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SITES OF LOST DWELLING:

The Figure of the Archaic City in the Discourses of Urban Design, 1938-1970

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General note on the overall dissertation: its contribution to the field, its outline:

This dissertation proposes a contribution to the scholarship, not only on post-war urbanism, but also more generally on architectural modernism. It is a synthetic project that maps out, in an international context, previously submerged connections among images, discourses and cultural practices. By examining representations of archaic cities as they had come to be excavated from an array of borrowed disciplines, it aims to chart, and hence make conscious, a powerful network of imagery and rhetoric that continues to inform contemporary city building. Also, by examining images of the archaic city as part of the history of architectural modernism, this project problematizes the historiographic divide between modern and post-modern urbanism, tracing instead a more complex sequence of ruptures and continuities that span the turbulent decades from the 1940's to the 1960's. This project fits into a larger history of architectural theory even as it also contributes to a cultural history of cities in the post-war period. It contends that the figure of the archaic city, far from being marginal, was central to discourses of modern urban design in this period.

There are, to my knowledge, no other synthetic works dealing with this topic. Books have been published on certain of the individual authors or institutions studied in this dissertation. These books include: Andrea Bocco Guarneri's *Bernard Rudofsky: A Humane Designer* (2003); Josep Rovira's *José Luis Sert 1901-1983* (2000) ; and Eric Mumford's *Discourse of CIAM Urbanism* (1999). However, such works tend to take the form of biography or catalogue raisonné. There are numerous studies of primitivism in modern art, including Frances Connelly's *The Sleep of Reason* (1994) and Marianna Torgovnick's *Gone Primitive* (1990). However, none of these works deals substantially with urbanism, and few deal with the post-1945 period. There are books, such as Nan Ellin's *Postmodern Urbanism* (1996) that approach post-war urbanism in a synthetic

manner but are forced to rely primarily on secondary literature because of the vastness of their scopes. Some of the themes of this dissertation parallel those in M. Christine Boyer's *City of Collective Memory* (1996). However, this dissertation closely examines the period between 1938 and 1972, which Boyer's book largely elides, jumping as it does from the 19th and early 20th centuries to the so-called postmodern decades of the 1970s and 80s.

Outline:

In the period between the late 1930s and the late 1960s, architects and planners often employed examples of cities, either from preindustrial periods or from parts of the world not touched by industrialization.[1] At the very moment they would seem to have become most irrelevant to the new urban orders, preindustrial urban forms retained a privileged place in the theory and visual imagery of urban design. Cited either as formal models or as metaphorical images, these archaic examples pointed to methods for remedying any number of urban ills, from visual chaos to social alienation. It was virtually a truism in this period that preindustrial cities, in certain respects at least, were vastly superior to their modern, industrialized counterparts. In fact, statements to that effect were so common that one can trace a vast network of urban design discourse in which the archaic city stood forth as a didactic figure, dialectically opposed to the dystopian contents of urbanized modernity. Surprisingly however, few historians have commented on this phenomenon, except as a minor thread of modernism or as an index of early "postmodernist" sensibilities. Through photographs and, to a lesser extent, drawings, images of ancient and preindustrial cities circulated through numerous publications on urban design, the same images often serving very different rhetorical purposes in different contexts. Such images included Piranesi etchings of Rome, archeological plans of classical cities, aerial photographs of African villages, and architectural photographs of historical European cities and their monuments. Certain favorite images appeared in multiple publications while new images continually appeared

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1 Although some historians would categorize medieval Florence and Bruges as industrial cities because of their extensive weaving industries and early forms of capitalism, the authors studied here generally thought of industrial cities as those whose forms had been determined by mechanized forms of industrialization and their products, including the steam engine, the railroad and the automobile.

as the writers themselves produced and collected photographs for their own publications. Thus, the archaic city was, in this sense, multiple archaic cities, whose form and number continually shifted and diversified. It may, at first glance, seem artificial and willful to categorize cities as different as Baroque Rome, ancient Athens, the Dogon villages of Mali, and Georgian London under the term, "archaic." Indeed, such cities would seem to have so little in common, formally, culturally or historically as to defy any kind of categorization. However, within the realm of urbanistic discourse in this period, such cities were bound by their common representational opposition to cities being built in the middle of the twentieth century. Although one might often perceive distinctions between cities considered 'outside of history' and those coded as belonging to distinct historical periods, those distinctions could just as easily disappear, and even the most canonical of the traditionally historicized cities of Western European narrative could be treated as ahistorical objects of perception or as abstract models of urbanistic order. What invariably bound the diverse examples of preindustrial cities together was the sense that they represented some principle of order or coherence on the far side of an urbanized malaise that had begun some time in the middle of the 19th century and expanded into new and monstrous forms in the 20th. Thus, to speak of the archaic city in the period between 1938 and 1970 is to refer to this object of imagined order, taking many specific shapes and examples.

CHAPTER 1: FROM VILLAGE TO PRECINCT
The Archaic City as "Neighborhood Unit"

The first chapter examines the manner in which the archaic city became a site for imagining and producing urban collectivities in the in the modernist discourses of urban design of the 1940s and 50s. Such collectivities, variously named 'public,' 'community' or simply 'the people,' were often represented as neighborly associations, in which physical proximities overcame differences. At other times, they were represented as informal groups gathering within specialized precincts and intimate piazzas. This chapter

investigates the ways in which archaic cities were deployed as objects of apparent familiarity and nearness, seeming to embody a scene of unmediated social relations that could re-emerge in the present. During the 1940s leading CIAM members, such as Sigfried Giedion and José Luis Sert began to absorb these discourses, particularly as they were filtered by the writings of Lewis Mumford, who viewed the medieval town as an embodiment of organic community. Employing sources from sociology, urban planning and architecture, this chapter demonstrates how such representations of the archaic city became increasingly abstracted from concrete social groups or institutions, devolving into an ideological representation of contentless, 'public' space. It examines the ideological and urbanistic consequences of this imagery as well certain rifts and variations, particularly in the British notion of the "precinct," in which spatial intimacy implied, not transparency and openness, but opacity and the reinforcement of specialized urban classes. In either case, the sociological representation of the archaic city as an intimate grouping of neighbors structured the representations of postwar "public space" in sometimes paradoxical ways. Here, urban space was supposed to signify, if not reproduce, an idealized social integration, attributed to the ancient *agora* or village green. This chapter draws on the José Luis Sert collection at Harvard University as well as from numerous published sources.

CHAPTER 2: FROM AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY TO SYSTEMS THEORY
The Archaic City as "Organic" Image

The second chapter investigates how "organic" representations of the archaic city emerged in photographs of vernacular cityscapes, producing ambivalent images in which the archaic seemed both to reinforce and to undermine modernism's utopian aims of overcoming artifice and alienation. This chapter traces the circulation of such photographs in publications and exhibitions, arguing that such photographs corresponded with a modernist project of "organic" integration, dating back to the 1920s and 30s, but taking on new and more ambivalent significations in the1950's and 60's. It examines

particularly the way in which an earlier primitivism centered on Mediterranean villages came to be deployed in an environmental critique of post-war American cities in the 1950s and 60s, when it seemed to such critics that modernism had gone deeply astray. Primitivism, in this context reemerged in the aesthetic fascination with so-called anonymous architecture, the description of such architecture as eternal or timeless, and its identification with contemporary formal ideals.[2] The publication of *Our World from the Air* by sociologist and planner Erwin A. Gutkind in 1952 introduced a broad-English speaking audience to a didactic panorama, ranging from familiar European cities to less familiar African tribal villages and Chinese cave dwellings. A number of these same photographs would then reappear 12 years later in Bernard Rudofksy's contentious exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, "Architecture without Architects." While the aesthetic patterns of urbanism, now oddly decontextualized, could now be recognized across the usual geographic boundaries, available as never before to the modern eye, their forms remained oddly estranged from the common 'environment' of modernity. It was a visual critique fraught with ironies and ambiguities, representing the archaic city as a utopian mirror for modernism's organic ideal while also framing such representations in graphically abstract forms that precluded easy identifications or interpretations. More generally, preindustrial and vernacular architecture came to stand, against the perceived chaos of postwar urbanism, for models of environmental harmony. On the one hand, such images could stand in as visual metaphors for a futuristic ideal of technological integration. On the other hand, these vernacular, hand-built cities were often implicitly and explicitly opposed to the modern, mass-produced cities of the industrialized world. This chapter draws on a number of archives, especially the Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Files, the Bernard Rudofsky papers at the Getty Center, and the Sybil Moholy-Nagy papers at the Archive of American Art.

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2 Primitivism has, of course, had a long history in art and art historical circles. There are numerous studies of primitivism in modern art, including Frances Connelly's *The Sleep of Reason* (1994) and Marianna Torgovnick's *Gone Primitive* (1990). However, none of these works deals substantially with urbanism, and few deal with the post-1945 period.

CHAPTER 3: FROM STREET PICTURE TO COGNITIVE MAP
The Archaic City as Psychological Anchor

The third chapter examines the visual conception of the archaic city as an anchor for subjective consciousness, orienting the individual to a meaningful cityscape. It investigates the way in which this representation of the archaic city as a psychological anchor grew out the discussions of civic art in the 1950s, in reaction to various modernist practices accused of being increasingly hostile or indifferent to its effects on the observer. It traces this paradigm back to the German, psychological theories of city planning in the late 19th century while also contextualizing its reemergence in the post-war period. It argues that this conception of the archaic city challenged many of the aesthetic assumptions of architectural modernism, even as it depended on modernist views of the perceiving subject as a generator of individual meaning. In an urban landscape, perceived as inhuman, disorienting and unrecognizable, the archaic city provided the counter-model of a visually meaningful topography. Transmuting an earlier urbanistic concern with the siting of monuments into a more open-ended sense of the subjectively meaningful cityscape, architects and planners turned to perspectival views of ancient cities in order to address contemporary problems of subjective coherence and orientation. In an era when it was commonly assumed that traditional monuments could no longer signify in the same way, visual focal points nevertheless continued to seem necessary as psychological anchors. Rather than being thought of now as allegorical or didactic monuments for public edification, they became forms without fixed content, multivalent landmarks that could be filled with quite different meanings. The archaic city thus came to embody a site, not of particular historical associations, but as physical structure that could be mapped in the imagination of subjective consciousness, where multiple perspectival views translated into a "mental image."[3] The organization of this chapter follows the work of three interlocutors, who met to discuss these issues in the spring of 1952 at the

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3 The term, "mental image," used by the urban planner, Hans Blumenfeld in 1953 (see discussion of Civic Art Conference later in this chapter), is already akin to what Kevin Lynch will famously call "*The Image of the City.*" Lynch also designated the "landmark" as one of the five principal elements of a city's image.

Civic Art Conference: Hans Blumenfeld, a German émigré working as an urban planner in Philadelphia; Christopher Tunnard a professor of city planning at Yale; and Kevin Lynch, a professor of urban planning at MIT. This chapter especially explores the ways that archaic cities emerged in and guided the meaning of "imageability" in Kevin Lynch's 1960 book, *The Image of the City*. It draws on the Kevin Lynch papers at MIT and the Christopher Tunnard papers at Yale, in addition to numerous published sources.

CHAPTER 4: FROM SPATIAL AESTHETICS TO AUTHENTICITY OF PLACE
The Archaic City as Experiential Object

The fourth chapter examines the aesthetic fascination with archaic cities from the point of view "experience," aimed at the aesthetic and subjective enrichment of the perceiving subject. It traces the origins of these discourses on the archaic city to German art historical writings of the early 20th century, in which empathy theory extended into the realm of urban design and then examines the ways in which this discourse repeatedly turned to the tactile, embodied elements of urbanism as a way of recovering concrete experiences against spatial abstractions and experiential coherence against chaotic sensations. The chapter agues that what began primarily as a way of determining the true aesthetic content of architecture as a spatial art increasingly became a means of representing a material authenticity in opposition to spatial abstraction. Under the banner of experience, the archaic city became a site for representing urban encounters that remained whole or authentic, irreducible to visual representations. The first section of the chapter discusses the American legacy of German art historical theories of space and plasticity as they emerged in the writings of art historian, Paul Zucker. The two interrelated themes that structured almost all of Zucker's publications on urbanism in the 1940s and 50s were: first, that the city had be theorized primarily as a spatial art form, and second, that urban design needed to recover its 'humanistic' content, by which he meant that its functionalism needed to be transcended and rendered as aesthetic experience. The second section of the chapter examines the writings and teachings of

Danish architect and urban planner, Steen Eiler Rasmussen, who transformed "experience" into pedagogical method in American architectural education during the 1950's. Given the wide dissemination of his writings and his enormous impact on architectural pedagogy, Rassmussen's has been surprisingly neglected.[4] To a far greater extent than Martin Heidegger's 1951 lecture, "*Bauen, Wohnen, Denken*," which was poorly understood by architects who heard it at the time, Rasmussen's American lectures and publications of the 1950s engaged contemporaneous urbanistic debates and shifted the discourse in the direction that would come to be identified as phenomenological: the description of embodied encounters; the privileging of immediate sensation over mediated knowledge; and the conception of the city as a subjectively intuited, material environment.[5] Drawing on the manuscripts and correspondence from the MIT Archive, the Yale Archive, and the Royal Danish Library, as well as numerous published sources, this chapter places the writings of Paul Zucker and Steen Eiler Rasmussen, in the intellectual context of architectural pedagogy in the 1950s and 60s.

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[4] An exception is historian Henrik Reeh. (See, for example, *The Urban Lifeworld* and *Den Urbane Dimension.*)

[5] In the fall of 1953 Rasmussen, arrived as a guest professor at MIT's school of architecture, where he gave a series of public lectures that would lead to his 1959 book, Experiencing Architecture. The book was first published in 1957 in Copenhagen, under the title, *Om at Opleve Arkitektur.* The English translation was published by MIT Press two years later.