



THE COMPETITIVE HYPOTHESIS — FREEDOM TO COMPETE

Adrian Lahoud

Neo-liberalism aims to secure a specific kind of freedom, freedom as the freedom to circulate, to trade, to compete. The 'ambiguity of competition', a phrase first used by John Kenneth Galbraith to refer to the writings of Chicago School poster boy Milton Friedman perfectly captures the tension between the idea of competition as interpersonal rivalry and competition as it applies to the market and its anonymous mechanism for securing a 'natural and true' price.

For Friedman, competition is simply *not monopoly*. Every actor's limited horizon of action is an article of faith and the individual becomes the only possible social unit — a position held with something approaching religious devotion within neo-classical economics. Not only this, but the perfectibility of competition — as enshrined in the notion of a 'free market', becomes synonymous with the idea of stability. As Galbraith was at pains to point out, the paradox or ambiguity within this idea is that every competitor seeks monopoly as the merciful end to competitions endless savagery.

Competition can be understood to manifest numerous tendencies with-

in architectural practice. Our starting point in this exhibition is to make a distinction between two types of practices, two parallel trades in either material or symbolic capital. Representing the former are the top 100 hundred or so design and engineering conglomerates whose names you will never recognize. Like dark matter, they make up most of the known universe but exist wholly outside of disciplinary consciousness and its discursive structures. In a somewhat Faustian bargain, for architecture to be monopolized on such a scale it first has to vanish out of sight.

On the other hand there is the remaining 0.5% of symbolically relevant practices that trade in the circulation of ideas or images (or what amounts to the same thing). Because the competition between ideas or images occurs in a condition of contracted attention in which ever-increasing levels of spin attempt to make contact with the dwindling attention spans of audiences, production becomes caught in a cycle of restless, superficial transformation that drains the possibility of actual difference. There is no outside to this problem of exacerbated flattening — the trade in symbolic practice simply adopts it as one additional

coordinate among many, instead of a structural problem to be resisted. In architecture today one can never accept reality enough, the possibility of conflict being habitually reduced to a force vector pointed at an always-accommodating form whose essential plasticity is always willing to fold, bend and lean, always ready to contort itself into a more pliant shape.

The plasticity of form and ethos is mirrored in the plasticity of work practice, because this ceaseless drive for strike out, innovation and originality must always attempt to extract the maximum of change from the minimum of means, workspace within the 0.5% becomes increasingly precarious, opportunistic and flexible — often leading to a sub-standardization of work conditions for employees and the expansion of internship as a form of cheap labour. Within the millions of blue foam models, the time and energy of a reserve army of workers is fossilized. This intense culture of competition within architecture is a wholly naturalized phenomenon, permeated by the apparent inevitability of capitalism.

Within a condition of economic insecurity, precarious work conditions

become a norm rather than an exception forcing an endless opportunism and the continual cultivation of our productive capacities as flexible workers and virtuosos of communication. When applied to social bonds, competition and precarity act like a solvent dissolving collective possibilities and delivering a restless, impatient productivity shadowed by the continual possibility of loss.

It is clear that the state of architectural production cannot be detached from the work and cultural conditions that make it operative. In this sense the idea of 'competition' acquires a double meaning, on one hand referring to the competition as a procurement mechanism for projects, on the other referring to an ethos or disposition that permeates work practice. This exhibition turns to both of these possibilities in order to continue an investigation into architectures present condition. Organised into four triangular rooms, the exhibition is singular subdivides and multiplies the floor plate of Storefront for Art and Architecture to create an episodic reading of paradigmatic competitive moments.

SF1: ON ANONYMITY, DECEPTION AND AMBITION

**Carmelo Rodríguez Cedillo &
Daniel Fernández Pascual**

In order to gain competitive advantage, competitors often break the pact of anonymity upon which many competitions are based by resorting to clues, lies, feints, forgeries, scams, ploys and other forms of deception. From the mountain of evidence we extract a single paradigmatic moment: coming up to the 1976 Shinkenchiku Residential Design Competition on the theme 'House for a Superstar', Adolfo Natalini of Superstudio greeted competition judge Arata Isozaki in a most unfamiliar way, leaving a personal postcard with an image of Michelangelo's David in his palm. Three months later during the judging of the anonymous competition, one of the entries proposes an egg encasing a golden statue of David orbiting the earth and floating eternally in space. Piero Frassinelli from Superstudio wins the third prize.

I.

A miniature mock-up of the encapsulated David is suspended from the ceiling encased in a solitary white egg. It has a peepholes at eye height. The peepholes allows visitors to take a look inside and discover Frassinelli's

'superstar'. In his purely written submission to the competition, he compares his egg capsule to the eternity of the pyramid and the eternity of the Pharaoh. Shifting from the David as a material working-object into himself as a working-author. With his smartly choreographed marketing — making Isozaki anticipate his submission via Natalini — Frassinelli reveals his secret touch on the competition work itself, a sentiment that elicits Isozaki's admiration.

II.

On a small shelf, a rubber stamp is placed next to an inkpad. The stamp reads 'Projects Must Be Signed'. It translates from Italian '*Il Progetti Si Firmano*': the proposal for the international competition for the Università degli Studi in Florence that was presented in 1970 by Archizoom Associati (Andrea Branzi, Gilberto Corretti, Paolo Deganello and Massimo Morozzi). Archizoom's adaptation of the No-Stop City for the competition in Florence was a statement about authorship. Being realistic about how architecture competitions worked/didn't work (whatever the case may



- 01 RIBA Survey, London, 1872
- 02 House for a Superstar, Superstudio, 1976 (remade model)
- 03 How Not To Title A Competition Entry
- 04 How Not to Judge A Competition Entry
- 05 Experts vs. Architects (remade cards) After Dolls' House Competition, 1981
- 06 'Projects Must Be Signed' after Archizoom, 1970
- 07 Geopolitical Cocktails Performance: Terroir Mimosas (Opening Night)

be), they decided to unveil the hypocrisy of anonymity even at risk of disqualification. Rejecting 'an architecture of bureaucracy' they sign their proposal with actual names (as well as surnames and addresses) and title the competition entry so that no doubt might remain as to its provenance.

III.

In 1981, AD's editor, Andreas Papadakis is unable to find the perfect dolls' house for his daughter and so announces a competition for architects to design one. When it came to the election of the best designs dissent emerges. Stage one was open and paper-based, from which 50 finalists were selected. For stage two twenty renowned architects had to be additionally invited to join the celebrity architect would lend some capital to the competition. The final jury consisted of James Gowan, Robert Maxwell, Andreas Papadakis, Bruno Zevi

and Vincent Scully but also a parallel jury made up of children. In this section of the exhibition, a series of 10 redrawn post-cards illustrates the split results, 5 winners selected by a panel of children and 5 winners selected by a panel of architects.

IV.

Concerns about cheating, labour exploitation or flashy architectural images in competitions might be familiar to contemporary sensibilities, but in one regard at least, architectural culture has proven to be relatively stable — it seems complaints do not change much over time. A meticulous survey by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) conducted among British practitioners at the behest of a new commission meant to investigate corruption and deception in architectural competitions carried out in London in 1872 makes for familiar reading. We repeat the survey here to elucidate responses 141 years later.

SF2: THE HABITAT OF HOMO ŒCONOMICUS

Ross Exo Adams &
Ivonne Santoyo-Orozco

Outside the realm of high profile architectural competitions, another world of architectural competition unfolds in multiple, largely unrecognizable practices. Competition here exists as a background condition—the immense, brutal economic rivalry that has fermented in an oddly silent yet pervasive manner over the course of the recent decades. Under the growing demand for large scale private real estate development around the world, a new landscape of competition has materialized itself in the likes of Special Economic Zones, private districts and clusters and the generalized privatization of civic space at large. Unfurling at a scale reminiscent of state planning of the previous century, these new demands have shaped a very different architectural and urban design practice dominated by a slew of colossal yet anonymous design conglomerates. Analogous to the neoliberal restructuring of the state, developers in this new mode of production have increasingly found themselves faced with the problem of producing large scale collective spaces, while framing them around the interests of an anonymous, freely competing individual.

By the latter half of the twentieth century, the influential American economist, Gary Becker, would take neoliberal, free market ideology to its logical conclusion, offering forth a new politico-economic model which would only take shape decades later. Like his predecessors, Becker too would center his economic program on the figure of the homo Œconomicus. However, unlike others before him, Becker would begin by radically reconceptualizing this subject: For him, homo Œconomicus was someone who unquestionably accepts 'reality', embracing it as the totality of his or her given circumstances. Becker realized that economic calculations could not be based solely on an individual's rational behavior, but must also account for his or her irrational behavior. By including all manner of conduct, Becker suggested that economic projections should therefore account for external stimuli which pre-condition behavior itself. In other words, Becker's new form of neoliberal policy would expand its domain to account for the mediation between personal interests and the composition of the external, affective environment in which homo



07 The Natural Habitat of Homo Œconomicus
08 The Ecology of Interests

Œconomicus dwells. For the entrance of homo Œconomicus, a new world would have to be constructed, a world that would foster an economy of interests.

The majority of today's architectural practices are required to intervene on both fronts, addressing the needs of large scale real estate development while idealizing them around the construct of the sensually aware, desiring individual. In order to keep up with these demands, architectural practices have sought to mediate this relation through a campaign of visual techniques. Beyond evoking certain identifiable trends in design—for architecture exists in the indifference of the background—, the imagery which has systematically colonized the entire architectural repertoire reveals much more about the external coordinates in which architecture operates today. Often eluding a clear subject or figure, such images instead depict spaces captured in the causal glance of a kind of super-subject who exists

at once in the privileged, everydayness of its gaze as well as outside the image and in the immersive grasp it purports to place in the space beyond the image. Figurelessness and interchangeability are the very basis on which homo Œconomicus' constructs its individuality.

Shrouded in lush greenery, and bathed in warm, late afternoon sunlight; 'vibrant' streetscapes, crowded with families, tourists and young lovers; skewed perspectives which reveal the naturally curving layout of active frontage; aerial views at sunrise with fresh mist captured in the texture of a new-yet-familiar planned district; the integration of local 'culture' within the appropriate interpretations of what already exists—this is the construction of 'place' which has been rolled out across the planet by the anonymous firms of a multi-billion dollar industry today. It is the vibrant, perpetual summer of homo Œconomicus, the verdant immersiveness of an ecology of interests.

SF3: THINK SPACE PAST FORWARD

Ana Dana Beroš and
Adrian Lahoud

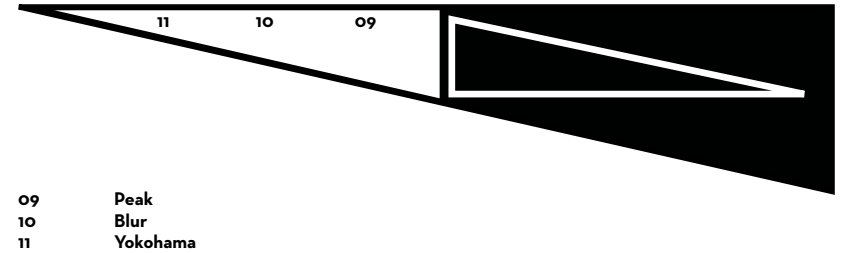
George Kubler thought ‘the moment of actuality slips too fast by the slow, coarse net of our senses’. The question is how one might perceive history while immersed in it. It was a question that animated **ThinkSpace Past Forward**. In architecture, as in many other things, the right project can make the wrong entrance, resting until archivists retrieve it from obscurity. In architecture as in comedy, timing is almost everything. Only rarely do certain projects manage to build their own time, shaping their own history and that of others. The three projects selected for Think Space this year: **The Peak**, **Yokohama Port Terminal** and **Blur Building** are examples of the latter, each managing the rather difficult challenge of posing a new problem to into and leaving that field transformed in their wake.

History is either said to be ‘made’ or ‘written’. In the first case this usually refers to historical events as such, in the second, to the practice of recording, organising and locating this event within a narrative. In response to a perceived condition of historical amnesia within contemporary practice,

the ambition behind the ThinkSpace Past Forward competition series was to force historical narration to emerge explicitly through a design proposal. The question this competition posed to its entrants was where to stand in relation to these singular moments of historical transformation.

Referring to the original panels in which Zaha Hadid refracts Hong Kong island through a suprematist prism, projects like **Peak on Peak** by Anna Neimark and Andrew Attwood, declare that the site for the project is no less than the architect herself. What ensues is a game of architectural prosopopoeia in which a “man made polished granite mountain” speaks to Malevich (again) through a new geological interlocutor.

Freeze/Melt by Eyal Weizman, sees the **Blur Building** as an unfinished project – the transformation of water-to-mist in the original inviting a further series of phase transitions from solid to liquid and so completing the cycle of transmutation posed by the original. Proposing only a circular subsurface heating and cooling



element, **Freeze/Melt** generates a platform of ice in late fall and a lake in early spring in a subtle, artificial acceleration of the seasons.

Yokohama Terminal: enabling for the living by Jorge Suro, re-imagines the original FOA scheme in low-resolution concrete, suggesting a strong diagrammatic continuity with the original if not a material one. Other projects such as **The Cloud* as an Archive attempt to step into different territory** by Andrei Olaru, Anna Gulinska, Elena Romagnoli and Pablo Roman, by rethinking **Blur Building** as an ephemeral data centre, proposing a structure in which guests might finally touch information. The **Noise** by Nenad Simić, Ana Cogoljević, Boris Ignjatović, Aleksandar Joksimović, Darko Kadvanj, Marko Matejić, Jelena Nikolić, Edin Omanović, Nikola Zamurović, both contracts and ex-

pands the original call for projects at Yverdon-les-Bains, reducing the intervention to a thin one-kilometre long path with nothing but a set of speakers at the end. Making the lone walk out to the end of the pier, visitors will hear the amplified sound of cosmic radiation. Where **Blur Building** revelled in its own spatial ambiguity, **Landship** by Gautier Duthoit, proposes a counter-concept, a simple rectilinear garden adrift in the lake. The project opens by citing Foucault: ‘We are in the epoch of simultaneity, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed.’ In their juror’s comments, Ricardo Scofidio and Charles Renfro liken **Landship** to an ark; the allusion is perfect, the space is intended to produce – through an act of radical separation – new perspectives on a conflated, collapsing environment.

THINK SPACE 2012
PAST FORWARD
PRESENTED
WORKS AND AUTHORS

THE PEAK LEISURE CLUB
Hong Kong, Competition 1983
by Zaha Hadid

PAST FORWARD 2012
 PEAK COMPETITION

Peak Eye
 by Horatiu Valcu, Austria;
 Daniel Reist, Austria

Rekurs(H)ive II
 by Marco Vanucci, Italy;
 Mirco Bianchini, Italy

Peak on Peak
 by Anna Neimark, USA;
 Andrew Attwood, USA

Construction of Situations
 by Alfonso C Medina, USA;
 Mauricio Kuri, Mexico;
 Oscar Gonzalez, Mexico;
 Alina Castaneda, Mexico;
 Alexandra Levian, USA

9x9: A Study in Inductive Design
 by Juenan Wu, USA;
 Renee Kwok, Hong Kong

YOKOHAMA PORT TERMINAL
Yokohama, Japan,
Competition 1994–95,
Completion 2002
by Foreign Office Architects

PAST FORWARD 2012
 YOKOHAMA PORT TERMINAL
 COMPETITION

Upon Arrival: Mediating Cultural
Connections through an Adaptation
of Japanese Gardens
 by Marissa Tirone, USA;
 Greg Bencivengo, USA

Yokohama Terminal:
enabling for the living
 by Jorge Suro, Mexico

Yokohama Competition
 by Jakša Kalajžić, Croatia

Real Virtuality
 by Tomislav Katić, Croatia

InterEmbrace
 by Matthew E. Messner, USA;
 Lulwah Alzaid, Kuwait;
 Adrienne Joergensen, USA;
 Evgeniya Plotnikova, Russian
 Federation

The Above, The Below and The City:
Ferry Terminal for Yokohama, Japan
 by David Edwards, United Kingdom

Topological Songlines for Yokohama
 by Pedro Pitarh, Spain

BLUR BUILDING
Yverdon-les-Bains, Switzerland,
Competition 1999,
Completion 2002
by Charles Renfro &
Ricardo Scofidio

PAST FORWARD 2012
 BLUR COMPETITION

The Cloud as an Archive
 by Andrei Olaru, Romania;
 Anna Gulinska, Poland;
 Elena Romagnoli, Italy;
 Pablo Roman, Spain

Chaak
 by Joshua M. Taron, Canada;
 Adam Onulov, Canada;
 Michael McGie, Canada

Landship
 by Gautier Duthoit, France

Prehistoric Periscope
 by Leonardo Zuccaro Marchi, Italy

Freeze/Melt
 by Eyal Weizman, United Kingdom

The Field
 by Fosco Lucarelli, France;
 Mariabruna Fabrizi, Italy;
 Léa-Catherine Szacka, France

Noise
 by Nenad Simić, Ana Cogoljević,
 Boris Ignjatović, Aleksandar Joksimović,
 Darko Kadvanj, Marko Matejić,
 Jelena Nikolić, Edin Omanović,
 Nikola Zamurović, Serbia

SF4: MIND THE GAP

Daive Sacconi

In the last twenty years the rise of the post-fordist society has had a massive impact on architectural production both in terms of the quantity of design that has to be produced and the speed at which it has to be delivered. The ever-changing nature of our “liquid modernity” requires enormous work-loads and continuous adaptation to the trends of a globalized market.

Accelerated urbanization forms an indissoluble link with the high-speed and ungraspable movements of financial capitalism — clashing against the slow clumsiness of design and building practice. The key issue for the success of any contemporary architectural firm is the bridging of this “geological fault”.

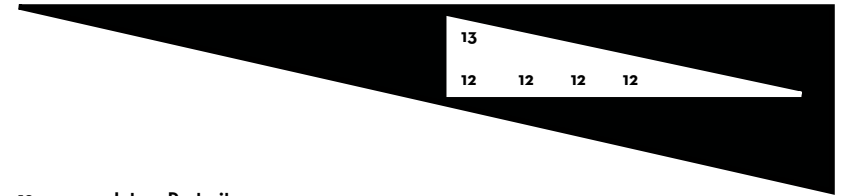
Across such a dizzying gap an anonymous army of trainees and interns is building a bridge.

Being cheap or free, this labor pool forms an indispensable ingredient for massive production, continuous adaptation and fast innovation. Their flexibility allows architectural practice respond to the restless demands of

the market. The figure of the intern — far from being just an apprentice that has to learn about the reality of the profession — has instead become a fundamental instrument to ensure competitive viability.

To be a leading practice in today’s panorama of international architecture one must almost re-create — in vitro — the heterogeneous complexity of a global world within the open plan of the office. Interns from all over the world are gathered in what we will call “living laboratories” of global society: they bring the essential mix of knowledge, cultural difference, social skills, curiosity for the unstable trends of life, strong motivation, intimacy, rapid adaptability to new technologies and capability to tirelessly perform. They are the backbone of post-fordist society, a multitude of faceless workers.

At the core of the exhibition’s concept is the idea to revert the condition of anonymity into the one of awareness. Taking advantage of the possibilities offered by the internet and the social networks, through the form of a competition brief, architecture interns



12 Intern Portraits
13 Intern Stories

and trainees from all over the world have been called to tell their stories through a short text and a self portrait. As prize the 30 most relevant contributions are displayed in a wall of personal experiences that showcases the paradoxical complexity at the core of architectural production. Sf4 will acknowledge the existence and the unspoken relevance of trainee’s contribution to the architectural discourse, giving for the first time a name and a face to the multitude of architecture workers. The exhibition will have an ongoing virtual extension in a website where the all the contributions will be continuously displayed and permanently discussed in real time. Thus the

physical exhibition will act as a showcase but more importantly as spark to a process of awareness construction extending beyond the walls and the time frame of the exhibition into a common and worldwide platform.

INTERNS

Alexandra Ienca, Alexandra Skitiova, Anna Grajper, Antonio Duarte, Ariel Vazquez, Blake Naumann, Fabio Fusco, Giada Cerri, Heng Liu, Hyun Soo Kim, Ilaria Rondina, Ivan Nasuttion, Jad Semaan, Julie Huynh, Li Pi & Junjie Wang, Krzysztof Syruć, Ling Xiao Zhang, Lucka Kuhar, Magdalena Malska

THINK SPACE: THE COMPETITIVE HYPOTHESIS

AN EXHIBITION EXAMINING THE COMPETITION CULTURE

Storefront for Art & Architecture,
New York

Storefront for Art and Architecture

Exhibition Opening:
January 22, 2013, 7PM

Exhibition:
January 22 – February 15, 2013

EVENTS

For events please check updates on

[http://www.storefrontnews.org/
programming/events](http://www.storefrontnews.org/programming/events)

or

[http://think-space.org/en/events/
exhibition](http://think-space.org/en/events/exhibition)

EXHIBITION CREDITS

CURATORIAL TEAM

Adrian Lahoud
Ana Dana Beroš
Kata Gašpar
Carmelo Rodriguez Cedillo
Daniel Fernández Pascual
Ross Exo Adams
Ivonne Santoyo Orozco
Davide Sacconi

EXHIBITION DESIGN

Amanda Clarke and Adrian Lahoud

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Rafaela Dražić

ABOUT THINK SPACE

Think Space is a wide scale disciplinary intervention using a design competition, exhibition, unconference and publications as its material. More information: www.think-space.org

THINK SPACE BOARD

Damir Ljutić, Chairman
Ana Dana Beroš, Program Coordinator
Luka Korlaet
Sanja Cvjetko Jerković
Vesna Vrga Perović
Kata Gašpar
Ana Marendić
Lukas Pauer, Publication Coordinator

Think Space Program was developed and organized by Zagreb Society of Architects.

DAZ

This exhibition is organized in partnership with the Zagreb Society of Architects and funded in part by Graham Foundation, Croatian Ministry of Culture and ACO Croatia.

GRAHAM FOUNDATION



Additional support for Storefront for Art in Architecture's exhibitions and programs are made possible by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council; The Peter T. Joseph Foundation; by its Board of Directors, members and individuals.



