

PLUG_IN PARK AVENUE_ UBER HQ



2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) Stanley Kubrick

“The shape is at the same time highly artistic and highly efficient, a diagram of maximum beauty and maximum rentability, combined in a single, Brancusi-like shape. Its geometry at the same time reinforces and escapes the existing city. It resonates with each of its famous neighbors—Seagram, Lever, AT&T, Racquet Club—yet it is emphatically futuristic.”

Rem Koolhaas Park Avenue Proposal description excerpt

The Corporate Headquarter type is under attack. Today with the ever present rise of startups to uber companies such as Facebook, Google, Twitter and the like we see companies that at one moment are incubating in a warehouse or garage quickly rise from obscurity to reach the summit of corporate culture, and with that they sustain a radical transformation in their approach to the workplace and more importantly the city. These companies are taking over and incising their way into the public realm (virtual and real) and therefore impacting city space in untold ways.

The Uber HQ is the focus of this semesters Deep Futures laboratory work. We will look at how new and quite different cultures of space and business, play and commerce and so on, are taking over and posing the question what becomes of these enterprises when they re-enter the ‘atmosphere’ of city space and urban culture. How will these Uber HQ’s change the landscape of dense infrastructure, reclaim the idea of image and prowess, situate themselves as dominant forces of change etc?

The place of question is the very heart of corporate HQ culture, Park Avenue in New York city. This zone, once the home to Pan American airways, Seagrams Distillers, Lever Soap and countless other major companies, is now ripe for the taking. The old notion of stand alone singular heroic monuments to corporate dominance and omnipresence are eroding in the face of emerging social networking (Whats App) electric and information technology based vehicles (Tesla) , cross cultural mega sites (Alibaba) and the like. The electro-sphere has spawned not only entirely new terrains of human interaction, but also new forms of collaboration, new types of product, new hybridized business and with it entirely new approaches to being present and being within city space therefore eventually new architectures.

Park Avenue is today a catalog of twentieth century technologies, types and approaches to architecture and building design, scrutinizing this place and repositioning, retrieving, reinventing and reworking Park Avenue is at the center of the summer 2014 DF lab. Students will take on the zone as a place to house and accommodate new typologies of the Uber HQ. The studio will explore the notion of Plug-In architectural works that will instigate an entirely new and radical different approach to building envelopes, spacial programming and city space in the heart of New York City.

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Exercise A

“The transition to what seems like a universal architectural language is a more complex process than we typically recognize, involving significant encounters between cultures, technical inventions and imperceptible ways of remaining ‘national.’ In a time of ubiquitous Google research and the flattening of cultural memory, it is crucial for the future of architecture to resurrect and expose these narratives.”

Rem Koolhaas Venice Biennale 2014 description excerpt

Each student will be given an arbitrary ‘aspect’ of Park avenue and develop a series of geometric explorations within the given volume and bounding area designated. The geometric explorations and studies will be centered around tectonic explorations tied to notions of networks, intersections and overlay. The martial logic of these explorations will be that of the typologies of buildings, walls, windows, surfaces, floors, ceilings and so on,

The resulting works will be critiqued in terms of their elegance, invention, clarity of purpose and architectural bravado and possibility.

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