tenants of the property, no signage shall be allowed on the façades of any of the Crown's buildings. The Crowne Estate, in other words, saw electronic displays as being not only problematic to manage, they were also thought to be damaging to the values of the specific properties and the corporation's overall portfolio.

Nevertheless, by the spring of 1963, with ensuing legal pressure from Forte, the Board of Commissioners changed their mind and decided to "relax" such a policy solely in regards to the Criterion Building. They reasoned that such a position can simply apply only to this particular site and need not automatically have bearings on all of the Crowne Estate's other properties. In the Minutes for the Commissioner's Board meeting, the First Commissioner stated that "Piccadilly Circus was a law unto itself," and that in his mind "the Commission could still hold

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[16] P. S. Bolshaw, 17 May 1963, Note by Assistant Commissioner for Crown Estate Commissioners Urban Estates Piccadilly Circus — Electrical Advertising, CRES 65/476, The National Archives, London, UK.

[17] Ibid.

ground against proposals that sought to add electronic displays to other locations."[18] In other words, the symbolic qualities the Criterion Building carried due its location in Piccadilly Circus, did not exist anywhere else, not even in the properties located to the Circus's immediate west on Regent Street.

Yet, even with Forte's push and celebration of electronic signage in the area, and the Crown Estate's recognition that properties in Piccadilly Circus obtained unique relationships to signage, the addition of illuminated signs to the Criterion was still not certain. It is important to note that in the Commissioner Board's rationale for changing their "no signage" policy were two articulated reasons. The first was the promise that income from the advertisements would amount to an annual earnings ranging between £30,000-£50,000, much greater than the commissioners had previously anticipated. The second was the fact that substantial and promising efforts set forth by the London County Council (LCC) — the municipal governing body of London at the time (until 1965) — to comprehensively redevelop the circus, were well underway and likely to begin by the final years of the 1960s. The Minutes from the Commissioners' Board Meeting held on 10th of May, 1963 note that although the Commissioners "had hitherto adhered rigidly to their policy of refusing advertisements in the Circus…they now had an opportunity to reconsider the matter in view of Sir William Holford's report on the Circus in which he favoured the provision of illuminated signs to add liveliness to the Circus after dark."[19]

The report in question was the *Piccadilly Circus Future Development: Proposals for Comprehensive Development by the Planning Consultant Sir William Holford, March 1962*, commissioned by the London County Council as a result of efforts at redevelopment that began during the mid-1950s.[20] Though I will elaborate on Holford's plans for Piccadilly Circus in the

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[18] Minutes for Commissioners of Crowne Estate Board Meeting, 22 May 1963, CRES 65/476, Criterion Building, Piccadilly Circus, London: Use for Electrical Advertising, The National Archives, London, UK.

[19] Minutes: Commissioners of Crowne Estate Board Meeting, 10 May 1963, CRES 65/476, Criterion Building, Piccadilly Circus, London: Use for Electrical Advertising, The National Archives, London, UK.

[20] London County Council, *Piccadilly Circus Future Development: Proposals for Comprehensive Development by the Planning Consultant Sir William Holford, March 1962*, London 1962.

next sections of this chapter, it is important to note here two key factors that played underlying roles in shaping how this project was perceived by the Crowne Estate Commissioners. On the one hand, Holford saw a need to maintain a coherently uniform sense of Piccadilly Circus as a pedestrian friendly area that bridged the shopping and entertainment districts of London. On the other hand, in order to ameliorate the circus, also needed was an increase in the area's square footage and flow of traffic, by making the Circus more welcoming to vehicles, hotels, and office-complexes. Holford proposed that the complete demolishing and rebuilding of not only the Monico site, but also of the entire circus, was needed. With such a total redevelopment seemingly underway, the Crowne Estate Commissioners saw an opportunity to both test out electronic signage as well as to potentially back out of a risky business venture they were still unsure would be profitable or easy to manage. Forte himself persuaded the commissioners of this, claiming that under the proposed LCC plans, the addition of signage will not be permanent but instead will only serve as a trial period, after which the Crowne Estate could make a more qualified assessment. He thus proposed that illuminated signage would bring in new sources of funding for a period of roughly only six years, until the redevelopment of Piccadilly Circus began, all the while offering cost effective aesthetic fixes to the sorely unexciting Criterion façade.

Although the Crowne Commissioners initially suspected Forte of attempting to establish legal precedence over the Crowne Estate, they eventually concluded that since demolishment of the building seemed inevitable, there was very little in the end for the Crown Estate to lose. Moreover, the commissioners themselves started to believe that by not demonstrating how signage can be a part of the Criterion prior to demolishment, they could potentially hinder the likelihood of doing so after the broader redevelopment has begun. In other words, they saw this as an opportunity to make sure they obtained negotiating powers with the LCC regarding the future plans for electronic signage on the Criterion. If the designers of the proposed schemes did not associate the Criterion Building with signage, Assistant Commissioner G. R. Clarke believed it might be too late to establish "a claim for similar advertising on any new building to be erected

on re-development of the Circus on the Criterion site." [21] As such, the commissioners granted Forte consent to approach prospective advertisers interested in contracting for illuminated advertising space on the Criterion Block.

Forte was able to secure the agreements of three advertisers — "Carlsberg Lager and Japanese Cameras…[each] at £10,000 per annum gross and The Sunday Times (at) a larger space at £35,000 per annum gross."[22] Still, this was far from achieving the goal of adding electronic signage to the bulk of the façade of the Criterion Building. Now standing in the way was the Westminster County Council (WCC), a newly established local government authority that oversaw (and continues to oversee) issues related to sanitation, tax collection, parking, and planning applications in the vicinity wherein Piccadilly Circus is located. Instituted the very same year that Claudgen Ltd. — an advertising company that Forte employed in order to manage advertisements on the Criterion — applied for the addition of electronic signage to the building, the WCC had the power to make decisions about the addition of signage to buildings in the circus. Unfortunately for Forte, the WCC rejected his application, citing two reasons for refusal. The first was fear that the "size and position, and the nature of the message to be displayed" would "distract the attention of drivers of vehicles and pedestrians…thereby causing obstruction of the carriageway and public footways and danger and inconvenience to both vehicular and pedestrian traffic."[23] Here, it was the addition of a "newscaster" that was argued to be of most danger. The Assistant Commissioner of Police described it as an "illuminated moving news message" that "would attract static crowds of passers-by whenever the news happened to be of

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[21] G. R. Clark (Assistant Commissioner),"Piccadilly Circus Electrical Advertising," 5 November 1963, File 19092/1, CRES 65/476, Criterion Building, Piccadilly Circus, London: Use for Electrical Advertising, The National Archives, London, UK.

[22] Cecil Clutton to Patrick S. Bolshaw, 2 December 1964, CRES 65/476, Criterion Building, Piccadilly Circus, London: Use for Electrical Advertising, The National Archives, London, UK.

[23] Westminster City Council, Appeal under Regulation 20(1) of the Town and County Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1960 by Claudgen Ltd., 1965, CRES 65/476, The National Archives, London UK.

great public interest."[24] A gathering crowd meant to the Assistant Commissioner that the scrolling messages — unravelling over a period of time, and therefore demanding a longer pause of attention — should not be erected on either the Criterion nor anywhere in the Circus for fears that it "would be clearly visible to drivers approaching Piccadilly Circus from Regent Street, Glasshouse Street and Shaftesbury Avenue."[25] The Assistant Commissioner believed that drivers would be too distracted by the scrolling messages and would accidentally drive over the equally absent-minded crowd. Signs may have attracted the attention of consumers but they distracted those same people, who were also drivers, beholden to basic responsibilities for proper oversight of their vehicles as they moved through shared public space.

The second reason given for not allowing the addition of signage, the WCC explained, was because the "proposed advertisements…would mask the main architectural features of this imposing building which is included in a [Statutory List (Grade II)] of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest compiled by the Minister of Housing and Local Government and would thereby adversely affect the appearance of the building and would also detract from the visual amenities of the area."[26] While Forte had the Crowne Estate Commissioners convinced that the Criterion's façade needed stimulation by electronic illuminations, the WCC felt that such materials would conceal the building's existing ornamentations. Thus, of concern for the Council were not only issues of traffic safety but also of preserving the heritage-based visual appeal of the Criterion as well as the circus as a whole.

Invested in the wellbeing and promotion of the Criterion Building, Forte and Claudgen Ltd. believed they had sufficient grounds to appeal these two points offered by the WCC.

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[24] Assistant Commissioner of Police to the City Engineer and Surveyor, 4 February 1965, CRES 65/476, quoted in Westminster City Council, Appeal under Regulation 20(1) of the Town and County Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1960 by Claudgen Ltd., The National Archives, London, UK.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Dawtry A. G. (City of Westminster Town Clerk) to Claudgen Ltd., 9 December 1964, CRES 65/476, quoted in Westminster City Council, Appeal under Regulation 20(1) of the Town and County Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1960 by Claudgen Ltd.,. The National Archives, London, UK.

Though the WCC was holding contradictory positions on the matter — one regarding distraction, the other citing heritage concerns — Forte's and Claudgen Ltd.'s appeals were eventually successful. As will be elaborated below, not only did the WCC allow electronic signage to appear on the Monico Site across the street, this local authority also eventually supported a massive comprehensive development plan, commissioned by the London City Council, that sought to entirely demolish and rebuild Piccadilly Circus, including the block upon which the Criterion building was located. Since the WCC was backing this plan to demolish the Criterion, the inclusion of the building on a supplementary list of historical value had very little judiciary claim. Not allowing signage on the Criterion thus would signal prejudice on behalf of Westminster. As far as I could find, these two counter-arguments proved to be satisfactory for Forte and the Crowne Estate to move on with their plans to install the Minolta, Carlsberg, and the Thomson Newscaster signs.

"The Monster of Piccadilly Circus": Coordinating Office Windows and Electronic Signage in Monico

As these discussions were going on about the southern side of Piccadilly Circus, it is important to note that Holford's plan, mentioned above, was born out of a highly scrutinized effort to redevelop the so-called Monico Site located across the road on the northern side of the circus. In November of 1955, the LCC received an application from Island (Piccadilly) Development Ltd. to redevelop the parts of the Monico site owned by Jack Cotton. Without their own sufficient economic resources to control a total redevelopment of the area, the council believed that the revamping of Piccadilly by individual private investors, each doing so separately but under the approval from the LCC, was the only strategy that showed any worthwhile promises in the near future. Although the LCC largely supported Cotton's 1955 proposal, they sought the addition of "car-parking facilities on the site" and "strongly recommended [that] development of the whole island site" was undertaken.[27] Cotton et al. reportedly obliged by buying out all properties on the block, and on 23 December 1958 formally reapplied with an office tower measuring 172 feet

[27] "Monico Site Inquiry," *Architect and Building News*, 23 December 1959, 642.

high, including a parking garage. In recognizing the important role that advertisements played in defining this block, Cotton's plan also designated substantial space for large vertical signage to be placed on the eastern, southern, and western sides of the tower.

While the scheme signaled satisfactory progress in the eyes of the LCC, the Royal Fine Art Commission (RFAC), tasked with providing approval of the design, were far from ready to endorse the project. Although members of the RFAC agreed to "a building of this general massing and volume" in principle, they also believed "it would be a mistake to provide a series of panels…to accommodate the advertisements."[28] Not only did the RFAC "prefer the whole building to be treated as a background for a much freer kind of advertising," in the words of the Commission's Secretary, Godfrey Samuel, the "whole siting of the advertisements [was] ill-considered and out of scale."[29]

Writing in the *Architectural Review*, architectural critic Kenneth Browne echoed such a stance by postulating that Cotton's plan threatened the auratic qualities of the electric advertisements. The demolition and rebuilding of Piccadilly Circus, Browne explained, should not have any significant impact on the architecture of the buildings, which otherwise "dissolv[e] in the blaze of lights" and act as mere "scaffolding for the signs."[30] The buildings, in other words, for Browne, had little to no architectural value. "The proposed scheme," he added, "is just rationed fun; controlled, co-ordinated, emasculated so that it can neither shock nor thrill."[31] However, since the buildings were necessary to support the signs, Browne concluded, "in Piccadilly Circus architecture and advertising must be indivisible."[32] It was not merely enough to simply allocate designated areas for advertisements to be placed on the façades of the Monico site; more necessary was the need for an organic arrangement of this signage. Commission's Secretary Samuel added,

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid, 642, 644.

[30] Kenneth Browne, "Piccadilly Circus: Advertising into Architecture," *Architectural Review* 125, No. 749 (June 1959), 399.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid, 401.

> If [the advertisements] are to be enjoyed by people in the Circus they should be at a lower level, starting perhaps at the height of a bus and certainly finishing broadly at the present [height]. Any advertisements on the upper part of this buildings will hardly be noticed by the people who have come to look at them and will mainly be seen by those far beyond the confines of the Circus, many of whom would find them objectionable. In other words, what seems to be required is a band of advertising at a lower level with a horizontal rather than a vertical emphasis.[33]

The vertical organization of signage on the Monico site was not something the RFAC wanted to approve. Rather, they felt a more panoramic lay-out would be more suitable to the Circus. As such, the RFAC concluded that the Island (Piccadilly) Development Ltd. "scheme seriously prejudice[d] the satisfactory development for the Circus as a whole," and proposed "that no scheme for this site should be accepted until a decision in principle has been taken on the future of the whole area."[34] Any future schemes, they added, "should make better provision[s] for pedestrian circulation…more appropriate provision for advertising and should be of higher architectural quality."[35]

Although the RFAC's position did not mean the immediate scrapping of Cotton's plans for the Monico Building, it did lead to the creation of a Public Inquiry set up by Minister of Housing and Local Government and Welsh Affairs, Henry Brook. Brook explained that "In view of the concern which has been expressed in Parliament and in the Press, I decided that a public enquiry was essential on the application to put up a new building, designed partly as offices, shops and restaurant and partly to display illuminated advertisements."[36] He cited "the main problem" as having been in regard to the location, organization, and practical usages of the advertisement displays:

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[33] Quoted in "Monico Site Inquiry," 644.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Henry Brook, Memorandum, Piccadilly Circus: Monico Site, 24 Nov 1959, CAB 129/99/22, The National Archives, London, UK.

> It has hitherto been generally accepted (though clearly some of the critics now want to call it in question) that bright advertisement lights must continue to be a striking feature of the Circus; my view is that the public would be most indignant if any public authority tried to get rid of them. But the crux of the matter is that you cannot satisfactorily combine office windows with large-scale advertising; it is not generally realised that many of the rooms behind the present electric signs in the Circus are empty. Hence the developer's proposal for a blank vertical strip of wall above the ground floor to carry the signs. That is the feature which has aroused most of the protest.[37]

If new office towers were to be built — and at this point there was not any immediate objection to such a development — a harmonious architecture between electronic signage and windows had to be designed.

Brook's inquiry took place between December 1959 and January 1960, and was chaired by Colin Buchanan — who, conversely, in 1963 was the leading author of the highly influential *Traffic in Towns* report which outlined the looming effects posed by, and possible mitigations of, the growing presence of automobiles on city life.[38] A journalist described the County Hall where the hearings took place as being populated by "three rows of seats closely packed with the legal profession, in front of a full house of spectators and witnesses, many of them well-known faces in architectural circles, assembled in the LCC's circular and columned conference hall."[39] Upon conclusion of the hearings, Buchanan felt that with "so many questions of taste and policy… involved in this case", it was "inadvisable to tender a formal recommendation."[40] He

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Colin Buchanan, *Traffic in Towns*, Ministry of Transport, London, 1963.

[39] "Monico Site Inquiry," *Architect and Building News*, 23 December 1959, 641. Conversely, all twelve volumes of the hearings can be consulted at: Transcript of Public Local Enquiry into Application by Island (Piccadilly) Development Ltd, December 1959-January 1960, LCC/AR/TP/04/134 to /144, London Metropolitan Archives, London, UK.

[40] Colin D. Buchanan, "Report of the Public Inquiry Concerning Development on the Monico Site at Piccadilly Circus," *The Town Planning Review* 31, no. 4, (January 1961), 289.

nevertheless also found that all parties involved — including the LCC, the Westminster City Council, the RFAC, Jack Cotton and Island (Piccadilly) Development Ltd., as well as the Civic Trust, and the Anti-Ugly Action Group, among others — were accordingly in agreement with one another regarding the need for a comprehensive plan. Throughout the entire inquiry no objections were raised against the LCC's plan to comprehensively revamp the entire Circus, including the replacement of the London Pavilion and the Monico Building with tall office towers. Thus, while Buchanan's report ultimately did not approve of Cotton's plan for the Monico site, it provided the LCC adequate support to pursue a comprehensive redevelopment of the entire Piccadilly Circus. The LCC, meanwhile, had already obtained the leasing rights to the London Pavilion from 1966 onwards so that no other tenant could hold back redevelopment efforts. The plan to demolish the London Pavilion was, in other words, already in the works.

Upside-Down Pyramids, Three Levels of Traffic, and Kaleidoscopic Signage: The Comprehensive Plans that Never Happened

In June of 1960, nearly immediately after the report from Brook's inquiry was published, the LCC appointed Sir William Holford as consultant to begin preparing a comprehensive plan. Still aiming to rely on private investors' participation, Holford and his team corresponded with Island (Piccadilly) Development Ltd. as well as other developers seeking to invest in redevelopment of the area. By March of 1962, Holford submitted his first official scheme to the LCC. That proposal included a broadened pedestrian piazza encircled by modern, flat-lined, rectangular office and hotel buildings, measuring between 100 feet and 200 feet in height. The buildings — inspired by a mixture of German Bauhaus, Russian Constructivism, and British Brutalism — were to be connected with a series of above-ground, enclosed, pedestrian walkways. This system of bridges was also beneficial for easing the flow of vehicle traffic on the proposed one-way street below. As far as signage was concerned, Holford's plan insisted that it was only to be placed on the Monico Site where "a screen structure above platform level facing the piazza and Shaftesbury Avenue…containing advertisement panels with a backing mainly of service and store rooms and plant" would be designated. Any future developments of the Criterion Building

and the "New London Pavilion" (as it was now being described) were to be kept free of advertisements not immediately associated with the tenants located within. Perhaps if Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Browne, and Steven Izenour had published *Learning from Las Vegas* a decade earlier, Holford might have been convinced to adopt a different attitude toward signage.[41] Back in 1962, however, clean-lines and modernist efficiency were Holford's rule of thumb.

Although the modernist strategies of total demolishment framed much of Holford's role in this project, as Bronwen Edwards and David Gilbert note, his efforts were not without an eye towards finding new balance between the city as designed for cars and the city as designed for the centuries-old pedestrianism of London.[42] While the LCC wanted to increase the flow of traffic in the circus by fifty percent, Holford sought to contain such desires by ensuring the new circus would be friendly to pedestrians. At the same time, rather than forcing developers to conform to his vision, Holford was flexible and open-minded with rethinking the plan, insisting that his scheme was to serve merely as a guideline for future projects; less as a binding document and more as a series of suggestions meant to be steered and modified by private developers. Indeed, between 1962 and 1972, Holford's plan was reworked a total of six more times both by Holford himself and in cooperation with other architectural firms as well.

The final comprehensive plan proposed under Holford's direction included three levels of traffic — two underground levels, reserved for the flow of both private vehicles and public transit, were to be topped by a vehicle-free, open-air, piazza. Not only was the circularity of Piccadilly Circus to be replaced by a square, each and every building surrounding this sharp angled plaza was to be rebuilt. A 430 foot bronze and glass tower done in the fashion of the International-Style was to be located on the Criterion block. A six-level structure of receding terraces, matched by an upside-down pyramid located to its east, were to make up a newly redesigned London Pavilion and Trocadero. According to one report, these terraces were "to act both as a grandstand to view the activity below and to emphasise the link between" the Criterion

[41] Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Browne, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972).

[42] Bronwen Edwards and David Gilbert, "'Piazzadilly!': The Re-imagining of Piccadilly Circus (1957-72)," *Planning Perspectives* 23, no. 4 (2008): 455-478.

and the Monico Building.[43] The Monico Building, meanwhile, was to be in the shape of a square with signage serving as a focal point on its southern façade (the side facing Piccadilly Circus), where "a wall of light and advertising" was to be arranged in "kaleidoscopic" fashion.[44]

One might assume it is likely that it was at these stages where the Commissioners of the Crowne Estate saw an opportunity to add signage to the Criterion. However, I was unable to find evidence that such a proposal was ever put forth by either the Crowne Estate nor Forte Holdings (Forte's company) to Holford and his team. In fact, quite the opposite was true. Instead of promoting the conservation of the Criterion Building, both the Crowne Estate and Forte Holdings were working towards replacing the building with the tall office-tower in Holford's proposal. By this time, Forte's company merged with the Trust Houses Group to form the publicly traded Trust Houses Forte (THF), and as such were able to raise the funds necessary for the construction of a tall building in place of the old Criterion. With the support of Crowne Estate, Forte sought to build as much office space, presumably with unobstructed windows, as possible. It seems as though by the time the six-year trial period for the addition of signage on the Criterion was over, both Forte and the Crowne Estate Commissioners no longer saw electronic signage as their most profitable investment. Concurrently, due to the company's reduced interests in the operation of newscasters, the Thomson Organization sold its ownership of the newscaster to Link Information Services, a public relations consultancy.[45] In the end, however, it was likely a fire in the Criterion offices of the newscaster that caused the device to be removed from Piccadilly.[46]

Holford's final scheme succeeded in establishing much of what he set to accomplish: a pedestrian-friendly plaza, an increase in the flow of traffic, and a more-or-less free-form arrangement of signage on the Monico Building. But like his preceding proposals, this one was also immediately met with scrutiny from both city officials and the public at large. While at first city officials pointed out that Holford's schemes did not sufficiently increase the flow of traffic

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[43] "Piccadilly-Circus Redevelopment: Westminster City Architect's Views," *Building*, 16 August 1968, 92.

[44] Ibid.

[45] "Thomson Organisation Sells Newscasters," *Times*, 31 October 1968, 30.

[46] "Piccadilly Blaze," *Times*, 29 August 1970, 1.

(his first proposal was estimated to increase traffic by only twenty percent, at best), by the end of the 1960s, the growing trends towards urban preservation steered public support away from the strategies of masterplanning — and its related destruction — altogether. Still unbuilt and stuck in committee, Holford's plan stalled. United under a common effort to improve the quality of life of urban culture by conserving existing buildings — especially theatres — and encouraging face-to-face interactions amongst pedestrians, conservation groups sought to halt any project that promoted the destruction of existing architecture. Groups such as the Save Piccadilly Campaign, the Save Westminster Action Group, the Save London's Theatres Campaign, the British Actors' Equity Association, sought to shape the policies of urban redevelopment in Piccadilly Circus away from the strategies of destruction and towards those of architectural preservation. Such groups in fact blamed city officials as well as the developers for letting Piccadilly become "slummy" as they awaited redevelopment permissions to come through. In regards to the Criterion, the Save Westminster Action Group put the blame squarely on the WCC, the Crowne Estate and the Trust House Forte Ltd., accusing the three of scheming with one another for mutually greater profits.[47]

By 1972, with the success of the Covent Garden Community Association to stop the total redevelopment of the nearby Covent Garden, the Save Piccadilly Campaign was able to get the newly formed Greater London Council (GLC) — which replaced the LCC as the governing body of London — to halt the Holford projects. By 1973, the WCC followed suit, by agreeing that a change in strategies was needed, and thereby established a Piccadilly Sub-Committee, chaired by Alderman Herbert Sandford. In a striking change of events, the Sub-Committee stated that the "specific aims" for any future development of Piccadilly Circus should "retain…the essential character of the Circus", including the "familiar scale of the present buildings and spaces."[48] When possible, all efforts should be made to conserve buildings "scheduled as of Historic and Architectural Interest" as well as those "selected by the Sub-Committee as worthy of retention or

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[47] Save Westminster Action Group, pamphlet, "Criterion Building," c. 1974, Piccadilly Circus, Westminster LB: Demolition Proposal and Redevelopment Including Criterion Theatre, LMA/4460/01/68/038, London Metropolitan Archives, London, UK.

[48] Westminster City Council, Piccadilly Circus Action Area Planning Brief, October 1973, page 6, F78/2911, The British Library, Boston Spa, UK.

rehabilitation."[49] The Sub-Committee also called for an improvement of "the overall environmental quality for those who live, work, visit or simply pass through the area," by providing "larger, safer and more pleasant paved areas with improved facilities for pedestrians," as well as "a variety and quality of…shopping and entertainment…whilst maintaining the bright lights character" which they believed "contribute[d] so much to the success of the Circus as the 'centre of the West End'."[50]

But not all bright lights remained. Even though the Piccadilly Circus Sub-Committee stated that the "bright lights character" of the Circus should be maintained, it was ultimately the push for the preservation and rehabilitation of existing buildings which proved most influential to the new vision of Piccadilly. Since it owned the London Pavilion, the GLC's Planning Committee ultimately decided, in 1974, that the London Pavilion was not to be demolished but instead to be preserved. By 1977, in anticipation of the Queen's Silver Jubilee, marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II's reign, the GLC dismantled the advertisements, cleaned and repainted the London Pavilion's façade. Shortly thereafter, the building was listed for preservation (GLC 1980). When the bright neon tubes were removed, there was very little, if any, opposition voiced. In fact, I have not been able to track down a single report of the removal of signage from the Pavilion. Whereas nearly two decades earlier, there was much debate about the organization of signage in this site, by the late 1970s, it was as though the presence of signage no longer mattered.

What began as separate efforts to renew the architecture of Piccadilly Circus organized by various organizations from the private-sector, ultimately resulted in a path of least renewal. Though the uncoordinated efforts to affix more signage and taller buildings on the southern and northern sides of the circus were set aside in favour of a city-led comprehensive plan, none of these plans were ever put in motion due in large part to a lack of coordination in the funding and to disagreements about the look of a renewed Piccadilly Circus. In the end, it was the ethos of architectural preservation, supported by multiple civic organizations and enforced by the powers of the public-sector, that finally prevailed as the guiding vision. As was reported in the

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

Architects' Journal, "After arguing and letting the patient Circus get seedier and seedier for fourteen years, the [Westminster City] Council have realised that what Piccadilly Circus needs is some serious help that will leave the best things the way they are."[51] But architectural preservation did not mean that all of Piccadilly Circus remained the same. Though all the buildings endured, the same cannot be said about the neon signage that appeared on them.

Removed from Preservation

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was very little disagreement among London's real estate developers, speculators, and city officials that Piccadilly Circus needed redevelopment. How that redevelopment was to manifest, however, was framed differently depending on which side of the circus was under scrutiny. While on the southern side of the circus the addition of signage to an old building proved to be fruitful largely because of promises that the building supporting them was soon to be demolished, on the northern side disputes mounted over the ways electric advertisements were to be organized on new constructions. And while on the western side there was absolutely no thought being paid to signage, on the eastern side it became increasingly clear that whatever signage that was on the building was going to be removed. As these differences suggest, any redevelopment that treated signage as a holistic component of Piccadilly Circus was going to directly challenge the distinct real-estate values that made up all four quadrants of this intersection. Since not all property managers saw signage as a desirable addition to their buildings, the places of neon displays in Piccadilly Circus — which would later become the façades upon which screens might be found — have been effectively delegated to the bulging curvatures located at the circus's northern corner.

By the 1970s, the various plans to totally redevelop this circus remained unrealized. However, while the Criterion Building, the London Pavilion, and the bulging Monico Building still stood firm, not everything in Piccadilly Circus remained the same. Over the proceeding decades, the flow of traffic has been changed to one-way on a number of the streets; the stretch of Piccadilly Road in front of the Criterion Building has been closed to vehicles, making it safer

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[51] "Commonsense Circus," *Architects' Journal*, 24 October 1973, 962.

and easier to reach the Statue of Eros; Eros, meanwhile, has been moved slightly closer to the Criterion Building in order to create a larger surface area for pedestrians. But perhaps most noticeable of all changes was the removal of signage from the London Pavilion in 1977.

Scholars have pointed out how public digital displays articulate the emergence of 'smart cities' and 'network societies' by enabling greater fluidity and interactions with the production and circulation of knowledge.[52] While my aim has not been to discount arguments about the rise of the "media city," in this chapter I have sought to emphasize a rather unexplored history of this materialization of screen culture, one that envelopes it within the frameworks of architecture and urban planning. As Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin observed, "Virtually all cities across the world are starting to display spaces and zones that are powerfully connected to other 'valued' spaces across the urban landscape as well as across national, international and even global distances."[53] While Graham and Marvin address the more contemporary processes of gentrification, this chapter has focused on the history of one such location, Piccadilly Circus between roughly 1955-1980, in order to reveal an iteration of the discourses that made room for moving image technologies and cultures in the outdoor urban landscape of London just prior to the rise of the neoliberal city. In this history, screens did not emerge as common-sensical outcomes. Instead, in this site, the spaces where screens might have appeared ultimately did not, largely due to a series of arguments that effectively saw signage as having negative impacts on traffic safety, neighbouring businesses, property management, as well as the preservation of the characteristics of centuries-old architecture.

The make-up of today's screen landscape in Piccadilly Circus grew out of a series of debates regarding urban renewal, from strategies of master-planning to the policies of cultural preservation. It is a history strongly embedded in the management of real estate and the politics of urban redevelopment. Although ideas about signage did play a role in shaping the discourses

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[52] Moritz Behrens, Ava Fatah gen. Schieck and Duncan P. Brumby, "Designing Media Architectural Interfaces for Interactions in Urban Spaces," in *Citizen's Right to the Digital City*, M. Foth et al. eds. (Singapore: Springer Science+Business Media, 2015), 55-77; Manovich, "Poetics"; McCullough, *Ambient Commons*; McQuire et al., *Urban Screens Reader*; Struppek, "Social Potential."

[53] Graham and Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism*, 15.

that took place, it was ultimately traditional ideas about architecture — the design of space, windows, bricks and mortar — that defined the spaces where signage in the Circus was to be found. As such, the digital displays that furnish today's Piccadilly Circus have much less to do with early twentieth century cinema than they do with the infrastructures and histories of real estate, urban design, architecture, electricity, advertising, and neon. To this day, it is not Piccadilly's signages that are protected by policies of preservation, but rather it is the architectural scaffoldings that support them. Signs play a subordinate role within this highly symbolic urban space.

The story of Piccadilly Circus also shows how strictly talking about economic processes of resource extraction and its systemic deployment in select sites in cities does not tell us enough about the processes of capital and power exchange that are at work in furnishing screens in public places. Redeveloping Piccadilly Circus ultimately did not entail the making use of screens as instruments of renewal. Instead, here rejuvenation was in fact marked by the removal of signage and the revelation of the architecture upon which it was placed. What prevailed, in other words, were suspicions about signage and the belief that signs disrupted the aesthetic qualities of architecture rather than enhanced it. Urban media are not simply added onto the fabrics of cities. When they do appear they are in fact the results of highly complex negotiations of power. In the case of Piccadilly Circus, these negotiations were prominently shaped by real-estate portfolio managers, developers, politicians, as well as civic groups. Some of the fears highlighted in the decades where discourses of redevelopment took shape were related to practical worries such as management of screen content, technologies, and spectatorial attention spans. They also were shaped by concerns with the impact that signage might have on property values. Ultimately, all such worries were legitimized through ideas about taste, aesthetics as well as the notions of historical heritage and architectural preservation. In the proceeding chapter, I will explore these politics of taste in greater detail, highlighting how ideas about the preservation of signage — not architecture — played instructive roles in the making of Times Square as an urban screen zone.

CHAPTER 2

LOW-RESOLUTION, HIGH-RESOLUTION, ZONING RESOLUTION: THE MAKING OF A REFINED SCREEN AESTHETIC IN TIMES SQUARE

In the previous chapter, I illustrated how the orientations, arrangements, and removal of screens in Piccadilly Circus were informed by a failed attempt to completely demolish and redevelop that particular junction in London. That redevelopment entailed, among other things, a plan to increase and foreground large-scale illuminated signage in the circus. The efforts to thoroughly rebuild Piccadilly Circus ultimately gave way to an ethos of architectural — not screen or signage — preservation. In the following chapter I will illustrate how similar debates emerged to shape Times Square during the 1980s and 1990s. But whereas the case of Piccadilly Circus led to the reduction of screen square footage and the increased protection of screen-less buildings, in Times Square discourses of redevelopment ultimately led to the demolition of old buildings, and their replacement with new screen-incorporated constructions. Screens in Times Square, I argue, proliferated due to the entrenched legal protection of illumination. As will be elaborated below, what took place in Times Square was not simply a history about making room for higher quality screens due to the increasing economic values of real estate and advertisements. Nor can this history be straightforwardly attributed to technological developments in screen engineering. While real estate values and developments in screen technologies played important roles in enabling larger screens of higher resolutions to be placed in Times Square, the history of this site was also more significantly shaped by successful efforts to make illumination an importantly recognized and legally protected feature of this space. Ironically, the push to preserve the luminosity of Times Square came about as a reaction to redevelopment projects that sought to economically rejuvenate the area by de-emphasizing, if not completely removing, signage from the area. In other words, prior to the proliferation of large LED screens, which accelerated rapidly beginning in the late 1990s and more prominently in the 2000s, the future of Times Square at one point looked like it might become free of screens altogether.

Between 1980 and 2000, New York City's Times Square underwent considerable economic, demographic, and material changes. Ushered in by significant tax incentives, as well

as new legal frameworks that criminalized sex industries, these new changes forever altered Times Square's screen architecture. Dominantly discussed as the Disneyfication period, this chapter instead focuses on the concurrent establishment of Zoning Resolutions N-820253-ZRM and 81-732, which I argue had broader ramifications than simply making Times Square more accommodating for international conglomerates, consumer capitalism, and family friendly tourism. Whereas resolution N-820253-ZRM allowed for tall constructions to be built in Times Square, resolution 81-732 outlined the minimum luminosity, placement, and size requirements necessary for signage in the famous intersection. Together, these two legal documents established public signage protocols that continue to endure. Though the two by-laws were established separately, they share a history that emerges out of the same period. Together, they variably contribute to the making of the so-called "super-signs" — enormously sized, and high-definition LED screens — that saturate Times Square today. As will be elaborated below, screens in Times Square throughout the 1980s were placed on low-rises and were of recognizably low resolution. By the 2000s, those screens were dismantled and replaced by larger screens of higher resolutions, placed on high-rises. What follows charts that transformation.

Far from being solely attributable to developments of digital screen technologies, this chapter will contextualize the emergence of large LED screens in Times Square within this locale's longer histories of signage, movie houses, pornography, grind house, video arcades, and public art-screen cultures. In what follows, I will highlight how the manifestation of flat LED billboards in this site was informed by highly contested debates among members of the city's economic, political, and cultural elites. These debates were sparked as responses to controversial proposals to redevelop Times Square into a financial district made up of high rises void of signage. The removal of glitzy signage and illumination, the architects of the proposal argued, was meant to displace the seedy and criminal activities that characterized the area between the 1960s through the 1980s — cultivated in massage parlours, peep-show arcades, grind houses, and porn theatres — by constructing valuable real estate, with adequate windows, for white collar jobs. In other words, signage during this period was associated with a debased and disreputable cultural strata. However, replacing signage clad buildings with high rise office towers, critics of the proposal argued, also had direct negative impacts on live theatre, first-run

movie houses, as well as the historical characteristics of Times Square as an open air, signage-filled, square in the city. Signage media, in other words, became a direct point of difference for very different models of redevelopment.

Looked at comparatively, the histories of Piccadilly Circus and Times Square reveal how the materialization of urban screens do not uniformly take shape; rather, they depend on context-specific power struggles. Though both redevelopments were informed by disciplinary policies, economic revitalization, and gentrification, these two histories also illustrate how the values of architectural and urban media heritage variably played instructive roles in shaping urban screen technologies. Revealed, therefore, are the ways by which urban screen cultures and clusters are not solely shaped by economic or technological forces, but also by what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu describes as other forms of capital, manifesting in terms of social bonds, political access, legal rights and knowledge, as well as the display and exercise of mastery of culture and the arts. Using Bourdieu's insights on the instructive roles that "legitimate culture" plays in the formation of social domination, in this chapter I will argue that the cultural histories of the two aforementioned by-laws tell the story of the making of a supposedly more refined urban screen aesthetic. This aesthetic is found in the content appearing on the screens, but it is also informed by the buildings upon which the screens are placed, the occupants of these buildings, as well as by the size and technical resolution qualities that characterize the screens themselves.

I describe this as a *refined* screen aesthetic not because it is objectively a more cultivated, enlightened, or improved use of urban screens. As Bourdieu argues, there is no such thing as a work of art, or cultural object, that is — without bias — more or less tasteful than others. Such values must always be understood as manifestations of particular social relations that shape, and are shaped by, the values of the identities of those classifying culture itself. As Bourdieu puts it, "taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier."[1] Ways of talking about, defining, and making use of culture are intricately tied to the reproduction of socio-economic relations of power by those individuals talking about, defining, and making use of culture. The notion that screens can be used in broadly defined tasteful manner is one that was arrived at through an intricate set of

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[1] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984), 6.

negotiations amongst various individuals with invested interests in the makeup of Times Square. In addition to government officials and real estate developers, these negotiations about tasteful screens were also shaped by the likes of architects John Burgee, Philipp Johnson, Robert A.M. Stern; by members of organizations such as the Municipal Art Society, the Broadway Actors' Equity Association, the American Institute of Architects, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the Times Square Alliance/Arts; as well as by art based organizations such as Public Art Fund, Creative Time, and the New Museum, to name a few. Though owners, workers, and patrons of strip clubs, peepshows, video arcades, grind house theatres, and massage parlours, held some sway in how redevelopment took shape or was being talked about, these individuals were ultimately pushed aside and disregarded. In other words, the making of a refined screen aesthetic was shaped by and reflected negotiations of power amongst members of similar social, cultural, and economic circles who, in distinguishing their differences from one another, also contributed to the systemic devaluation of people from circles that they deemed irrelevant to the discourses about the legitimization of cultural practices and objects.

As I will elaborate on in the final sections of the chapter, critics of the proposal to remove signage from Times Square variably made use of electronic signage art and artists as instruments of cultural legitimization. Through art works by the likes of Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, Martha Rosler, the Guerrilla Girls, Tibor Kalman, Elizabeth Diller, Ricardo Scofidio, Andy Warhol, Bjork, Isaac Julien, Ryoji Ikeda, Laurie Anderson, and Pipilotti Rist (to name a few), live theatre, first-run movie houses, and commercial advertisements were highlighted as positive characteristics in the make-up of Times Square. On the other hand, such artworks also painted the cultures of pornography, exploitation cinema, and video arcades as problematic — or, at best, as challenging — hindrances to the economic, social, and cultural improvements of Times Square. In other words, arts groups maintained an ambivalent relationship to the full spectrum of meanings associated with screens and signage in the square. Such a privileging of signage cultures as articulations of live theatre and first-run screen cultures (as opposed to adult businesses) reveal what Bourdieu described as the workings of "symbolic power": the forceful privileging of dominant tastes. Like the physical use of force, "symbolic power" is potent and assertive in its efforts to order social relations. It functions in such a way as to legitimize the

dominance of the culturally, socially, and economically affluent over the dominated lower class. As Bourdieu argues, "The harder it is to exercise direct domination, and the more it is disapproved of, the more likely it is that gentle, disguised forms of domination will be seen as the only possible way of exercising domination and exploitation."[2] What I aim to make clear is that such an understanding of the workings of culture — not simply as an instrument of power, but also as a manifestation of the reproduction of existing power relations — is crucial to understanding the ways screen technologies have become integral components of Times Square's outdoor moving image culture.

Illuminating Histories of Times Square

Since the turn of the century, Times Square has been characterized by the languages of brightness. This grew from an enduring mixture of entertainment venues, nightlife, advertising signage, and various technologies of illumination.[3] As was the case with most streets, parks, and public squares in New York City, gas lights were the first primary technologies of illumination used to brighten signage, buildings, and Times Square's night sky during the nineteenth century (known at the time as Longacre Square). With the integration of an electrical grid in the early 1890s and until the 1960s, the area was illuminated by incandescent lights, arc lights, and neon. Though these technologies gave a sense of movement and liveliness to the area, their main characteristic was that of illumination. Starting in the 1970s light emitting diodes were introduced into Times Square, though the majority of illumination sources were still comprised

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[2] Pierre Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, translated by Richard Nice (Standford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 128.

[3] See Tama Starr and Edward Hayman, *Signs and Wonders: The Spectacular Marketing of America* (New York: Currency/Doubleday, 1998); Darcy Tell, *Times Square Spectacular: Lighting Up Broadway* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007); Erkki Huhtamo, "The Sky Is (Not) the Limit: Envisioning the Ultimate Public Media Display," *Journal of Visual Culture* 8.3 (2009): 329–48; Kirsten Moana Thompson, "Rainbow Ravine: Color and Animated Advertising in Times Square, 1891-1945," in Joshua Yumibe, Sarah Street and Vicky Jackson, eds. *The Color Fantastic: Chromatic Worlds of Silent Cinema* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 161-178.

of neon and incandescent lights. As will be detailed in the next sections, it was only around the 2000s that LEDs — digital screens that can display real-time feeds of photorealistic and numerous combinations of multi-coloured moving images — began to take on more dominant roles in furnishing this square's landscape. How and why, then, did Times Square change from a hub of neon and lights to one of LED screens? What were the reasons that caused the area to transform from technologies of grand illumination to technologies of high resolution moving image media? Put differently, why did illumination remain a feature characteristic of Times Square, yet the instruments for luminosity transformed from incandescent and neon lights to high-resolution LEDs?

As much as the history of Times Square is intertwined with illumination, for media historians it also represents what Erkki Huhtamo describes as a media archaeology of 'screens before screens.'[4] In addition to billboards, Huhtamo identifies projection technologies — such as magic lanterns, oxy-hydrogen limelights and electric arc-lights — as important early contributors to the formation of contemporary urban screens. Such media, according to Huhtamo, variably contributed both to the proliferation and institutionalization of signage as a normal mode of address that "gave products a monumental and 'universal' quality" in modern urban life.[5] Focusing on the arrival of mechanical and neon signage, Kristen Moana Thompson likewise argues that electrical advertising "acted as an expanded form of cinema, reimagining the night sky as another form of cinematic screen."[6] She writes, "As atomized incremental movement that repeated in cyclical form, electrical advertising of both text and images can be understood as a structural form of animation."[7] The illusion of movement generated in mechanical and neon signage differs from more conventional understandings of cinema screens. In contrast to the projection of sequential photographs onto an unchanging screen surface in celluloid and digital cinema, or the encoding of images on electronic screens such as CRTs, Plasma, LCDs and LEDs,

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[4] Huhtamo, "Sky is (not) the Limit," 329.

[5] Erkki Huhtamo, "Messages on the Wall: An Archaeology of Public Media Displays," in Scott McQuire ed., *Urban Screens Reader* (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2009), 20.

[6] Thompson, "Rainbow Ravine," 166.

[7] Ibid.

the illusion of movement being generated in early electrical and neon advertising makes use of a different conception of screen frames. As Thompson writes, "Through the rhythmic alternation of illumination and darkness and the metrical rise and fall in luminosity, or manipulation of durational intensity, animated electrical advertising transformed a spectator's sense of space through its capacity to extend, fill, and colour space."[8]

While such histories of illumination and electrical signage help contextualize how an urban screens logic has been shaped in Times Square, it is important to keep in mind that much of the signage and animation that took place on the surfaces of its buildings was also accompanied by a complex history of other types of screen practices, including first-run movie palaces, second-run theatres, grind houses, porn theatres, peepshow parlours, loop films, adult video stores, and multiplexes. Many of these businesses also used signs on their exteriors to draw patrons towards their pay-per-view screens inside. This history reveals the ways screens of many sizes and types in Times Square grew out of an economy of screen affects associated with different industries and taste cultures. For example, prior to the American media industry's concentration in Hollywood, it was New York City that served as the central hub for the management of vaudeville acts, filmmaking, film distribution, sheet music, and radio, amongst other types of entertainment.[9] Times Square served as the symbolic site that gave this media entertainment industry both a representational and a tangible sense of place. Later, between 1920 and 1940, nearly a dozen movie theatres were located in and around the close vicinity of Times Square. Tucked between live musical theatres, burlesques, vaudevilles, dance halls, restaurants

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[8] Ibid. Conversely, elsewhere I argued that this type of production of animation also takes place in contemporary examples of Digital-Out-of-Home media; see, Zach Melzer, "Spectroaming Instaticity: The Aesthetics of Digital-Out-of-Home Media In Highly Screened Environments," É*cranosphère* 1 (2014).

[9] See Robert W. Snyder, "Vaudeville and the Transformation of Popular Culture," in William R. Taylor ed., *Inventing Times Square: Commerce and Culture at the Crossroads of the World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 133-146, 387-390; Brooks McNamara, "The Entertainment District at the End of the 1930s," in Taylor ed., *Inventing Times Square*, 178-190, 396-398; Philip Furia, "Irving Berlin: Troubadour of Tin Pan Alley," in Taylor ed., *Inventing Times Square*, 191-211, 391-392; Ross Melnick, "Station R-O-X-Y: Roxy and the Radio," *Film History* 17.2/3 (2005): 217-233.

and hotels, these movie theatres oftentimes featured films depicting the glamorous — and not-so-glamorous — life of New York City's entertainment industry.[10] Films from that period oftentimes featured the "bright lights" of Times Square as the background setting for stories about talented musicians, singers, dancers, and actors from small towns making their way to Broadway in search of fame. These films were oftentimes either based on Broadway theatre plays, vaudeville acts, theatrical revues ("Follies"), or radio shows that were performed in and around Times Square, or simply featured performers and venues associated with Times Square.

Aerial photographs taken in the 1940s show an acute brightness from the cluster of signage that emanated from this crossroads comprised of dozens of converging and criss-crossing streets. Thus, combining its mediated representations as well as its actual brightness, it is easy to understand how the luminous surge that emitted from Times Square is oftentimes inaccurately described as "*the* Great White Way." As historian David Nye clarifies, with the introduction of electric grids nearly all modern North American, European, and Asian cities and towns featured brightly lit boulevards where a focalized area of commerce and entertainment took place.[11] As a term adopted specifically in the anglophone world, 'Great White Ways' manifested in many boulevards particularly across North America during roughly the first half of the twentieth century. Still, it was New York City's Broadway boulevard that was recognized as perhaps 'the greatest' of Great White Ways — frequently referred to as such in films, newspapers, magazines, and postcards — with Times Square serving as its defining focal point. And while many other Great White Ways have since become dimmer, Times Square still remains one of the most luminescent focal points, if not the brightest, of all. The glow of electric light that characterized Times Square is not new nor was it only to be found in that area of midtown Manhattan. But its intensity and magnitude — galvanized and even mythologized in films, radio

[10] There were dozens of films set in New York City's Broadway. Some of the more notable titles are *The Jazz Singer* (1927), *Broadway* (1929), *Broadway Babies* (1929) *42nd Street* (1933), *Gold Diggers of 1933* (1933), *Big Broadcast of 1937* (1936). See Martha Shearer, *New York City and the Hollywood Musical: Dancing in the Streets* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), esp. chapter 5.

[11] David E. Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880-1940* (MIT Press, 1992).

“Broadway and 42nd Street,” Gottscho-Schleisner, Inc., ca. 1930. Museum of the City of New York.

broadcasts, and postcards from the 1920s through 1940s — shaped it as one that was symbolically and uniquely tied to the worlds of popular culture.

Historians such as Alexander J. Reichl, James Traub, and Marshall Berman generally agree that the narrative of contemporary Times Square begins with a period between 1880-1910, where a mixture of types of media and commerce contributed to what became (and still remains)

the city's entertainment district.[12] This was followed, between 1910-1950, by an augmentation of the area's financial, cultural and symbolic values as a hub where mixtures of lower, middle, and upper-class commercial desires could be experienced in public space. By the 1960s, however, the area became a symbol of the gradual decline of urban economic and cultural values. Whereas Times Square of the pre-WWII years — typified by elegant hotels, chic dancehalls, and picture palaces — was marked by a glamorously romantic and enthralling nightlife, those of the post-War period were increasingly characterized by an abandonment of that era's glimmer. Starting in the 1960s through the 1980s, the residues, dirt, and decay of industrialism, white flight, urban sprawl, and abandoned buildings became the most dominant features that characterized this place. Movie palaces and picture houses were either demolished or converted to grind house cinemas showing kung-fu, exploitation, and pornographic films. Dance halls were converted to strip clubs. New types of businesses such as adult bookshops, video arcades, massage parlours, and brothels set up shop. Large, luminescent and playful signage made by the likes of O. J. Gude and Douglas Leigh was replaced by blinking neons, bland theatre marquees, and storefront CRTs advertising sex and violence. Movies made by "New Hollywood" filmmakers — such as, most famously, *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) and *Taxi Driver* (1976) — depicted the neighbourhood with stark differences to 1930s and 40s musicals that also used Times Square as a much more wholesome and often glamorous setting. Such images and realities had great impact on the commercial and media cultures that took place in Times Square, but also on narratives that shaped the more general assessment of Times Square as the focal point in the broader deterioration of urban morals.

To be sure, for the likes of Jeffrey Sconce, Samuel Delaney, Kat Long, Anthony Bianco, David Church and many others, the so-called decay period in Times Square's history also marked the golden years of exploitation cinema, pornography, as well as a kind of emancipatory

[12] Alexander J. Reichl, *Reconstructing Times Square: Politics and Culture in Urban Development* (University Press of Kansas, 1999); James Traub, *The Devil's Playground: A Century of Pleasure and Profit in Times Square* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2007); Marshall Berman, *On the Town: One Hundred Years of Spectacle in Times Square* (New York: Verso, 2009).

space for gay and queer communities.[13] If urban sprawl and post-industrialization robbed the city of economic worth, rulings in the country's Supreme Court in the 1960s and 70s injected sex industries and exploitation cinema with new protections. What used to be experienced underground — speakeasies, secret meeting spots, burlesques, brothels — was no longer considered unlawful. In other words, this period was not marked by cultural decline as much as it was by the widening of liberties, accessibilities, and legal protections of what were theretofore regarded as illegitimate cultures. Times Square of the 1970s and 80s was seen (and still is by many) as a mecca that gave low-brow, pornographic, exploitation, and queer cultures more legitimate outlets. It had its own kind of tourism that attracted both people who felt safe in the area, as well as those who wanted to witness the supposed smut and vulgarity firsthand — the best, cheapest thrills at the crossroads of the world. Nevertheless, notwithstanding even the most celebratory or affirming accounts, there was generally a consensus that improving the area's economic worth was a desirable goal. It is not as though exploitation, pornography, or queer cultures aspired to be politically excluded or economically unprofitable.

Nowhere were the symptoms of economic decay more visible than on a single block located in the south-west corner of Times Square — Forty-second Street between Broadway and Eighth Avenue — at the time nicknamed "the Deuce."[14] Though this block was symptomatic of the broader economic results of de-industrialization, it was largely the presence of adult

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[13] Jeffrey Sconce, "Trashing the Academy: Taste, Excess, and an Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style," *Screen* 36.4 (1995): 371–93; Samuel R. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: NYU Press, 1999); Kat Long, *The Forbidden Apple: A Century of Sex & Sin in New York City* (New York: Ig Pub., 2009); Anthony Bianco, *Ghosts of 42nd Street: A History of America's Most Infamous Block* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009); David Church, "From Exhibition to Genre: The Case of Grind-House Films," *Cinema Journal* 50.4 (2011): 1-25. See also Josh Alan Friedman, *Tales of Times Square: Expanded Edition* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 1986/2007); Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, *Sleazoid Express: A Mind-Twisting Tour Through the Grindhouse Cinema of Times Square* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002); Austin Fisher and Johnny Walker eds., *Grindhouse: Cultural Exchange on 42nd Street, and Beyond* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2016).

[14] In 2017, HBO began airing *The Deuce*, a television drama series set in and around 42nd Street during the 1970s.

entertainment and sex trade that were held responsible for the block's decline of respectability.[15] Writing in 1979, *New York Times* architectural critic, Ada Louise Huxtable described it as "squalor" and "a potpourri of the sordid and the merely crummy, infused with a dull sense of menace."[16] The block was home to dozens of movie theatres featuring adult exploitation movies and pornography, massage parlours, strip clubs, prostitution, as well as video arcades and adult bookstores. In addition to being dominated by businesses catering to cisgendered, hyper-sexualized, toxic masculinity, the block was seen as a hindrance to the existence of other uses of the area, most identifiably to businesses that did not cater to such sexual desires. In a 1978 report, the City's Department of City Planning (DCP) described the exceedingly high concentration of pornographic and exploitation cinema as a major contributor to the high crime rates and the overall "aesthetically displeasing street environment."[17] The homogenous use of the block for sex trade and adult-themed entertainment was said to be problematically contributing to the underutilization and deterioration of existing buildings in the area. Exploitation theatres, video arcades, adult bookshops, hourly rate motels, massage parlours, and prostitution only made use of the proportionally smaller footprints of the buildings they were occupying. The DCP regarded the concentration of adult commerce and underutilization of prime real-estate as highly problematic challenges that were not only thought to be feeding one another, but were also feared to be "responsible for the deterioration of the whole area" adjacent to Forty-second Street, including the legitimate theatres and hotels, the New York Public Library and Bryant Park, and even shops on Fifth Avenue, the Ninth Avenue markets, and the Rockefeller Center located nearly a dozen blocks away.[18] Whereas starting in the late 1960s and early 1970 pornography and

[15] To be sure, sex trade did not suddenly emerge in Times Square during the 1960s; rather, it was a part of the neighbourhood since at least the later part of the nineteenth century. See Timothy J. Gilfoyle "Policing of Sexuality" in William R. Taylor ed. *Inventing Times Square*, pp.297-313, 410-417; Laurence Senelick, "Private Parts in Public Places," in William R. Taylor ed., *Inventing Times Square*, pp. 329-353, 420-423; and Long, *The Forbidden Apple*.

[16] Ada Louis Huxtable, "The Many Faces of 42nd Street," *New York Times*, 18 March 1979, D31, D33.

[17] New York City Dept. of City Planning, *42nd Street Study* (New York: DCP, 1978), 16.

[18] Ibid, 26.

exploitation films experienced new legal protections in the courts and within the American film industry,[19] their presence was not regarded favourably by many, including the city's real-estate market.

Depictions of the area as a hub of sins, crimes, and sex were not vocalized by only one constituency. Both right-wing conservative religious ideologists, left-leaning anti-pornography feminists, as well as counter-culture activists, made use of Times Square as an example of the amoralities that characterized modern urban society. For example, media historian Carolyn Bronstein illustrates how Women Against Pornography, a politically left leaning anti-pornography feminist group who set up a permanent advocacy centre in Times Square, was taken over by right wing conservatism to such an extent that the group's messages were venturing closer to those of anti-sexual liberation ideals that feminists during the 1960s and 70s fought for.[20] Though Women Against Pornography eventually separated from its conservative constituents, the history of this particular group illustrates how broad ranging were criticisms of the clustering of pornographic theatres in Times Square. City and state officials of varying political leanings identified this area of midtown Manhattan to be one of the most visible contributors to the overall decline of New York City's and New York State's values. In other words, adult entertainment was positioned outside of mainstream political discourse, taking the blame for a considerable range of moral and economic woes.

It is out of this context that the contemporary discourses of 'refined' screen aesthetics in Times Square emerged. Over a period of roughly a decade, between the late 1970s and 1980s, a series of negotiations among city and state officials, lawmakers, real estate developers, architects, city planners, cultural preservationists, persons from the theatre industry, public art groups, and artists, collectively contributed to the making of a set of protocols that ultimately defined the ways digital screens would look in Times Square. These protocols were put into practice by members of the city's economic, social, and political elite who sought to rebuild the

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[19] See Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (University of California Press, 1999) and Jon Lewis, *Hollywood V. Hard Core: How the Struggle Over Censorship Created the Modern Film Industry* (New York: NYU Press, 2002).

[20] Carolyn Bronstein, *Battling Pornography: The American Feminist Anti-Pornography Movement, 1976–1986* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

city based on a set of taste dispositions that censored hard and soft-core adult entertainment. These protocols not only dictated where screens were to be placed on buildings, what size they would take, how bright they must be, and what resolution they would possess. By making Times Square into one of the sites with the most highly concentrated amount of massive digital billboards in the world, the zoning resolutions also shaped the kinds of content that could and could not appear on the screens. As will be explained below, these negotiations and the set of protocols that resulted from them reveal how the histories of urban screen media, at least in this instance, are intricately tied to ideas about architectural aesthetics, advertising, politics of gentrification, tourist economies, taste dispositions, and urban preservation. Together, the culmination of these ideas articulate what a multi-story, tasteful screen — seen every day by as many as 450,000 pedestrians, or nearly 150 million visitors each year — might look like.[21]

"Bowl of Light" or a "Canyon of Walls": Zoning Resolution N-820253-ZRM

On two separate evenings, in March and again in November of 1984, a collective of organizations — including the Municipal Art Society, the American Institute of Architects, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the Artkraft Strauss Sign Corporation, the Save the Theatres Inc., and the Actors' Equity Association — co-ordinated two protests that shut off the electricity powering many of the signs in Times Square. For one hour on each respective evening, only one electronic sign displaying a cannonball destroying the New York skyline, accompanied by the message "HEY, MR. MAYOR! IT'S DARK OUT HERE. HELP KEEP THE BRIGHT LIGHTS IN TIMES SQUARE", was orchestrated to remain lit. With this low-resolution animated message playing behind him, Kent Barwick, then president of the Municipal Art Society, cautioned that the design of Times Square was at risk of changing from a "bowl of light" into a "canyon of walls".[22] Of the many nicknames attributed to it throughout the twentieth

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[21] "Pedestrian Counts." Times Square Alliance. December 2011-April 2019. https://www.timessquarenyc.org/do-business/market-research-data/pedestrian-counts.

[22] Original quote: "Instead of a bowl of light, you have a canyon of walls." Kent Barwick, quoted in James Brooke, "Conserving the Glitter of Times Sq." *New York Times*, 11 May 1986, 35.

century — the ‘Great White Way’, the devil’s playground, the ‘Crossroads of the World’, the porn capital of the world, the pulsating heart of the city, a tourist trap — its arguably most instructive descriptions were these two analogies of bowl and canyon, uttered in a dimly lit demonstration to “Keep Times Square Alive”.

Whereas today Times Square is characterized by torrents of bright colours emitting from giant digital displays, during the 1980s that very image of electric spectacle was at risk of being destroyed by four bulky office towers. Designed by star architects John Burgee, and the so-called “Dean of Architecture,” Philipp Johnson, this proposed Times Square Centre was to be built in the manner of the Rockefeller Centre located just a few blocks north-east of Times Square. Not unlike the Art Deco Modernism of Rockefeller Centre, each floor of these nearly identical proposed towers was to feature uniformly designed row-after-row of identical rectangular-shaped windows. Following guidelines to maximize rentable office space, Burgee’s and Johnson’s chosen façades were intentionally designed to be incompatible with signage. Also noteworthy, Burgee’s and Johnson’s plan proposed to demolish the sign-covered Times Tower building — Times Square’s namesake — and to include an empty pedestrian plaza in its place.

Though the proposed buildings of Burgee’s and Johnsons’s Times Square Centre were designed in the guises of postmodernism and deconstruction, much like the duo’s then-recently completed AT&T (“Chippendale”) building, their only embrace of ornament came with the centre’s French mansard roofs and unusually tall archways. Such motifs were chosen in reference to the Hotel Astor and the Knickerbocker Hotel, both of which were built in Times Square at around the turn of the century. Burgee and Johnson referenced the two buildings in an effort to allude to a bygone era in Times Square’s history where glamorous picture palaces, dance halls, lavish hotels, and burlesques were prominent features. Though the Knickerbocker Hotel was still standing in 1984 (as it still is today), it was at the time being used as residential lofts, and commercial showrooms and studios — that is, not as a glamorous hotel. Thus, with the Hotel Astor having been demolished for nearly two decades, Johnson’s and Burgee’s roof and archway design was merely a semiotics of references to histories abstracted from the past, far removed from the contemporary realities of the area.

The Burgee-Johnson plan belonged to a strategically coordinated effort between private investors and city officials to revitalize the area by erecting new towers with added square footage. The increase in rentable spaces were hoped to make the area more economically profitable, diverse both in the kinds of businesses that would use the towers and the various types of people that would frequent them. Such spaces were also foreseen to make room for businesses with transactions that would be more easily traceable and accountable to municipal coffers. The removal of signage from this real estate area, in other words, was linked to the making of the area more hospitable to so-called respectable businesses — law firms, in particular. After decades of divestment in the area, the four office towers of the Johnson-Burgee plan were initiated through a concerted partnership between the private and public sectors. With a commitment from real estate development company, Klein Realty, New York City and New York State initiated the 42nd Street Redevelopment Project in an effort to revitalize 42nd Street. In addition to tax incentives, this plan also included limited borrowing protections from the city, as well as, most importantly, the revisioning of construction height and floor area allowances in midtown. The 1982 Midtown Zoning Resolution — N-820253-ZRM — gave Klein Realty permission to construct taller and bulkier office towers in what was considered by many to be prime, though underused and neglected, real-estate location.[23] Up until then, the height allowance for buildings located on street corners was fifteen times the lot to floor area ratio (FAR). The new zoning resolution's allowance of eighteen FAR, increased the square footage of rentable property by twenty percent. Importantly, the new FAR did not simply allow for taller structures to be built in the area (i.e. a fifteen stories building could now become an eighteen stories building). Rather, because FARs are calculated based on the overall average of the building's entire square-footage in its relationship to the square footage of the lot upon which it is built, the twenty percent increases allowed for buildings to become bulkier as well. For example, a fifteen stories building could remain fifteen stories but its makeup can change from 100,000 square footage per floor to 120,000 square footage per floor.

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[23] By 1982, N-820253-ZRM had been shaped by a 1961 Zoning Resolution, which was itself informed by the city's 1916 Zoning Law. In other words, N-820253-ZRM was a strategy for urban density management that at the time had already been taking shape for nearly seven decades.

Because it was difficult to give a practical assessment of how the new FAR allowances were going to dramatically alter the composition of buildings (for example, a fifteen stories building changing to eighteen stories does not seem that drastic), the MAS enlisted the Berkley-based professor of urban design, Peter Bosselmann, and the Environmental Simulation Laboratory to design three, sixteen foot models that would help visualize those changes.[24] The different models designed by Bosselmann and his team gave three distinct visual references to what the new zoning resolutions would allow: one that illustrated a replica of Times Square as it existed at the time; another that showed the kind of architectural designs that would take shape because of the new Midtown Zoning Resolution; and a third model that illustrated the kinds of conditions the MAS thought were most desirable for the area. Along with a twelve-minute film narrated by actor Jason Robards, the Times Square Sim Lab illustrated in detail — including signs and billboards — how each potential scenario would appear from the perspective of a pedestrian.[25] According to Bosselmann, the scale of the model was built large enough so that it could be photographed at eye level using a conventional 35mm camera with a close-focus lens. Such a scale permitted "the camera to 'walk' along Broadway, pivoting right and left. The model and views recorded in this fashion became a powerful design tool to develop and test alternative controls, based on qualities already in place and on enhancing the experience of the visitor."[26] Based on the simulated models and the film, *New York Times* architectural critic Paul Goldberger, who until then supported the Burgee-Johnson plan, was himself convinced that the new zoning resolution would transform Times Square into a 'grand canyon', writing that the new constructions would "squash" the open-air characteristics of the area "as firmly as a shoe might

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[24] See Peter Bosselmann, "The Berkeley Environmental Simulation Laboratory: A 12 Year Anniversary," *Berkeley Planning Journal*, 1.1 (1984): 150-160 and "Times Square," *Places Journal* 4.2 (July 1987).

[25] The script for the film, written by Peter Bosselmann and *New Yorker* writer Tony Hiss, can be found in Bosselmann, *Filmscripts: Five Films Produced at the Environmental Simulation Laboratory* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1990) pp.17-23. Conversely, Barwick's imagery of "bowl of light" versus a "canyon of walls" was also used in this film.

[26] Bosselmann, "Times Square," 60.

Peter Bosselmann, Director of the Environmental Simulation Laboratory at the University of California - Berkeley, demonstrating the impact of New York City's 1982 Midtown Zoning Resolution using a to-scale model of Times Square. Commissioned by the Municipal Arts Society, August 30, 1985. Copyright: Regents of University of California.

flatten an ant".[27] Clearly, with the new by-laws in place, Times Square was to be furnished with taller, obtrusive, and bulkier constructions that would significantly make the streets feel denser with concrete, rather than illuminated and dynamic.

While this revision to the building allowance impacted all properties in the area, the 42nd Street Redevelopment Project gave Klein Realty significantly unique financial incentives. In addition to gaining the ability to influence prices for new office rental spaces in midtown, as well as potentially the rest of Manhattan, the developer was able to rely on immediate growth in the property's values. According to a 1987 review by the City Planning Commission, between 1982 and 1986, midtown real estate values grew at an annual average rate of 26 percent (from $24 per square foot to $64 per square foot). On 42nd Street, one example illustrated an even greater growth. The Candler Building, purchased in January 1980 for $1.3 million, was sold in January

[27] Paul Goldberger, "Will Times Square Become a Grand Canyon?" *New York Times*, 6 October 1985, H31.

1984 for $14.75 million. That is, its value grew by more than eleven times, or one thousand percent of its original value. Such changes, based to a large degree on speculation, were directly attributable to the N-820253-ZRM Midtown Zoning Resolution.

Zoning resolutions were at one time radically new ways for systematically thinking about urban activities, resources, and people. At their core, they are strategies of density management. Whether densities of people, businesses, or activities — or, indeed, all three at the same time — zoning resolutions are tools by which city officials can better organize, govern, and limit the clustering and distributions of movements. Instead of a blindly disorganized arrangement of businesses and people, zoning laws organize the city based on the clustered activities that inform a particular area — i.e. residential, industrial, entertainment, etc. Such resolutions enable ways by which the city can legitimize an approval, or disapproval, of a property development proposal based on the location of the project and its impact on the particular area where it is zoned. On the other hand, zoning resolutions are also tools by which the city could legitimize the supposed need for real estate growth in particular areas, thereby giving preference to certain types of businesses over others. In other words, zoning resolutions allow cities to mold the cultural uses of areas by privileging certain activities, businesses, and people over others. As a strategy for the management of urban density, zoning resolution N-820253-ZRM gave government officials legitimized power to approve of, help fund, and implement large scale real estate constructions such as the 42nd Street Redevelopment Project.

As urban sociologist Miriam Greenberg has noted, the new constructions in Times Square grew out of broader efforts by the city to rebrand its image, both nationally and internationally, as a site worthy to invest in.[28] This was a time when New York City, unable to pay for basic operating expenses or borrow any more money from lenders, was nearly bankrupt. In an effort to get out of repeated fiscal crises, rebranding strategies such as the 'I♥NY' campaign and the 42nd Street Redevelopment Project belonged to a broad political effort to repair the image of the city as a welcoming and safe place. But as Greenberg explains, this was crucially also a way to make the city into a site where social problems can be resolved through market-based solutions. Taller

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[28] Miriam Greenberg, *Branding New York: How a City in Crisis Was Sold to the World* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

buildings could generate greater economic and taxable profits. High-rise office towers meant both more square footage added to the city and, in comparison to topless bars and grind house theatres, more accountable transactions thanks to the likelihood of paper trails in corporate bureaucracies. In other words, the 42nd Street Redevelopment project was in many ways an instance of what Michel Foucault described as the 'governmentalization' of the city. The plan allowed city officials to take control over spaces and resources from populations deemed "undisciplined," and to hand that control over to a population deemed productively self-governing.

However, framing this history too greatly through the lenses of governmentality does not necessarily explain all that took place in Times Square during this period. Put differently, this case serves as an important reminder that governmentality does not necessarily manifest in the same way in all circumstances, nor does it highlight the specifics of how meanings of "disciplined" or "undisciplined" citizenry are arrived at. As Bourdieu argues, the very existence, formation of ideas, and shifts in discourses about something like governmentality (or what he described as "heuristic efficacy") are highly contingent "on the balance of forces between social agents who have entirely real interests in the different possibilities available to them as stakes and who deploy every sort of strategy to make one set or the other prevail."[29] That is, definitions of disciplined citizenry are intricately tied to the social positions and "position-taking," as Bourdieu put it, of those social agents who assert equity and ownership over the immediate results of those discourses, largely because those outcomes have direct impact on the worth (economic, social, cultural) of those social agents. Accordingly, governmental systems are not made up of individuals with equal powers working cohesively towards accomplishing common disciplinary goals. Rather, they are made up of individualized dispositions (*habitus* learned through one's upbringing and schooling) that variably make use of multiple types of knowledge (economic, social, cultural *capital*) in hierarchically structured stratums of power (arenas wherein struggles over capital are battled; *fields* such as law, politics, economics, science, medicine, pedagogy, art, architecture, media, technology) in order to influence the ways that

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[29] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 29, 34.

social dominance is organized. It is this triangular formation of habitus, capital, and fields that ultimately shapes the definitions and values attached to things such as "legitimate culture" and "disciplined populations". Succinctly put, governmentality is an arena of struggle that is fought over using various types of knowledge, that are themselves shaped by individualized dispositions, in order to influence the arrangements of hegemony.

Bourdieu elucidates an understanding of the functioning of culture in governmental systems that demands more attention be paid to the values of art and aesthetics in shaping the organization of social identities and their relations to one another. Since judgements and dispositions about arts and everyday practices are schematically learned through one's social positions — whether in their family, their social circles, and their education — these acquired forms of apprehension can take on primary roles in the organization of power, just as instructively as those of economic and political modes of power. As fostered forms of knowledge, ideas about culture become more than simply world views or instruments within a type of "false consciousness"; rather, they become integral to the practical, rational ways by which individuals conduct themselves and socialize (or not) with others. Instead of the Foucauldian notion of "useful culture", in Bourdieu's understanding it is the formation of a "legitimate culture" that plays an instrumental role in guiding the definitions of what is considered disciplined and unruly. Being able to identify and elaborate on aesthetic codifications in a work of art, or conduct oneself in accordance to the norms established in a particular social event or context, is as telling of one's social position as is being able to own a valuable business or a powerful position in political office. This "legitimate culture" is not static, but it is highly contingent in that it is intricately dependent on the changing dynamics that take place in the realms of social, legal, political and economic distributions of power.

Taste played a crucial role in shaping the legitimacy of screen technologies in Times Square. Importantly, however, the narrative about the making of screens into objects of legitimate culture was not written in a way that gave particular types of signage technologies preferential treatment over others. Rather, it was about delimiting what were the kinds of uses of signage and illumination technologies, if any, would be suitable for the area. Aside from instances of malfunction, disorganization and disrepair, nowhere did I come across examples

where technologies such as neon, movie marquees, incandescent lights, LEDs, CRTs, were singled out as examples of signage and illumination media that were seen, in and of themselves, as distasteful. As long as signage was a source of illumination, how luminosity was to materialize — what kinds of technologies or screen resolutions it was going to be mediated through — was considered irrelevant. Nevertheless, though no particular signage or illumination technologies were favoured, how those technologies were to be placed, managed, maintained, by whom, and for what purposes, were equally of concern to developers and signage preservationists alike. As will be elaborated on below, such a negotiation of power between those who sought to preserve signage and those who proposed to remove it was also indirectly a display of both camps' disregard to the cultures of adult themed industries.

The Portman Hotel Conflict Resolution

Before they were protesting the demise of Times Square through high-rises, members of the Municipal Art Society were in agreement with city officials and developers that high-rises were essential to the redevelopment of the area. A 1982 report of the 42nd Street Development Corporation — a "private, not-for-profit, tax-exempt Local Development Corporation [formed as] an offspring of the Municipal Art Society of New York"[30] — began with a photograph of actress Estelle Parsons sitting at a candle lit table with a glass of wine in her hand. On the wall behind Parsons hangs a large mural of a seductive painted female nude. The caption of this image states: "What's a Nice Girl Like Estelle Parsons Doing in a Massage Parlor on 42nd Street?" Upon opening the pamphlet, the following answer is provided: "Estelle Parsons is having lunch at LaRousse, a nice French restaurant that was the not-so-nice French Palace, a massage parlor, seven years ago. Over these years, to our delight, a good deal of West 42nd Street has been transformed."[31] The report lists a number of positive developments in its objectives to renew 42nd Street, including a cohesive strategy to create housing for artists

[30] 42nd Street Development Corporation, *42nd Street Development Corporation Report*, (New York 1982), 4.

[31] Ibid, 1.

working in theatre, the near completion of a convention centre on the western most end of the area, the renewal of Bryant Park and the Public Library, a light rail line that "would unify the street's disparate ends, from United Nations to Theatre Row," as well as the construction of office towers that would "pay for it all." Also significant, argued the report, was the displacement of adult entertainment businesses that were contributing to "four decades of accumulated, renewal-resistant blight."[32] The report, in other words, makes two things abundantly clear: in the opinion of this not-for-profit local development corporation formed by the Municipal Art Society (MAS), the displacement of adult entertainment and the addition of high-rises are two inseparable, essential objectives that must be achieved in order for the redevelopment of Times Square to take place.

What was it, then, that took place between 1982 and 1984 that changed the official platform of the MAS? Why was the organization in support of office towers in 1982 but not in 1984? What was it about these constructions, either already being built or in stages of proposal, that this civic organization pivoted to oppose? Succinctly put, the MAS's opposition to the redevelopment project that it once supported came about because of strategic resistance to the new constructions' unforeseen impacts on what they considered to be legitimate uses of architecture and technologies of illumination in the square. These aversions were largely magnified by the construction of yet another new towering building, located in the middle of the Times Square bow-tie, a 49-storey hotel designed by famed architect and investor John Portman. Not unlike its contemporaneous counterpart in Los Angeles, later famously criticized by the likes of Fredric Jameson and Edward Soja for embodying a late-modern ethos, this Marriott Marquis Hotel was ultimately argued to be further contributing to the supposed decay of the area.[33] With a lobby raised above ground level, an undefined entrance, multiple convention halls, a fitness centre, a 1,600 seat theatre, and nearly 2,000 rooms facing inwards to its hollowed interior, guests of the hotel found themselves securely separated from the outside world, as though in a

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[32] Ibid, 4.

[33] Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (July-August 1984): 59-92; Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989).

bunker. As Soja put it, Portman's design is that of a space that is "seemingly open in presenting itself to view but constantly pressing to enclose, to compartmentalize, to circumscribe, to incarcerate."[34] In Portman's architecture, Soja saw a fragmented and confusing labyrinthian-like simulation of the world marked by its orientations away from public space, and a spatial design that emphasized the peripheral over the central. Moreover, with its lack of architectural setbacks and minimal signage on its façades, the stark ascent of this building's two dominant pillars, towered over and engulfed the street below. The hotel's architecture allowed suburbanite visitors to claim space in the city by both parsing out and breaking the rhythms of the urban environment, as well as transforming the meanings of interiority and publicity into flows of global capital. Such configurations and uses of the area benefitted more affluent visitors, thereby straining businesses catering to cheaper fares, including lower-budget theatrical performances.

It was not only in its appearance that the Portman Hotel privileged opulent tourist economies. Its construction also demanded the demolition of five smaller theatres that had been around since the 1900s and 1910s: the Astor, the Bijou, the Gaiety, the Helen Hayes, and the Morosco theatres. In addition to demolishing these relics of the past, critics of the project argued that the new larger theatre in Portman's hotel would also not be able to facilitate the kinds of intimacy that existed in these older theatres. Joan K. Davidson, a "Life Member of the MAS", and President of the J. M. Kaplan Fund (a family foundation invested in developing urban environments through historic preservations) wrote in an opinion letter in the *New York Times* that the aforementioned Portman Hotel would "foist on an area of low-rise theatres and restaurants an out-scaled structure of a hackneyed design".[35] Both in its presence and design, this new tall edifice was argued to be overshadowing, miniaturizing, and erasing the rest of its immediate surroundings. Rather than vitalizing the activities on the street by galvanizing a shared communion and a welcoming of passersby inside, the new hotel was criticized for being designed more like a towering citadel, devoid of signage on its exterior, erasing its footprint's historical past, and emphasizing a simulation of urbanism through its interiors.

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[34] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 243.

[35] Joan K. Davidson, "An Urban-Planning Blunder Called Portman Hotel," *New York Times*, 6 Nov 1980, A34.

Pushback against the Portman Hotel project was a political and legal battle that reached as high as the offices of the White House and United States Supreme Court.[36] Though it began development in 1973, due to series of budgetary and legal battles as well as significant public criticism, the hotel was only fully completed in 1985. Still, even with much public disapproval for the project, the Supreme Court ultimately decided that demolition of the old theatres was well within Portman's legal rights. As the Supreme Court's decision lifted a temporary stay on construction, a determined alliance of organizations sought to stop the demolition and began staging a two-week protest in which actors performed "marathon readings" of plays presented in the Morosco and Hayes theaters. Participants in these demonstrations were staunchly and wholeheartedly committed to this cause. As demolition of the theatres began taking place, about 170 protestors were arrested. Among the arrested were actors Colleen Dewhurst, Tammy Grimes, Treat Williams, Celeste Holm, Susan Sarandon, Michael Moriarty, and the same Estelle Parsons who appeared on the cover of the 42nd Street Development Corporation's 1982 report discussed above. Within hours of their arrests, the remaining protestors were seen carrying placards with the statement "Free the Morosco 200" written on them. In a telling, if overly reductive summarization of the crowd's disapproval, actor Christopher Reeves, who was not arrested but was amongst the protesters, was quoted: "It's increasingly a battle between artists and technology."[37] Ironically, it was the new tall constructions, bare of illuminated signage, that were seen as infringements on the low-rise, comparatively brighter and playful, architectures of old theatres. Considering that the protestors ultimately wanted more signage technologies in Times Square, Reeves's remarks were nevertheless instructive of the values that old and new architectures were being given through redevelopment. Still, compassionate utterances such as those vocalized by Reeves and the 'Morosco 200' coloured the ways that decades-old theatre

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[36] "Federal district court Judge Kevin T. Duffy issues a temporary restraining order preventing demolition of [the Helen Hayes, Morsco and Bijou] theatres based on one plaintiff's claim that 'the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation reacted to improper pressure applied by the White House' in their decision to expedite demolition of the theatres." Betsy Holland Gehman, "New York on the Way Up…Yet Again," *Promenade* (Summer 1982), 48.

[37] Christopher Reeves, quoted in Frank J. Prial, "Court Stay Lifted and Demolition Begins at Two Broadway Theaters," *New York Times*, 23 March 1982, B5.

architectures were being regarded as cherished and symbolically charged sites that characterized the area.

While construction of the Portman hotel was not successfully halted, one important outcome to have emerged out of this controversy was the organization of a number of civic groups under one common cause — theatre preservation. Before the dust from the demolition had settled, a sharpened vision of redevelopment became clearer: the destruction of theatres and their replacements with massive constructs would take away from the history and lively atmosphere of Times Square. Massive buildings such as the Portman Hotel do more to deemphasize the kinds of conditions needed to revitalize a theatre district, and in the long run actually ruin any chances the theatre industry may have through the processes of redevelopment.

The "Keep Times Square Alive" demonstrations were not protesting redevelopment or economic rejuvenation of the area. At the core of protestor-concerns were the imposing ways by which the buildings of the Burgee-Johnson plan, like the Portman Hotel, were going to transform the architectural look and feel of the Times Square bow-tie both in terms of their towering sizes, their lack of acknowledgement to the neighbourhood's existing businesses, and their disregard for the area's historical ties to glitzy signage. "This is just a taste of what the Great White Way would be like if Times Square is lined with office buildings," wrote George Lewis, then executive director of the New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects, in his *New York Times* opinion piece.[38] Tall, bulky hotels and office towers free of signage were going to ruin Times Square's feature characteristics of low-rises displaying brightly illuminated, low-resolution, incandescent, neon and LED boards. If the post-modernist aesthetics of Burgee's and Johnson's architecture relied on implied references to historical architectural styles, other businesses during this period were making use of the square's existing architecture as a reference to their immediate present. Broadway's so-called "legitimate" theatres and first-run movie houses were not all closing down. Both were very popular and economically viable businesses with a history and a presence that was extensively tied to the area. Such businesses regarded Times Square as the unofficial large lobby of the theatre district. They were not going to let the area so easily become an office district.

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[38] George Lewis, "Protestors Darken Great White Way," *New York Times*, 8 November 1984, B5.

Importantly, however, these demonstrations were also tactfully not organized in support of saving the seedy characteristics of the "Deuce". What the protestors wanted to be 'kept alive' was itself a particular understanding of the history of glitz in Times Square, one that did not necessarily privilege all of Times Square's businesses, cultures, and activities — especially those specializing in pornography and exploitation cinema. As will be discussed in the next section of this chapter, not only were adult-themed businesses not included in the efforts to either promote or challenge the construction of office towers. Such occupations and types of trade were directly targeted and branded as examples of hindrances in the redevelopment efforts by both those who wanted to reconstruct as well as those who sought to preserve the area's architecture.

Low Resolution, High Resolution, and the "Special Times Square" Zoning Resolution

As Lynne B. Sagalyn suggested, in response to the Portman Hotel and the Burgee-Johnson plan, members of the MAS "set out to change the public consciousness about Times Square. To convince an unknowing and skeptical public that the lights, glitter, and tawdry character was worth preserving."[39] Using the logics of zoning language, architect Hugh Hardy noted in one MAS board meeting that members of this organization should employ new strategies in order to make zoning resolutions work for their visions of the neighbourhood.

> "We have begun to counter the argument that you have to abolish Times Square in order to clean it up. We have become effective in persuading people that if business continues as usual, Times Square will disappear. We are making it clear that we are not opposed to all development. We will address the issue of density, how much and where. The shaping of bulk is a primary consideration. In this regard, the Portman Hotel has proved to be a helpful ally by being an example of what not to do. We will attempt to propose a way to approach our goals through taxation and zoning rules and regulations, and we will continue

[39] Lynne B Sagalyn, *Times Square Roulette: Remaking the City Icon* (Boston: MIT Press, 2003), 247-248. In addition to the two staged blackouts and the short film, the MAS also organized competitions for new proposals for Times Square as well as public exhibitions of those competitions.

> to promote our views zealously. We will have to identify the coalition that will then go and do our work. We have to convince interested parties that they will have to cooperate or lose the neighbourhood."[40]

If zoning resolution N-820253-ZRM gave legitimacy to the construction of tall buildings and the demolition of theatres, it also resulted in concerted pushback from a number of civic and private organizations against the type of redevelopment that would remove signage and theatres from the area and replace these with bulky office towers. Alongside members of the theatre community, architectural preservationists, and the MAS, this coalition of organizations protesting the Burgee-Johnson plan also consisted of personnel from the signage media industry — including owners, manufacturers, managers, electricians, maintainers, and artists alike. Like the theatre community, members of this industry demanded that more be done to protect the existing architectural and illuminated signage aesthetics of the area.[41] In the same manner the MAS framed the Burgee-Johnson plan as one that was misaligned with the cultural values of stage theatre, individuals from the signage community positioned their media technologies and services in like manner and in full support of the theatrical arts. Thus, though the Portman Hotel was outside of the purviews of the 42nd Street Development Corporation's objectives, its presence and its impact on public opinion were highly influential on the rest of the redevelopment that was to take place in Times Square, particularly regarding building heights, as well as the preservation of theatres, signage and illumination technologies.

Whereas the majority of illuminated signs in Times Square in the early 1980s were either made up of theatre marquees, large illuminated paper billboards, or neon signs, this was also an early period when computerized screens — electronic billboards — with their new capabilities to feature electronically programmed moving image content during the day and night, started

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[40] MAS, minutes of board meeting, 17 October 1985, quoted in Sagalyn, *Times Square Roulette*, 247.

[41] Signage companies agreed to shut off their signs during the staged protests. Tama Starr, president of signage manufacturing company Artkraft Strauss, and who was deeply involved in the MAS efforts, also began writing a book-length history of signage in Times Square; see Tama Starr and Edward Hayman, *Signs and Wonders: The Spectacular Marketing of America* (New York: Currency/Doubleday, 1998).

appearing in this site.[42] One of the signs at risk of being demolished by the Burgee-Johnson plan, in particular, was the very same Spectacolor screen that was employed in the "Keep Times Square Alive" demonstrations. Though it required more than ninety-two miles of wiring in order to connect to a computer located on the fourth floor of the same building upon which it was located, the aesthetics employed on this twenty by forty feet electronic display were nevertheless of extremely low resolution. Being made up of merely 8,942 programmable bulbs, this screen was only able to display twenty-four distinguishable colours at eight frames per second. In comparison, whereas the Spectacolor screen had a measurement of only 2,048 pixels, a 77 feet tall by 323 feet wide 4K LED screen added to Times Square in 2014 features 2.3 million pixels.[43] If the Spectacolor screen featured about 2.5 pixels per every square foot, the current standards of high resolution in Times Square, based on the quality of this 4K screen, is 93 pixels for every square foot. That is, today's screens provide roughly 36 times sharper images than those that appeared on the Spectacolor screen. Still, because the images displayed on Spectacolor were able to be seen even during the daylight hours, as well as for the fact that the screen was programmable at the touch of a button, between 1976 and throughout the 80s, this screen's technical capabilities were defining the standards of high quality electronic signage at the time. Moreover, the screen also had significant economic and symbolic values due to its location on One Times Square — formerly Times Tower, the building after which the name "Times Square" was designated.[44]

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[42] Philip H. Dougherty, "Advertising: An Addition to Times Square." *New York Times*, 11 Oct. 1976, 55.

[43] Sean O'Kane. "This Is Google's Massive Android Billboard in Times Square," *The Verge*. 25 Nov 2014. https://www.theverge.com/2014/11/25/7283509/this-is-googles-massive-android-billboard-in-times-square.

[44] By 1976, the former Times Tower had been stripped of its masonry a replaced with marble-faced concrete slabs by the Allied Chemical Corporation. For more on history of this building see Aurora Wallace, *Media Capital: Architecture and Communications in New York City* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012) especially pp.78-88; and Ada Louis Huxtable "Re-Inventing Times Square: 1990," in William R. Taylor ed., *Inventing Times Square: Commerce and Culture at the Crossroads of the World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 356-370, 423-424.

Located on the north facing façade of the building, this screen was regularly used to display advertisements, news updates, as well as an eight-year-long running computer art works program — entitled *Messages to the Public* — curated by Public Art Fund. The *Messages to the Public* series began with a piece by Keith Haring in January 1982 and lasted until August 1990. Featuring 30-second works by more than eighty artists (including the likes of Haring, Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, Vitto Acconci, Martha Rosler, Guerrilla Girls, Linda Montano, to name a few), these low-resolution animations were displayed every twenty minutes amounting to more than fifty times per day on what was then the most prominent screen in the square. Images of Martha Rosler's "Untitled" piece from 1989 illustrates how the screen's technical capabilities amounted to very low-resolution moving image aesthetics. Describing his experience working with the Spectacolor screen, artist Robert Rauschenberg found the technology to be extremely limiting, saying that "it didn't yield any new experience for me aesthetically. It's a good idea, but to make it interesting for artists they'd have to modify it considerably — use three bulbs for every one they're using now, put in a dimmer, make it more flexible."[45] With the inability to display photorealistic images, these technical capabilities limited the kinds of messages that could be displayed on this Spectacolor screen. Conversely, roughly 90% of the pieces featured in the *Messages to the Public* series were those that dominantly used text to convey their messages.

Still, even though it technically was only capable of generating low-resolution images, this screen nevertheless both modernized and augmented the values attributed to the dominantly low-rise architecture of the area. As an electronic sign that regularly displayed illuminated and playful advertisements, public service announcements, and works of art, its practical applications also illustrated how these low-resolution aesthetics complemented the glitz and genteel urbanity that were likewise attributed to the low-rise architectures and cultures of stage theatres. Though the aim in emphasizing the screen as a harmonious part of Broadway stage plays was to directly contrast those of the proposed signage-free office towers, such articulations also did the work of distinguishing the Spectacolor board from less respectable uses of screen, signage, and illumination technologies by pornography, exploitation, and sex-trade cultures. For example,

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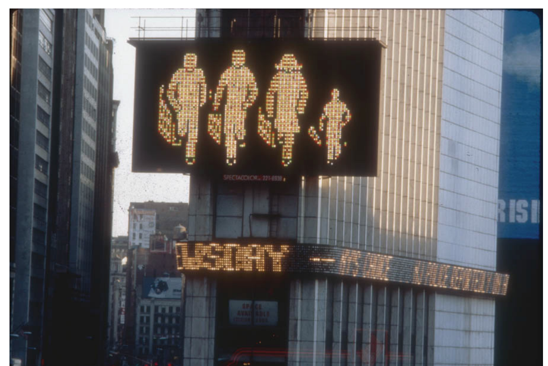
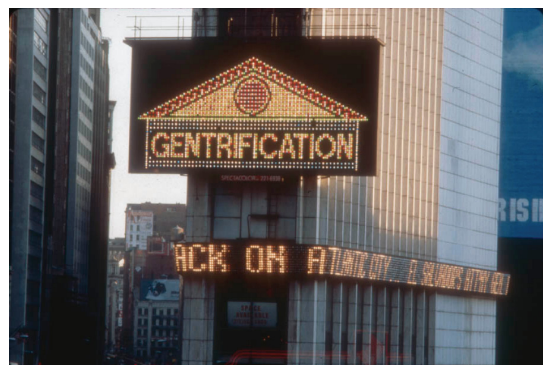
[45] Robert Rauschenberg, quoted in "Talk of the Town: Rauschenberg," *The New Yorker*, 23 May 1977, 31.





Martha Rosler's "Untitled" displayed on the Spectacolor screen inTimes Square as part of the Public Art Fund's *Messages to the Public* series, March 1989. Copyright: Jane Dickson

Jenny Holzer's use of the Spectacolor screen illustrates how low-resolution alphabet-based texts were instrumental in shaping meanings to the area's problematic gender politics. In between advertisements for potato chips, soda, tooth paste, and with pornography just down the street, Holzer placed short aphorisms such as "Men don't protect you anymore"; "A man can't know what it's like to be a mother"; "Romantic love was invented to manipulate women"; "Mothers shouldn't make too many sacrifices"; "Your oldest fears are the worst ones"; "Raise boys and girls the same way"; "You are so complex you don't always respond to danger"; "What urge will save us now that sex won't"; "Abuse of power comes as no surprise". These vigorously phrased statements worked both to provoke participants as well as to blend into the aggressively masculine Times Square landscape of this period. Though highly guided by the ethos of existentialism, uncertainty and contradiction, Holzer's use of the Spectacolor screen strove to make visible, felt, and confronted uneven relations of power, particularly those embedded upon gendered differences, with an acute awareness of the ways the screen- and site-specificity shaped the art itself. This was art that drew its affective power in part from its simple text-based format but also in ways that showcased that particular screen in that particular location. As art historian Gordon Hughes puts it,

> "In Holzer's work, positions are assumed, identities delimited, meaning shaped and ideologies spoken only at the point that language takes physical form…and only in relation to the contexts in which such forms are situated…What we experience, in other words, is both a void of empty value (the work as text) and the filling of that void as a construction of value (the material contingencies that articulate the text). It is in this process of constructing value that we experience power. Not as a state or condition that can be circumvented, or delegitimated — not as a weapon used to wage ideological war between competing, preconstituted positions — but power as a process of articulation that constitutes those positions in the first place."[46]

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[46] Gordon Hughes, "Power's Script: Or, Jenny Holzer's Art after 'Art after Philosophy'" *Oxford Art Journal* 29.3 (2006): 423-4.

Holzer contributed with both ambivalent as well as explicit meanings to discourses of protection, power, and patriarchy both broadly understood, as well as in how they appeared more specifically in Times Square. Still, while Holzer's work gave shape to problematically unresolved debates, her messages were arguably plainly devoid of any real resolutions to the problems being highlighted.[47] This is not to suggest that Holzer was exploiting the problems that she addressed, but rather to come to agreement with Holzer that art has its own limitations in countering dominant manifestations of power.

In addressing uneven gendered dynamics, Holzer's work also directly drew distinction with the uses of screen, signage, and illumination technologies in the adult-themed businesses that populated Times Square. In contrast to Holzer's "Truisms," pornography and exploitation theatres with architectures that were in visibly run-down states of disrepair, displayed phrases such as "Hot Spur," "Massacre of Pleasure," "Disco Sex," "My Sex Rated Wife," "Sex Constant Sex," "Sex With a Stranger," "Slip of the Tongue," on their brightly lit marquees. Likewise, flashing curvatures of neon signs adorned the entrances of video arcades, strip clubs, and adult bookstores that featured other uses of screen media such as video games, light shows, and so-called porn loop films on kinetoscope-like peep apparatus.[48] By not featuring these adult-entertainment and sex-trade communities in their protests against the Burgee-Johnson plan, those

[47] For contemporaneous critiques of the complicated and contingently problematic relationships between art, redevelopment, and public space in so-called "public art," see Patricia C. Phillips, "Out of Order: The Public Art Machine," *Artforum International* 27 (Dec. 1988): 92–97; W. J. T. Mitchell, "The Violence of Public Art: 'Do the Right Thing,'" *Critical Inquiry* 16.4 (1990): 880-899; Rosalyn Deutsche, "Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy," *Social Text* 33 (1992): 34-53. See also Deutsche's, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (MIT Press, 1996).

[48] For scholarly work on loop films see Anthony Bianco, *Ghosts of 42nd Street: A History of America's Most Infamous Block* (William Morrow, 2004), especially pp.157-180; Amy Herzog, "In the Flesh: Space and Embodiment in the Pornographic Peep Show Arcade," *The Velvet Light Trap* 62 (2008): 29-43; and Peter Alilunas, *Smutty Little Movies: The Creation and Regulation of Adult Video* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), especially pp. 47-49. For interviews and accounts of loop films culture in Times Square see Ashley West, Marty Hodas, Anthony Bianco, and Kat Long, "Marty Hodas: King of the Peeps Interview." *The Rialto Report*, 29 June 2014, https://www.therialtoreport.com/2014/06/29/marty-hodas-king-of-the-peeps-podcast-38/; as well as Romola Hodas, *The Princess of 42nd Street: Surviving My Childhood as the Daughter of Times Square's King of Porn* (Riverdale, NY: Riverdale Avenue Books, 2018).

who sought to "Keep Times Square Alive" outlined a particular kind of narrative that demarcated adult-themed uses of illumination technologies outside of its social and cultural objectives. Though critics of the Burgee-Johnson plan wanted to see bright lights remaining in Times Square by galvanizing a mutually productive relationship between the worlds of art and advertising, they decisively also deemphasized the illuminations that emitted from the worlds of pornography, exploitation cinemas, and the sex trade.

Through the *Messages to the Public Series* and the "Keep Times Square Alive" demonstrations, the Spectacolor screen and the Times Tower were emphasized as important components of Times Square's infrastructure. In their everyday usages as displays for advertisements and art works, the Spectacolor screen and the Times Tower addressed a public enwrapped in both the glows and spectacles, as well as plights and mires, of capitalism. The Burgee-Johnson plan threatened to remove such aesthetic values from the square, and with them bring a sweeping change, a flattening of, the contradictions found in Holzer's work as well as the more politically tamed advertisements that were likewise featured on the screen. Looking more closely at some of its uses, therefore, this Spectacolor screen offers greater insights into the reflexive and practical values attributed to urban screen media in the worlds of advertisements, theatre, and commercial culture, in their relations both to building heights and everyday uses. This particular screen serves as an important reminder of the ways illumination technologies, signage media, and media art played instrumental roles in shaping the contours of this infrastructure's redevelopment; how it was felt, addressed, and arguably delegitimized. Adding new architecture or taking away signage media had direct impact on the values — economic, cultural, political, legal, etc. — attributed to those things, but also to the values of individuals and groups invested in those values as expressions of their own self-worth. If the construction of new high rises was a way of displacing the concentration of adult-themed entertainment, it also risked diluting the theatre and signage communities residing in the area.

In other words, what took shape through Times Square's redevelopment was "symbolically violent" in Bourdieuian terms. The battle over the aesthetics of Times Square was one that was fought by people who belonged to the same advantaged social circles working to distinguish themselves, in part, from members of society who could not enter those debates,

those who did not have a seat at the table. As Bourdieu argues, "Explicit aesthetic choices are in fact often constituted in opposition to the choices of the groups closest in social space, with whom the competition is most direct and most immediate, and more precisely, no doubt, in relation to those choices most clearly marked by the intention (perceived as pretension) of marking distinction vis-a-vis lower groups."[49] Members of the MAS, in coalition with members of the theatre and signage communities, fought with real estate developers and architects over what should be considered appropriate and legitimate aesthetics of architecture in Times Square. But in their disagreements, both sides of these privileged groups retained the basic fundamentals they shared in common: that the removals of power and legitimacy from owners, workers, and patrons of sex-trade, massage parlours, video arcades, adult bookshops, pornography and exploitation cinemas, was necessary in order for redevelopment to take shape in their likeness.

What transpired in Times Square during the 1980s was the result of negotiations of power amongst members of the city's economic and cultural elites about the binding of narrow definitions of playful illumination and signage with the architectures of high-rise office towers. Whereas for Burgee and Johnson signage technologies were distasteful largely because they did not work appropriately with their vision of an office environment for white collar jobs, the MAS took the position that signage and illumination were tasteful because they were intricately connected to the commercial and entertainment histories of the area. That is to say, the negotiations of power between those who wanted to transform the area into an office district and those who wanted to preserve its characteristics were articulated through opinions about the tasteful roles of signage and illumination, or lack thereof, in architecture. Both those who proposed the construction of new office towers free of signage, and those who wanted technologies of signage and illumination to be preserved, agreed that economic redevelopment of the area was necessary in order to remove pornography, exploitation, and sex-trade; cultural activities that both parties considered to be distasteful and disruptive to what they considered as "legitimate culture".

Lacking public support and repeated prolonging of its construction, the Burgee-Johnson design ultimately never came to fruition. With difficulty finding investors and companies who

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[49] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 60.

were willing to move their businesses to the seedy block on the one hand, and with criticisms coming from what the city itself deemed “legitimate” businesses on the other, the city was ultimately put in the position to establish a new “Special Times Square” zoning resolution. This new set of by-laws not only regulated signage, but also ensured that the presence of signs in the area would be protected in any future redevelopment of the area. Tabled in 1986 and passed in 1987, Zoning Resolution 81-732 outlines and intricately details the ways buildings located between 43rd and 50th Streets, with facades facing Broadway and Seventh Avenues — the so-called “bow-tie” — must incorporate illuminated signage of significant proportions and of significant illumination onto the facades in question. Conversely, these new laws affected only new constructions or renovations to existing buildings. This new “Special Times Square” zoning resolution did not designate any particular type of illuminated sign to be of valuable cultural heritage. Rather, it merely enshrined Times Square as a hub of illuminated signage, stipulating its protection and maintenance as such. However, it did not reverse the revisions to building height allowances outlined in the 1982 Midtown Zoning Resolution. In other words, as a conflict resolution, it can be argued that the “Special Times Square” by-laws sought to resolve the differences between developers and preservationists. However, this also meant that neither party fully got what it wanted. Whereas developers had to minimize the amount of windows available on their buildings’ façades, those who fought for the preservation of the area had to come to terms with the fact that although theatres and signage would be protected, the area’s dominant low-rise-look was not going to remain the same.

From Conflict Resolution to High Resolution

During one of the key periods in which Times Square was being significantly debated, the forces of redevelopment advocated for a particular set of cultural values that were measured against the protection of theatres and signage. Within the short period of 1980-1987, two zoning resolutions were passed — one that allowed for taller constructions, and one that forced these new constructions to feature large bright screens on its façades. Additionally, the push to protect old

theatres also found new commitments from city officials and support from the general public.[50] Nevertheless, preserving old theatres and signage were not in and of themselves going to eliminate clustered adult entertainment, a primary goal of both of the most powerful forces in Times Square debate. Even after these new resolutions, many of the theatres located on 42nd Street, under legal, though not political protection, were still occupied by pornography and exploitation theatres. Thus, the displacement of these businesses persisted as an essential step on the road to redevelopment.

As a result of the failure of the Burgee-Johnson plan, and with the zoning resolutions in place, starting in the 1990s the city had put forth a new redevelopment plan. The then newly established New 42nd Street Corporation was tasked with helping curb crime, removing blight, displacing "smut," and rebranding the seedy 42nd street as a revived, crime-ridden, family-friendly, and economically viable block in midtown Manhattan. To achieve these goals, this City and State funded corporation employed artist Tibor Kalman (of Benetton fame) and architect Robert A. M. Stern (who designed Disney's studios and office buildings) to envision what Times Square, under the new zoning resolutions, should look like. Both Kalman and Stern infused redevelopment with reassuring cultural values. Whereas Stern had the reputation of one who was able to integrate playfulness into his otherwise historically-informed architecture — working for and being on the Board of Directors of the Disney Corp., as well as being a student of architect and co-author of *Learning from Las Vegas,* Robert Venturi — Kalman's was that of being an "entrepreneurial leftist," producing provocative advertisements that arguably sought to be socially conscious. Their sketches, which served as guidelines for the project, called for vibrant signage, a mixture of retail and entertainment uses, and the protection of old theatres. To the dissatisfaction of members of the MAS, these Stern-Kalman sketches did not call for the halting of the construction of high rises. Instead, they attempted to provide a vision where both high rises and gaudy signages could cohesively support one another. Nevertheless, it appears that the goal of the MAS to halt the construction of high-rises in the area has lost ground amongst its

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[50] For recap of these commitments, as well as the impacts that theatre preservation in Times Square had on its live theatre culture, see Mark Sussman, "New York's Facelift," *The Drama Review* 42.1 (1998): 34–42; and, Jonathan Burston, "Recombinant Broadway," *Continuum* 23.2 (2009): 159–169.

"42nd Street Now!" Robert A.M. Stern's and Tibor Kalman's vision for the redevelopment of Times Square, 1992. Courtesy: Robert A.M. Stern Architects, LLP.

supporting coalition — including, especially, members of the theatrical and signage communities. If the Midtown Zoning resolution provoked the theatre and signage communities to act in protest of redevelopment, the Special Times Square zoning resolution served as a welcome remedy to satisfy their concerns. Put differently, without the commitments of these two industries, members of the MAS did not have enough social and cultural capital to stop the construction of high-rises in Times Square.

But this is not to suggest that negotiations of power through signage culture did not continue to have direct impact on redevelopment. In order to help beautify lots that were empty due to demolition, Kalman was also responsible for setting up temporary art exhibitions in Times Square. In summer and fall of 1993, he curated works by Diller and Scofidio, Jenny Holzer, and others, to be included in the so-called "42nd Street Art Project". Done in collaboration with Creative Time — a non-profit contemporary arts organization — the aim of this project was to make the redevelopment "feel democratic." As theatres across the street were being moved or

renovated, works such as Diller and Scofidio's *Soft Sell*, Holzer's *Truisms* and *Survival* series, and Kalman's own *Everybody* were used to brand the project and the area as one that is more welcoming, more culturally elevated, more playful. *Soft Sell* used four LCD displays, located at street level, in the entrance of a former porn theatre, played on its past by making the work seem like a peepshow. Having been situated where the pornography theatre and the street met, *Soft Sell* not only situated redevelopment firmly within the adult-themed history of the area, it also directly displaced pornographic culture in the name of another cultural legitimization. As described by Diller and Scofidio:

> "The project takes issue with the production of 'desire' in relation to several forms of urban currency specific to the site: bodies, real estate and tourism. The video uses one of pornography's most familiar devices, the close-up, cut-up body. A pair of gigantic female lips, projected onto the entrance doors, recites a litany of solicitations to passerby. Her sensuous voice emanates from the original speak-hole of the ticket booth."[51]

With the help of newly elected mayor Rudy Giuliani's adoption of zoning laws that curbed the amount of adult businesses found in proximity to one another,[52] examples such as the 42nd Street Art Project — though were at one level provocatively critical of capitalist systems — also did the work of gentrifying the space. As Rosalyn Deutsche argued at that time, the politics of so-called "Public Art" in redevelopment were intricately fraught with problematically universalizing meanings of 'public' and 'art' in ways that unevenly biased the already economically and socially advantaged.[53] In the name of universality, conceptions of art and the public as all-

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[51] Liz Diller, and Ricardo Scofidio, "Soft Sell: Project Information," 1993. Available on *Diller Scofidio and Renfro* website <https://dsrny.com/project/soft-sell>. Last accessed 5 April 2019.

[52] See Marilyn Adler Papayanis, "Sex and the Revanchist City: Zoning out Pornography in New York," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 18.3 (2000): 341–353.

[53] Deutsche, "Art and Public Space," 37.

embracing — whether through billboards, signage, illumination, screens, space or people — were used to legitimize the displacements of sex workers, consumers, and gay communities.[54]

Today's Times Square looks like a combination of the two visions that Kent Barwick articulated in the "Save Times Square Alive" demonstrations. Not so much a bowl of light nor a canyon of walls, the Times Square of today can be described perhaps as a *canyon of light*. With new taller constructions being built, the area is also filling up with larger, brighter, and higher resolution screens. Since the early 1990s, the area has been governed by a Business Improvement District, named the Times Square Alliance. This alliance, along with the Times Square Advertising Coalition — a non-profit trade organization — curates the *Midnight Moment* series, a digital arts exhibition that displays video art projects simultaneously over dozens of the large screens in Times Square. Like the *Messages to the Public* series before it, many prominent artists are featured in the *Midnight Moment* project, including Pipilotti Rist, Yoko Ono, Andy Warhol, Bjork, Isaac Julien, Ryoji Ikeda, Laurie Anderson.

To be sure, these works have stark differences from those curated by Public Art Fund throughout the 1980s. These more recent works appear on multiple screens. They include very minimal uses of text, relying mainly on abstract images of landscapes, faces, and colours, and less on explicit political messages. Take, for example, Pipilotti Rist's *Open My Glade (Flatten)*, a remake of an earlier piece presented in 2000 on a single screen in Times Square. Smudging her face up against what seems to be the parameters of the screens, Rist playfully illustrates the flattening, abstracting, and compartmentalizing of women's bodies in an otherwise astonishingly colourful, bright and vivid landscape. Surrounded by a multiplied visual spectacle of her own self, the images of Rist's faces and the smudged characters they embody, are always touching the surface but never fully surpassing its thresholds. Whether Rist finds this pleasurable or not is somewhat ambivalent — though, it is likely both. But what is certain is that these screen platforms would not have been here had a different kind of Times Square taken shape. Rist's work could not have been presented in the low resolution Spectacolor screen from the 1980s. It is this high resolution on high towers that created a platform for this kind of refined screen

[54] For perspectives on pro-adult zoning in Times Square, see Benjamin Shepard, *Queer Political Performance and Protest* (New York: Routledge, 2009), especially chapter chapter 5.

aesthetic to take shape. But it was not simply the appearance of new screen technologies that made this change possible. Also at work was a highly concerted and systemic control over the values attributed to technologies of illumination in this area. Large, high resolution screens were not inevitably going to be a part of Times Square. They were the result of a broader struggle over the rejuvenation of the city, its disciplining, manifest through articulations about its aesthetics.

A good deal of studies in the area of urban screens theorize ways by which screen media create opportunities that can help facilitate more "inclusive cities."[55] In foregrounding bottom-up and community-driven solutions, both designers, city officials, and scholars alike are emphasizing ways screens can be used to help shape the city as more open and participatory. Largely missing from these studies is an understanding of the histories that shaped the ways particular sites in cities become spaces where so-called smart city "inclusivity" can be discussed at all. While focus on making cities more inclusive and accessible is crucial to making cities livable, it is also important to pay attention to the kinds of exclusions that have long characterized screen politics. We must tend to the categories of accessibility and asymmetrical inclusiveness that are being promoted. For whom are these sites and the media within them being made accessible and defined as inclusive? Who is being excluded?

As Shannon Mattern points out, cities — their architectures, infrastructures, institutions, technologies, inhabitants — have always been informed by politics of participation.[56] For millennia, built environments have always been responsive; have been designed as a system for the circulation of ideas, people, and things; have accumulated information and been made to transform because of that information; etc. Cities cannot suddenly become participatory — as purposefully ambivalent as that term may be — or inclusive, for this is an ongoing process constantly in formation. In other words, discourses about inclusivity in cities are new ways of talking about, or articulating, a very old conundrum — how is power to be distributed and within which kinds of relations? While this history stretches over centuries, it is also important to focus

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[55] For an example and a discussion on such studies, see Joel Fredericks et al., "Blending Pop-Up Urbanism and Participatory Technologies: Challenges and Opportunities for Inclusive City Making." *City, Culture and Society* 12 (2018): 44-53.

[56] Shannon Mattern, *Code and Clay, Data and Dirt: Five Thousand Years of Urban Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

on its relatively shorter periods. The history of Times Square reveals an example of this shorter-ranged unfolding of events, one that shows how discourses about inclusivity and exclusion have been instructive and fundamental to the meanings of screen technologies before paradigms of big data and interactive connectivities took shape.

Far from being ontologically unique, media infrastructures — architectural or technological — are always expressions of intricately contingent social struggles. Media infrastructure scholar, Brian Larkin writes that although any infrastructure's primary function is to distribute resources, it is important to recognize that infrastructures are also "semiotic objects" that "address and constitute subjects, as well as their technical operations."[57] More than being simply utilities informed by political and technical rationalities, Larkin writes, infrastructures "also exist as forms separate from their purely technical functioning, and they need to be analyzed as concrete semiotic and aesthetic vehicles oriented to addressees. They emerge out of and store within them forms of desire and fantasy and can take on fetish-like aspects that sometimes can be wholly autonomous from their technical function".[58] Following Larkin, the pushback against the Burgee-Johnson plan was plainly as much a battle for the semiotics of Times Square and entertainment spaces, as it was over the technical specifics of an urban area. Both key parties represented established and legitimated interests and positions predicated on economic prosperity; both had integrated a moralizing position against cultural enterprises and activities deemed tasteless. Screens became a compromise that semiotically constituted the differences between and assimilations of the industries of art, entertainment, and real estate.

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[57] Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42.1 (2013): 327–43, 336.

[58] Ibid.

PART II

MEDIA ARCHITECTURE MAINTENANCE

CHAPTER 3

PUBLIC-PRIVATE MEDIA ARCHITECTURE: GOVERNMENTAL LOGICS IN YONGE-DUNDAS SQUARE

I am standing at the bottom most level of a four story underground parking lot. The air is dry. Thick white walls and columns, noticeably dirty from the collecting dust, close up this compacted space into even tighter corridors. Fastened bright red fire extinguisher hoses condense the already low overhead. The cracked and water-stained grey cement beneath my feet has reached the lowest point of this architectural substructure's bottommost spiral. It is quiet and dingy but also well lit with rows of fluorescent fixtures hanging from the low overhead. It is an ordinary looking underground garage just like any other; a hollowed space bared down to its most unadorned function: temporary storage for vehicles. This one however is unique for it is integrally linked to the architectural and political configurations supporting outdoor screen media in Yonge-Dundas Square — an open-air public space, roughly an acre in size, located approximately sixty feet above. This is where Yonge Street and Dundas Street meet, site to the most concentrated collection of digital billboards in Canada. There are no wires or brightly digitized animated images to be seen down in this grimy Toronto parking lot. Nevertheless, like the digital screens located above, the Dundas Square Garage was imagined and developed as an intricate component of the street level public square.

Operated by the Toronto Parking Authority, this 250 vehicle parking lot is the result of a public-private initiative entitled "Downtown Yonge: A Program to Promote the Regeneration of Toronto's Main Street," set up between the City of Toronto and the Yonge Street Business and Resident Association Inc. (YSBRA). This partnership officially began on March 4th, 1996. In an effort to rejuvenate the Yonge Street and Dundas Street intersection — long a major focal point for shopping and urbane activities in the city's downtown core — this public-private partnership envisioned a project that would "clean up" the neighbourhood from "undesired" businesses, activities, and people. To achieve this, the City of Toronto expropriated the entire block bounded by Dundas Square, Victoria Street, Dundas Street East, and Yonge Street, and tenaciously held on to this piece of land, deferring its development until private investors signed-on, supplying

funding and hence helping the redevelopment plan come to fruition. The project's finished product looks remarkably similar to early renditions of the partnership's proposal, including the open-air public square, water fountains, and large digital billboards all situated on top of this underground garage. In other words, like the signage and the empty plaza that hang atop it, from its inception, the underground garage was conceived of as a space that is crucially indivisible from the rest of the media architecture complex that is Yonge-Dundas Square. Taken seriously, the definition of media architecture that emerges out of this site does not only consist of polished amalgamations of electric media with brick and mortar; rather it also includes a dingy, rather ordinary, car park.

There is, however, yet another layer of media architecture that emerges out of this example. Way atop the Toronto Public Health Building located on the eastern side of the square stands a "Sam the Record Man" sign. Featuring two neon circles that give the impression of two musical vinyls or compact-discs seemingly turning, this sign—an iconic feature of Yonge Street during the 1980s through the 2000s—stands as a relic that commemorates the neighbourhood's bygone neon era. As will be detailed further below, though the storefront upon which it was located has been out of business for nearly a decade, the history of how this sign has been re-erected at one of the highest points in the new Yonge-Dundas Square, is shaped by the same political configurations that have designed the underground garage found below. Concisely put, the media architecture of Yonge-Dundas Square consists of both the Dundas Square Garage, the pedestrian square that stands atop it, the new large LED screens, the buildings that support them, as well as the old "Sam the Record Man" sign.

Media architecture scholars Alexander Wiethoff and Heinrich Hussmann write that "if used wisely," media architecture is "a new, smart construction material that can…enhance… communication and enable a material dialogue between the city and citizens."[1] Not withstanding that the integration of screens into architecture can transform the experience of that built environment, the categories of the "city" and "citizens" in Wiethoff's and Hussman's proposition are too broad to suitably account for the specific functions carried out by various human and technological agencies. Being made up of multiple subjectivities and experiences, neither the

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[1] Wiethoff and Hussmann, "Introduction," 1.

"city" or "citizens" provide sufficiently distinct definitions of social intents, structural inequities, and what an enhancement of communication and dialogue in urban environments fully entails. If, as Wiethoff and Hussman suggest, "accessing information via the built environment can empower people to gain more knowledge on their surroundings which in turn can provoke behaviour changes," then analyses of media architecture should also include more qualified understandings of the citizens and the places being transformed, promoted, or displaced, as well as the particular kinds of behaviours being encouraged.[2] This would include consideration of the particular kinds of uses to which media technologies are being put as well. Rather than thinking about cities as abstract, undifferentiated portals of information, it is important to remind ourselves that cities and all they contain cannot simply be reduced to metaphors of data, storage, algorithms, and commands. Interactions in the city are intricately tied to the social and political spheres that shape them.

This chapter examines the organization and control of the spaces, signages, and practices put in place at Yonge-Dundas Square, and aims to bring into focus the particular appropriation and management of publicness that is being mobilized in this locale. It argues that in order to properly understand the manifestation of screen technologies, not only in Yonge-Dundas Square but also as a dominant manifestation of urban screens around the globe, we must rethink the "media architecture" paradigm — the theorization of media not simply as an addition to architecture but as making possible a new medium altogether — and to consider the ways urban screens and media façades are shaped by the economic contexts and neoliberal aspirations of Business Improvement Areas (BIA) and Public-Private Partnerships (PPP). Instead of theorizing abstract or transcendental notions of citizenship and the urban context, this chapter provides an understanding of one dialogue about urban citizenship and the ways it took shape amongst a certain group of citizens in Toronto between roughly 1996 and 2015. At stake and under discussion in this example were precisely how the meanings and frameworks by which a "public" or "publics" can be defined and operated within a media architecture complex.

The Dundas Square Garage reveals both the boundaries and the thresholds of what I am calling *public-private media architecture*. I am mobilizing this term as a corrective to the more

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[2] Ibid.

commonly utilized notions of “public screens” and “media architecture” where screens are theorized through the lenses of architecture and urban planning in ways that seek to articulate how screen technologies can mobilize and enhance public engagement in the city. Rather than making use of outdoor moving image media for advertising purposes — as is largely the case in Piccadilly Circus, Times Square, and Yonge-Dundas Square — proponents for public screens and media architecture advocate that screen technologies potentially offer new modes of address to take place in urban public space, doing so in ways that can alter the functions of architecture as well encourage supposedly more inclusive interactions amongst people in and with the built environment.[3] By employing the term ‘public-private media architecture’ I seek to fine-tune our understanding of outdoor screens by pointing to the political infrastructures that organize the kinds of publics that not only can take shape through them but also make them a part of urban environments. Such political frameworks mobilize particular articulations of civic interaction and public space — what they are for, who can access or make use of them, and at what cost.

Finding new landlords capable of changing the aesthetic allure of the downtown area was not all the city’s council members sought to accomplish. In order to ensure that downtown Yonge Street maintained its appeal to middle- and upper-income demographics, the partnership also ushered in a political model that enables private business owners to hold governing powers over the area by both equipping the city with better relations to business community members that it deemed responsible, as well as through a more closely managed system of publicly funded tax spending. The media architecture of Yonge-Dundas Square, in other words, illustrates how the technological infrastructure of outdoor screen media at this particular intersection in Toronto has been shaped to accommodate the politically engineered rationalities of public-private partnerships. Problematically, as a governing body that approves all activities taking place in Yonge-Dundas Square, the Yonge-Dundas Square Board of Management is representationally disproportionate. Out of the fifteen members that make up this board, only one is democratically elected by the broader community. The other fourteen serve as members either due to predefined frameworks of expertise or are chosen to be representative of the neighbourhood’s desired

[3] See Dave Colangelo, “We Live Here: Media Architecture as Critical Spatial Practice,” *Space and Culture* (April 2019).

characteristics.[4] Thus, although the city of Toronto maintains legal jurisdiction over the area, ensuring that ownership of Yonge-Dundas Square remains in the hands of the city, it is through this sub-contracted public-private managing board that the majority of decisions regarding everyday usages and care for the square are made. To be sure, these powers are neither homogenous nor are they absolute. Nevertheless, they are an important site through which legitimate power and control over public resources, and codifications of publicness into media architecture, can be enacted and enforced.

In response to a great deal of scholarship on media architecture that seeks to make the case for the social potentials of moving image media in architecture, in this chapter I do not argue for a better use of visual technologies in public spaces but rather for a better understanding of the ways the technologies are being used. In doing so, I seek to highlight how the meanings of publicness are shaped through the management of media architecture and urban screens in the so-called smart city.

Continuing the theme of preservation that ties this dissertation together, in comparison to the other three sites being investigated, ideas about the protection of architecture or signage did not heavily influence the Yonge-Dundas Square project. In Piccadilly Circus and Quartier des Spectacles (to be examined in chapter 4), existing buildings were deemed desirable components of preservation. In Times Square it was decided that an abstract notion of "illuminated signage" needed preservation. In Toronto, calls to preserve signage such as the revolving neon vinyls on the façade of "Sam the Record Man" shop in the Yonge-Dundas Square area were not sufficient to curtail the project. Aside from a thinly argued framing of Yonge Street as a forgotten centre of commerce in Canadian history, very few legally binding frameworks of material or cultural preservation existed or were set up in order for the Yonge-Dundas Square project to take shape. The Yonge-Dundas Square project, in other words, involved the destruction of the site without any concern given to the extant buildings erected therein. Tracking the establishment of the

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[4] Four are representatives from the City's Parking Authority, the divisions of Environmental and Energy, Economic Development and Culture, and Police Services; five are citizen appointees who are appointed by residents and stakeholders in the neighbourhood; two are from Yonge Street Business Improvement Area; one is representing the Residents' Association; another represents Ryerson University; and another is a representative of Massey Hall.

Yonge Dundas Square Board of Management's control over events during the ten-year long debacle of storing and reinstalling the iconic Sam the Record Man sign, this chapter will illustrate how governance of spaces for signage is managed as a public-private architecture.

Before focusing on the controlling powers of the Yonge Dundas Square Board of Management, I will first elaborate on how the cement and metals that make up the Dundas Square garage force us to critically rethink the materialities of media architecture by opening up our understandings of the political and economic contexts that shape its construction. I will conclude this chapter by discussing the brief history of the "Sam the Record Man" sign. Though the importance of the sign as a historical artefact played an instructive role in shaping its place in Yonge-Dundas Square, my argument will articulate how the lack of official emphasis on preservation of the area helped shape the media architecture of Yonge-Dundas Square.

Theorizing Public-Private Media Architecture

The term "media architecture" emerged during the early 1990s. Its appearance coincided with the rise in usage of digital software to aid in architectural design processes, and what architectural theorist Patrik Schumacher later named the style of "Parametricism."[5] Whereas Parametricism fashions architecture through computer aided design by encoding values with cohesively tied functions and variables into an "elegance of ordered complexity and the sense of seamless fluidity," the founders of the German architectural firm ag4 "conceived" of the term *mediatektur* to describe a practice that combines architecture with electronic media of a different order.[6] Whereas architects such as Zaha Hadid, Frank Gehry, Peter Eisenman, and Rem Koolhaas

[5] Patrik Schumacher, "Parametricism: A New Global Style for Architecture and Urban Design," *Architectural Design* 79.4 (July/August 2009): 14-23.

[6] Prior to ag4, the term "media architecture" was briefly used by the American telephone company Bellcore to describe an architecture of a different order. The "Integrated Media Architecture Laboratory" sought to make it possible to send and receive texts, images, and video messages over telephone lines. But while the 'media architecture' that Bellocore had in mind was tied to the organization of information in the realms of telecommunication technologies, the German architects thought of a more literal, neologist, relation. Since then, *mediatektur* has also been spelled as *mediatecture, meditexture,* and *media architecture* in English.

designed architecture "rooted in digital animation techniques,"[7] ag4 designed architecture that made use of digital media rooted in moving image technologies. Similar to what Mark C. Taylor described as "electrotecture,"[8] ag4 treated LEDs, LCDs, plasma screens, and other illuminations — much like cement, steel, stones, and glass — as materials that make up the entire architecture of a building. As one co-founder of ag4 put it, "Orchestrated interiors, sculptural architecture, façade design, ornament, painting and glass windows are, just like media façades, medialized and interactive methods, which give space a meaning and force it to speak as a communication-sculpture."[9]

The three founding partners of ag4 — architects Christoph Kronhagel and Reinhard Lepel, and filmmaker Harald Singer — found the titles of architects and filmmakers to not sufficiently describe the work involved in the methodical and careful coalescing of spatial design with electronic visual media. Missing from traditional conceptions of architecture and filmmaking, they believed, was an identification of the architect and filmmaker as media designer: the "mediatect."[10] "Mediatecture does not only use media but is also a medium itself," writes Singer.[11] It does not describe either "film or pure architecture, design or communication," but rather "something else" altogether.[12] Media architecture, in their minds, is not simply the furnishing of architecture with media technologies. It is rather the symbiotic relation between the two: "an altogether new discipline with its own rules of creation."[13]

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[7] Schumacher, "Parametricism," 15.

[8] Mark C. Taylor ed. *Electrotecture: Architecture and the Electronic Future* (New York: Anyone Corp., 1993).

[9] Harald Singer, "The Origins of Mediatecture in ag4," in Christoph Kronhagel ed., *Mediatecture: The Design of Medially Augmented Spaces* (New York: Springer, 2010), 38.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., 36.

[13] Christoph Kronhagel, "Mediatecture," *Kronhagel — Mediatecture*, 2003. http://217.160.90.153/en/profile/profile-mediatecture.htm. Last accessed, 2 August 2019.

Much as in how Gene Youngblood idealized electronic media in the 1960s and 1970s, Singer sees in media architecture "a potential means" of achieving what he believes films seek to do: "to immerse the viewer — to draw him in and surround him."[14] Although he does not refer either to Youngblood nor to the french film theoretician André Bazin, Singer — who also produces immersive films and installations for dome theatres — sees in media architecture a way to engage what the likes of Youngblood and Stan Vanderbeek thought of as the making of cinema into environments and "happenings," to borrow the term used during the 1960s. In media architecture, Singer sees a potential to create built environments that can be responsive to their occupants, and as such define dwellers and architecture not as static but rather as dynamic and configurable. He writes, "mediatecture is the orchestration and temporalizing of space, the filling of space with meaning and the creation of a sphere of communication."[15] This is not unlike the ways expanded cinema theorists and filmmakers thought of their craft. As Janine Marchessault put it, multi-screen installations signaled a shift in thinking about cinema 'where space became acoustic' and where the image was "liberated not only from the screen but also from the constraints of traditional forms of drama, story, and plot."[16] Expanded cinema meant filmmaking that challenged conventional notions of framing, spectatorship, and display by situating images and spectators in multiple frames and viewing positions. Singer's definition of media architecture, in other words, does not signal much difference from the ways expanded cinema was thought about during the 1960s and 70s.

But Singer provides only one understanding of media architecture. In contrast, Christoph Kronhagel, another member of ag4, recognizes that the interweaving of architecture with layers of communication does not only materialize with media architecture but has rather been

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[14] Although he does not directly reference Bazin, Singer writes that the rise of "16:9 widescreen, high definition television and 3-D television and cinema are all leading in the same direction and confirm the thesis" that "film seeks to immerse the viewer — to draw him in and surround him." Singer, "The Origins of Mediatecture in ag4," 60.

[15] Ibid., 39.

[16] Janine Marchessault, "Multi-Screens and Future Cinema: The Labyrinth Project at Expo 67," in J. Marchessault and Susan Lord eds., *Fluid Screens, Expanded Cinema* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 38, 46.

fundamental to all architectural styles. Even Modernist architecture which "must physically develop concrete and stable spaces," he writes, "encourages the creation of virtual space"[17] by sustaining an "ambiguous" definition of any and all spaces.

> Each of us clearly has our individual perception of how our living space is put together — because otherwise we would not be able to orient ourselves in our daily lives. And yet, as each person's perception is overlaid with a wide variety of personal experiences, no one can 'objectively' look at a space. Yet somehow we manage, in our social processes, to synchronize our spatial perception in such a way that we can understand each other.[18]

However well-designed, Kronhagel acknowledges, the experience of space always pulls in the directions of less-than clear realms of communication; of the production of misunderstandings and of multiple, sometimes competing, meanings. "The relationship between reality and virtuality," he writes, "is (and always was) very complex."[19] Yet, he adds, "the development of electronic media, with their potent ability to create a virtuality of contagious intensity, both underlines this complexity and puts it in a new light."[20] In contrast to Modernist architecture, "electronic media develop spaces which are as elusive and unstable as possible in order to be as unambiguous as possible for the short moment of their existence."[21] Unlike concrete materials, electronic media can transform the aesthetics of architecture from moment to moment. By enabling the continuous and ephemerally changing appropriations of architecture, for Kronhagel, electronic media offer a way to make spatial design communicate more accurately to ever-changing events that take place within and in their ever-changing surrounding environments.

There is a paradox in how Kronhagel approaches the definition of media architecture. Following his argument, if architecture communicates ambiguously, media make that

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[17] Christoph Kronhagel, "Spatial Concepts and Augmented Space," in Christoph Kronhagel ed., *Mediatecture: The Design of Medially Augmented Spaces* (New York: Springer, 2010) 280.

[18] Ibid., 279.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 287.

communication less ambiguous. Yet, in doing so, he suggests, media replace the laws of architecture as the design of space with those of the design of communication. His is a call for ‘an architecture of symbol that dominates space’ not only ‘because architecture is not enough,’ but also because cinema is not enough. Yet, such a design of changing signs, images, sounds and illuminations is a description of sites that already exist, such as museums, galleries, movie theatres, music halls, living rooms, even waiting rooms. How do the architectures of such spaces as well as buildings devoted specifically to media technologies — such as film and television studios, libraries, archives, newspapers and data centres[22] — fit into Kornhagel’s limited definition of media architecture?

Instead of qualifying the ambiguously communicative capabilities of architecture as a sustaining characteristic of other building designs — what Walter Benjamin recognized as architecture’s ability to be “the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction”[23] — Kronhagel argues that somehow the addition of media produce more explicitly clear articulations of architecture. Aside from what media theorists such as Stuart Hall and James Carey identified as the instability of Claude Shannon’s model of communication, Kronhagel is no longer speaking of architecture but of a limited definition of mediation itself.[24] This is reductive for even in their most narrowed definitions

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[22] For examples of scholarship on such media architectures see, Shannon Mattern, “Broadcasting Space: China Central Television’s New Headquarters,” *International Journal of Communication* 2 (2008): 869-908, and “Animated Spaces: Experience and Context in Interaction and Architectural Design Exhibitions,” *The Senses & Society* 9.2 (2014): 131-150; Lynn Spigel, *TV by Design: Modern Art and the Rise of Network Television* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), especially chapter 3, and “Housing Television: Architectures of the Archive,” *The Communication Review* 13 (2010): 52-74; Aurora Wallace, *Media Capital: Architecture and Communications in New York City* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Kristin Veel, “Uncertain Architectures: Performing Shelter and Exposure,” *Imaginations* 8.2 (September 2017).

[23] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Random House, 1968), 238.

[24] James Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Stuart Hall, “Encoding, Decoding,” in Simon During ed., *The Cultural Studies Reader: 2nd Edition* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 507-517.

media (defined solely as communication) require some sort of architecture (defined solely in terms of space), and architecture carries with it qualities of mediation. To view a film, cinema relies on the design of a space (theatre, living room, gallery, office, library, class-room, archive, etc.). Similarly, the spatial properties of a broom closet communicate something very different from those that make up the corner office. Media are not only representational, textual, or technical; nor is architecture only nonrepresentational and void of meanings. Not only is Kronhagel's prioritization of media contradictory, it also limits definitions of media architecture strictly as the design of communication.

There is a bias in theorizations of media architecture that give greater emphases to electronic media over bricks, mortar, metal, glass, and other materials conventionally used in building constructions. Nowhere is this more well defined than in the field's more recent effort to differentiate between 'media architecture' and 'media façade.' Consultant and curator M. Hank Hauesler argues that media façade is a more productive term for it helps define media architecture as the communicative outcomes that arise when media embedded in architecture have on 'urban space and the immediate environment.'[25] For him media architecture is dominantly defined as the perception of buildings as media displays. It is in media façades that the experience of urban architecture transforms that which is adjacent to it, where the animation of otherwise inanimate objects occurs. In contrast, Gernot Tscherteu, co-founder of the Media Architecture Institute, argues that "media façade" does not sufficiently qualify the work of media architects for it highlights an understanding of screens and media as being separated from architecture. The most important feature of media architecture, he explains, is "a combination of Architecture (physical spatial structure) and Media (images produced on the surface or within the structure of the architecture)" that is conceived as a single project from conception to completion.[26] Whereas for Hauesler media architecture describes the impacts that media façades have on the public space outside of a building and the perception of a buildings as electronic

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[25] M. Hank Haeusler, *Media Facades: History, Technology, Content* (Ludwigsburg: Avedition, 2009), 14.

[26] Gernot Tscherteu, "Media Architecture Scenes," in Gernot Tscherteu et al. eds., *Media Architecture Biennale 2012 Exhibition Catalogue* (Aarhus: Media Architecture Institute, 2012), 13.

media, for Tscherteu the emphasis is on the conception of architecture and media as a whole, not as separate parts.

Even though they arrive at two different understandings of media architecture, both Hauesler and Tscherteu reveal similarly narrow definitions of both media and architecture. Haeuesler defines media as "communication in the visual form of a dynamic text, graphic or image" and architecture as the landscape of screens in urban environments.[27] And although Tscherteu seeks to identify a cohesive relation between the two, he nevertheless categorizes media simply as electronically mediated visual communication and architecture as the physical scaffoldings that hold onto the digital technologies that make media possible. Problematically, both Hauesler and Tscherteu, like Kronhagel and Singer, fail to acknowledge that the relations between media and architecture have been far more complicated than their assertions make them out to be.

Not only have definitions of media architecture failed to acknowledge the mediatic qualities of architecture, they also under-theorize the spatial qualities of all media. Withstanding Robert Venturi's and Denise Scott Brown's famous debunking of Modernist architectural bias to the design of space and form over ornamentation and content, giving greater emphasis to media in media architecture is problematic from the historical perspectives of both media studies and architecture alike. The inclusion of digital and electronic artifacts in either the design process or in the makeup of buildings does not instantiate a new paradigm. As architectural critic, Neil Leach, put it: "There is no such thing as digital architecture."

> "Buildings may…be associated with a certain aesthetic through the digital tools used in their design and construction, but ultimately their aesthetic expression is not controlled by those tools. At best, we might refer to the ways in which a certain aesthetic expression might be afforded by the tools used in their design

[27] Haeusler, *Media Facades*, 14.

> and construction. However — in and of themselves — buildings can be neither political or digital."[28]

We need to be weary of oversimplifying the distinctions between digital media and architecture in order to arrive at a definition of media architecture. Simply because architecture is embedded with digital technologies, this does not entail that suddenly architecture has entered a new realm of mediation. Media and architecture have integral and inseparable relations built on complex interchanges between space as media and media as space. The communicative qualities of architecture, like all media, are not limited solely to the textuality of the object or the materials being used. They rather also manifest in the context within which the object emerges as well. If as Malcolm McCullough argues "buildings were the first mass communication medium," their underlying message, perhaps more than any other medium, is that of ownership and control of place.[29] In this regard, the communicative values of media architecture — both the materials used as well as meanings that surround them — signal a system of jurisdictions and the management of place.

Taking architecture properly into account reveals a media architecture that is not only focused on the transformation of architecture from an inanimate object into an animated medium of communication; rather, it also brings into focus an understanding of media architecture as the assertion of proprietorship over space. The spatial and communicative logics of media architecture do not only manifest in or through the textuality of screen technologies and media façades. They are also found in places such as the underground Dundas Square Garage (owned and operated by the City of Toronto) and the empty square where pedestrians can stand to look at the screens (owned by the City of Toronto but operated by the Yonge-Dundas Square Board of Management). Such an understanding points to what Henri Lefebvre argued as the dominant meanings of space being shaped by and as the embodiment of dominant social relations. As Lefebvre put it, "space has taken on…a sort of reality of its own, a reality clearly distinct from,

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[28] Neil Leach, "There is No Such Thing as Political Architecture. There is No Such Thing as Digital Architecture," in Matthew Poole and Manuel Shvartzberg eds., *Politics of Parametricism: Digital Technologies in Architecture* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 76.

[29] Malcolm McCullaugh, *Ambient Commons*, 140.

yet much like, those assumed in the same global process by commodities, money and capital."[30] For Lefebvre, space is "a tool of thought and action" that "in addition to being a means of production…is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power."[31] The communicative qualities of architecture, as Lefebvre argues, is situated and contingent. That is, media technologies and architectures intersect with spaces that are already encoded by social operations of conduct.

Spaces such as the Dundas Square Garage and the open-air square are produced by a system of economic, social, and cultural values that jointly structure the architectures of outdoor screen technologies. As will be elaborated on below, these values are organized through a series of public-private partnerships that gain the power to negotiate the meanings of publicness in terms of an amalgamation of commercial and community-based interests. Asking how media architectures design new kinds of public spaces means taking seriously which kinds of publics and communities are being promoted over others. As Orit Halpern argues, how media and architecture are experienced in such a space — whether in a state of "attention" or "distraction" — is "inadequate to describe a sensorium [that is supposedly] infinitely extendable."[32] The media architecture of the smart city, Halpern suggests, signals a departure from the modernist focus on the transcendental observer. Instead, here the receptions of media and architecture "hide inside protocols, storage banks, and algorithms."[33] To be sure, whereas Halpern discusses an architecture inscribed in the automatization of artificial intelligence, the example of Yonge-Dundas Square is one more closely related to the decision-making held in large bureaucracies. Nevertheless, understanding how such a shift in the site where observation in the city occurs — from citizen subjects to a calculated component in an infrastructure of data analysis — demands paying closer attention to the systems that support the city and architecture as such. This is not to

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[30] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Donald Nicholson-Smith trans. (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 26.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Orit Halpern, *Beautiful Data: A History of Vision and Reason Since 1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 6.

[33] Ibid.

suggest that the meanings of publicness being produced through public-private partnerships are plain inversions of previous incarnations of the space as a public place. As will be elaborated on below, the public-private partnership that was set up to construct and manage Yonge-Dundas Square helped facilitate diverging, contradictory, and even conflicting appropriations of the space as a public space.

Public-Private Media Architecture and Urban Re-Planning On Yonge Street

Prior to 2002, Yonge-Dundas Square was occupied by a series of shops selling cheap, oftentimes sleaze, merchandise as well as a much smaller outdoor parking lot that was able to serve no more than forty cars at one time. Much like Forty-Second Street in Times Square during the 1970s and 1980s, the area surrounding what is today known as Yonge-Dundas Square used to be synonymous with low-priced bargain stores, massage parlours, tattoo shops, strip clubs, adult book stores, and X-rated movie theatres, each emblazoned with bright and stark neon lights. Stretching roughly four city blocks, this area — more commonly referred to throughout the 1970s and 1990s as the "Yonge Strip" — was characterized by its concentration of cheap thrills and dangerously lurking menace. The aforementioned Dundas Square Garage, in other words, did not exist; nor for that matter did Yonge-Dundas Square.[34]

Imagined and developed as an intricate element of the public spaces created for the usages of large digital screen technologies for advertising purposes, the Dundas Square Garage and Yonge-Dundas Square were built as the result of a public-private initiative entitled *Downtown Yonge: A Program to Promote the Regeneration of Toronto's Main Street*. Adopted on March 4th, 1996, this initiative was set up between the City of Toronto and the Yonge Street Business and Resident Association Inc. (YSBRA). In an effort to redevelop the Yonge Street and Dundas Street intersection, this public-private partnership envisioned a project that would 'reverse the decline of Yonge Street, and restore it as a main shopping street' by "creating a

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[34] This is not to be confused with the fact that the name "Dundas Square" did exist, for it was, and still remains, both the name of the short street located just south of Dundas Street East between Yonge Street and Victoria Street, as well as the name of the building that formerly occupied the block.

stabilizing influence on the downtown core" and redeveloping "underused prime retail sites."[35] Instead of conventional efforts at reducing crime and increasing real-estate values, this initiative was promoted through a more entrepreneurially-led vision that sought total redevelopment of the space. Funded by both public city taxes and the private sector, the program was overseen by a Steering Committee made up of representatives from YSBRA, city appointed officials, and Ward 6 Councillor Kyle Rae (city councillor representing the administrative division within which the project was undertaken). "Cosmetic change," according to then city councillor Rae, "was not going to be enough. Surgery had to occur."[36]

The proposal describes the yet to be built Yonge-Dundas Square as forming a focal point in "Toronto's main shopping street" (Yonge Street), one that belongs to a culture of retail.[37] The redevelopment of this crossing, the authors of the proposal argued, was crucial for the improvement of both the City's and the greater Province of Ontario's economic and social appeal: "The well-being of Yonge Street is key to maintaining the economic and social health of the downtown, the City and the region." The values of retail, the City and the YSBRA claimed, serve "as the glue that ties the important functions of the downtown together." The "Yonge Street Regeneration Program," as it came to be known, sought to make improvements to the physical appearance of the area, to create a strong sense of place, and to attract new up-to-date retail and entertainment space.

Specifically in regards to the block where Yonge-Dundas Square was going to be built, at the centre of the proposal were four requirements that the City and YSBRA wanted private developers to integrate into the new constructions: the creation of an open-air square where citizens could lounge and gather; a four-story underground parking lot located below the square; the rebuilding of 319 Yonge Street (now 10 Dundas East) to include a food-court and a multiplex

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[35] City of Toronto and Yonge Street Business and Residents Association Inc., *Downtown Yonge: A Program to Promote the Regeneration of Toronto's Main Street* (Toronto: City of Toronto, 1996), 4.

[36] Quoted in Nick McCabe-Lokos, "Councillor Kyle Rae Force Behind Project" *Toronto Star*. 29 May 2003: J10.

[37] City of Toronto and Yonge Street Business and Residents Association Inc., *Downtown Yonge*, 1.

theatre; and for this new building to be furnished with large LED billboards on the façade that faces the new open square. Although the project's "Steering Committee" was flexible on many aspects of this redevelopment, these four components were not negotiable. In addition to LEDs being integrated into the new building located on the northern side of the square, alongside those also being erected on its south side, the Steering Committee approved of a plan to add "media towers" on both the north-east and south-west side corners of the square. The square was to serve more than simply a gathering space. It was also to embody the characteristics of the area. In the words of marketing analyst John Williams (who was called upon to give legitimacy to the new plan), through the facilitation of multiple LED screens, the newly designed square was thought to extend the "visual-stimuli" that would accompany the experience of shopping.[38] If retail served as the glue that was to hold the area together by "enlivening the Street and symbolizing the health of the City," then multiple large LED billboards predominantly displaying advertisements would serve as its material manifestation. The media architecture being promoted through the LED screens, in short, was designed to embody and aestheticize the logics of retail and the experience of the commercial interactions taking place inside the businesses deemed symbiotic with the history of the area.

In order for such an architecture to take shape, the partnership proposed a massive redevelopment of the area, envisioning a new centre for the downtown core shaped as an open-air public square where a concentration of bawdy commerce and neon signage would be replaced by digital billboards displaying commercial advertisements to passing pedestrians or a gathering crowd. But in order for this redevelopment to take place, and since the owners of the property in question refused to cooperate with the partnership's terms, the city of Toronto needed to expropriate the land upon which the new square was going to be built. Strongly pushing for an all-encompassing strategy, councillor Rae argued that the only productive way to ensure positive change would be through "the expropriation of inefficient properties."[39] In doing so, the city was

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[38] City of Toronto, "Exhibit Report 64: Expert Report of John Williams, marketing analyst," *Transcript of the Joint Board of the Ontario Municipal Board and the Board of Inquiry Hearing on the Yonge/Dundas Redevelopment Project* (Toronto: City of Toronto, 1998).

[39] Ibid.

responsible for displacing the large discount-rate “Jeans, Jeans, Jeans” denim store, a Caribbean restaurant, a jeweller, a shoe store, and a “Lick’s Homeburgers & Ice Cream” restaurant. These businesses and the buildings that housed them, representatives from YSBRA argued, needed more than physical repair. In the drastic words of James Brown, one of the architects who was hired to design the new square, the buildings occupying the land “were basically a criminal landscape. There's no other way of saying it. You bought drugs there, you sold drugs there, you used them on top of the buildings.”[40]

As Beth Milroy points out, the urban planning approach taken up by the city signaled a “dramatically different conceptualization of space” than the rejuvenation approach that was projected onto the area until then.[41] This new approach to thinking about the area yielded a planned partnership of legal and financial resources between the city and chosen real-estate developers. “The City will take a lead role in facilitating the assembly of and securing the rights to the subject lands, as well as advancing the necessary municipal and provincial planning approvals,” all the while the private “developers will be required to provide design and development expertise and creativity, financing, leasing and ongoing management.”[42] While the legalities of the Province of Ontario allowed the City of Toronto to expropriate the land as it saw suitable, the city nevertheless needed the YSBRA to serve as a type of insurance mechanism that would reassure private developers that their investments in the redevelopment of real estate in this area would be supported by likeminded businesses. Without the YSBRA’s support, the city would have likely had a difficult time convincing developers to invest in the area.

Because the public-private partnership insisted that both the Dundas Square Garage and the digital billboards were required features of the newly developed architecture of Yonge-Dundas Square, the garage must be understood as an intricate component of the square’s media architecture. The area’s new buildings and square did not simply transform from static

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[40] Quoted in McCabe-Lokos, “Councillor Kyle Rae Force Behind Project”, J10.

[41] Beth Moore Milroy, *Thinking, Planning and Urbanism* (Vancouver: University of British Colombia Press, 2009), 2.

[42] City of Toronto, *Yonge Street Redevelopment Project: Request for Qualifications* (Toronto: City of Toronto, February 1997), 2.

architecture or empty lots into dynamic constructs. They were rather strategically defined as economically defunct buildings and real estate deemed stale and in need of replacement. This simple fact, that Yonge-Dundas Square occupies an area that demanded buildings to be completely demolished — not rebuilt, or augmented with media façades, but instead to be fully removed — signals that media architecture can be more than just architecture with media façades. Media architecture, at least in this instance, also signals an architecture of destruction. Understanding this is also crucial to recognizing that the aesthetics of media architectures are situated in and configured by particular agreements between city officials, private developers, and so-called stakeholders.

Concealing the "Public": Managing Media Architecture In Yonge-Dundas Square

Although the City of Toronto invested $10 million to develop Yonge-Dundas Square, with the nearing completion of the project it became apparent that operational costs for managing the square had "not been identified in previous budgets" nor had they "been included in the 2002 budget estimates."[43] This was largely because the new square was originally intended to act as an open space where citizens could spontaneously gather to look at the surrounding screens, crowds, or to simply lounge in the retail landscape. The day to day management of events by a centralized body in this media architecture complex, in other words, was an afterthought that was only raised during the very late stages of the project's construction. It was not until December 4, 5, and 6, 2001, where the City Council adopted Clause 27 of Report 16 of the City of Toronto's Policy of Finance Committee thereby formally establishing the Yonge Dundas Square Board of Management (YDS-Board), where a new vision for the day-to-day management of the square was articulated.[44]

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[43] Toronto City Council, Policy and Finance Committee, "Report No. 16, Clause No. 27." *Yonge/Dundas Square - Operations Resulting from Urban Development Services Capital Project and Governance Model (Ward 27 - Toronto Centre)*, December 4, 5 and 6, 2001.

[44] Ibid.

The authors of the report consulted in preparation of this clause — Councillor Kyle Rae, staff from Corporate Services (Facilities and Real Estate), Finance, Economic Development Culture and Tourism, Urban Development Services, the Chief Administrator's Office, the Toronto Parking Authority, the Downtown Yonge Street BIA, and the Toronto East Downtown Neighbourhood Association — considered three models of governance for the square: "(1) direct City management; (2) Board of Management with participation of community stakeholders; (3) contracted services."[45] Although the square is jurisdictionally under the ownership of the city, having its everyday operations being managed by the public sector would not function satisfactorily for "unlike public squares attached to City-owned buildings where programming is geared toward community events…Yonge-Dundas Square was intended to be used largely for commercial events for which a fee would be charged."[46] An operations model where the city held full responsibility, according to the authors, "would not take full advantage of the knowledge, expertise and resources of the community which has worked so hard in the planning of the Square," adding that "if operated like other civic squares, the commercial interest may be diminished" and could potentially "result in substantial cost to the City over the long term."[47] On the other hand, according to the authors, contracting out projects on a case by case basis would likewise not be satisfactory, for such a model would require constant monitoring by both the city and the community: "It sets the stage for conflict among the contractor, the City and the community."[48] The authors feared that a contracting model may also bring about "a tendency to skew the balance of events too far towards profit-making events when a balance is desirable for events that benefit the area."[49]

The Board of Management was considered the most suitable option because it ensured that this media architecture was going to be managed by residents and businesses that were

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[45] Ibid., 7.

[46] Ibid., 3.

[47] Ibid., 7.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

considered to hold desirable stakes in the economic and cultural wellbeing of properties in the neighbourhood. Core to this rational was a desire to directly involve local interests from residents and businesses in the neighbourhood: "The community has a vested interest in ensuring the Square remains safe, clean, and active. The co-operation and assistance of the community is an essential step towards ensuring the success of the Square."[50] A Board of Management made up of stakeholders who were expected to continue to make significant financial and resource contributions to the neighbourhood, provide marketing expertise, as well as help attract commercial-focused events, was considered most promising for it involved stakeholders with a sensitive eye toward, to borrow from the language of business, risk management. Under the Board of Management model, Yonge-Dundas Square "can operate on a financially viable basis, engage the stakeholders in the vicinity and provide a well-balanced mix of commercial and public uses."[51] As such, the authors of the report concluded, as ultimately also did City Council, that the establishment of a Board of Management was the most promising model of governance for the square because it struck a balance between community- and commercial-based interests on the ground.

To be sure, not all businesses' and residents' claims to hold vested interests were considered equal, as for example was clearly the case with businesses whose lands were expropriated by the city. It is important to note that the report was written in consultation with members from Downtown Yonge BIA (DYBIA; formerly YSBRA) and the Toronto East Downtown Neighbourhood Association (TEDNA), who took the careful steps to illustrate the degrees of commitment and legitimacy they had already displayed in promoting their influence in the neighbourhood. These two BIAs displayed ongoing support for the project, represented businesses and residents from the neighbourhood, as well as acted as a focal point where these various financial, commercial, business, residential and cultural organizations collectively shared their concerns. In short, members from DYBIA and TEDNA embodied the stakeholder qualities that the city deemed necessary to carry the entrepreneurial spirit favoured in the city.

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid., 7-8.

Clearly DYBIA and TEDNA had both vested interests in managing the square. Moreover, they arguably also did hold well founded claims that in their hands the square will be properly managed in accordance to the city's desired outcomes. Nevertheless, this did not entail that the proposed Board of Management was going to fully embody a democratically elected body that validly represented all members of the community. Aside from the seat held by the elected Councillor for Ward 27, eight of the nine other members being proposed to obtain voting rights in the YDS-Board were representatives from various organizations in the neighbourhood: one from the Toronto Theatre Alliance, one from Ryerson University, one from Yonge Street Mission (anti-poverty charity group), one from TEDNA, and four from DYBIA. With exception of the City Councillor, who automatically serves as a member of the YDS-Board throughout his or her term in elected office, each of the other eight voting members may "hold office at the pleasure of the Council that appointed them and, unless sooner removed, shall hold office until the expiration of the term of the Council that appointed them and until their successors are appointed, and are eligible for reappointment."[52] In other words, members of the YDS-Board appointed by DYBIA, TEDNA, and the Toronto Theatre Alliance may hold controlling governing power over events in the square for an indefinite length of time, depending on the desires of the organizations that appointed them.

Under this public-private configuration, members from the listed organizations gained power "to manage and operate Yonge Dundas Square…in particular rental fees and the terms and conditions for using the Square and to make necessary recommendations for [their] improvements"; "to develop an annual program of events for the Square and to review the effectiveness of the program"; "to develop a business plan and an annual budget for managing the Square"; "to periodically review general operating guidelines for the use of the Square"; "to identify issues associated with the management of the Square and to work towards the resolution of these issues with stakeholders and the City."[53] Put in Bourdieusian terms, members of DYBIA and TEDNA — who were potentially to gain the most dominant voting power in the YDS-Board — displayed sufficient economic and social capital in order to convince members of city council

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[52] Ibid., 15.

[53] Ibid., 8.

to invest their own political and legal capital into a model of governance that essentially forced city officials to forego their own political and legal capital. Individuals from the private sector agreed to invest their networks and pools of financial and social ties with members from the public sector and in exchange expected to gain direct jurisdictional and political influence over publicly-owned city property.

For the first year of operations, the board was expected to "submit as soon as possible an initial 1 year business plan" as well as a 3-year business plan "demonstrating how the Board will achieve financial self-sufficiency within 3 years."[54] These plans were to be periodically reviewed by the Commissioner of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism, and in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer. During this time, the City also agreed to provide the Board of Management a "preliminary start-up budget"[55] estimated at $695,000 with expectations that rental of the Square would "generate revenues of approximately $320,000 in the six months after opening in July 2002."[56] Such a budget was therefore expected to leave the Board with a netted $375,000 budget to help cover operation costs starting January of the following year.

To note, it is suggested in this document that daily rates for renting of the square be set in the amount of $5,000, plus a fifteen percent administration and co-ordination fee, amounting to a total of $5,750 per calendar day. Renting of additional labour and equipment, such as awnings ($500) and sound systems ($400), as well as sales taxes were to be added to this total.[57] However, should the City of Toronto organize an event on these premises, it would be exempt from making any such payments, up to twenty percent of programmable days.[58]

Also important to highlight is that any and all events being set up in the square must be made freely accessible to the public. The square cannot be gated, and individuals, groups, and companies renting the square cannot charge entrance fees to their events. Estimations and

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[54] Ibid., 4.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid., 2.

[57] Ibid., 13.

[58] Ibid., 13-14.

configurations of the space such as these signal a significant definition of the kinds of renters and activities that the city and the BIAs deemed able to make use of the public square. While not an extraordinarily immense sum — considering the costs that other renters pay for street level property in the heart of the city's retail centre — an approximate price-tag of $6,000 per day (or roughly $2.2 million, if calculated based on annual basis) does limit the kinds of renters that are willing and able to pay such expenses. Such sums are certainly outside of the reach of most organizations and activities. As a result, the square is most frequently rented by retail-based companies who set up booths in the square to promote their products through sample giveaways and other brand familiarization strategies. To note, the YDS-Board opted to revise the rental fee structure to reflect peak and off peak hours. The agreed upon rates are $5,700 peak, $3,500 shoulder, $1,900 off peak per day, not including extra equipment rental costs.[59]

This is not to suggest that all YDS-Board members were in full support of such a configuration. In fact, immediately after the establishment of the YDS-Board, the mandates favouring commercial businesses that were agreed upon with the city were scrutinized by certain members of the newly elected Board. The strongest of such articulations came from Robert Sniderman, son of Sam Sniderman, co-owner (with his brother Jason and cousins Lana and Arna Sniderman) of Sam the Record Man store, and co-founder with Arron Barberian (proprietor of Barberian's steakhouse) of YSBRA. In a letter addressed to Ron Soskolne, chair of YDS-Board, and in full anticipation that it be shared with the other members of YDS-Board, Sniderman raised his concerns with the "unusual conditions that have been placed on the Board by the City to make the Square a self-sustaining facility."[60] For Sniderman, the public-private arrangement between the city and the members of YDS-Board meant the unreasonable expectation of unpaid

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[59] Yonge-Dundas Square Board of Management, "Public Square Business Plan 2003-2005," in "Yonge-Dundas Square (YD2) minutes 2003-2004," Fonds 402, Series 1707, File 50. City of Toronto Archives.

[60] Robert Sniderman, "Letter addressed to Ron Soskolne, Chair, Yonge-Dundas Square Board of Management," May 16, 2003, Fonds 402, Series 1707, File 50, "Yonge-Dundas Square (YD2) minutes 2003-2004," City of Toronto Archives. Found in "Yonge-Dundas Square Retreat" booklet (October 31, 2003).

labour for planning and organizing multi-million dollar public events believed to be crucial to the well-being of the project.

> The role of the Board, our efforts and the unreasonable pressure to achieve a level of financial sustainability predominate our work and it is simply unfair to expect a volunteer Board to be placed on such a high level of scrutiny in order to produce revenue for the City from this public asset. I feel as if there is a 'sword hanging over my head' which will someday fall because I/we were unable to perform up to a standard which in the short term has become an unrealistic goal for a facility that was never designed or expected to serve the purpose for which we are working…Given my significant business expertise and experience with event promotions, I know that it will take years to develop a recognition level and repertoire of clients who will be prepared to utilize this facility on a regular basis…I believe there is a naivety either on the Board or in the City in not recognizing this fact and that there are also numerous well-funded, private organizations whose daily responsibility it is to attract the same events in which we are interested. Our volunteer Board of Management representing Yonge-Dundas Square on behalf of the City of Toronto does not have the funds, budget, expertise, hours of operation, operating infrastructure, skilled management personnel or financial support to be competitive in [such] an industry.[61]

Sniderman explains that "it was never [his] understanding, as the square was being built or prior to accepting a position on the Board, that those conditions would dominate [the Board's] responsibilities and become such an overbearing responsibility."[62] While clarifying that he was "in favour of the square being used for a variety of community and corporate events," Sniderman nevertheless stressed that "his primary interest and expectation was that the square would become a place, more like many renowned squares in the world, for community involvement and

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[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

expression and less for profit."[63] "Having [the Square] function as a profitable event facility," he pointed out, "was never part of the design criteria" for "no event infrastructure was provided in any proposal — nor did that factor in the eventual selection" of architectural proposals.[64]

Although the agreement with the City was to provide the YDS-Board $375,000 netted from the first six months of operations, the YDS-Board estimated their annual expenses to be just over $1 million, including, for example: $191,222.16 for Staff ($90,000 General Manager;[65] $59,222.16 Facilities Coordinator; $35,000 Administrative Assistant; $7,000 Training); $40,000 for Other Administration Costs (phone, courier, office equipment, etc.); $100,000 for Marketing; $661,325 for Maintenance (including, for example, $205,000 for janitorial services, $10,000 for garbage removal; $100,000 for power washing; $275,928 for security, $35,000 for architectural maintenance); $18,525 for Utilities (Gas, Electricity, Water).[66] Upon agreement with Industrial Property Services on 29 November 2002, another $12,000 were added to the budget to account for snow removal per season.[67] With such estimates, the $375,000 budget left over from the first six months thanks to the City's initial $695,000 startup fund would not be enough to account for total expenses that the YDS-Board anticipated. To make up the extra $700,000 needed to properly manage the Square, the YDS-Board estimated that a minimum of thirty-six events (bringing in approximately $250,000), DYBIA allocation ($40,000) film shoot rentals and royalties ($22,000), Percentage of Revenue from sales made at events on site ($50,000), amongst

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

[65] The General Manager is required to report to the Chair of YDS-Board as well as be accountable to the City of Toronto's Managing Director of Economic Development in the Division of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Department. See Employment Contract Between Yonge Dundas Square Board of Management and Carol Jolly, November 25, 2002, Fonds 402, Series 1707, File 51, "Yonge-Dundas Square (YD2) minutes 2001-2002," City of Toronto Archives.

[66] Yonge Dundas Square Board of Management, "Revenue," 2003, found in Fonds 402, Series 1707, File 50, "Yonge-Dundas Square (YD2) minutes 2003-2004," City of Toronto Archives.

[67] Barbara Caplan, "Letter to Yonge Dundas Square Board of Management," December 9, 2002, found in Fonds 402, Series 1707, File 51, "Yonge-Dundas Square (YD2) minutes 2001-2002," City of Toronto Archives.

other sources of revenues needed to be secured.[68] To be sure, this budget was only for the first year of operations that included portions of the initial $695,000 fund provided by the City. During the second year of operations, YDS-Board was expected to be fully self-sufficient.

Sniderman's position complicates understandings of the power relations negotiated between private interests and governance of public resources — of the workings of economic and political powers — as they manifest through this public-private partnership. Even though Sniderman thinks that the values of his social and professional capital are devalued through his newly attained position, he nevertheless has gained the ability to raise his intuitions, knowledge, and concerns through his new role that is recognized to hold claims of ownership over what is otherwise a publicly shared space. This is not to suggest that Sniderman's concerns are invalid, but rather to highlight how his values and meanings of publicness can now be articulated within a legitimate platform that is crucially integral to the wellbeing of the neighbourhood. By trading his professional and social capital in exchange for certain political and legal capital, Sniderman is able to explicitly scrutinize and assign his values to the public facilities of Yonge-Dundas Square through direct processes of exchange with other members of his now broader social and professional network. To be sure, Sniderman does not have total control over the kinds of values that the public spaces, gatherings, facilities, and activities taking place in Yonge-Dundas Square are to gain. Such values are exchanged and negotiated amongst him and other YDS-Board members. Nevertheless, his articulations illustrate the segregation of the broader public out of conversations about matters that directly concern it.

To sum thus far, under the newly formed YDS-Board, the meanings of publicness that the media architecture of Yonge-Dundas Square were set to represent were to be managed through a balance between the logics of community-building and commercial-based enterprises. Such a balance is struck by a select group of individuals who themselves are influenced by their own economic interests and ongoing mandates. Even without accounting for individual members, such an arrangement allows organizations from the private-sector to hold a majority of votes in matters concerning the management and usages of otherwise public space, and therefore to

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[68] Yonge Dundas Square Board of Management, "Revenue," 2003, found in "Yonge-Dundas Square (YD2) minutes 2003-2004," City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 402, Series 1707, File 50.

potentially prioritize their private interests and retail biases over those of the broader community. Indeed, the city of Toronto approves of Board members largely because of their expertise in retail-based events management as well as their network of social relations that includes both individuals with legal knowledge and qualifications, as well as those with economic means. As a result of such underlying structural conditions, events in the space frequently appropriate the square for marketing purposes. Such uses re-enforce the perceptual logics of retail consumption being displayed on the encompassing LED screens. More importantly, they also help normalize uses of this public space in ways that supersede people and activities deemed disruptive to the harmonies of middle-income retail shopping.

Because it is owned and operated by the City of Toronto, the Dundas Square Garage fits in as the "public" component of the public-private arrangement set up between the city and the select non-governmental organizations doing business in the downtown Yonge Street area. To be sure, the public articulated through this garage is not equal to the one idealized by Jürgen Habermas, where neither governmental nor commercial biases influence public or private identities. In the Dundas Square Garage exists a different modality of the public, one that stands in contrast to the private and public spheres, though in parallel to the private and public sectors. Here, the city of Toronto manages the parking lot, making use of it as yet another source of profitable real estate that is intricately tied to the infrastructure of retail-based outdoor screen media owned and organized by the private sector. Although this space is easily accessible, it is set-up in such a way as to privilege non-residents of the area, particularly persons who would get to this neighbourhood by car. As a space operated by the public sector, the Dundas Square Garage is designed for the use of a public that resides elsewhere and who comes to the area in order to shop for goods and leave their financial capital behind. Here the public is figuratively buried. Yet, it is not simply put underground. Instead it is more correct to identify how it serves as a foundation, and is formulated as a source of income that is in-sourced from other parts of the city. This is what a version of a "public" formulated through the two quasi-governmental structures of PPP and BIA appears like.

To be sure, this configured articulation of public access and managed control over public space is not particular to media architecture. All screen-based media complicate easy boundaries

between the public and private. Cinema screens, for example, address a public audience oftentimes in a privately managed auditorium. Television has long been theorized as a medium that brings the outside public world into the private domestic space, broadcasting messages from either the private (corporate, cable) or public (state-run) sectors. Jean Baudrillard famously theorized that television blurs the boundaries between the public and private to the extent that the meanings of either entities are completely displaced. For him, in this 'age of simulation' — the final stage before total simulacrum — reality is simply a configuration of symbols with no reference to the original. The public and private only gain (though for Baudrillard they only lose) their meanings through the constant displacement of these concepts into an endless mise-en-abyme.

We might want to agree with Baudrillard and to qualify that media architecture offers yet another articulation of this displacement of the meanings of public and private. However, while it is true that no absolute definitions of either the public or private exist, it is the association and relationships between the meanings of these two concepts — the nuanced articulations of privacy and publicness as they manifest at different sites and in different contexts — that need to be addressed. As Anna McCarthy argues, it is important to look at the use of television in nondomestic spaces because this illuminates how "television shapes the way we experience a place as public or private…but not always in identical ways, producing identical meanings."[69] McCarthy does not seek to discount Baudrillard's claim that an absolute definition of the public or private ever existed, but rather to illustrate how the elasticity of television can give publicity and privacy tangible meanings within different spatial contexts. This is not to suggest that television's ability to act as a conduit whereby meanings, values, and experiences of the public and private can be fluidly shaped and reshaped is the only threshold where publicity and privacy materialize. Rather, these articulations importantly also manifest in the spatial configurations where television screens are placed. As McCarthy writes, sites such as malls and restaurants are

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[69] Anna McCarthy, *Ambient TV: Visual Culture and Public Space* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 4.

"neither public nor private," rather "they embody in one way or another a particular sense of the relationship between public and private."[70]

Distinctions between public and private values are less about well defined boundaries and more about identifiable relations attributed to media. Recognizing the nuances of publicity and privacy in spatial design is crucial to understanding how the ideals of publicity or privacy (or in the case of Baudrillard, of a simulacrum) are achieved, or are working towards being achieved. Like television, usages of media architectures articulate particular relationships to the otherwise intangible notions of public and private. At Yonge-Dundas Square, these articulations were dominantly shaped by the neoliberal frameworks of the public-private partnership between the city and the YSBRA. Along with the multiple large LED commercial screens that now surround the square, the Dundas Square Garage represents one more articulation of the public-private partnership's control over this media architecture. The public here is redefined through an ecology of media and architecture that includes digital displays, retail stores, an open square, and an underground parking lot.

Multiple screens and underground parking spots in Yonge-Dundas Square act as ideal expressions of retail and the expanded conceptualization of retail environments. But they also belong to a range of other techniques and technologies that help shape and define how meanings of the public in this media architecture operate. As Evelyn Ruppert contends, the LED screens are one component of a range of "technologies of aestheticization"[71] — that is, they are part of an aestheticization of a broader system of territorial control that include real-estate ownership, zoning regulations, and by-laws that enable select members of the community to have governing powers over the square. Most notable of these technologies is the Yonge-Dundas Square Board of Management (YDS-Board), which directly manages the events that take place in the square. Assembling agreements between, and investments by, key players to make room for media architecture on Yonge Street were only the first necessary steps taken in order to re-appropriate this site for real estate concerns. Once these ties were set in motion, the next crucial steps were to

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[70] Ibid., 3.

[71] Evelyn S. Ruppert, *The Moral Economy of Cities: Shaping Good Citizens* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 141.

ensure that the site was properly managed and maintained as a site suitable for the retail-oriented tastes of the public-private imaginary. Through the establishment of the YDS-Board, the meanings of the public being articulated through media architecture could be closely aligned with the values of the public-private partnership. Put differently, the YDS-Board reveals important insights about the appropriations of the meanings of the public and private — the control of the spaces as public and private, or as public-private — in this particular media architecture.

Managing Media Architecture For Public-Private Publics

I have thus far outlined how the area today known as Yonge-Dundas Square emerged through neoliberal policies that enable businesses to gain governing powers over public spaces. I have discussed how the configurations of public-private partnerships and so-called business improvement areas variably, and in concert, manage two different kinds of spaces that make up the media architecture complex of Yonge-Dundas Square — the city operated Dundas Square Garage and the open air square operated by the YDS-Board. While I have made the case that the city's expropriation of land from businesses that previously occupied the area (in order to develop Yonge-Dundas Square, the underground garage, and the establishment of the YDS-Board) amounts to its privatization, I now want to briefly point to the ways these institutional and corporate bodies have contributed to new techniques through which the meanings of publicness can or have been formulated.

I bring attention to these instances of media technologies management in order to complicate simplified conclusions about the loss of publicness that might arise from criticisms of YDS-Board model. While the two mechanisms of the Dundas Square Garage and the YDS-Board do the work of redefining public uses of the newly developed Yonge-Dundas Square media architecture — interpreting the public either as users of a city-run parking lot or through a disproportionate representational membership in the YDS-Board — it is important not to slip into constricting definitions of the "public," but to instead recognize the varied types of publics being privileged, activated, empowered, or put into play. The publics of Yonge-Dundas Square,

for better or worse, are configured as visitors travelling to the commercial district in order to act as consumers of retail and as locals who act as elected representatives of and by the district's businesses and residents in order to better manage the neighbourhood's shared public spaces and resources. Such definitions of the public as consumers and patrons of retail goods did not exclusively emerge out of the Yonge-Dundas Square project. Understandings of the public as shoppers and retailers was a part of the area long before redevelopment began. Built into the legalities and material infrastructures of Yonge-Dundas Square and the YDS-Board was thus a privileging of the public as vendors and shoppers of mid- to high-bargain retail goods and services. In order to redefine the area as one where those kinds of commercial interactions take place, the city used its land expropriation power to forcefully remove low-bargain retail stores from the neighbourhood. The public being formulated through the newly designed square and its governing infrastructure thus emerged out of political arrangements established by the city and business friendly BIAs. This form of governance undertakes portions of the managing powers that were otherwise within the purviews of the city and puts them into the hands of neoliberal BIAs and public-private partnerships. The version of the "public" that emerges through the Dundas Square Garage and the YDS-Board, in other words, gives shape to newly defined types of publics; what might be termed public-private publics.

Such configurations of public-private publics also shape the materialities and governance of media architecture. Although the YDS-Board has the privilege to manage the marketing and managing of events that take place in Yonge-Dundas Square, its influence over screens located around the square is somewhat more limited. The majority of the large LED screens surrounding the square are owned by private advertising agencies and, as such, are regulated by the city's special signage by-laws. Nevertheless, the YDS-Board does have influence on the management of at least two screens that are located within the square. In summer of 2003, the YDS-Board agreed to enter into an agreement with Clear Channel Outdoor Canada (Clear Channel) to lease out a portion of the square to the international outdoor advertising conglomerate for a ten year

period.[72] With a target installation date of November 2003, Clear Channel would install two, eight by twelve foot, LEDs in the north-western corner of the interior of the square.[73] The agreement ensured that Clear Channel would not only install and maintain the screens at no costs added to the YDS-Board, provide the YDS-Board access to display content on these screens, as well as add to the visual stimuli of the square. It also guaranteed that the YDS-Board would obtain steady earnings from revenues gained through advertisements displayed on the screens. The agreement stipulated that the YDS-Board was to gain an "annual payment that is the greater of $75,000 or thirty percent of gross revenues."[74] Conversely, although the total guaranteed payment to the YDS-Board over ten years was thus estimated to be at least $750,000, financial projections for advertisement spending at the time indicated that actual potential income from these two LEDs could potentially generate much higher profits to the YDS-Board reaching as much as $1.9 million over the ten year term.[75] In other words, Clear Channel for its part expected to gain as little as $2.5 million or more than $6 million in annual revenues generated from advertisements on these two strategically positioned screens. The agreement also gave the YDS-

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[72] First the Board had to recommend this. Next the decision is passed to the city's Economic Development and Parks Committee. If passes there, then the decision needs to be approved of by City Council. Yonge-Dundas Square Board of Management, "Draft Minutes," 26 June 2003, Fonds 402, Series 1707, File 50, "Yonge-Dundas Square (YD2) minutes 2003-2004," City of Toronto Archives.

[73] John Jory (President Clear Channel Outdoor), "Letter: LED displays; Yonge-Dundas Square," 16 June 2013, Fonds 402, Series 1707, File 50, "Yonge-Dundas Square (YD2) minutes 2003-2004," City of Toronto Archives.

[74] Carol Jolly (General Manager), "Subject: Signage RFP — Summary of the principle terms of Clear Channel's Proposal for Signage at the Square," 23 June 2003, Fonds 402, Series 1707, File 50, "Yonge-Dundas Square (YD2) minutes 2003-2004," City of Toronto Archives.

[75] Jory, "Letter: LED displays; Yonge-Dundas Square."

Board access to 5% of display time. Lastly, at the end of the ten year leasing agreement, Clear Channel was required to sell the screens back to the YDS-Board for the nominal cost of $1.[76]

These two leased screens reveal how the YDS-Board found ways to both create a steady source of income as well as governing power by both renting out property located within its newly formed jurisdictional boundaries, as well as by expanding the screen square footage for use by advertisers in the square. Put differently, in its privileged position as a public-private entity, the YDS-Board has managed to both gain control over public real estate in the square as well as private resources paid for by Clear Channel. The Clear Channel screens illustrate how the public-private arrangement not only allows members of the private sector to gain control over public space; it also provides the city with strategically situated positions to make its governing influences more effective.

With the nearing end of its leasing agreement with Clear Channel, the YDS-Board is currently planning on expanding its public-private power to include seven more such screen arrangements in order to support its growing events infrastructure. Intending to scrap the two Clear Channel screens, the YDS-Board is now preparing to enter into a new ten year contract, this time with another outdoor advertising corporation, Outfront Media Canada (Outfront). In this new contract, Outfront also agrees to solely pay for the cost of construction, installation, and maintenance of seven new LED screens, in addition to a new Wi-Fi network, an enhanced accent lighting system, an updated control system hardware and cabling, as well as the accompanying energy costs involved with each of these technologies. In return, the YDS-Board would gain "sole and exclusive usage" of five of the seven signs, minimum annual guarantees of $400,000 for the first five years and $500,000 for the final five years, as well as 30% of Outfront's annual gross revenues gained from leasing of the signs to third parties. For its part, the YDS-Board

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[76] Conversely, after this was initially set into motion, due to building code setbacks, the signs were only installed in the fall of 2004. Immediately after installation, members of YDS-Board expressed "serious concerns…about the poor resolution and quality of the images." Clear Channel agreed and were working to resolve those issues. Yonge-Dundas Square Board of Management, "Draft Minutes," 30 September 30 2004, Fonds 402, Series 1707, File 50, "Yonge-Dundas Square (YD2) minutes 2003-2004," City of Toronto Archives.

agrees to make payments for any municipal taxes which may be imposed on Outfront as a result of the operation of the signs.

If the contract with Clear Channel illustrated how a public-private arrangement allows for a systemic privatization of one element of the public sector, this new contract with Outfront signals how members from the private sector also do not always find all public-private arrangement to be entirely satisfactory. At the January 19, 2017 city council meeting, whereby YDS-Board and Outfront sought the city's authority to enter into this new ten year agreement, a number of nearby advertisers — Astral Media, Clear Channel, Bentall Kennedy (10 Dundas Street East), Cadillac-Fairview (Eaton's Centre) — expressed their opposition to the new plan, arguing that the addition of the newly proposed public-private screens will block lines of sight to their own private screen properties.[77] In his deputation, Paul Seaman, Vice-President of Clear Channel whose ten year contract was set to expire, argued that his company found the legal powers given to the public-private YDS-Board to be "fundamentally flawed and unfair," and furthermore do "not seem to respect other legally placed signs."[78]

> "The city of Toronto should not grant a variance to a sign that is specifically designed in place to obstruct other signs. While Yonge-Dundas is a special sign district, each sign stands on its own merit and does not attempt to obstruct or block other signs. The city should allow the obstruction of sight line while levying to increase tax [on] both sign and property. The city would not approve a private sector sign that intentionally blocks other signs, and it should be consistent in its approach…The original intent of the signage was to engage and benefit Dundas Square. Now it serves to be a billboard that obstructs other billboards…Different rules for the city versus the private sector is simply wrong."[79]

Sheila Jennings, General Manager of Cadillac-Fairview Eaton's Centre, also voiced her employer's similar concerns, saying,

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[77] Toronto City Council, Executive Committee - Meeting 21, EX21.8, 19 January 2017, City of Toronto Archives.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

> "We have put significant amount of capital and time to revitalize the south-west corner of Yonge and Dundas and the Centre for everyone's enjoyment. The entire Square-facing area of our complex has undergone significant renovation and those tenants will be directly impacted…[W]e are a long standing occupant in the area, and we are in no way opposing digital advertising in the square. This area has grown to be what it is today with collaboration on everyone's behalf and we are here to voice concerns on the process of this proposal….[However] the sign[s] proposed will have a significant change to the square and we believe the consultation with surrounding stakeholders was insufficient in that it provided minimal information regarding the scope, design, and size of the proposed signs. There needs to be a balance of signage in and around the square. There was no indication the new pillars on the north-east corner and the north-west pillars were going to directly impact the sight-lines of the other signs in the area. There will be significant impact on CF Toronto Eaton's Centre's both retail and commercial tenants, and also on the media tower [located on the corner of Yonge and Dundas Street West]."

Dan Starnino, Vice-President Development and Operations for Astral Out of Home signage company, whose company applied for but was not awarded this contract, echoed such sentiments, saying, "We're not saying that signage is not welcome in the square. It actually is. We think basically the more the merrier. It creates atmosphere and drives tourists. Our issue is the height." Pointing specifically to one of the proposed pillars supporting the new screens, Starnino argued that properties located behind the planned structure "will obstruct all the surrounding properties which had been there [for] sixteen years, twelve years, eight years, all to create the Dundas Square vibe."[80]

In his response to such oppositions, General Manager for Yonge-Dundas Square, Taylor Raths, stated that many of these claims were not well founded, pointing out that the proposal has been in the works for roughly two years. He especially wanted to draw the City Council's attention to the fact that Sheila Jennings herself has been and remains a sitting member of the

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[80] Ibid.

YDS-Board "and has been aware of this project for two years."[81] Throughout this period, the YDS-Board has invited all businesses and stakeholders in the area to the design panel. Those who were not able to attend the panel, were reached out to in person and were met with in individual meetings. The YDS-Board also implemented changes to the design that were commented upon and asked for by the neighbouring stakeholders.

At the end of the hearings, the Executive Committee voted in favour of the new ten year agreement as well as the proposed changes to the media architectural makeup of the square. Thus it can be argued that such a decision allows the public-private partnership to "conceal" what members of the private sector considered to be their sightlines; the space between the square and the surrounding screens. But what emerges here should not be considered the privileging of a public sector's articulation of publicness over those formulated by the private sector. To be sure, the new proposal also brought about criticisms from the original architects of the square who complained that this re-appropriation of the space alters their design of a community gathering area: "The square has lost its nature as a public square. Other parks don't have to make money… Why does this one?"[82] As *Toronto Star* columnist, Shawn Micallef put it, "It appears Toronto has public space where freedom of speech is governed by private interests."[83]

The screens leased out by the YDS-Board serve as an illustration of the emerging public-private formulation of public space, as well as the public-private power to influence urban media architectures. Each of these configurations of governing influence illustrate how the management of signage through the public-private model of the YDS-Board produce both multiple meanings of publicness in the Yonge-Dundas Square media architecture complex. In the following section I will discuss how this public-private arrangement influences the preservation of old media architecture in ways that do not directly involve any measurable economic returns. While only directly involving two members of the YDS-Board, the "Sam the Record Man" neon sign illustrates how Ryerson University and the city council, through their agreements, were held

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[81] Ibid.

[82] Kim Storey quoted in Shawn Micallef, "Yonge-Dundas Square is Toronto's Last Stand for Public Space," *Toronto Star*, 27 Jan 2017.

[83] Ibid.

responsible for the preservation of one iconic sign. I focus particularly on the management of this sign because it is one of the most symbolically charged objects to be preserved as part of the Yonge-Dundas Square development. It ties in with the themes of preservation and conservation that bind this dissertation together, as well as illustrates another way through which the public-privatization of urban spaces manifest, this time through a privately owned sign and a public educational institution.

In Maintenance: A Sign In Public-Private Limbo

On Friday, 15th November 2013, Ryerson University invited ten news outlets to visit the back of a tractor-trailer somewhere in the City of Vaughan's suburban industrial neighbourhood of Concord. Located just outside Toronto, about 20 kilometres north from Yonge-Dundas Square, the news crews were invited to report on the wellbeing of the Sam the Record Man sign — a roughly 15 metres long by 11 metres high, three stories tall, sign consisting of an estimated 800 sources of light, featuring two sets of large neon tube rings designed to look like two large vinyl discs, and weighing roughly the size of a killer whale. To gain access to this site, the crews had to agree not to disclose to their readers the exact location of the trailer currently housing the dormant sign "in order to help keep it secure,"[84] a Ryerson spokesperson warned the reporters in advance of their arrival. As Liam Casey, reporter for the *Toronto Star*, put it, "The rules of engagement were simple: See the sign, verify its existence."[85] Although he found the unplugged sign in hundreds of dispersed pieces, Casey confirmed that indeed "the iconic Sam the Record Man sign is real," and still "spectacular." This unusual invitation to report on the wellbeing and existence of an unlit sign in its temporary state of storage came about as a result of growing skepticisms from both members of the public and politicians who worried about the condition of the sign. Last seen lit in the winter of 2008 as part of the *Nuit Blanche* festivities, the beloved

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[84] Liam Casey, "Confirmed: Sam the Record Man Sign Lives to Rise Again," *Toronto Star*, 15 Nov 2013.

[85] Ibid.

sign was taken down by Ryerson University with the promise that it was to be soon re-installed again. Nearly a decade later, the sign still remains in storage.

The Sam the Record Man sign is one of a few architectural artifacts deemed worthy of preservation in the Yonge-Dundas Square development. But this designated classification was not easily achieved, nor at the time of writing this dissertation has it still been fully realized. After opening its doors on Yonge Street in 1961, Sam Sniderman's 'Sam the Record Man' shop came to be recognized as one of the most important national landmarks of recorded music consumption in Canada. Its large neon signage mimicking large vinyls became the city's most iconic representations of its music culture. By the 2000s the store was no longer profitable. Initially declaring bankruptcy in 2001, after re-opening its doors again in 2002, declining sales and substantial realignments in retail music businesses across the industry both regionally and worldwide forced the shop's new owners (Sniderman's children and nieces) to close the 40,000 square foot store in the spring of 2007 once and for all. Although it served as an important participant in the rejuvenation of Yonge Street and Yonge-Dundas Square (Robert Sniderman formed the YSBRA and served on the YDS-Board), Sam's store was on the verge of becoming as unprofitable as those businesses the city had only recently fought to legally remove from the area.

Rather than becoming a burden on the neighbouring business-friendly initiatives, the public-private partnerships, and the various Business Improvement Area associations, the Sniderman family wanted to sell its property to a business or organization that would ensure that the economic and cultural wellbeing of the Yonge Street development maintained its momentum in tact. It quickly became apparent that Ryerson University, with its growing student body and prominence in the city as an institution of higher-education, would be a suitable new owner of the land. "I want Ryerson to get the building," said the 87 year-old Sam Sniderman to the *Toronto Star*. "It's a relationship we've had from the very beginning of time. We've grown simultaneously. Now, Sam's is no more. But it will go on eternally if Ryerson takes over the building and establishes it as their front door on Yonge St."[86] However, because he had put

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[86] Quoted in Daniel Girard, "Ryerson Ramps Up Plan to Win Sam's Site," *Toronto Star*, 3 July 2007.

ownership of the property in the hands of his two sons and nieces through an in-trust account, Sniderman's desires could only indirectly influence the transaction between the four co-owners of the property and Ryerson University.

Unable to come into an agreement on the financial value of the property in a timely manner, Ryerson University's Board of Governors sought for ways to expropriate the land so that the publicly-funded institution could then purchase it at a "fixed market value" assigned by the Government of Ontario. Under the same Expropriations Act that the city invoked in order to take over the land where the newly erected Yonge-Dundas Square is found, Ryerson's Board wanted to ask the province of Ontario to expropriate the property in order to better achieve the university's own academically-focused community goals. Like the City of Toronto successfully did less than a decade earlier, Ryerson's board believed they could also make the case for expropriating the land owned by the Snidermans, arguing the university will use the property in order to improve and better fulfill their educational mandates.

As Ryerson Professor of Urban Planning and Development, David Amborski demonstrates, at this time not only did Ryerson have a permanent sitting member on the YDS-Board, the publicly-funded institution also played an important role in sustaining the public-private development efforts in the area.[87] Through its agreements with the city and Pen Equity — a real estate development and management company — Ryerson university allowed the developer to build a 340,000 square foot entertainment based retail centre, including a thirty screen megaplex movie theatre, on top of the university's four-story parking facilities. Such an agreement allowed for the expansion of the newly reconstructed 10 Dundas Street East property. In exchange, the university was given access to the twelve theatre spaces for five hours a day, which university staff estimated to roughly amount to $3.6 million of free classroom spaces.[88]

It remains unclear whether Ryerson's Board of Governors was truly considering expropriation, or whether they were raising this strategy as a tactic to encourage the Sniderman

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[87] David Amborski, "Ryerson University and Toronto's Dundas Square Metropolis Project," in David C. Perry and Wim Wiewel eds., *The University as Urban Developer: Case Studies and Analysis* (Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2005), 175-189.

[88] Ibid., 184.

family to quickly sell their land to Ryerson instead of pursuing other potential buyers. Nevertheless, by January of 2008, the two parties came to an agreement to sell the property, along with two others, for the sum of $40 million.[89] It is important to note however that prior to Ryerson announcing its intentions to pursue strategies of expropriation, the City of Toronto had already designated the entire property a heritage building. This was largely done to protect the large sign located on the Yonge Street façade of the store. Because the Ontario Heritage Act does not recognize the saving of signs for cultural preservation purposes, the city had to designate the entire building to be worthy of heritage protection. The purchasing agreement detailed that Ryerson University could demolish the brick and mortar store, however it was still bound to maintain and reinstall the sign onto the new building Ryerson was constructing in its place.

Nearly four years later, Ryerson University began the construction of a new centre located on the square footage of the old Sam the Record Man shop. The new glass clad building did not include the sign on its external façades. While maintaining that the university is "obligated…to repair the sign or to take it out of the warehouse and to put it back together," then President of Ryerson Unversity Sheldon Levy voiced that because the sign "was totally falling apart" the university had been seeking alternative ways of commemorating the sign. A year later, with the construction of the Ryerson Student Learning Centre well underway, the university had officially proposed to Toronto and East York Community Council a "vibrant reinterpretation" of the ways the Sam the Record Man sign would be paid tribute. Instead of re-installing the sign onto the façade of the new building, Ryerson University put forth the idea of "a commemorative insert" on the Yonge Street sidewalk where the store previously stood as well as a web page honouring Sam's history. According to the city's report of the proposal, the insert was to "be lined up with the former location of the storefront and…accompanied by an interpretive plaque…that will include an image of the storefront signage with commemorative text and inserts that will represent the sign's lettering and discs."[90] In their proposal, the university again raised concerns about the conditions and dangers associated with the reinstallation of the sign, quoting costume signage experts, Gregory Signs & Engraving Limited, who identified "mercury

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[89] "Ryerson Buys Sam the Record Man Property," *CBC News,* 18 Jan 2008.

[90] Daniel Dale, "City Lets Ryerson Out of Contract on Famed Sam the Record Sign," *Toronto Star*, 29 Aug 2013.

spillage in the event of a fire or breakage," and a "decrease in the number of qualified neon sign professionals," as major reasons why the university should be allowed to back out of their agreement.[91]

In addition to resource and energy concerns, the architects of the Student Learning Centre — Snohetta and Zeidler Partnership — also cited conflict with the eco-friendly design of the new building, and the distractions caused by the sign's flashing lights to individuals working inside.[92] Denying that the estimated $250,000 reinstallation cost was the reason Ryerson was proposing a variation to the agreement, Levy told the *Toronto Star* that "if the university were to hang the sign, it would have to install it at the Gould Street location rather than its new Student Learning Centre on Yonge Street, because of architectural concerns."[93] In other words, Ryerson University was protecting its mutual decision with the architects of the learning centre not to include the sign on the new "modernist" building's façade, while at the same time proposing to place it in a location away from the visual traffic on Yonge Street. "The alternative that we are bringing to the city is one that we think is fantastic and preserves the sign and celebrates the history of it in a much, much better way," Levy said.[94] "It's visibly far, far more accessible than the sign…This is right in front of everyone, with the history accessible right at eye level on Yonge Street," he added.[95]

At least seven of the eleven councillors agreed with the new plan not to reinstall the sign, and granted Ryerson another year to determine the fate of the sign. As Councillor Adam Vaughan for example put it, "The trouble with these electronic signs is that they are not exactly built to last," and they also involve great "environmental challenges."[96] For him it was not so much the

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[91] Ibid.

[92] Chris Bateman, "Sam the Record Man Sign Probably Gone for Good," *blogTO*, 30 Aug 2013.

[93] Laura Kane, "Ryerson Denies Cost Motivated Nixing Sam the Record Man Sign," *Toronto Star*, 30 Aug 2013.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

sign that needed preservation as much as it was the life of Sam Sniderman and the shop that needed commemoration. Reinstalling the sign was only one way of doing so. But if reinstallation was unfeasible, then alternative options should be further explored. Then Mayor, Rob Ford, also concurred, "It's a unique sign for the City of Toronto. Everybody remembers the Sam the Record Man sign…So to get rid of it, it's unfortunate. I'd like to keep it. But if we can't keep it, we can't keep it."[97] Even former Councillor Kyle Rae chimed in saying that in hindsight, it was impractical to ask Ryerson to reinstall the sign. "When I think about it today, telling a new property owner that they have to put the sign up of a no-longer-existing business is a pretty bizarre thing to do."[98]

Others, however, found Ryerson's proposal and the councillors' decision to allow Ryerson to rescind the original agreement to be highly problematic and revelatory of the deep biases to promote new construction over the preservation of architectural heritage. Speaking of his fellow councillors, Councillor Josh Matlow called the decision a capitulation of elected officials' powers to enforce the law.

> "I think the city has done, overall, an awful job of protecting our heritage…We've demolished so many buildings and taken away so many places that should be a part of our heritage in the name of progress…They [city councillors] sign an agreement to protect our heritage. They're going to capitulate at the end of the day. This looks to me like capitulation."[99]

Likewise, a slew of outrage appeared in public newspaper readers' opinion pieces. For one opinion writer this was clearly a case where a simple good-willed agreement between Ryerson and the City was being evaded: "It's about City Hall's egregious record on defending the interests of all Toronto citizens…through enforcement of even the most basic notion of historic

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[97] Laura Kane, "Ryerson Has Another Year to Decide Future of Sam the Record Man Sign," *Toronto Star*, 10 Sep 2013.

[98] Laura Kane, "Sam the Record Man's Son Dismayed Ryerson Won't Hang Sign," *Toronto Star*, 5 Sep 2013.

[99] Kane, "Ryerson Has Another Year."

preservation."[100] Another argued that this "is about much more than heritage preservation. It's also about a developer looking to escape their legal obligations."[101] Still another wrote that in her mind this was clearly a case of the ruling class doing as it pleases: "Ryerson promised to re-mount the sign, then reneged. People get sick of the wealthy and powerful making their own rules, and who can blame them?"[102]

If up to now there was little public outcry against the development of Yonge-Dundas Square, or the privatization of public spaces and resources, or the concentration of power amongst members of the public-private partnership, the removal of the Sam the Record Man sign became a kind of lightening rod, garnering significant public and political pushback against the core of the neoliberalist realignment of city governance and the screen spaces that accompanied it. As Toronto resident and founding member of the "Save Our Sign" group — an activist group formed for the purpose of holding Ryerson University to their contractual obligations to pay for the restoration, reinstallation, operation, and ongoing maintenance of the sign — Sean Boulton wrote in his reader's opinion piece,

> Ryerson promised the city that they'd restore the sign and reinstall it on either the new Student Learning Centre or their Gould Street library building. They're now unwilling to do so, essentially because it's too hard, too costly, and not in line with their vision of their neighbourhood. If Ryerson is allowed to shirk this responsibility, what type of precedent does that set? Why should anyone who makes a commitment to the people of this city, however reluctantly, not expect that they'll be able to point to this example and get off the hook as well?[103]

In addition to the "Save Our Sign" group, Music Canada president Graham Henderson, President and CEO of The Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences as well as the JUNO Awards, joined celebrated musicians such as Jane Bunnett, Gord Downie, Rik Emmett, Leslie Feist, Daniel Lanois, Geddy Lee, Gordon Lightfoot, Anne Murray, amongst others, to voice their

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[100] Jeff Balmer, "Columnist Off-key on Sam's Sign," *Toronto Star*, 21 Sep 2013.

[101] Sean Boulton, "Columnist Off-key on Sam's Sign," *Toronto Star*, 21 Sep 2013.

[102] Margaret Meagher, "Columnist Off-key on Sam's sign," *Toronto Star*, 21 Sep 2013.

[103] Boulton, "Columnist Off-key on Sam's sign."

opposition to Ryerson's 'vibrant reinterpretation' of its agreement to reinstall the sign. In his letter of support, the lead singer of *The Tragically Hip*, Downie wrote:

> I can think of no better icon, no better beacon, no better sign downtown for your people to rally around, to meet under. I can think of no other place in Toronto that would 'get this'—that would understand the importance of this—more than Ryerson University. Dear Ryerson, please go with your initial impulse to purchase, save and proudly display this sign. It is a good one. For all kids past, present and future.[104]

Folk singer-songwriter Lightfoot, in his letter, simply stated, "The giant spinning discs are a reminder of the huge role that Sam Sniderman and his store played in the cultural life of Toronto and I believe they should be preserved and remounted in the interest of our city's heritage."[105] And in her letter addressed to Ryerson University, Feist wrote "Our collective story in music, and the rare landmarks we have available to us to remember it by, are a way to avoid heaving ourselves headlong into the future blind of what helped form us. It wouldn't take much but to put it in the hands of people who will do right by it's [sic] legacy."[106]

The public outcries were successful. Less than two months after the initial decision to let Ryerson renege on the agreement by exploring options other than reinstallation, and with growing skepticisms that Ryerson University was indeed, as Councillor Matlow put it, "going to lengths to protect and preserve the sign that are commensurate with its civic importance"[107] —

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[104] Gord Downie, "Letter to Ryerson University," 21 October 2013. Retrieved from the SOS: SAVE OUR SAM the Record Man Sign, posted 4 November 2013. facebook.com/SaveSamSign/

[105] Gordon Lightfoot, "Letter of support for Save Our Sign group," 5 Sept 2013. Retrieved from the SOS: SAVE OUR SAM the Record Man Sign, posted 10 July 2014, facebook.com/SaveSamSign/.

[106] Leslie Feist, "Letter to Ryerson University," 25 October 2013. Retrieved from the SOS: SAVE OUR SAM the Record Man Sign, posted on 30 October 2013, facebook.com/SaveSamSign/.

[107] Councillor Josh Matlow, "Letter to Sheldon Levy, President and Vice-Chancellor Ryerson University," 17 Sep 2013. Retrieved from the SOS: SAVE OUR SAM the Record Man Sign, posted on 25 September 2013, facebook.com/SaveSamSign/.

even the very existence of the sign was put into question[108] — city councillors voted 24-18 in favour of referring the issue to the deputy city manager for further investigation and exploration of solutions to reinstall the sign. By involving staff and the resources of the city, Ryerson was now being forced to comply with the stratified efforts to ensure the sign would be reinstalled in public, not in a museum or remembered through placards.

In June of 2014, deputy city manager John Livey put forth a plan to install the sign atop the city owned Toronto Public Health Building, overlooking the eastern side of Yonge-Dundas Square. Prior to attaining approval from the local planning committee as well as city council, Sean Boulton of "Save Our Sign" found the plan to be satisfactory. "I don't think it's the best solution we would have all hoped for, but at the end of the day with what is available I think it's a good solution," he told the *Toronto Star*. The proposal was not without faults. For Councillor Matlow, most problematic was what would happen if the building was to be sold in a future date? City council resolved this issue by stipulating that any future sale of the site would include an agreement to preserve and maintain the sign there; somewhat forgetting how this entire issue began in the first place.

More than a year and a half later, in February of 2016, Ryerson University issued a request for bids on installing the sign on top of the Public Health Building. It took them another year to choose the Hamilton-based signage manufacturer, Sunset Neon, to repair, refurbish, and reinstall the sign."We are very pleased to announce the iconic Sam the Record Man signs, with their spinning neon discs, will once again illuminate downtown Toronto," said current Ryerson University president and vice-chancellor Mohamed Lachemi, adding, "We're very thankful to the City of Toronto and the Sniderman family for their ongoing support and patience."[109]

In comparison to the establishment of the YDS-Board, the story of the "Sam the Record Man" sign, owned by Ryerson University — a member of the YDS-Board — illustrates how public outcries helped ensure that the material remnants of this iconic piece of Yonge Street's signage culture remained a part of the neighbourhood. While it seemed as though the sign was

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[108] The Fixer, "Ryerson Looks Dodgy by Refusing to Prove Sam's Sign Hasn't Been Destroyed," *Toronto Star*, 1 Oct 2013.

[109] Emma McIntosh, "Sam the Record Man Sign to Go Back Up this Summer," *Toronto Star*, 8 March 2017.

going to be discarded from the area, the story of this sign reveals the kinds of powers that members of the YDS-Board tried to exert. But it also illustrates the influence that members of the public can have over the area. The production of public spaces, capital, and people under the orders of the public-private arrangement do not mean that a uniformed definition of the public-private public emerged. Members of the YDS-Board do not manage the square entirely without any external pressure from either the city, other members of the public, or crucially, amongst members of the managing board. Indeed, interacting with the city and private citizens who want to make use of the square is what YDS-Board members are largely tasked to do.

Conclusion

Readers of this chapter might find the shift in focus from the management of space to the management of signage as incongruent with the goals that I initially set forth. An analysis of the spaces of the square would emphasize the empty areas between screens, not the screens themselves. But analyzing the management of space also means a focus on the management of objects that are placed within and define the boundaries of that space. While theorists of media architecture seek to emphasize the inseparable ties between media technologies and other building materials, the three agreements discussed above illustrate how in practice, objects such as LED screens, digital projections, and neon signage are not always treated as materials that are symbiotically tied to the architectural construct but to a more amorphous built environment constituted largely by open urban space. Just as media contents are programmed to display varying images and messages that change throughout the day, so too are the screen devices upon which those messages are displayed subject to the scrutinies of programming and change, albeit over longer periods of time.

The term “media architecture” seeks to combine the sculpting of space with the display of either textual, graphic, moving, or abstract images through electronic lighting and screen technologies. Media archaeologist Erkki Huhtamo observes that such a combination of architecture with media can be traced back to eighteenth and nineteenth centuries practices of magic lanterns, phantasmagoria, fireworks, as well as to the profusion of signboards, sky-signs,

searchlights, arc-lights, and illuminated billboards in the early parts of twentieth century. Certainly, these genealogical precursors are clear evidence of an urban architectural past that should not be discounted. When new media are added onto architecture they alter, augment, or transform the original architectural construct. However, as Zlatan Krajina puts it, we must always be

> "suspicious…about whether emphasizing media or mediation as a kind of separate element which is 'added' to the understanding of the city in the service of discovering something entirely 'new' will get us very far. Lest we end up in a blind alley where mediation (whether as representation or technology in use) is contrasted to any 'real'/'actual' city (whatever that might be), we might better keep in mind that there hardly ever was a moment in urban history that wasn't mediated."[110]

Dissecting media from architecture both downplays the ways that architecture itself mediates, as well as wrongfully qualifies media as elements that can be unstrung from the social, economic, and cultural power relations that shape architecture. While there certainly are kernels of truth to Huhtamo's genealogy, there is much analytical evidence to contradict, or in the very least complicate, the history he is proposing. In excavating the media archaeology of media architecture, it is important that we not risk deemphasizing the intricately inseparable history of media as architecture as well — especially its operations as ownership of land and as regulator of public interactions.

Public-private media architectures are neither quite public nor quite private. Rather, they articulate the entanglements and agencies of both public and private organizations of capital. In doing so, such architectural configurations conceal the influence that private interests impose over public spaces, normalizing the governmental powers of selective portions of the private sector in intertwined relations with the political mechanisms of the public sector. Organizations such as the Yonge Street Business and Residents Association, the Yonge-Dundas Square Board of Management, the Times Square Alliance, and the Quartier des Spectacles Partnership (discussed in the next chapter) restructure urban forms of governance by providing private businesses

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[110] Zlatan Krajina, "Back to the City," *Mediapolis: A Journal of Cities and Culture* 1.5 (November 2016), http://www.mediapolisjournal.com/2016/11/back-to-the-city/.

authority to manage public spaces and services, thereby legitimizing the hegemonic dominations that neoliberal ideologies can hold over urban cultures. Iterations such as Dundas Square Garage and YDS-Board, like the LED billboards in Yonge-Dundas Square, illustrate the practical ways the restructuring of urban governance manifest through the management of a range of architectural, technical, spatial, and legal practices, each giving select members from the private and public sectors legally legitimized authority over public space. The rise of BIAs and PPPs, particularly in Canadian cities, have not only coincided with but have arguably also been crucially instrumental to the adoption of urban screens in the Canadian context, providing both financial and legal support to this emerging technological infrastructure. In return, such organizations hold claim over the management of urban screen cultures and control the kinds of things that can be done through these technologies, the images that appear on them, and the spaces they create and frame.

It is not enough to theorize how, as Moritz Behrens et al. put it, "interactions between humans and humans, humans and computers, and humans and architectures" can be better designed within "media architectural interfaces."[111] Needed is also an intricately defined understanding of how humans, computers, and architecture are defined and empowered; not only by whom, for what purposes, and through which mechanisms, but also through better understandings of the ways they are enabled to act as agents of influence. Public-private configurations of urban screens legitimize private control over public screen culture in particular, and public urban culture more broadly, by masking their operations as services undertaken and managed for the benefits of the broadest public possible. Whereas the borders of the public screen exist on the screen and in the space located immediately in front of it, and where the thresholds appear at the brinks of spectatorial interaction, the public-private screen is demarcated by a broader architectural arrangement, one that enfolds the defined boundaries of public and private, further obscuring what Abigail Susik describes as urban screens' "politics of occupation."[112]

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[111] Moritz Behrens et al., "Designing Media Architectural Interfaces…," 56-7.

[112] Abigail Susik, "The Screen Politics of Architectural Light Projection," *Public* 45 (2012): 106-119.

The media architecture of Yonge-Dundas Square has been informed by both the paradigms of architectural demolition as well as those of media preservation. Whereas a number of buildings have been destroyed in order to make room for new urban screen spectatorial and display infrastructures, Yonge-Dundas Square has also been informed by the preservation of "Sam the Record Man" sign, thereby connecting the square to a historical period that existed prior to its development. LED screens in Yonge-Dundas Square, in other words, played crucial roles in aestheticizing and monumentalizing a sense of upscaled retail to a newly defined public-private public. Moreover, within the newly established YDS-Board, screens and spectatorial spaces became the grounds upon which competing public and private interests were being negotiated. To be sure, YDS-Board members did not always consent to the terms and power of this newly formed governmental organization. Notably, Ryerson University did not want the onus of maintaining and re-erecting the "Sam the Record Man" sign. Variably, a number of YDS-Board members objected to the redesign of the square's screen infrastructure, arguing that the new designs will obstruct the views towards screens that they themselves owned and relied upon as sources of income. As architectural objects, LED screens in Yonge-Dundas Square belong to a rather complex configuration of building materials, financial investments, as well as governmental bodies for managing the operations of events that take place in the square every day. Through redevelopment, screens and spectatorial spaces in Yonge-Dundas Square gave material formations to a particular type of urban occupation, one that is dependent on the management of places where screens are located as well as the sites from which screens can be looked at.

CHAPTER 4

MAINTAINING '*LA REVOLUTION TRANQUILLE*': ARCHITECTURE, PROJECTION MAPPING, AND AN AESTHETIC OF MAINTENANCE IN QUARTIER DES SPECTACLES

In the last chapter I argued that media architecture should not be theorized solely as new media that are created through the amalgamation of screen technologies with built environments. Deeper analyses of the construction histories of media architecture, such as in Piccadilly Circus, Times Square and Yonge-Dundas Square, serve as crucial reminders that the use of screen technologies as building materials dominantly emerge in economic and political contexts that favour the formation of Business Improvement Areas and Public-Private Partnerships. Efforts to privatize urban spaces through redevelopment oftentimes involve the demolition of buildings so that new constructions, outfitted with screen media, can be built. In this chapter I emphasize a different kind of convergence among media, architecture, and urban infrastructure in order to bring attention to what is arguably a similar neoliberal appropriation of urban screens. In operation since 2009, of the four sites I analyze, Quartier des Spectacles (QdS) is the most recent of developments. Unlike Piccadilly Circus, Times Square or Yonge-Dundas Square, it is not characterized by tightly clustered LED screens displaying advertisements throughout the day and night hours. Instead, in QdS digital projectors are employed in order to display strictly non-commercial-based, artistic, and playful moving images onto the façades of nine buildings, scattered throughout an approximately one squared kilometre zone, solely during the darker evening hours.

Rather than erecting new buildings, as will be explained below, the emergence of urban screens in QdS relies on their aesthetic transformation through the use of what is commonly

referred to as "projection mapping."[1] Projection mapping is a family of technologies, made up of computers, digital projectors, and what is referred to as "masking" software. This software closely traces an existing facility — typically a building, though it has also been used on bridges, roads, sculptures, cars, furnitures, shoes, even human faces — in order to calculate how high-resolution, and uniformly focused, moving images can be projected onto the surface of that object. Unlike the distance maintained between a cinema screen and a projector, which necessarily remains fixed so that a focused image can be projected across the entire frame, the façades of three dimensional objects such as buildings cannot maintain a similar equidistant relation to a projector. The slightest changes between a building's surfaces and the projectors used can create a disjunction, a blur, or a stretch of the image. This becomes especially noticeable in buildings that have abrupt set-backs or are circular in shape. Masking is therefore used to minimize the traces of gaps in, protrusions to, or protractions of the surfaces of objects in ways that both flatten their differences but at the same time highlight their contours by creating a seemingly tightly fitted veil.

In contrast to the ways LED screens permanently cover buildings to create so-called "media façades," images displayed using projection mapping media only temporarily obstruct the built environment. Unlike LED displays, digital projectors and projection mapping do not demand the destruction of, or significant alterations to, existing buildings. Because that is the case, the employment of projection mapping can enunciate the interactions between architecture and media in ways that call attention to a politics of preservation that is less about the destruction and replacement of buildings, and more about the continued maintenance of those buildings through the addition of digital projection technologies. In this chapter I illustrate how this type of media and architectural amalgamation manifests in the QdS projection mapping infrastructure, a network of nine (though originally there were eight) buildings scattered throughout the QdS zone

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[1] See Donato Maniello, *Augmented Reality in Public Spaces: Basic Techniques for Video Mapping* (Brienza: Le Penseur, 2014); Sarah Barns and Shanti Sumartojo, "When One Idea Led to Another: Re-inscribing and Recombining Thinking Spaces Using Nighttime Projections at the Australian National University," *The Senses & Society* 10.2 (2015): 179-199; Katerina Korola, "Probing Light: Projection Mapping, Architectural Surface, and the Politics of Luminous Abstraction," *Intermédialités* 24/25 (2014/2015).

upon which moving image media are projected. In emphasizing how the Quartier des Spectacles Partnership — a public-private partnership between the city of Montreal's tourism office and representatives from a mixture of cultural, academic, and business communities in the area — manages and maintains the security of digital projectors, computers, buildings and spectatorial space that are part of this infrastructure, this chapter argues that projection mapping techniques nevertheless work in congruence with neoliberal policies of privatization similar to those found in Times Square and Yonge-Dundas Square. Significantly, as will be argued below, this assimilation of projection mapping with neoliberal power is done through the transformation of academic and cultural institutions that were established in accordance with egalitarian liberal principles.

Urbanist Yanick Barrette argues that the "mega-project of the QdS came to consolidate [an] idea of spectacularization of urban space, a conception of and for Montreal originally imagined by Jean Drapeau."[2] As Mayor of Montreal from 1954-1957 as well as 1960-1986, Drapeau's various administrations helped implement and oversee the construction of the public underground transit system, the hosting of the 1967 World Exposition, the 1976 Olympics, the building of the Place des Arts performance centre (now located in QdS), as well as the promotion of dozens of cultural festivals. Barrette describes Drapeau's policies between the 1970s through the 1990s as crucial mechanisms that assisted the dense boom in Montreal-based festivals. According to Barrette, the development of QdS can therefore be attributed to Drapeau's cosmopolitan policies which established the city as a place synonymous with outdoor spectacles. Building on Barrette's analysis, in this chapter I highlight how the geography of this cosmopolitanism is also deeply embedded in the economic and political frameworks of the so-

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[2] Originally, "le méga-projet du QdS est venu consolider [une] idée de spectacularisation de l'espace urbain, une conception « de et pour » Montréal originellement imaginée par Jean Drapeau." Yanick Barrette, "Le Quartier des spectacles à Montréal: La consolidation du spectaculaire," *Téros: Revue de Recherche En Tourisme* 33.2 (2014): http://journals.openedition.org/teoros/2691.

called "Quiet Revolution" (a.k.a "la Revolution tranquille").[3] Focusing on the management of buildings that are part of the QdS Partnership's projection mapping infrastructure, I will highlight how the rise of welfare-state politics, egalitarian liberalism and Québecois secularism also helped shape the branding, economies, resources, and infrastructures of urban screen technologies in QdS. If cosmopolitanism and spectacles have been cultivated in buildings such as Place des Arts between the 1960s through the 2000s, since the launch of the QdS projection mapping infrastructure in 2013, those festive spirits have also been more recently mapped onto the façades of buildings themselves.

As political theorist Wendy Brown writes, neoliberalism "is a loose and shifting signifier," "a peculiar form of reason," the grasp of which is arguably inescapable.[4] Whether it be the cost of medicine, increase in gun sales, rise in mass incarceration, mechanical failures in public transit systems, mass migration and the mistreatment of migrants, growing commercialization of public spaces, or lack of resolutions towards dealing with climate change based on the grounds of needs rather than market desires, neoliberalism is oftentimes invoked to explain the reasons why things are not working towards proper solutions. Whether appearing through multi-national organizations or contraband networks that operate outside of the legal frameworks of state courts, or in such formations as business improvement districts and public-private partnerships that work at arms length from publicly elected positions, neoliberalism functions both at global and local scales. It is, as Brown puts it, where "all conduct is economic conduct," where "all spheres of existence are framed and measured by economic terms and metrics, even when those spheres are not directly monetized."[5] But neoliberalism does not exist

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[3] For histories and reviews of debates surrounding Québec's "Quiet Revolution" see: Jacques Rouillard, "La révolution tranquille, rupture ou tournant?," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes* 32.4 (1998): 23-51; Yves Bélanger, Robert Comeau and Céline Métivier eds., *La révolution tranquille, 40 ans plus tard : Un bilan* (Montréal, VLB Éditeur: 2000); Éric Montpetit and Christian Rouillard, "La Révolution tranquille et le réformisme institutionnel. Pour un dépassement des discours réactionnaires sur l'étatisme québécois," *Globe. Revue internationale d'études québécoises* 4.1 (2001): 119-139.

[4] Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 20, 17.

[5] Ibid., 10.

in a vacuum, nor does it manifest homogeneously across all geographies and spectrums of modernity. Like privatization, it is a historically situated term that is best described as a series of actions that seek to realign the management of projects, resources, and capital that were previously administered to publicly elected officials. This realignment has been done either through the instating of regulations that favour private sector growth, or through the handing control of governance to private, oftentimes for profit, entities.

Because members of the QdS Partnership consist of both representatives from the private sector as well as from publicly-funded institutions, this public-private partnership offers a unique look at the transformation of policies rooted in egalitarian liberalism into those that are shaped by neoliberal reconfigurations of governance and the privatization of capital. In QdS, projection mapping media play a crucial role in illuminating the buildings and infrastructures that were built as a result of welfare-state policies established through the Quiet Revolution. By employing digital projectors and masking software, the QdS Partnership aestheticizes these buildings and infrastructures in ways that call for the renewal of existing architecture not through their destruction, but through their remaining intact. In doing so they give prominence to select buildings in the area through the addition of a layer of meaning. No longer only housing academic or entertainment activities inside, these buildings now also stand in as platforms for the logics of tourist economies, festivals, and new real-estate economies for condos and office spaces. Digital projectors and the techniques of projection mapping, at least in this instance, demonstrate how minimal disruptions to the built environment still feeds tendencies towards gentrification, privatization, and neoliberalization of cities while at the same time also emphasizing the persistence of projects long in the making.[6] Building on scholarship in maintenance studies (discussed further below), I refer to this layering as an aesthetic of maintenance.

Some of the findings in this chapter are based on interviews I conducted with QdS Partnership personnel. Although I was able to conduct these interviews, for reasons that have yet

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[6] See also my "Territorial Expanded Cinema in The Neo-Liberal City: Curating Multiscreen Environments in Yonge-Dundas Square and Quartier Des Spectacles," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 27.1 (2018): 88-107, where I argue for an understanding of screens in Quartier des Spectacles as giving shape to neoliberal political frameworks.

to be clarified to me, communications with my contact were abruptly put on hold. The last message I received simply stated an apology for not being able to reply back to my inquiry, followed by what seems to be an internal memo that this line of communication is now officially closed. After having been left in the dark, and with a number of unsuccessful attempts to re-establish communication, I was unable to obtain my interviewees approval to directly quote their words. The barricades put on my correspondences with workers and representatives from QdS point to the impediments that exist in arrangements such as the QdS public-private partnership. It illustrates this organization's abilities to control knowledge about public urban infrastructures through the management of its own image as an administrative power over public resources. This points to the problems that research on maintenance cultures can take. Not only is this material often not properly archived and adequately documented, it also points to the ways knowledge about maintenance of public culture can be restricted by private or pseudo-public bodies. Circumventing such limitations, while I do not directly quote from my interviews, this chapter has nevertheless gained insights from the information shared with me by QdS's personnel.

Making an Urban Screen Infrastructure

In the 2002 Montreal Summit, then newly elected Mayor Gérald Tremblay and his team initiated a call to rejuvenate the area located between Bleury Street to the west, Saint Hubert Street to the east, René-Lévesque Boulevard to the south, and Sherbrooke Street to the north. Because of the presence of dozens of performance halls in the neighbourhood, the roughly one kilometre squared area was at the time vernacularly referred to as 'le quartier des spectacles' (the entertainment district). Tremblay's Union Montreal party argued that while the designated zone was home to a great deal of performance venues that helped facilitate a high degree of nighttime activities, the neighbourhood was nevertheless being under-utilized during the daytime. Union Montreal identified approximately twenty-five concert halls and theatrical venues — including Place des Arts, Cinéma Impérial, Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, Monument-National, Théâtre St-Denis, Société des Arts Technologique, Spectrum, Metropolis, and Club Soda to name a few — as serving crucially important institutions that helped shape the area's nightlife as wholesome,

intellectual, and culturally elevating. However, because of their heavy reliance on evening-hour activities, it was suggested, such institutions were also part and parcel of a broader characterization of the neighbourhood that was synonymous with seedier and low-brow nighttime venues and activities.

Particularly troublesome in the minds of politicians was one intersection on Saint Catherine and Saint Laurent — nicknamed the "Lower Main" and "la Main" — where striptease, 99 cent hot-dogs, bars, sex shops, pawn shops, used-clothing stores, sex trade, vacant lots, as well as eastern-European, middle-eastern, and east-Asian grocery stores have long characterized the place to some as seedy and to others as ethnically diverse. Such a mixture of subjects and tastes helped characterize the neighbourhood as a site where diverse mixtures of class, race, sex, and ethnicities collectively contributed to its makeup. One journalist described the juxtaposition of cultures and tastes in the Lower Main as being representative of a particular type of Montreal kitsch that is deeply historical and characteristic of the city's multi-cultural composition.[7] As promises of economic rejuvenation of the area gained strength, it became rather apparent that select businesses would no longer fit the newly elected government's new vision for the neighbourhood. In addition to the Café Cleopatre striptease bar, the city was also in process of approving the removal of the Montreal Pool Room (a hot-dog and poutine fast food restaurant that has been on the block since 1919), Club Opera (a dance club), and the Main Epicérie (an ethnic grocery store).[8]

Seeking to make the area appealing to real estate developers by facilitating more regular daytime activities, the city sought to promote more "mixed-uses" in the area by aggrandizing the twenty-five concert halls and theatrical venues — along with their collective 28,000 seat capacities — to function as cultural staples that worked in congruence with the construction of

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[7] Jean-Christophe Laurence, "Last call pour le Red Light," *La Presse*, 16 May 2009.

[8] In an ongoing legal battle, the owner of Café Cleopatre has managed to block the city from expropriating the land where his business is located. The Montreal Pool Room and the Main Epicérie have been relocated across the street from its former location in order to make room for the construction of a new building. See Jonathan Cha and Eleonora Diamanti, "En marge du Quartier des spectacles : tensivité et trajectoires opposées du Spectrum et du Café Cléopâtre," in *Le Quartier des spectacles et le chantier de l'imaginaire montréalais*, eds. Simon Harel, Laurent Lussier and Joël Thibert (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2015), 29-66.

new office and residential condo towers. This was part of Union Montreal's broader effort at re-branding Montreal as "the city as ultimate work of art" that directly sought to make culture into a social, economic, and political instrument.[9] In the party's 2004 budgetary plan, Union Montreal outlined how they intended to make culture and knowledge useful as strategic sources of economic and social influence in the city:

> Culture and knowledge undoubtedly serve as a strategic vector of development in Montreal. As a cultural metropolis, Montreal possesses unique assets including vibrant creativity and enviable international influence. Nevertheless, such advantages need to be reaffirmed and reinforced in order to secure Montreal's position in the local, national and international scenes. With this in mind, the City will introduce its first cultural policy and will then define a cultural development plan with the aim of organizing…municipal actions in partnership with cultural circles, local communities, as well as the Federal and Provincial governments. Such a cultural policy will make it possible to affirm the essential role of culture as a factor of economic and social development in Montreal.[10]

By honing in on and better fostering the neighbourhood's arts and cultural institutions, the city's strategy was to rebrand this large focal area in the centre of the city as an entertainment district.

The solution became the establishment of the QdS Partnership, a network of select organizations that together gain concerted representation and legalized claims over public space

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[9] Helen Fotopulos qtd. in Juan Rodriguez, "Pump Up the Culture: It's the Engine that Powers this City," *The Gazette,* 15 March 2003, D1.

[10] Originally in French: "La culture et le savoir sont sans conteste un vecteur stratégique du développement de Montréal. Comme métropole culturelle, Montréal possède des atouts uniques, dont une créativité en effervescence et un rayonnement international enviable. Néanmoins, ces avantages doivent être réaffirmés et renforcés afin de soutenir le positionnement de Montréal sur les scènes locale, nationale et internationale. Dans cette optique, la Ville déposera sa première politique culturelle et définira par la suite un plan de développement culturel dans le but de convenir…des interventions municipales dans ce domaine, en partenariat avec les milieux culturels, les arrondissements et les gouvernements fédéral et provincial. Cette politique culturelle permettra d'affirmer le rôle essentiel de la culture comme facteur de développement économique et social à Montréal." Ville de Montréal, *Plan budgétaire 2004*, Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 2003.

in this zone in the city. Like the Times Square Alliance and the Yonge-Dundas Square Board of Management, the QdS Partnership privatizes urban infrastructure by providing collaborative governing powers to select companies and organizations from the neighbourhood. With financial assistance given by the government of Canada ($40 million), the province of Québec ($40 million), and the city of Montreal ($40 million), as well as various private investors, the QdS Partnership has the capacity to brand roughly one square kilometre in the centre of town in its own image. It has used this money, and continues to use it, to fund and host local, national and international artworks and events, to brand the area as "a hub of artistic creation, innovation, production, and presentation," and as a "place to celebrate public art" through a newly established connected infrastructure.[11]

In its vast geographic footprint, of the four sites this dissertation investigates, QdS's territory consists of the largest square footage.[12] Located between Montreal's main commercial district, the gay village, Chinatown, and the Plateau neighbourhood, the footprint of QdS covers approximately one kilometre squared. Instead of clustering screens very closely to one another (as is the case in the other three sites this dissertation investigates), QdS features only nine screens that are scattered throughout this large territory. Whereas in Piccadilly Circus, Times Square, and Yonge-Dundas Square, LEDs are placed around the circumference of each respective locale's comparatively condensed area in order to establish a single, bundled, gathering focal point for spectatorship, digital projectors strategically dispersed around QdS are designed to create separate pockets of spectatorship and interaction.

This scattered arrangement of screens in QdS grew out of the kinds of policies established by the QdS Partnership, whose chosen mandate is to "avoid the 'super-

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[11] Quartier des Spectacles Partnership, "Quartier Des Spectacles | History and Vision." *Quartier des Spectacles Montréal*. Last accessed 4 November 2019. https://www.quartierdesspectacles.com/en/about/history-and-vision/.

[12] While the entirety of the Times Square district can fit into this area close to five times, the Times Square bow-tie itself can fit into the square footage of QdS approximately twenty-six times. Comparatively, the square footage of Piccadilly Circus and Yonge-Dundas Square can fit into QdS more than sixty times and more than seventy-five times, respectively.

commercialization' style evident in Times Square at all cost."[13] The dispersion of screens functions both in the ways spectators are encouraged to playfully roam around the district, experiencing pockets of interaction with digital projections, as well as in how the QdS Partnership makes use of the broader network of existing infrastructure in order to tie the large area into a uniformly themed experience. In contrast to the focalization of multiple screens into one relatively contained area — such as in Piccadilly Circus, Times Square, and Yonge-Dundas Square — the QdS Partnership seeks to manage the commercialization of the space by making use of screens in restrained manners over a limited number of surfaces found across a larger square footage. Urban scholar Laurence Liégeois rightfully describes this as a strategy for making the space feel more like a playful labyrinth, not unlike those found in Disney theme parks.[14] The moving image projections scattered throughout this site are designed to function with the rhythms of the area as a centre for the celebration of a conventional and middle-brow definition of art and culture.

QdS's highly managed policy to favour public art over the presence of commercial advertisements is not only meant to differentiate the district from sites such as Times Square and Yonge-Dundas Square; it also grew out of the social dynamics, political situations, and economic aspirations that shaped the QdS Partnership's and the city of Montreal's shared vision. "In North America all cities cannot be New York," said Helen Fotopulos, Montreal's executive committee member in charge of culture and heritage.[15] Instead, she argued, Montreal must harness the bohemian spirit and verve of its large multicultural artist community who have persisted throughout the 90s as major businesses and manufacturing jobs left to Toronto. As digital media

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[13] Original wording: "La 'surcommercialisation' à l'image de Times Square doit à tout prix être évitée." Le Partenariat due Quartier des spectacles, Mémoire du Partenariat du Quartiers des spectacles sur le project de PPU du Quartier des spectacles – Pôle due quartier latin [Présenté à l'Office de consultation publique de Montréal Montréal], November 2012. http://medias.quartierdesspectacles.com/pdf/documentation/PQDS_memoireppuVFINALE.pdf.

[14] Laurence Liégeois, "Espace labyrinthique et contrainte: Quelles stratégies d'aménagement pour les espaces publics ?" *Géographie et cultures* 70 (July 1, 2009): 37–56.

[15] Quoted in Juan Rodriguez, "Pump Up the Culture: It's the Engine that Powers this City, *The Gazette*, 15 March 2003: D1.

scholar Joel McKim pointed out, as much as it is seen as a tourist destination, the city and the Partnership also see QdS as a way of cultivating and shaping Montreal into what Richard Florida describes as the "creative city" — where the works of artists, software and game designers and others found within a rather destabilized and precarious workforce of the cultural industry, are thought to play increasingly important roles in the global knowledge economy.[16] City officials, in search of secure investments, are seeking ways to harness and cultivate this type of creative workforce in the hopes that it will help improve their positions in the local, regional, national, as well as global economies. Culture is not only seen as big business; it is also seen as a strategic envisioning of the future of labour and the economies of cities.

This is precisely part of not only the rhetoric being employed in Montreal but also the type of vision that drives screen usages in QdS. In addition to the aforementioned funds, the Partnership also secured the spatial and infrastructural resources necessary for the integration of the nine digital projections scattered across the entire squared kilometre area. This infrastructure includes both the real-estate where projectors are placed, the displaying rights of the façades of the buildings upon which images are projected, the square-footage within which spectators can securely look at the screens, as well as access to the energy grid that digital projectors demand. In order to support its vision, the partnership helps cover up to seventy-five percent of project costs, and provides internet connectivity, electricity, digital projectors, pedestrian-friendly areas and large building façades. Artists are asked to secure the remainder expenses through other sources, whether that be out of pocket or through other public or private funds. In other words, through the coordination of real estate, space, and technological infrastructures the QdS Partnership has nearly total control over these particular public surfaces — both for projecting, displaying, as well as spectating — in the city. By rebranding the area as a district for the arts, the city and the QdS Partnership began marketing the zone as a place where people could attend one of the many festivals that take place in the area — such as the Jazz Festival, Just For Laughs, Francopholie — exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Arts, and theatrical, operatic, or ballet performances, all the while being enwrapped in a safe, pedestrian-friendly, atmosphere.

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[16] Joel McKim, "Spectacular Infrastructure: The Mediatic Space of Montreal's 'Quartier des spectacles'," *Public* 45 (2012): 128-138.

In legitimizing the spectatorial settings as such, the designated pathways lead visitors to moving image content curated by the QdS Partnership's Programming Committee. The kinds of works that appear on QdS's projection mapping infrastructure are too different to define in one singular formal aesthetic. Works such as *Bloc Jam* (2010) by the Montreal-based art and design studio Daily tous les jours, and *Co existence* (2014) by Léna Babadjian, make use of computer animation to display abstract or representational, brightly coloured or black and white, figures and shapes. On the other hand, an example such as Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Homeless Projection: Place des Arts* (2014) used video documentation of conversations with homeless individuals made to look as though they are sitting atop the edifices of the Place des Arts complex. Variably, by creating composited images from thousands of photographs and videos gathered from the internet, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's *Make Out* (2009) combined techniques of digital animation with those of documentary. Still other examples, such as *Time Drifts* (2010) by Philipp Geist, and *9 x [MTL]* (2016) by Gabriel Poirier-Galarneau and Vincent Bilodeau, rely largely on text-based graphics or made use of old photographs to project digitally composed collages onto the buildings.

These examples illustrate how QdS makes use of the different types of animation, text, and documentary. Also noteworthy are the variety of modes of engagement and interactivity that have correspondingly been selected. Whereas *100% Chance of Snow* (Cyrielle Tremblay, 2018) is largely conceived to be ambient and does not demand any sustained engagement from spectators, *McLarena* (Daily tous les jours, 2014) demands spectators to physiologically incorporate their bodies and movements into the work. Conversely, whereas a work such as *Bridge — Bench* (Vincent Morisset and Caroline Robert [AATOAA], 2017) generates participation by gathering data of passersby, a work such as *Space Monkey* (Dawn of Man, 2018) asks its spectators to be engaged solely as viewers whose presence cannot alter the work in any direct way. Likewise, whereas a project such as *Mégaphone* (2013) by Étienne Paquette and Alexandre Lupien of Montreal based studio Moment Factory, seeks to create a collective dialogue amongst the gathered crowd, an example such as Francis Laporte's and Alexis Laurence's *Villes pour la vie – Contre la peine de mort* (2014) offers a more didactic mode of

address by creating a narrative that is supported by graphical data, statistics, and imagery about the histories of the death penalty in Canada.

While artists are asked to raise pledges from other outside sources, content for projection mapping is funded in large part by the QdS Partnership. Thus, in its recent self-established authority as curator of public art, the programming committee searches for and chooses works that underline the themes of connectivity, creativity, networking, and communication. For example, in its call for proposals for the 2012 *Luminothérapie/Light Therapy* design competition, the QdS Partnership states:

> Proposed concepts must form the basis for a powerful, rich and creative idea that prompts members of the public to get out and explore the eight sites…involving a relationship and connectivity between each of the eight façades used for projection. The works must be communicative amongst themselves, generating dialogue that incites citizens and visitors to walk around in the Quartier des Spectacles. The projections should be playful and graphical, and assert the uniqueness and coherence of the district.[17]

In this instance, terms such as 'powerful,' 'rich,' 'communicative,' 'playful' and 'connective' stand in to define the meanings of creative engagement with the area's built environment. The featured content is thus curated to function as augmentations of the experience of QdS as a unified territory.

As part of their conditions for eligibility, calls for proposals released by the QdS Partnership also stipulate that selected works "must be of artistic or creative nature; must be designed or adapted for exterior public space; must not convey a message of a sexual nature, or

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[17] Original wording: "Le concept proposé doit être à la base d'une idée forte, riche et créative qui donnera envie au public de découvrir les huit lieux…qui implique une relation et une connectivité entre chacune des huit façades de projection. Les œuvres doivent communiquer entre elles afin de susciter un dialogue qui favorise la déambulation des citoyens et visiteurs dans le Quartier des spectacles. Ludiques et graphiques, les projections doivent permettre l'affirmation de la singularité et de la cohérence du territoire." Le Partenariat du Quartier des spectacles. "Luminothérapie au Quartier des spectacles 2012: Concours de design - Vidéoprojections," 4 June 2012. Design Montreal, Bureau du design de la Ville de Montréal. https://designmontreal.com/concours/luminotherapie-au-quartier-des-spectacles-2012-video.

promote violence, or involve any other offensive content; must adhere to safety and universal accessibility standards as applicable to activities in public spaces."[18] In other words, broader categories of creativity and communication are constrained to works of art that do not convey sexual messages or violence, explicitly advertise a service or product, or seek to offend any individuals or groups. This is not to suggest, however, that such guidelines have restricted controversial or critical works of art from being included in the QdS projection mapping programme. For example, Philipp Geist's *Time Drifts* (2010) challenges the modern urban drive to accumulate and reposition fragmentary or contradictory knowledge, by densely populating the grounds and buildings in QdS with layers upon layers of textual words, squares, cubes, perforated planes, lines, and fog. The piece put into question the need to aestheticize and create multiple meanings and connections from otherwise seemingly disparate parts of the city. Other works explicitly confronted the gentrification that was taking place through the very redevelopment structures that helped fund the art projects themselves. Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Homeless Projection: Place des Arts* (2014) included performances by homeless individuals who, according to Wodiczko, "appear as actors and characters at *Place des Arts*…projected onto the roof of a performance art centre building and be seen as if they were sitting on it."[19] By placing their images and performances atop one of the main cultural focal points of QdS, *Homeless Projection* allowed the homeless to figuratively occupy the spaces from which redevelopment had displaced them. Variably, Lozano-Hemmer's *Make Out* (2009) also brought attention to the recent historical specificity of the site where the work was being displayed. Located on the empty lot where a sex shop building was demolished, the piece displayed projected images of multi-sexually oriented couples kissing. Such a gesture, as McKim writes,

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[18] Original wording: "être de nature artistique ou créative; être conçu ou adapté pour l'espace public et en extérieur; ne pas véhiculer un message à connotation sexuelle ou favorisant la violence ou tout autre contenu offensant; respecter les normes de sécurité et d'accessibilité universelle liées à une présentation dans l'espace public." Le Partenariat du Quartier des spectacles, "Appels de Projets: Créer Pour l'espace Public," 18 February 2019. Quartier des spectacles Montreal. https://www.quartierdesspectacles.com/en/competitions/26/creating-for-public-space/proposal.

[19] Marc James Léger and Krzysztof Wodiczko, "*Homeless Projection: Place Des Arts*: An Interview with Krzysztof Wodiczko," *Journal of Urban Cultural Studies* 2.3 (2015), 328.

"injects an element of eroticism into an entertainment district in the process of being sanitized, testing the threshold of what is now permitted in the area and simultaneously offering a reminder of the Quartier's spatial and historical roots."[20]

Though the content that appears through the projections does not explicitly advertise specific products, it nevertheless serves as a marker that cohesively ties companies in the QdS Partnership — who help fund and maintain the projections — into a unified experience implicitly held under the Quartier des Spectacles banner. QdS consists of more than eighty cultural centres, educational institutions, and businesses. Members in the partnership are made up of representatives from the Place des Arts, Hydro Quebec, Université du Québec à Montréal, CEGEP Vieux Montreal, SAT (Society des Arts Technologique), Tourism Montreal, as well as more than a dozen other theatrical venues. Noticeably not included in the list of QdS Partnership members, however, are the Café Cleopatre, La Coalition pour les droits des travailleuses et travailleurs due sexe (a Montreal-based sex workers' advocacy coalition), and Stella, l'amie de Maimie (a.k.a. Chez Stella; a Montreal-based sex workers' organization), to name a few.[21] This is not accidental. Through the very make-up of its structure, the QdS Partnership systematically either directly promotes or indirectly stands in as a catalyst for the promotion of businesses, trades, and activities that work in congruence with its vision of a profitable entertainment district. Creative content on QdS screens, in other words, should not be mistaken for what it is: advertisements, branding, and the sponsorship of visual material to help promote a particular ideological vision for this neighbourhood that is directly managed by a selected team of representatives.

To be sure, the use of outdoor screens for non-commercial intentions is not particular to QdS. Times Square has its share of creative and artistic utilizations of its screens (most recently the ongoing "Midnight Moment" project put up by the Streaming Museum). The YDS Board

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[20] McKim, 137.

[21] See Anna-Louise Crago and Jenn Clamen, "Né dans le Redlight: The Sex Workers' Movement in Montreal," in *Selling Sex: Experience, Advocacy, and Research on Sex Work in Canada*, edited by Victoria Love, Elya M. Durisin, Emily Van der Meulen, 147-164 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013); and Julie Podmore, "Queering Discourses of Urban Decline: Representing Montreal's Post-World War II 'Lower Main,'" *Historical Geography* 43 (2015): 57-83.

makes use of its square to display movies and performances. The owners of the screen in Piccadilly Circus regularly integrate playful and interactive content. But at each of these other sites, art and non-commercial uses are seen as disruptions to the normalized and dominant uses of the screens. At QdS, art is the dominant type of content that appears on this district's architecture. However, this art is also largely used as content to promote the City of Montreal, businesses, and organizations associated with the objectives of the QdS Partnership. Moreover, though artistic and creative uses of public screen media are an inviting development in Montreal's urban culture, these creative potentials should not overshadow the fact that QdS also plays an instrumental role in the privatization of public spaces and disciplining of the population.

In its unique concentration and organization of power, the QdS Partnership is able to ratify a particular outdoor screen culture infused in the milieus of highly defined artistic communities. Such a development in the structural promotion of public art enables recognizably positive usages of outdoor moving image media that are not strictly tied to the production of commercial-based advertisements. Nevertheless, even in its differences with the other sites investigated in this dissertation, the organization and management of screen culture in QdS by the Partnership have homologous histories to the processes of gentrification that likewise also shaped the redevelopments of Times Square and Yonge-Dundas Square. The inclusion of screen technologies in QdS shares many of the characteristics of urban privatization, exemplifying what Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin describe as the "splintering" of commonly shared urban infrastructures into colonies of concentrated systems of governance. But in QdS, this splintering occurs through the transformation and augmentation of distinct projects that are perseveringly in formation. According to the QdS technical director, Ivan Klein, choosing to use digital projectors over LED screens allows artists to make use of architecture in QdS like a 'creative toolbox in a lab,' while at the same time also "enhancing buildings in a way that respects their form and function."[22] But it is not as though this toolbox allows just about anything to take place in this lab. In Klein's words, "every image must meet certain criteria before it's considered for the

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[22] Ivan Klein quoted in Christie Digital, "Quartier des spectacles: Case Study," *Christie Digital: Costumer Story, Quartier des spectacles,* 12 November 2012, https://www.christiedigital.com/CaseStudies/2012/Quartier-des-Spectacles-Case-Study.pdf.

display and the videos have to express the theme of the building they're displayed on."[23] Digital projectors were selected over LED screens not only because these technologies have far cheaper price tags (though that certainly influenced the final decision), but also because they do not demand that new buildings be constructed to support them.

Notably, though not surprisingly, all of the owners of the buildings used in the QdS projection mapping infrastructure have representatives on the Partnership's Board of Governors. That projection mapping media are added in terms of minimal disruption to the existing architectural and cultural fabrics of the neighbourhood, puts into focus how this particular type political project is here made to operate. Unlike in Piccadilly Circus where architecture was preserved, or in Times Square where the notion of signage was protected, or in the case of the 'Sam the Record Man' sign in Yonge-Dundas Square, where the sign has been commemorated as a memory of a bygone era, the histories of the buildings being animated in QdS through projection mapping are underscored in a new light, persisting as structuring and supporting elements of projects that began long before the establishment of the QdS Partnership. Rather than putting forth policies and by-laws of urban preservation, traces of the impacts of the QdS development manifest in the everyday maintenance of the area's new technological infrastructure. Thus, in contrast to the architectural and signage preservation discourses that characterized the histories of Piccadilly Circus, Times Square, and Yonge-Dundas Square, the decision to augment this particular area in Montreal with digital projectors — explicitly not LED displays — is better analyzed through the rubrics of sustained upkeep. As will be elaborated on below, in using the existing resources built through the welfare state policies of the 1960s through 1990s — such as the buildings of the Place des Arts complex, Université du Québec à Montréal, CEGEP Vieux Montreal, Bibliotheque National du Québec, Hydro Québec, as well as the energy and urban planning infrastructures that sustain them — the QdS Partnership modifies the original egalitarian objectives out of which these assets emerged by reconfiguring these institutions into mechanisms that operate to the benefits of for-profit markets. At work in QdS, in other words, is a set of everyday operations put in place in order to manage these buildings as screens. To analyze this, needed is less a theorization of architectural preservation and more that

[23] Ibid.

of a set of everyday operations for reinforcing and supporting architecture for new purposes. Building on insights gained from maintenance studies, in the following section I will further elaborate on these discrete, though nonetheless significant distinctions.

From Architectural Preservation to the Operations of Maintenance

Focus on maintenance has gained significant traction in the fields of science, technology and society studies (STS), information sciences, media studies, and architecture.[24] Whereas an important core of these focus on technological infrastructures,[25] others point out how media breakdown, upkeep and repair do not strictly occur in the purviews of large scale networks or institutions. In addition to identifying maintenance as key to understanding a particular area of practical knowledge,[26] scholars have also investigated how maintenance and repair work

[24] For an excellent review of maintenance studies also see Shannon Mattern, "Maintenance and Care," *Places Journal* (November 2018).

[25] Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things out: Classification and Its Consequences* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1999); Chris Otter, "Making Liberalism Durable: Vision and Civility In the Late Victorian City," *Social History* 27.1 (2002): 1-15; Stephen Graham and Nigel Thrift, "Our of Order: Understanding Repair and Maintenance," *Theory, Culture & Society* 24.3 (2007): 1-25; Sebastián Ureta, "Normalizing Transantiago: On the Challenges (and Limits) of Repairing Infrastructures," *Social Studies of Science* 44.3 (2014): 368–392.

[26] Julian E. Orr, *Talking About Machines: An Ethnography of a Modern Job* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Christopher R. Henke, "The Mechanics of Workplace Order: Toward a Sociology of Repair," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 4 (2000): 55–81; Tim Dant, "The Work of Repair: Gesture, Emotion and Sensual Knowledge," *Sociological Research Online* 15.3 (2010); Jérôme Denis and David Pontille, "Material Ordering and the Care of Things," *Science, Technology & Human Values* 40.3 (2015): 338-67.

intersect with politics of gender,[27] the politics of disasters and environmental ruins,[28] questions of maintenance and glitch aesthetics,[29] as well as to transnational import chains of migrant

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[27] Mierele Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies Of Household Technology From The Open Hearth To The Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); Lisa Parks, "Cracking Open the Set: Television Repair and Tinkering with Gender 1949-1955," *Television & New Media* 1.3 (2000): 257-278; Daniela K. Rosner, "Making Citizens, Reassembling Devices: On Gender and the Development of Contemporary Public Sites of Repair in Northern California," *Public Culture* 26.1 (2013): 51-77.

[28] Scott Knowles, *The Disaster Experts: Mastering Risk in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); David E. Nye, *When The Lights Went Out: A History of Blackouts in America* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010); Stephen Graham, ed. *Disrupted Cities: When Infrastructure Fails* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Jessica Barnes, "States of Maintenance: Power, Politics, and Egypt's Irrigation Infrastructure," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 35.1 (2017): 146–164; Ingrid Burrington, "What Happens to the Internet After a Disaster?" *Select All*, 31 Oct 2017, http://nymag.com/selectall/2017/10/what-happens-to-the-internet-after-a-disaster.html. Deferred maintenance such as most visibly became apparent in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina is another example of the ways maintenance is organized into hegemonic orders. See Scott Knowles, "Deferred Maintenance: The American Disaster Multiplier," *Technology's Stories*, 1 June 2016. https://doi.org/10.15763/JOU.TS.2016.6.1.02. Giles Slade, *Made to Break: Technology and Obsolescence in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[29] Mierle Laderman Ukeles, "Manifesto for Maintenance Art, 1969! Proposal for an Exhibition, 'Care'," originally published in Jack Burnham, "Problems of Criticism," *Artforum* (January 1971): 41; Iman Moradi, *Glitch: Designing Imperfection* (Jaguar Book Group, 2009); Peter Krapp, *Noise Channels: Glitch and Error in Digital Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Rosa Menkman, *The Glitch Moment(um)* (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2011); Mark Nunes ed., *Error: Glitch, Noise, and Jam in New Media Cultures* (New York: Continuum, 2011); Jeffrey Donaldson, "Glossing Over Thoughts On Glitch. A Poetry of Error," *Artpulse Magazine*, 6 April 2011, artpulsemagazine.com/glossing-over-thoughts-on-glitch-a-poetry-of-error; Nina Horisaki-Christens et al. eds., *Maintenance Required* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2013); Lori Emerson, "Glitch Aesthetics," in *Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media*, eds. Marie-Laure Ryan, Lori Emerson, Benjamin Robertson (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 2014), 235-236; William Benoit, *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies: Image Repair Theory and Research*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015); Kevin Gotkin, "Pornography's Media Breakdown: Troubleshooting in Three Parts," *Porn Studies* 4.4 (2017): 406-418.

communities.[30] A key insight articulated throughout much of this area of research has been what Steven Jackson described as "broken world thinking" — the logic that perceives the world not in terms of being able to reach some sort of optimal performance but rather, as something that is always in processes of breakdown and deterioration. Maintenance workers — or, to put it more broadly, the logics of maintenance — see the inevitability of technological malfunction and of material decay. No technology, medium, architecture, furniture, infrastructure, art, or whatever the artifact may be, can be perfectly designed to beat the tests of time, chemical reactions, or human and nonhuman interventions. Everything is prone to processes of alteration, breakdown, and what anthropologist Fernando Domínguez Rubio describes as the "seemingly banal fact that things are constantly falling out of place."[31]

Approaching the study of media with an appreciation and recognition of the environmental, social, and technical fractures that they either help bring about or do not seek to resolve, focus on maintenance reveals points of investigation, theoretical and methodological approaches, as well as temporal understandings of the media technologies and cultures that we study. As Jackson put it "broken world thinking" reveals "an appreciation of the real limits and fragility of the worlds we inhabit — natural, social, and technological — and a recognition that many of the stories and orders of modernity […] are in process of coming apart, perhaps to be replaced by new and better stories and orders, but perhaps not."[32] In contrast to the thesis of planned obsolescence — as crucially substantial and valid as it is — the work of maintenance highlights the systems of values, whether great or small, that support the existence of media. Rather than asking how are media designed or innovated, what their dominant intended uses are, or how their cultural values are preserved in the long term, focus on maintenance seeks to understand how media are cared for in terms of everyday use and breakdown.

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[30] Jenna Burrell, *Invisible Users: Youth in the Internet Cafés of Urban Ghana* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).

[31] Fernando Domínguez Rubio, "On the Discrepancy Between Objects and Things: An Ecological Approach," *Journal of Material Culture* 21.1 (2016): 60.

[32] Steven J. Jackson, "Rethinking Repair," in *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality and Society*, edited by Tarleton Gillespie et al. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014), 221.

A great deal of attention in cinema studies has likewise been given to the logics of maintenance through focuses on institutions and communities of preservation, to objects and techniques of storage and cataloguing, as well as to the curatorial practices being adopted in media preservation labs, archives, libraries, and museums.[33] Such institutions, techniques, and practices illustrate how cinema cultures have been concerned not only with gathering, preserving, cataloguing, protecting, and making media materials (technologies, objects, and texts) accessible to publics both large and small (whether generally quotidian or with expertise command), but also with repairing media materials when damaged. Such sites, in other words, are fundamental examples of the practices of moving image maintenance. In them, care for and protection of cinema technologies (mostly films) are the most crucially salient parameters that inform their institutional frameworks and guidelines. Nevertheless, it is also important to note that the more dominant focus in these sites has been guided by the notions of primacy, historical origins, and cultural heritage.

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[33] Ralph Sargent, *Preserving the Moving Image* (Washington: Corp. for Public Broadcasting, 1974); Anthony Slide, *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 2000); Haidee Wasson, *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2005); Karen F. Gracy, *Film Preservation: Competing Definitions of Value, Use, and Practice* (Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 2007); Lynne Kirste, "Collective Effort: Archiving LGBT Moving Images," *Cinema Journal* 46.3 (2007): 134-40; Rick Prelinger, "Archives and Access in the 21st Century," *Cinema Journal* 46.3 (2007):114-118; Prelinger, "Points of Origin: Discovering Ourselves Through Access," *The Moving Image* 9.2 (2009): 164-175; Giovanna Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2009); Janna Jones, *The Past Is a Moving Picture: Preserving the Twentieth Century On Film* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012); Leo Douglas Graham Enticknap, *Film Restoration: The Technology and Culture of Audiovisual Heritage* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Nicolette Bromberg with Hannah Palin, "Starting from Nothing: The Art of Creating a Film Archive," *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 13.1 (2013): 217-225; Cait McKinney, "Body, Sex, Interface Reckoning with Images at the Lesbian Herstory Archives," *Radical History Review* 122 (2015): 115-128; Giovanna Fossati and Annie van den Oever eds., *Exposing the Film Apparatus: The Film Archive as a Research Laboratory* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016); Jan Eberholst Olsen, "Maintaining Analogue Film Projection in the Digital Age," *Journal of Film Preservation* 94 (2016): 53–58; Philipp Dominik Keidl, "Toward a Public Media Archaeology: Museums, Media, and Historiography," *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 17.2 (2017): 20–39.

Whereas such an attention to historical practices has highlighted the important balance that exists between information sciences and cultural heritage concerns, this framework of inquiry has arguably glossed over a wide range of practices and infrastructures of moving image media care that sustain other commonplace techniques, technologies, and epistemologies found outside of preservation and archival paradigms. In terms of film production, for example, maintenance manifests in configurations such as production insurance plans, technical units on production crews as well as in studio security teams, arguably further expanding the category of "below the line" labour.[34] In terms of distribution we can list the equipment used and chosen to protect films at shipping stages, or the techniques used to encrypt content so it could not be easily pirated, to name a few. In terms of exhibition practices, focus on maintenance might lead to better understandings of the work done by projectionists to fix melted, scratched, or crumpled celluloid or decrypted data; or their attentiveness to the life cycles of projector lamps. Likewise, maintenance can highlight repair work done on home movie equipment, VCRs, computers, DVDs, as well as, battery and screen repair shops, or insurance plans taken on mobile devices. Or additionally, maintenance studies might investigate the labours and techniques of care being employed to protect and maintain server farms. Production-to-archive streams are dominant signifiers of a large portion of media activity. Focusing on the innovation, production, distribution, and storage of technologies and media contents is absolutely important to understanding a great deal of moving image media cultures. However, such streams do not include all categories of moving image media maintenance that take place at each of the stages of production, distribution, consumption, and storage.

To be sure, this is not to suggest that there is no work being done in museum, archival and library studies that seeks to think about moving image media objects in the present. Nor is this a claim that archival work entirely differs from that of maintenance. As Lynne Kirste, special collections curator at the Academy Film Archive puts it, "Most archival repositories share the same mission: to gather materials that fall within their collecting mandate; protect their holdings

[34] Vicki Mayer, *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

from harm and damage; identify, organize, and catalogue materials; preserve deteriorated items; and make their collections publicly accessible."[35] Nevertheless, there is still much to gain from understanding the ways media are preserved and maintained outside of the ideals of perfect retrieval or reconstruction; outside of efforts to uncover under-investigated historical genealogies and distinctions between the present and the past. Focusing on maintenance can help illuminate practices of cinema that are stitched throughout and are integral to the commonly studied production-distribution-exhibition-archive streams.

We might want to think about the study of maintenance cultures as a sub-area of research of what Charles Acland termed "residual media."[36] Acland's indispensable observation that media have much longer shelf lives that continue to impact dominant cultures and the geophysical environments way past their so-called industrial, cultural, or market life cycles, likewise also informs the study of maintenance cultures. Both the residual and maintained are attentive to the logics of the persistence of media through time. But I want to stress that there is at least one crucial difference. In addition to acknowledging the residual qualities of media technologies and cultures, the registers of maintenance also emphasize an understanding of the temporality of media not in terms of lingering or enduring remains but rather as a socially conditioned or engineered process of sustentation. As is the case in residual media studies, maintenance studies examines how are media used not only as conduits of historical memories but also as conduits of ongoing socio-technical systems. Understood as such, maintenance studies can certainly reveal historical dimensions that further inform our understanding of media, but its primary area of investigation is not necessarily historical. Maintenance studies are not historical in the ways that media archaeology, as Angela Piccinni puts it, is strictly concerned with "dismantling and reconstructing media technologies in order to reveal secret histories and lost lineages."[37] In the words of Domínguez Rubio, focus on maintenance "opens up an entirely

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[35] Kirste, "Collective Effort," 135.

[36] Charles Acland, "Introduction: Residual Media," in *Residual Media*, ed. Charles Acland (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xiii-xxvii.

[37] Angela Piccini, "Media-Archaeologies: An Invitation," *Journal of Contemporary Archaeology* 2.1 (2015): 5.

different approach, one that takes temporality, fragility and change as the starting points of enquiry."[38]

In QdS, the workings of maintenance manifest not only in the ways urban screen workforces are managed, but also in the very selection of digital projection technologies themselves. With meters of accumulating snow and ice, temperatures dropping lower than negative thirty degrees celsius, and wind gusts reaching up to seventy kilometres per hour, Montreal's winters can be hostile environments for outdoor digital projectors. In contrast to indoor movie theatres, domestic living rooms, or gallery spaces, projectionists in QdS take into account a wide range of variables that could potentially present disruptive challenges to the display of moving image media. Being attentive to drops in temperature, water infiltration, and strong winds is how maintenance workers in QdS think about outdoor screen culture on a regular, and instructive, basis. Extreme changes in temperature could potentially mean either a very busy day at work, or perhaps even a day where animated images cannot be projected.

But temperature is only one variable amongst a number of others that keep QdS technicians on constant alert. Whereas broadband cable engineers in Australia are on the lookout for cockatoos chewing through fibre optic and power cables in order to sharpen their beaks, technical workers in QdS are attentive to flooding, rotting and rusting, as well as the possibility of interventions by squirrels, raccoons, crows, insects, and humans.[39] Accordingly, in the initial phases of QdS's development, the hired technical team was tasked with the conceptualization and fabrication of a system that could sustain a broad range of speculative challenges. During the early stages of equipment installation, the technicians assessed which types of wires and connectors were more sensitive to possible interruptions, and took measures to make them more solid and air tight so that the transmission quality won't be negatively affected. The result became a series of custom-built enclosed shelters where digital projectors can be safely placed in an out-of-reach and acclimatized environment.[40] As is the case for data centres, which

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[38] Domínguez Rubio, "On the Discrepancy," 60.

[39] "Cockatoos Chew Through Broadband Cables," 3 November 2017, sec. Australia, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-41857761.

[40] Christie Digital, "Quartier des spectacles."

comparatively generate far more heat than digital projection equipment, it is in fact more cost effective and secure to place media in relatively colder climates than to fabricate cold systems within hot and arid conditions.[41] The shelters are protected simply by being located on rooftops, behind a fence, so they are hard to reach, and are monitored through security cameras to help hinder any potential vandals. In case of a sudden power outage, all equipment is connected to an uninterruptible power supply so that they can be safely shut down without any major damage caused to the equipment. According to QdS technical director, Ivan Klein, though "these machines start and stop by themselves every night" they are nevertheless constantly "monitored from home or by phone by the team. It's so important that [technicians] get this constant feedback from the projectors."[42] The maintenance of urban screens in this regard speaks to ongoing management and control of the environment and conditions within which digital projectors function not as ahistorical events but rather as speculatively probable likelihoods that might occur at any given moment.

In addition to media technologies, QdS projection mapping infrastructure also reveals the distinctions between the paradigms of architectural preservation and building maintenance. In her recently published book *Maintenance Architecture*, Hilary Sample argues that focus on architectural maintenance reveals "more than a problem of trying to be or appear eternally new. Maintenance presents evidence of nature, evidence of human relationships beyond the technical."[43] If the paradigms of preservation focus on the culturally specific values attributed to particular buildings, those of maintenance situate these anthropocentric logics within broader human and nonhuman contexts. In QdS, a logic of preservation highlights the historical values being attributed to particular buildings. But because these buildings are not protected through any official preservation status or by-laws, more revealing is an understanding of their functions

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[41] See Allison Carruth, "The Digital Cloud and the Micropolitics of Energy," *Public Culture* 26.2 (2014): 339–64; Mél Hogan, "Data Flows and Water Woes: The Utah Data Center." *Big Data & Society* 2.2 (2015): 1–12; Jennifer Holt and Patrick Vonderau, "'Where the Internet Lives': Data Centers as Cloud Infrastructure," in *Signal Traffic: Critical Studies of Media Infrastructures*, eds. Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 71–93.

[42] Ivan Klein quoted in Christie Digital, "Quartier des spectacles."

[43] Hilary Sample, *Maintenance Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), 4.

within the newly acclimatized context put in place to ensure that the operations of the QdS projection mapping infrastructure run continuously and without interruptions caused by any environmental or anthropocentric factors.

Whereas studies of maintenance can bring attention to instances when technological infrastructures break down, the strengths of such analyses are not found in their abilities to simply make built infrastructures visible; rather it is in their abilities to reveal one more vantage point through which relations of power materialize.[44] To begin with, as Brian Larkin argues, the notion that infrastructures are invisible is itself a misnomer. “Invisibility is certainly one aspect of infrastructure,” Larkin writes, “but it is only one and at the extreme edge of a range of visibilities that move from unseen to grand spectacles and everything in between.”[45] Maintenance is one of the many visible in-betweens that make up the built networks and environments we call infrastructures.[46] Maintenance cultures, in other words, are important traces of the strategic calculations and makeups of infrastructure administration. If, as Larkin puts it, infrastructures “generate the ambient environment of everyday life,” their maintenance (or lack thereof) become integral components that at the same time inform how infrastructures are being defined as “networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas.”[47] Or, more pointedly, understanding the dimensions of maintenance liability trace how certain kinds of goods, people, or ideas are cared for and articulated as networks. Paying attention to how objects, individuals, capital, and concepts flow in infrastructures illuminates the politics and power structures that shape their movement. As Larkin puts it, infrastructures “shape the nature of a network, the speed and direction of its movement, its temporalities, and its vulnerability to breakdown. They comprise the architecture for circulation, literally providing the undergirding of

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[44] This is in reference to Susan Leigh Star’s and Karen Ruhleder’s argument that one of the characteristic features of infrastructure is that it “becomes visible upon breakdown.” See Star and Ruhleder, “Steps Toward an Ecology of Infrastructure: Design and Access for Large Information Spaces,” *Information Systems Research* 7.1 (1996): 113.

[45] Brian Larkin, “The Politics and Poetics,” 336.

[46] See also Lisa Parks, “Around the Antenna Tree: The Politics of Infrastructural Visibility,” *Flow: A Critical Forum on TV and Media Culture*, 5 March 2010.

[47] Larkin, “The Politics and Poetics,” 328.

modern societies."[48] Lack of adequate assessment of breakdown in building and technological infrastructures illuminate not only how those infrastructures are designed, but also of the systems (financial, legal, etc.) that are set up to support them.

Technical maintenance workers played a crucial role in the design and conceptualization of QdS as an outdoor screen platform. But this is not to suggest that maintenance workers have final authorship of all that takes place in QdS. As Claude Fortin observed in her interviews with QdS personnel, in order to minimize any further degradation of the material used in the *We're All Friends Here* (Sam Meech and Marilène Gaudet, 2015) installation, even though the artists explicitly asked that wear and tear become a part of the work, the QdS Partnership directed its technical maintenance crew to gate off the portions of the work that were within direct human contact.[49] Works that appear to be breaking apart because of repeated human uses do not appear to be the kinds of things the QdS Partnership is interested in showcasing. Thus, as Fortin writes, "in taking on the maintenance of artworks deployed on its site on behalf of the artists, the Partnership inevitably became involved in their design."[50] More than simply curating works of media art and architecture, the Partnership inserts itself in the role of authorship.

Technical and repair workers certainly produce and circulate knowledge about technology in ways that vary greatly from managerial work. But such distinctions can risk overstating the relationships between maintenance knowledge and its management. As Andrew Russell and Lee Vinsel argue, "There is no point in keeping the practice of hero-worship that merely changes the cast of heroes [from innovators to maintainers] without confronting some of the deeper problems underlying the innovation obsession."[51] Focusing on maintenance work does not mean de-emphasizing the economic and social structures that shape them. Maintenance

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Claude Fortin, "Delving Deeper: Considerations on Applying Empirical Research Methods to Infrastructural Urban Technology Projects," *PlaNext – next Generation Planning* 4 (2017): 76–93.

[50] Ibid, 89.

[51] Andrew Russell and Lee Vinsel, "Hail the Maintainers," *Aeon* (April 2016), https://aeon.co/essays/innovation-is-overvalued-maintenance-often-matters-more.

is after all a sector of labour that is managed and regulated by particular economic and political systems. Although maintenance is commonly referred to in terms of technological repair, it also crucially entails the logics and parameters for ensuring that repair is minimized or does not take place altogether. As Steven Jackson puts it, "That spectacular failure is not continually engulfing the systems around us is a function of repair."[52] Paying attention to maintenance proves to be important largely because it makes up a crucial part of management in late capitalism, and thus brings attention to the ways ideas about maintenance, preservation, and decay are organized in terms of everyday operations. In this regard, it can be said that practices of preservation fit within the broader category of maintenance management, but that have gained particular kinds of historically symbolic values that stand in contrast to the more simple everyday acts of sanitation and upkeep.

We cannot simply theorize maintenance as a broad category that works against preservation; rather, needed are careful assessments of the ways the categories of preservation are governed within the broader systems of maintenance management. As media scholar Mark Deuze writes, "Given the increasingly global, networked, and unpredictable nature of the media industry, and the growing complexities of media work (determined in part by rapid technological developments), the challenge to the future of media work seems to be a uniquely managerial one."[53] Maintenance is thus also best understood as a set of managerial operations that ensure technical failure is kept at bay. Minimizing disruptions to the built environment as well as the risks of technological breakdown, the integration of digital projections in QdS emphasize not strictly the politics of architectural and urban preservation, but instead those of particularly enduring socio-cultural projects in the making.

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[52] Steven J. Jackson, "Repair," Theorizing the Contemporary, *Cultural Anthropology* website, 24 September 2015. https://culanth.org/fieldsights/720-repair.

[53] Mark Deuze, "Preface," in *Managing Media Work*, ed. Mark Deuze (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2011), x.

Pavillon Président-Kennedy, Complexe des sciences Pierre-Dansereau, Université du Québec à Montréal. Image courtesy of Jean Gagnon, 1 August 2012.

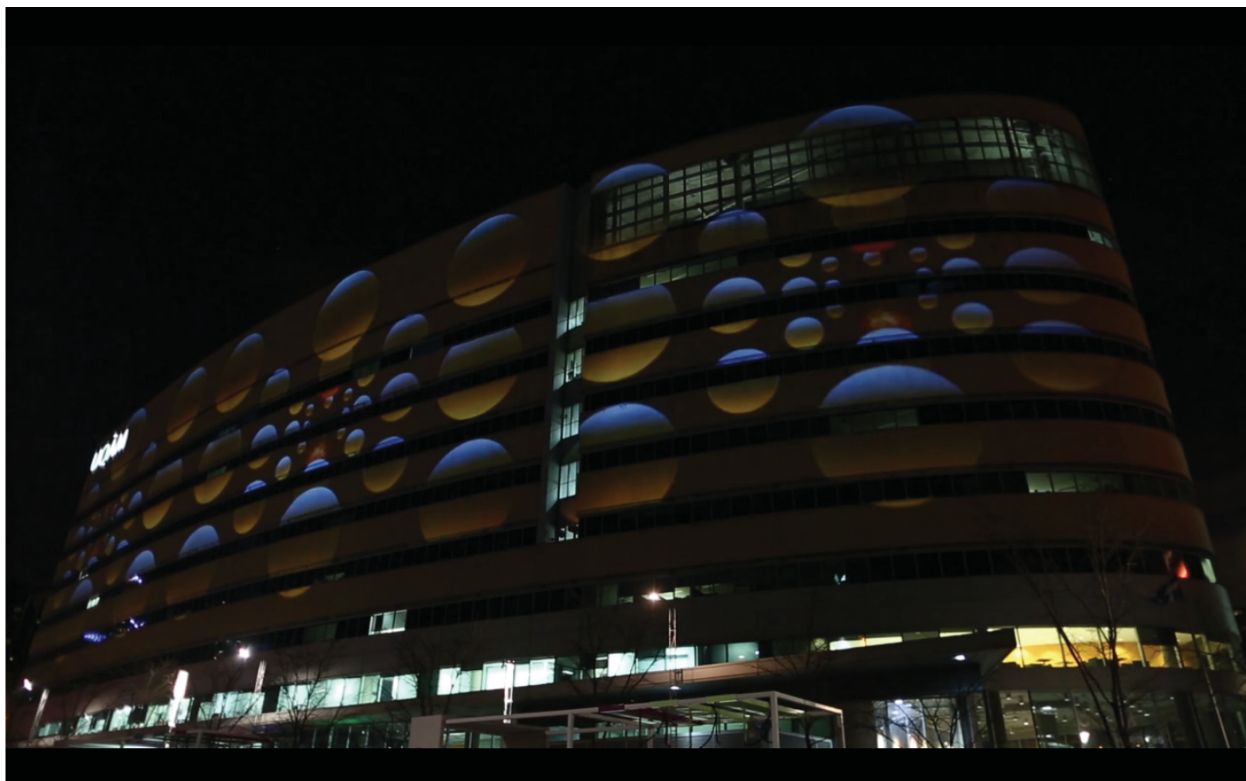
An Aesthetic of Maintenance

With a yellow-tinged brick façade cohesively tied by six rows of glass windows, harmoniously curved in the shape of an elliptical cylinder, the President-Kennedy Pavilion of the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) is a strikingly captivating construct. Its shape gives the impression of the top of a large submarine-like vessel having surfaced in the middle of the city. This resemblance lends the pavilion the allusions of travel and movement; of deep diving, punctuated by intervals of surfacing. Such meanings serve this building appropriately for, as an academic institution, it is a site where diving deep into research is matched with the allusions of surfacing that occur with the sharing of that knowledge. Both figuratively and literally, both within and laid on top of this building's façades, depth and surface organize the gathering, production, and circulation of knowledge.

Built between 1996 and 1998, the architecture of UQAM's President-Kennedy Pavilion was arguably more than simply about the construction of an edifice for academic learning. Back in the 1970s, the founding of the university that houses it signaled more than the addition of another academic institution to Montreal's educational landscape. It was also an illustrative example of the structural changes that took shape in Québec since the 1970s through the rise of institutions devoted to Quebecois communities — including the secularization of the provincial government through the creation of public-funded education and health systems; the creation of companies devoted to the extraction and processing of natural resources (iron, steel, pulp, mining, petroleum); new labour and civil codes; the amalgamation of the province's electrical companies into one unifying nationalized corporation (Hydro-Québec); the development of a new nationalist party devoted to the sovereignty of Québec; as well as the establishment of new cultural institutions such as Place-des-Arts and le Cinematheque Québecois. During the university's first substantial expansion in 1974, new facilities were added through the purchasing of the grounds of the St. Jacques Church located on Saint Denis street. Instead of fully demolishing the older building, the construction of UQAM's Judith-Jasmin Pavilion was done through the renovation and re-appropriation of the church. The university's construction, thus, symbolically marked the displacement of the Catholic Church and the hegemonic control by international and Canadian communities over much of the economic, political, judiciary, and cultural capital in Montreal. Informed by such a history, the production of knowledge that takes place within the President-Kennedy Pavilion — built in the 1990s, as part of the university's second expansion — therefore does not only help define the building as a symbol of disciplined knowledge creation. As an illustration of the Quiet Revolution's persistence, this building's resemblance to a nautical vessel communicates a juxtaposition of rigidity and concretion with the tropes of passage, revelation, and the congealing of political transformation. Its anchored presence combines both the notions of transitioning between different sites and temporal intervals, of the manifestations of exploratory training and changes in perspective, and the layering of meanings born out of the dreams of nationalist sovereignties and shared social actions.

“Université du Québec à Montréal under Construction, Corner of Rues Sainte-Catherine and Saint-Denis, Montréal.” Photograph by Gabor Szilasi, 1977. PH1983:0540, Canadian Centre for Architecture Archives, Montréal, Québec, Canada.

With their assimilation into the QdS permanent video projections infrastructure beginning in 2013, both the Judith-Jasmin and the President-Kennedy Pavilions have been imbued with yet another set of symbols and functions. With the rebranding of its neighbourhood as “Le Quartier des Spectacles” during the darkened night hours, these buildings have been transformed from academic, environmental and mathematical sciences complexes into two giant urban screens. Such a configuration thus covers these two building with yet another set of meanings, this time both with the connotations that are tied to them as institutional spaces produced by sovereign and disciplinary politics, as well as nodes within the projection mapping infrastructure of the Quartier des Spectacles.



Panorama (Alexis Laurence and Francis Laporte, 2014) projected onto Pavillon Président-Kennedy, Université du Québec à Montréal. Image courtesy of National Film Board of Canada.

Dix anagrammes autour de Norman McLaren (Delphine Burrus, 2014) — based on Norman McLaren's film *Begone Dull Care* (1949) — projected onto Pavillon Judith-Jasmin, Université du Québec à Montréal. Image courtesy of National Film Board of Canada.

One of the first major uses of QdS's digital projections was *McLaren Mur á Mur// McLaren Wall to Wall*, an eight-piece homage celebrating the work of the late Scottish-Canadian animator Norman McLaren, on the occasion of the iconic Montrealer's centennial birthday. Funded, curated, and managed by the QdS Partnership, in collaboration with the National Film Board of Canada, each of the eight films featured in the program was projected onto the façades of eight buildings located around the QdS zone — including UQAM's President-Kennedy, Judith-Jasmin, School of Design, and J.-A. DeSève buildings, the Bibliotheque et Archives National du Québec, College Vieux Montréal, and Place des Arts. Both independently and in unison, the coordinated composition of the eight films combined the various buildings in the area into one cohesive whole, highlighting the buildings upon which projections were cast as particularly unique. In *Panorama* (Alexis Laurence and Francis Laporte, 2014), for example, colourful spheres, lines, and scratched celluloid taken from nine of McLaren's films were re-imagined onto the wide surface of the cylindrically shaped President-Kennedy pavilion.[54] Although the composition of the final compiled images looked like a single, uniformed frame, *Panorama* was in fact made possible through four digital projectors located across the street on the rooftops of Place des Arts. The use of projection mapping, therefore, helped assimilate the architectural makeup of the pavilion with that of the Place des Arts complex. Through this relationship, both buildings arguably became connected as one.

By employing projection mapping technologies, the QdS technical team follows a strategy where minimal disruption to selective buildings and the existing built environment takes place, while at the same time also featuring and making use of those buildings in the branding of the area. Rather than concealing their architectural designs, projection mapping enhances, nurtures, and services the meanings of the buildings upon which images are projected. The added layers of the projected *Panorama* onto the pavilion's south facing façade underlined the President-Kennedy Pavilion's architectural allusions to passage, revelation, movement,

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[54] *Panorama* compiles material from nine of McLaren's films — including *Stars and Stripes* (1940), *Dots* (1940), *Begone Dull Care* (1949), *Blackbird* (1959), *Opening Speech* (1961), *Canon* (1964), *Lines Horizontal* (1962), *Spheres* (1969), and *Synchromy* (1971) — each reinterpreted to playfully fit onto the surface of the President-Kennedy Pavilion.

transition, and transformation yet again, this time both as an academic institution as well as a screen space within the networked branding infrastructure of the QdS Partnership.

New media scholars, Nanna Verhoeff and Clancy Wilmott usefully point out that the concept of "layering" — that is, the addition of information onto a given space or construct — has been frequently adopted as a "design principle" in artworks that use media façades, location-based media, and urban interfaces.[55] Likewise, media scholar Joel McKim writes that "despite the growing impact of data-oriented forms of urban computation, representational media [screens, pictures, images, renderings, animations] continue to play a significant role in the future development of our cities."[56] Artists, designers, and architects, he adds, use the animation of built environments as "a tool for both visualizing digital information and accessing temporal registers beyond the restrictive confines of the immediate present."[57] Visual media are used to make visible the collections and calculations of data that are otherwise gathered and implemented through mechanisms (such as artificial intelligence and algorithms) that lack representational imagery. In works by artists such as Rafael Lozano Hemmer, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Stan Douglas, Karen Lancel, Herman Maat, and many others, digital media and representations are articulated as added layers onto existing built environments in order to investigate and make visible the hidden workings of algorithmic culture in the informational city.[58] The logics of representational modes of engagement and layering become dominant ways

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[55] Nanna Verhoeff, Clancy Wilmott, "Curating the City: Urban Interfaces and Locative Media as Experimental Platforms for Cultural Data," in *Code & The City*, eds. Rob Kitchin and Sung-Yueh Perng (London: Routledge, 2016), 119.

[56] Joel McKim, "Speculative Animation: Digital Projections of Urban Past and Future," *Animation* 12.3 (2017): 293.

[57] Ibid. 288.

[58] See also, Alex Adriaansens and Joke Brouwer, "Alien Relationships from Public Space: A Winding Dialog with Rafael Lozano-Hemmer," *TransUrbanism* (Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/NAi Publishers, 2002), 138-158; Holly Willis, "City as Screen / Body as Movie," *Afterimage* 37.2 (2009): 24–28; Marc James Léger and Krzysztof Wodiczko, "*Homeless Projection*"; Katerina Korola, "Probing Light"; Dave Colangelo, "Curating Massive Media," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 4.2 (2015): 238-262; May Chew. "Phantasmagoric City: Technologies of Immersion and Settler Histories in Montreal's *Cité Mémoire*" *Public* 58 (2018): 140–47.

of thinking about how to express, scrutinize, and reflect back on the workings of data sensors, big data, and the so-called Internet of Things on so-called networked and information societies.

Through the use of projection mapping, in QdS layering is articulated as a tool for selectively reinforcing already existing infrastructures. If no new buildings need be constructed, then this is also to suggest that no old buildings need to be demolished in order to make room for the new layers of urban screens. Buildings such as Place-des-Arts, UQAM's complexes near the Latin Quarter, the Cinémathèque québécoise, or La Theatre du Nouveau Monde — complexes and venues that have been integrally tied to the strengthening of Québec's francophone identity — are not threatened to be demolished or altered in any substantial ways. Moreover, key constructions and appropriation of the neighbourhood by and for the ideologies of Québecois sovereignty, built in the late 1990s and early 2000s — such as the Bibliotheque et Archives National du Québec and UQAM's newer complexes located near Place-des-Arts — can be further modernized as key canvases in both Québec's nationalism and what the QdS Partnership refers to as its "digital playground." In QdS projection mapping technologies are being idealized as tools that help strengthen social projects that are already long in the making. Here, the added layer of projected images is one that produces enunciated illuminations about ongoing projects through an aesthetic of continuance and maintenance. Stated differently, the narrative being presented by the QdS Partnership in its selection of projection mapping technologies is that of the ongoing and enduring engagement with already existing projects. Maintenance here functions not only on buildings, urban spaces, or projection mapping technologies, but also at the level of nationalist public policy. Maintenance, in this locale, operates as an ideological and structuring activity of culture both in terms of heritage as well as the sustained engagement with the contemporaneous everyday.

The application of projection mapping in the service of political perseverance, in other words, encodes the older buildings as technologically and aesthetically new. But in doing so, such technologies also help reconfigure the meanings and functions of these buildings in accordance with the logics of privatization models of governance as well. Although these institutions are internally impacted by the logics of neoliberal cutbacks and austerity measures, as separate entities, the buildings of UQAM, Cégep Vieux Montréal, Place des arts, and

Bibliotheque et Archives national du Québec still dominantly function according to egalitarian principles of equitable distribution of wealth and welfare rights through progressive taxation. But in their participation in the Partnership they are now also operating according to the logics of neoliberal reasoning as well. No longer only housing academic or entertainment activities inside, these buildings now also serve as platforms within the QdS projection mapping infrastructure, displaying ambient and interactive images that work in congruence with the logics of tourism, festivals, as well as the economies of new condos, hotels, and office buildings. In other words, in their assimilation into the QdS projection mapping infrastructure, these buildings also work according to the logics of financialization and monetization of public institutions for purposes of economic profit, adopting new functions that stand outside of their initial academic and cultural mandates. By assembling various publicly funded institutions along with companies from the private sector, the QdS Partnership transforms the otherwise egalitarian liberalist institutions into objects guided by the reasoning that free markets are the best tools for measuring and responding to social needs. All of these things signal the transformation of these egalitarian liberal institutions into a new configuration, one that is also aligned with the governmental policies of neoliberalism.

To be sure, the addition of projection mapping has not only been favourable to the QdS Partnership. As discussed in the QdS Partnership's 2011-12 Annual Report: "The availability of the Partnership's equipment, expertise and support for the realization of video-projection projects favours the initiatives of the Quartier's partners. For example, the video-projection equipment put in place by the Partnership is a learning and professional development tool for graduate students in interactive media at UQAM School of Media."[59] That is to say, projection mapping media also created new facilities for UQAM to expand its curriculum and training equipment,

[59] Originally: "La mise à disposition des équipements, de l'expertise et du soutien du Partenariat pour la réalisation de projets en vidéoprojection favorise les initiatives des partenaires du Quartier. Par exemple, les équipements de vidéoprojection mis en place par le Partenariat sont des outils d'apprentissage et de développement professionnel pour les finissants du baccalauréat en médias interactifs de l'École des médias de l'UQAM." Le Partenariat du Quartier des spectacles, Rapport d'activités 2011/2012, 12.

thereby strengthening the university's institutional mandates to produce unique skills and areas of knowledge that better fit with today's changing media production industries.

Yet, the claim that QdS's screen infrastructure does not disrupt the existing built environment is in itself not entirely true in other respects as well. From its early stages of development, the discourse that shaped what became known as the "Quartier des spectacles project" began with a disregard to the neighbourhood's own historical significance as both a Red Light district as well as an epicentre populated by immigrant communities. Buildings such as Café Cleopatre and the area's history of sex-trade, are not treated with the same regard that is obtained by the Monument National and Yiddish theatre. Moreover, as art scholar Josianne Poirier illustrated through interviews with artists who made use of the area both as their workplace and home prior to the establishment of the QdS Partnership, the QdS project also had some fundamentally negative impacts on the artist community that already lived in the neighbourhood prior to this rebranding.[60] Because the project contributed to an increase in land-values, this made living in the area unaffordable for low-income artists. At the same time, in promoting a series of digital-based artworks, the partnership also helped demote the values and place of non-digital art. As Poirier argues, in branding the space as an artistic hub, the QdS Partnership in fact placed a number of artists outside of its arts-focused infrastructural, economic, and cultural frameworks.

The addition of projection mapping to the neighbourhood made striptease and drag shows at Cafe Cleopatra, the cheap 'steamie' hot dogs served as the Montreal Pool Hall, as well as portions of the arts community to seemingly appear out of place. By rationalizing the area as an aesthetic and walkable pathway, the QdS Partnership has been able to legitimize which activities, businesses, objects, and cultures fit into its preferred aesthetic schema. Such an articulation of the space is less devoted to discount shopping and cheap entertainment, and more to curated encounters with the preferred cultures of theatre, ballet, contemporary dance, opera, classical music, and contemporary art. Moreover, as a result of redevelopment, places such as the

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[60] Josiane Poirier, "'Tu ne peux pas te promener avec des feuilles de plywood pendant le Festival de Jazz': La place de la création au centre-ville de Montréal," in *Le Quartier des spectacles et le chantier de l'imaginaire montréalais*, eds. Simon Harel, Laurent Lussier and Joël Thibert (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2015), 77-93.

Spectrum (performance venue) and the neoclassical Wilder Building — deemed by Heritage Montreal to have both architectural and historical values to the city — have both been destroyed or significantly renovated. In the case of the Spectrum, although no new plan has been approved, the building has already been demolished. And, in accordance with the Quartier des Spectacles promotion of local cultural communities and organizations, the province of Québec agreed to fund and support a plan to convert the Wilder Building into a dance complex where four different dance organizations can call the building their main headquarters. Although the main foundations of the Wilder Building are still in tact, many of its original characteristics and recognizable traits are no longer in place. Clearly, not all histories matter.

To be explicated out of QdS's brief history, therefore, are similar politics of cultural preservation that likewise shaped the redevelopments of Times Square and Yonge-Dundas Square. As was the case in New York City and Toronto, efforts to economically revitalize QdS resulted in the displacement of groups and activities deemed as impediments to the supposed wellbeing of the neighbourhood. But whereas Times Square and Yonge-Dundas Square were ultimately re-branded as focal points of commercial culture that emphasized the redevelopments' historical ties to theatrical and commercial heritage, QdS has been branded as a focal point in the city's bohemian, performing and technological arts culture through its ties to the heritage of the Quiet Revolution. In other words, embedded in the management of screen technologies and cultures are also efforts to legitimize redevelopment through the protection of certain historical narratives over others. This preservation does not take place in an isolated archive or museum, nor through bylaw set up to explicitly protect the cultural heritage of buildings. Rather, in QdS it manifests through the management and funding arrangements for the projection of digital art on particularly maintained institutions.

Maintenance as Ideology

In employing projection mapping technologies, the QdS Partnership lays claim to a strategy of minimal disruption as well as a means of supporting the existing built environment. Maintenance becomes a site where the logics of the QdS Partnership lead us. This is not to suggest that the

technologies of digital projectors and projection mapping are, in and of themselves, defining urban screen culture in terms of maintenance as opposed to preservation. Rather, entities such as the QdS Partnership perform and legitimize neoliberalist appropriations of projection mapping through the logics of infrastructural maintenance in that they do not merely seek the preservation of buildings, but also the improvement of uses of those buildings in accordance with future-oriented and speculative economics of urban development programs. Questions of architectural and cultural preservation have played crucial roles in the development of QdS and the shaping of the QdS Partnership's mandates. But in this site, they have been thematized in terms of the continuity of ongoing projects rather than those of a conservation of a different era. Molded as additions to urban infrastructures, digitally projected images work in distinction to the paradigms of architectural preservation by emphasizing the maintenance of existing buildings.

If the redevelopment of QdS involved the de-legitimization of sex workers and the economically disadvantaged, it is also important to note that the disciplining of the neighbourhood was also shaped through the further empowering of select academic, cultural, and industrial institutions that have been a part of this area since at least the 1970s — particularly Place-des-Arts, UQAM, Hydro Québec, Theatre du Nouveau Monde, as well as newer institutions such as SAT and BAnQ. The QdS Partnership and the City of Montreal see QdS as being particularly useful in strengthening these institutions, all regarded as essential to support the cultural and knowledge-based industries. The city and the Partnership see QdS as an added infrastructure that helps promote Montreal as a "creative city." QdS is meant to serve as a playground made for and by an educated population — made up of artists, entrepreneurs, lawyers, academics, etc. — all of whom contribute to the creative economy. Through the QdS Partnership's emphasis on select entertainment venues in the neighbourhood, the themes of continuity that colour the QdS project helped demarcate which cultural practices and venues fit into its vision. Diverging from its history of multi-cultural junction, architectural critics Luc Noppen and Lucie K. Morisset go as far as to suggest that the nocturnal theme emphasized by the QdS Partnership now defines the neighbourhood as 'ineluctably uni-functional.'[61] Though

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[61] Originally: "inéluctablement monofonctionnelle". Luc Noppen and Lucie K. Morisset, "L'apres-vision," *ARQ: La revue d'architecture* 128 (2004): 20-24.

such an assessment is overly reductive of the workings of culture in QdS, it can nevertheless be argued that the QdS Partnership has set out to define a narrower set of favoured outcomes from the operations that take place in this locale.

Returning to Jackson's claim — that being attentive to maintenance helps us recognize how "many of the stories and orders of modernity […] are in process of coming apart, perhaps to be replaced by new and better stories and orders, but perhaps not" — I am not convinced that focus on maintenance, or maintenance work in and of itself, reveals an undoing of modernity. Broken world thinking, the attentiveness to the processes of decay, does not precisely describe an amodernist project. Or if it does, it is important to highlight the highly stringent managerial orders that are also at work in sustaining such an engagement with media technologies. As highly integral aspects of media, maintenance practices should not be understood as afterthoughts that are added on as results of breakdown or decay. Maintenance is a crucial area of thought that is stitched — though, not always evenly and equally tightened across all varying socio-economic geographies — into media cultures. According to Canada's office of Industry Statistics, positions in maintenance or repair make up roughly 5% of all jobs in Canada. They exist in just about every industry, and are believed to be one of the fastest growing skillsets needed for the healthy growth of industries and economies. Against claims that media disrupt cultural, social, economic norms, the notion of maintenance highlights the ongoing persistence and continuations of existing power structures and dominance as they manifest through changing media environments. If maintenance has critically functioned as a demarcation to help identify changes and processes in history, as well as a corrective to histories that treat media as objects that rupture and revolutionize ongoing social and environmental relations, then the structuring of maintenance — understood as a set of operations that are themselves under managerial scrutiny — would also follow suit.

The logics of maintenance both inform and are informed by highly varied, though thoroughly grounded social, economic, political, cultural and technological contexts. As such, maintenance practices can reveal distinct organizations of things that stand somewhere between the logics of innovation and preservation, and in contrast to those of obsolescence. As Hillary Sample writes, in architecture "maintenance occupies a particular space and moment in the life

of a building. It comes after design, after construction drawings…but exists after building, between acts of building and preservation, and again after preservation or restoration."[62] In this chapter I've argued that in combining the ethos of architectural and technological upkeep, in QdS maintenance also functions as an ideologically structuring principle that gives shape to, and is shaped by, the dominant narratives of managing the creative city through the preservation values attributed to the city's historical-ties to the policies and politics of the welfare state put into motion during the so-called Quiet Revolution. Key to analyzing such forms of preservation, however, is also an understanding of the discourses that shape which particular buildings are selected to be animated as such. The maintenance of projection mapping technologies, the management of these technological formations and the labour involved, work in congruence with neoliberal policies of urban privatization. Maintenance is molded as an addition to urban infrastructures by working parallel to the paradigms of conservation and preservation. Nevertheless, in doing so, such uses of projection mapping technologies also do the work of emphasizing certain buildings, sites, and social histories over others. In their aesthetic of maintenance, instances of projection mapping such as those found in QdS also reveal an economy of cultural values, but also the systemic degradation of histories deemed less, or altogether not, worthy of management.

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[62] Sample, *Maintenance Architecture*, 15.

CONCLUSION

ARCHITECTURES OF ILLUMINATION MEDIA

This project was originally conceived of as a comparative analysis of Piccadilly Circus, Times Square, and Shibuya Crossing (a major junction in Tokyo that also features large urban screens). The aims of such a comparison were to investigate three similar sites located in the geographies of the global economy. Though I maintained focus on Piccadilly Circus and Times Square, I decided to shift my analysis away from the case of Shibuya Crossing and to provide an analysis of two comparative Canadian examples instead. In doing so, this study notably does not take into account the countless rich examples of urban screen media found outside of these arguably dominant streams of large scale, exceptionally financed, North American and Western European instances. On the other hand, in focusing on these four sites, the strengths of my analysis lays in its deeper understanding of urban screen cultures during the shifting contexts of urban governmental logics, from egalitarian liberalism to neoliberal frameworks of governance, as they took shape in this North Atlantic region of the world. Seeking to make deeper connections than mere processes of technological remediation of cinema or television, this dissertation focused on contextualizing the manifestation of urban screens less in terms of the commercialization of urban spaces and more in terms of the privatization of public places.

In focusing on the histories of Piccadilly Circus, Times Square, Yonge-Dundas Square and Quartier des Spectacles, I have argued that far from being a simple type of multiplication or expansion of moving image cultures, the histories of urban screen technologies illustrate a rather highly restrictive system of control shaped by the economies of real-estate, the bureaucracies of massive urban redevelopment projects, the governing of cultural activities and industries, and the management of “desired” and “undesired” people and affects. I have traced how each of the sites went through similar succession of events where ideas about redevelopment quickly gave way to the influence of urban preservation practices. At different historical stages during the transition from egalitarian to neoliberal systems of governance, city and real-estate developers argued that these urban zones were being inadequately and insufficiently used. Such positions were

articulated through arguments about the increasing square footage of real-estate, of the flow of pedestrian and vehicle traffic, as well as more problematically to the policing of people, things, activities, and tastes. But this push towards rejuvenation that occurred variably in each site did not easily come to fruition. Attempts to redevelop these locales were met with pushbacks that contrastingly sought to keep the architectural and qualitative characteristics of each respective area as much as possible. As this dissertation has shown, it is these efforts to protect architecture and signage that ultimately played important roles in shaping the designs, sizes, arrangements, content curatorship, and regulations of screen technologies in these sites. Though spaces for outdoor screens were shaped by ideas about the renewal of urban environments, efforts to preserve the characteristics of each area also proved to have long lasting impacts on the place of screens in these sites.

In contrast to Anne Friedberg's genealogy of screens in terms of openings and frames, the histories discussed in this dissertation reveal what happens to the genealogical ties that exist between media and architecture when screens serve not as figural or metaphorical windows, but replace windows altogether. Crucially, this genealogy is closely informed by the political and economic configurations that organize and orchestrate whether and how screens and architecture amalgamate. Whereas in Piccadilly Circus calls for architectural preservation ultimately resulted in the limitation of façades where screens can be placed, in Times Square the designation of illumination as an important architectural hallmark became the catalyst for ensuring that the presence of large scale digital displays became a prominent feature of this locale. In contrast, from its inception the construction of Yonge-Dundas Square was designed to prominently feature digital screens. This project was made possible mostly through the demolition of buildings. Preservation only entered through discussion of one particular "Sam the Record Man" neon sign that was protected in order to commemorate a time prior to the construction of the newly designed square. The history of this sign's preservation reveals how greater legitimacy was given to the memories of this particular sign more than any of the demolished architectural constructions. Variably, the inclusion of digital projections in the newly established Quartier des Spectacles was made possible through a combination of building preservation and demolition; however, here it was the protection of buildings connected to the historical heritage of the Quiet

Revolution, not signage, that decisively informed how urban screens would amalgamate with the area's architecture. Though the logics of privatization have dominated the calls for redevelopment of these four sites, it was the variable cultural politics, logics, economies, and legal frameworks of preservation that have played decisive roles in rationalizing the relations between screens and architecture.

This dissertation has thus also illustrated the variable ways through which different configurations of public and private models of governance — from egalitarian to neoliberal systems — have distinctly informed the amalgamation of media with architecture. In the case of Piccadilly Circus, disagreements amongst members of the private and the public sectors ultimately led to the dissolution of redevelopment projects. This arguably amounted to the dissection of media and architecture as two separate entities. The lack of coordination between the City of London, the Crowne estate, and private investors essentially did not lead to the protection of media façades as unique characteristics of this junction, but rather to the conservation of architecture through the dismantling of signage. Variably, although in the early stages of Times Square's redevelopment there was support from the City and State of New York for private investors' plans to remake this locale in the image of tall office towers and hotels that were free of signage, such coordinations did not include the support of the city's theatre, advertising, arts, and cultural heritage communities. Vociferous protests from the neighbourhood's local businesses and civic organization proved to be pivotal in establishing political support for new constructions in Times Square. In order to better coordinate these differences, as well as to appease the desires of local businesses, the city implemented special signage requirement laws that protected and ensured the amalgamation of media and architecture in this locale. In other words, instead of a coordinated partnership between the city and local businesses, the creation of Times Square as a deluge of large and bright digital displays on tall office towers and hotels was achieved through the establishment of special legal procedures that ensured the synthesis of illuminated signage with architecture.

In comparison, in the case of Yonge-Dundas Square, though media and architecture were considered in unison during many of the stages of redevelopment, it was the protection of one particular "Sam the Record Man" sign that later helped connect the square to a period that took

place prior to redevelopment. The history of how this sign became a part of Yonge-Dundas Square reveals the complex ways through which the public-private partnership between the city and select stakeholders — the Yonge-Dundas Square Board — was able to prolong the preservation of the sign. At the same time, however, this instance also illustrates how this public-private partnership ultimately helped ensure that architectural heritage carry a far minor role in the redevelopment. The "Sam the Record Man" sign found a place atop a newly gentrified public square in a way that only emphasizes the area's retail heritage over its other seedier histories. Contrastingly, from its inception, the Quartier des Spectacles Partnership sought to find ways through which the redevelopment of this Montreal neighbourhood would have minimal impact on the existing architecture. By adding a projection mapping infrastructure, the Quartier des Spectacles Partnership has been able to ensure the protection of select buildings. Importantly, instead of following special heritage laws that protect and preserve the architectural makeup of this neighbourhood, this public-private partnership was able to ensure the protection of select buildings by integrating them into this organization's daily operations. Whereas the implementation of screen media through the use of projection mapping technologies has helped encode these buildings as aesthetically and technologically new. This strategy has also done the work of gentrifying the area by displacing sex workers, homeless people, as well as artists who can no longer afford living in this neighbourhood.

My aims have not been to compare and evaluate whether or how egalitarian liberalism might be better than neoliberal systems of governance for the development of urban screen cultures. Instead, I have sought to historicize the emergence of urban screens within these two intricately related political contexts. The business improvement areas and public-private partnerships I discussed in the preceding chapters did not emerge because of urban screens; rather, urban screens were employed through the political and economic mechanisms that allowed these kinds of neoliberal organizations to exist. To be sure, such coordinations of control over urban screen technologies and cultures are not without consequences. As Justin Clemens et al. argue, "the regulatory processes that organize the uses of…[urban] screens are tantamount to the inculcation of certain controls on creativity, seeking to capture and canalize aesthetic affects

for governmental and corporate ends by, above all, a kind of fiscal moralization of technology."[1] The supposedly laissez-faire ethos of neoliberalism does not necessarily mean that public-private partnerships do not have influence over the ways urban screen technologies manifest. Indeed, such configurations have highly intricate command over the everyday governance of urban screen infrastructures. Nevertheless, it should also be recalled that the impacts of neoliberalism on urban screen culture are not homogeneous nor absolute. As the differences between the four histories of Piccadilly Circus, Times Square, Yonge-Dundas Square, and Quartier des Spectacles have shown, the integrations and implementations of urban screens, the amalgamations of media with architecture, and the contradistinctions between urban developments and heritage concerns, are highly contingent on specific political, economic, geographic, cultural, and historical contexts.

In these concluding words it should also be remembered that not all urban screens are organized by public, private, or public-private organizations. Works by artist collectives such as The Dawn of Man, The Illuminator, and The Pixelator have been projected without official permission from the owners of the buildings on which the images are displayed, or are not commissioned through any public mandates or authorities. For example, The Dawn of Man's *Projection Napping* series features pyjama-wearing characters, whose bodies lean against the parameters of the buildings upon which they are projected, "at random times and locations, occurring unannounced, and each lasting only for several hours."[2] Variably, whereas The Illuminator group projects anti-police brutality messages onto the façades of police stations, The Pixelator places boxes made out of foam and gel in front of digital billboards in order to

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[1] Clemens et al., "Big Screens," 49.

[2] "Projection Napping," *Optical Animal*, Accessed 13 November 2019, http://www.opticalanimal.com/Projection-Napping/.

transform the advertising content into abstract works of illumination art.[3] Such guerrilla art-like examples of urban screens test the politics of occupation as well as the saturation of the logics of commercialism and surveillance in public spaces through either unauthorized, disruptive, or explicitly illicit uses of moving image media.

Likewise, the complexities, contradictions, and paradoxes posited by the urbanism implied in the term '*urban* screens' should not be overlooked as well. The phrase does not adequately take into account the many iterations of screens found in rural or transitory spaces such as towns or airplanes. While it can be argued — as Stephen Groening, for example, does — that the placing of screens on airplanes in the forms of inflight entertainment technologies extend the definitions of urban environments both vertically and horizontally, such understandings risk being overly reductive of the workings of both media and urban space.[4] Similarly, an example such as Foresta Lumina, which features projected images in a forested area in the rural Eastern Townships of Québec, does not so easily fit into a definition of urbanism in the same ways that screens found in downtown centres might. As Anna McCarthy argues, we cannot "come up with a general set of social operations that media always perform regardless of their place."[5] The mere presence of screens cannot shape the ways places are experienced as either exclusively urban or rural, public or private. Instead, media inform the ways we experience places as either urban, rural, public or private "but not always in identical ways, producing identical meanings."[6] This is not to argue that instances of screens on airplanes and in more rural places are not in any way

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[3] On The Illuminator see Colangelo, "We Live Her," and Tim McSorley, "These Artist-Activists Projected Anti-Police Brutality Images on Montreal Police Headquarters," *Vice* (blog), 30 June 2014, https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/7bmdkb/we-hung-out-with-activist-collective-the-illuminators-while-they-projected-anti-police-brutality-images-on-montreal-police-headquarters400. On The Pixelator, see Jason Eppink and Alice Arnold, "Electric Signs: An Interview with Jason Eppink, The Pixelator," in *Urban Screens Reader*, Scott McQuire et al. eds., 217-220 (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2009).

[4] Stephen Groening, "Aerial Screens," *History and Technology* 29.3 (2013): 281-300.

[5] McCarthy, *Ambient TV*, 4.

[6] Ibid.

informed by urban cultures, but instead to point to the complexities that are present in the terminology used to describe such screens.

The four sites investigated in this dissertation reveal a small sample of zones that are dominantly characterized by urban screens. A great deal of research is left to be done regarding the amalgamation of urban screens with architecture in numerous other sites, an abundant majority of which are found in East Asian and European cities. Nevertheless, as the findings of this dissertation have shown, the histories of urban screens, the relations between screens and architecture, are intricately tied to the politics of urban development, the economies of real-estate, and the cultural values attributed to architecture and illuminated media.

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