

Event City – a New Madison Square Garden

Madison Square Garden Arena
Virtual – Visual – Physical Density
New York City

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Theory: Event City
Virtual – Visual – Physical Density

New technologies and their impact on the constructed environment is the essence of the many studios research I have been conducting. Initial theories of the relation between the Internet, and urban density had predicted the dislocation of the city. Information and communication would melt the dense city center as information was accessible from any point on the globe.

But the opposite has proven to be the rule, as information without context is meaningless. It is estimated that more than half of the world population is living in urban centers. But what is the actual purpose of such a high density city at the beginning of the XXI Century? Why are we paying so much rent to live in the center of cities like Paris, New York, Tokyo, Mumbai or Cairo?

What is the city of the XXI century offering to us that we believe is so valuable? And in that regard, what is the model of the new city of the XXI century?

The city and its plurality has become the interface between the virtual and the physical, with architecture finding its new role as an interface between the mind and the body.

If the main “raison d’être” for a city is its production of immaterial information, how does the physical constitution of the city encourage and enhance this non physical production?

The new role of the city has become an “Event city”, confronting the dislocated data with the physical and human context. Is the Event City a human oriented Network, or an information oriented network? It brings us back to the initial question, regarding the relationship between the Virtual and the Physical in architecture. The event bring into question the notion of “Presence” amid a highly constructed event.



.Program: a New Madison Square Garden Arena

Recently the New York City Council voted to let the lease of Madison Square Garden expire within 10 years. The Manhattan Arena will need to relocate, or to be redesigned within a new masterplan for Penn Station. The entire neighborhood is going through a major change, with the gigantic Hudson Yard development, the redesign of Penn Station and the phase three of the High Line.

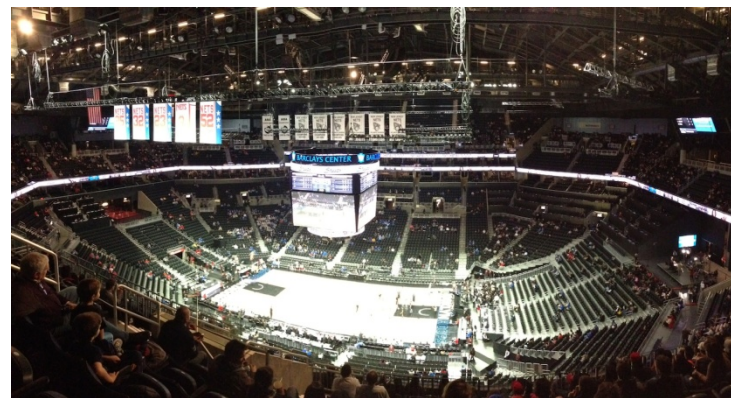
The opportunity to redesign Madison Square Garden allows us to rethink what is a major arena in the XXI Century. MSG is the most well known performance space and currently host Music entertainment, NBA Basketball, NHL Hokey and political conventions.

Usually considered as a “Container” the arenas are now more interactive, where the distinction between the inside event and the city outside becomes permeable. The relation between the live event, the filmed and recorded event is quite complex. But this actual “presence” is also the essence of the city. The feeling that one can actually participate in the information generator by being present at a specific place at a specific time is essential and raises the question of “presence” in regard to Architecture.



I have explored a decade ago the relationship of the live event with interactive architecture and the City for TRL in Times Square. I am interested in this tension between the virtual and the physical event. The premise of the studio will be to not only design a Sport and Entertainment Arena, but to see how it activates the city, and its direct surroundings.

Recently, the construction of the Barclays Center in Brooklyn has offered an interesting challenge for Madison square garden, where the new arena operate as an urban generator of events, integrating public urban space as well as large information screens.



Project Site: Hudson Yards – West New York City

Madison Square Garden is famously located on top of the most active train Station in the United States. With 640,000 people a day transiting through Penn Station, the Western gate to the city needs a major redesign. But the entire West side of Midtown is going through a major transformation. The Hudson Rail Yard is being covered and massive towers are currently being built.

The opportunity to insert Madison Square Garden into this new Masterplan for the Hudson Yard forces us to take some position of the role of a new “event Arena”. Multiple scenarios are possible, such as keeping the arena above Penn station or relocating the arena within the Hudson Yards.

The major transformation of the neighborhood brings into play the extension of the High Line as well as the extension of the number 7 subway. This highly transformative condition of this part of the city center raises the question of programs and activities beyond the ubiquitous office and residential towers. Ultimately, the studio is a research in contemporary culture and the future of the urban city center.



This is where we need the city; as a physical interface contextualizing Virtual information into a Physical space, negotiating between dimensions, and in return producing information and knowledge. The future of the city in the information age is not the dissolution of the physical space into the ether of digital bits, but rather an essential tool to understand and interface information: It is what I call the “knowledge city”. The City should be considered as an interface between stored knowledge and active users, as well as between active users themselves, and between active users and the surrounding space. It is the place for the possibility to exchange knowledge, to learn from each others. It is the place for chance encounter, the un-programmed, the un-mediated, and the unexpected.

Event Spaces - Interactive Surfaces

How does architecture answer to this extreme speed of interaction? How does architecture integrate this notion of the Event, of the additional layer of “augmented” reality, of this additional virtual or informational presence? Architecture has always been a very slow and heavy process, requiring massive amount of investment, long decision process and enormous inertia. The construction materials for traditional architecture have also been extremely static, with stone, concrete, steel and glass as the main elements.

The notion of Event Architecture is not entirely new and from Cedric Price to Bernard Tschumi or Guy Debors, the idea of an event based environment has been proposed in a number of projects.

The studio will explore two avenues toward this responsive architecture. On one hand, the reduction of the volumetric condition to a condition of complex surfaces, and on the other the usage of information layered on top of the surface. The resulting aggregation of these strategies is leading to a condition of the Hypersurface, both as a digital as well as a complex topological surface.



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