

PRACTICES

Double Feature: Counter-Practices of World City Monumentality in the Age of the Anthropocene

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the representational strategies of the world city in the age of the Anthropocene by concentrating the discussion on the notion of monumentality. By introducing the concept of 'world city monumentality', which can be defined as the projected anticipatory representation of the city's desired global future embodied in the skyscraper, we attempt at illuminating on how monumentality is contested by its counter-practices, as significant artistic forms of experiential engagement in public space. To do so, we trace a critique of a distinct world city monument, the Azrieli Center in Tel Aviv, Israel, by presenting our site-specific fictive intervention titled "Double Feature" (2021) as a case study.

KEYWORDS

monumentality; world city; counter-practice; Anthropocene; Tel Aviv

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1. The Anthropocene, the world city, and its “anxiety of representation”

The Anthropocene, a notion introduced by chemist Paul J. Crutzen to describe our current geological age,¹ has been often paired with acknowledging urbanization processes as significant evidence of the impact of humans on the planet. Indeed, urbanization is one of the central elements of the epoch in which we live. The very existence of urban forms and processes of human settlement, especially cities, can be seen as a fundamental feature of the anthropogenic age, as it marked a shift from the centrality of man as a species to that of the city as a key global phenomenon. Since its inception, economic globalization—i.e., the global movement of capital—accompanied by the emergence of a global culture, has profoundly altered the social, cultural, political, and spatial reality of nation-states and cross-national regions, and reshaped forms of urbanization, the city, and the practices of city-making across the world. In her seminal work “The Global City” (1991), Saskia Sassen argues that although an international economic system and an overall world economy have existed for centuries, it is only since the late twentieth century that we have arrived at a distinct situation in which the global economy is located within national territories and their urban formations.² For the first time, many cities around the world share a global culture, which has critically transformed their histories, their adaptive schemes, and their future developments, while also dramatically reshaping their self-representational strategies. A phenomenon that falls under the notion of the world city. The term is not exactly new. Patrick Geddes had already introduced the concept as early as 1915 in his classic “Cities in Evolution.”³ However, his understanding of what a world city was remained unclear until it was later reprised and elaborated by urbanist Peter Hall (1966), who also first contextualized it within the historic multiplicity of phenomena that characterize globalization and its impact on the forms of urbanization: a shift from the city as the godly image of the world to that of many nodes structural to a network of dislocated yet ever-expanding centers of global financial power, “dispersed production,”⁴ and high-technology depending on capital flows, extraction practices, and wealth creation. Or, as Hall straightforwardly wrote, a global hierarchy of competing “cities in which a quite disproportionate part of the world’s most important business is conducted.”⁵

1 See Crutzen, Paul. “Geography of Mankind.” *Nature* 415 (2002): 23.

2 Sassen, Saskia. *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. (United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, 2013).

3 Geddes only mentioned the term in the title of the third chapter of *Cities in Evolution*. See Geddes, Patrick. *Cities in evolution: An introduction to the town planning movement and to the study of civics*. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1915), 134.

4 Sassen, *The Global City*, 325.

5 See Hall, Peter. *The world cities*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966).

Although it is easy to see the relevance of this phenomenon within the discourse of the anthropo-centered impact of humans on Earth, this specific scenario much problematizes the concept of the Anthropocene, understood as ‘the act’ of a species (humanity) upon nature⁶ that can be measured geologically. It leads us instead to definitions such as Capitalocene, introduced by scholar Jason W. Moore (2016), which seems better suited to describe evidence of the activity of ‘social beings’ and human organizations on Earth—primarily capitalism—of which current patterns of global urbanization are certainly one of the most severe instances. Leaving aside unresolved terminological quarrels, this view transcends the dualism of human and nature by asserting that they have an interdependent generative relationship and, more interestingly for us, it renders urban formations a product of capital and material wealth movements, appropriated through extractive practices and labor, and eventually reinvested into real estate processes.⁷

Now, with cities relentlessly adjusting their identity to that of the world city, wishing to conform their image to the global model, there emerge a problematic “anxiety of representation,”⁸ accompanied by a condition of ‘placelessness’ determined by “de-territorialization.”⁹ Indeed, in their attempt to climb and hold on to the numerous world-system rankings,¹⁰ cities and their development processes are driven by intense competition, leading to the projection of authoritative and dominant icons of wholeness and exceptionality. A projected status quo that is materially and symbolically reflected within their own spatiality, organizations, and built forms, ultimately levels out the rich differences of local specificity and incorporates them into the logics of capital by standardization and homogenization.

The discourse outlined until here converges with the discussion on monumentality and memory which, similarly to the critique of global culture and the world city, has been at the center of contemporary scholarly debate. To contextualize, let us quote the words of cultural theorist Andreas Huyssen (2003), who wrote that “today we think of the past as memory without borders rather than national history within borders.” He continues, “memory is understood as a mode of re-presentation and as belonging to the present,” thus suggesting that “our thinking and living temporality are undergoing a significant shift, as modernity brought about a real

6 Moore, Jason W. The Capitalocene, Part I: on the nature and origins of our ecological crisis, *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44, no. 3 (2017): 594-630.

7 Moore, Jason W., ed. *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?: Nature, history, and the crisis of capitalism*. (United States: Pm Press, 2016).

8 Vickery, Jonathan. “The past and possible future of counter monument.” *IXIA: the public art think tank* 351 (2012), 5.

9 Sassen, *The Global City*.

10 One well-known example of world city indexing is provided by the “GaWC – Globalization and World Cities Research Network,” a think tank based in Loughborough University in Leicestershire, UK, researching on the relationships between world cities in the context of globalization. Recent classification (2020) of world cities indicates London and New York as class Alpha ++, the “most integrated with the global economy”. See “The World According to GaWC 2020 report,” accessed March 11, 2022, <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2020t.html>.

compression of time and space yet also expanded horizons of time and space beyond the local.¹¹ In this regard, the phenomenon of globalization in the Anthropocene age has also brought to the fore a critical shift in understanding the carrier of memory par excellence, namely the monument, as well as monumentality itself, its meaning, and how it is practiced.

It is our intention with this paper to examine representational strategies of the world city by concentrating the discussion on the notion of monumentality, as relating to its spatial and aesthetic expression, i.e., the monument. Accordingly, through the lenses of practice-based research informed by artistic and spatial disciplines, in the following section we will introduce the concept of 'world city monumentality,' which can be defined as the projected anticipatory representation of the city's desired global future, embodied in one of its most symbolic architectural typologies: the skyscraper. We attempt to briefly illuminate the concept by discussing one major feature of world city monumentality—verticality—and how monumentality is contested (socially, spatially, and politically) by its counter-practices, which hold much potential as artistic forms of experiential engagement in public space. To flesh out our argument, in the third section we will eventually trace a critique of a specific world city monument, the Azrieli Center in Tel Aviv, Israel, by presenting our site-specific fictive intervention titled "Double Feature" as a case study. Lastly, we will draw conclusions from the case study analysis.

2. World city monumentality and its counter-practices

For a start, let us first briefly clarify some major terms at play here, namely the monument and monumentality. The dictionary definition by HarperCollins tells us that a monument is a large-scale built form constructed to remember a particular event or a personality from the past.¹² The term is linked in the collective imagination to an element of the city characterized by a distinct iconography. Previous studies on monuments have already developed excellent criteria for investigating monumentality in its material and visual dimensions. Among many, Johnathan Vickery (2012) proposes the reading of tropes of monumental form via their positioning, location, material, form, and rhetoric.¹³ Through these vectors, Vickery holds that we should locate a monument "as an empirical object, in terms of physical structure (often a massive stone or bronze sculpture); (also) as an aesthetic function of space (it conducts a commanding role in civic ritual or acts as a marker of a territoriality of civic

11 Huyssen, Andreas. *Present pasts: Urban palimpsests and the politics of memory*. (Stanford: University Press, 2003), 6.

12 "Monument," HarperCollins English Dictionary, accessed March 11, 2022, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/monument>.

13 Vickery, "The past and possible future of counter monument", 7.

space); and thirdly, as a genre of visual rhetoric."¹⁴ Indeed, the monumental built form stands out as a resource of emphasis for formal solemnity and dimensional hypertrophy. As Cecil Elliott (1964) wrote, "since the decision to establish a monument necessarily presupposes that its meaning will endure, the monument too must endure,"¹⁵ thus posing a question of duration that would ensure the best performance of commemorative work. A monument, at least in its popular sense, would thus be built with materials designed to last over time, and would function as a mediator. However, today the very understanding of monumentality and its lasting signifiers have changed, as Elliott had already noted in the 1960s. There has been, in fact, a dramatic "increase in the expression of monumentality in buildings which are not, strictly speaking, monumental in purpose,"¹⁶ which rather suggests, following Elliott, that we can understand as 'monument' all that which is dedicated and raised to an "idea of monumentality," or "the crystallization of the architectural ideals of an era."¹⁷ Beyond the material dimension and visual representation, monumentality also poses an obvious question of political significance. Iain Hay et al. (2004) provide us with a convincing definition of the monument's role, writing that "[...] monuments are political constructions, recalling and representing histories selectively, drawing popular attention to specific events and people and obliterating or obscuring others."¹⁸ Indeed, monuments and monumentalizing processes are essential elements of the construction of politics of memory and identity, as they "embody discourses that inevitably express selective points of view on the past"¹⁹ in the present. Furthermore, in processes of monumentality, material representation and selective articulation of specific narratives—by means of inclusion and exclusion—are used by political authorities to convey dominant views of the past in the present as designed scenarios and social dynamics of a future desired by the few.²⁰ Andreas Huyssen had already located this utilitarian approach to monumentality processes in nineteenth-century nationalism, stating that "[...] the main concern of nineteenth-century nation-states was to mobilize and monumentalize national and universal pasts so as to legitimize and give meaning to the present and to envision the future: culturally, politically, socially. This model no longer works," he argues.²¹

14 Ibid., 2.

15 Elliott, Cecil D. "Monuments and Monumentality." *Journal of Architectural Education* (1947-1974) 18, no. 4 (1964): 51–53, 52.

16 Ibid., 51.

17 Ibid., 52.

18 Hay, Iain, Andrew Hughes, and Mark Tutton. "Monuments, memory and marginalisation in Adelaide's Prince Henry Gardens." *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 86, no. 3 (2004): 201-216, 204.

19 Bellentani, Federico, and Mario Panico. "The meanings of monuments and memorials: toward a semiotic approach." *Punctum. International journal of semiotics* 2, no. 1 (2016): 28-46, 10.

20 See Massey, Doreen. "Places and their pasts." In *History workshop journal*, no. 39 (1995): 182-192.

21 Huyssen, *Present pasts*, 2.

Given these premises, how can we understand the role of monumentality in relation to the world city? What are the symbolic and embodied strategies employed by the world city to project its narratives, moved by the anxiety of (self-)representation in the global scene? In attempting to address these issues, we would like to introduce the concept of world city monumentality by looking at a particular quality of monumentality itself, which concerns much of its visual, rhetorical, and political dimensions. That is, verticality, and its translation into the most representative built typology of the world city, the skyscraper.

In his seminal text "Vertical," geographer Stephen Graham (2016) strongly advocated for a new understanding of global cities and their phenomena, one that would go beyond "flat perspectives"²² and would rather take into consideration three-dimensionality as an instrument to look not only at cities' development dynamics but also at their representational strategies. For Graham, the notion of 'verticality' (as an addition to the horizontal plane) is a key characteristic of the contemporary city and thus, we argue, of the world city, for the latter is "increasingly shaped across vertical as well as horizontal [networked] geographies of power."²³ Verticality also relates to a particular—and perhaps 'primal'—anthropic action on nature, that is, the control of the 'ground,' i.e., the earth's surface or, in the urban context, the street level. Graham stresses that the "'ground' itself, rather than being the product of natural geological processes, is increasingly manufactured and raised up as humans shape the very geology of cities in ever more powerful ways,"²⁴ to the point that we can speak about "multiple grounds": the one down below and the one up above. In such a scenario "power relations between the watchers on high and the watched below become ever more critical."²⁵ These "vertical metaphors" reveals not only the projection of articulated representations of hierarchies of "power, wealth, status, and happiness,"²⁶ but they also speak about an estrangement of the experiential bodily encounter – the one possible at the ground level.

To our understanding, the vertical metaphors of the contemporary city—as explained by Graham—well rhyme with the very spatial tropes of monumentality. The argument is that what is being monumentalized at the outset is "human exceptionality,"²⁷ as Donna Haraway would have it, over that of nature, and ultimately over human defeat – death. Indeed, "vertical metaphors are deeply embedded in the way humans conceptualize

22 Graham, Stephen. *Vertical: The city from satellites to bunkers*. London: Verso Books, 2016, 22.

23 Ibid., 22.

24 Ibid., 24.

25 Ibid., 26.

26 Ibid., 29.

27 See Haraway, Donna. "Otherworldly conversations, terran topics, local terms." *Material feminisms* 3 (2008): 157.

and shape their lives and their worlds."²⁸ If this holds true, verticality, expressed through monumentality, exorcizes the loss of individual power and control, as well as the dissolution of planned future narratives. All these are symbolically conceptualized in horizontality and transience, which are opposed by an endless quest for height and permanence. This also means that, in implying timeless status and power, monumentalized verticality correlates with physical height above the ground.

Following this argument, the most evident built expression of monumentalized verticality in the context of the world city lies in the high-rise building type. This position has been backed by a consistent amount of literature in the last fifteen years, especially across the disciplines of urban theory and geography.²⁹ In discussing the phenomena of the global city, scholarship on skyscrapers highlights the "significance of tall building sites as a nexus of power made visible."³⁰ Indeed, we can argue about their role as monuments in that, by acting as "vertical storytellers,"³¹ "they most eloquently narrate the chronicle of the built form as well as the social, economic, and political trajectories of cities,"³² while also telling us about the "power relations between those who rule and decide and those who are subordinated, excluded, and marginalized."³³ For Graham, skyscrapers are "vertical symbols of the dominance of major corporations and capitalist business elites" which, in their "struggle to materialize corporate prestige in stone, steel, aluminum and glass" sees in the high-rise typology "a symbolic representation of the power, reach and identity of corporations themselves."³⁴ The anxiety of representation posed by the world city model thus leads to the design of (tentatively) memorable vertical silhouettes as means of urban or national branding, by defining the monumentalized presence of the city on world indexes. Indeed, skyscrapers act as a projected anticipatory representation of urban and national future, as a "promissory value"—according to Aihwa Ong—achieved by leveraging on fetishized economic and political competition between rival cities.³⁵ Therefore, we might speak of a collective, homogeneous, and standardized vertical morphology of architectural units,³⁶ which would

28 Graham, *Vertical*, 30.

29 For a full coverage see Graham, *Vertical*.; Ford, Larry R. "World cities and global change: observations on monumentality in urban design." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 49, no. 3 (2008): 237-262. McNeill, Donald. "Skyscraper geography." *Progress in human geography* 29, no. 1 (2005): 41-55.

30 McNeill. "Skyscraper geography."

31 Charney, Igal, and Gillad Rosen. "Splintering skylines in a fractured city: High-rise geographies in Jerusalem." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 32, no. 6 (2014): 1088-1101, 1090.

32 Ibid., 1090.

33 Ibid., 1090.

34 Graham, *Vertical*, 141-142.

35 See Ong, Aihwa. "Hyperbuilding: Spectacle, Speculation, and the Hyperspace of Sovereignty." In *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of being Global*. UC Berkeley. (2011): 205-226.

36 Staal, Jonas. "Monument to Capital." accessed March 10, 2022, https://www.uncubemagazine.com/blog/15508779?wt_mc=nlw.2015-04-17.content.linkartikel.

suggest that world city monumentality does not lay much on this or that “obviously identifiable toy-like skyscraper”³⁷ but it rather encompasses a much larger—indeed, global—phenomenon.

To summarize, world city monumentality, expressed through verticality, would imply a few specific qualities: (1) a rhetorical projection of present narratives towards a city’s desired global future, as factual expression of control and power; (2) a memorable homogenization and standardization of formal and aesthetic features, adjusted to a global model; (3) a critical positioning to signal authorized representation of centrality in the urban system; (4) and an incremental distancing from the ground level, which estranges the bodily encounter and its relation to transiency.

Departing from this understanding, we would like to pose a seemingly broad question in order to initiate a reflection on an alternative category of monumentality analysis as discussed thus far. What kinds of practices can illuminate the rifts and contradictions between ideological visions of the future and critical material realities posed by the world city’s self-representational strategies? Or in other words, how is the world city monumentality countered, diverted, re-imagined?

We argue that the emergence of ‘weak’ practices, or counter-practices, of monumentality seems well suited to address the nature of the world city and its practice of monumentality. Notions such as James E. Young’s counter-monument,³⁸ Jochen Gerz’s anti-monument, or Mechtild Widrich’s performative monument³⁹ have already moved the discussion away from the monistic conception of reality as permanent and fixed, breaking historical master narratives by returning the obligation of memory-work from the monumental immovable form back to the citizen. Practices of counter-monumentality emerge as artistic strategies operating in the public realm of the city “by which the classic monument-form could be ‘countered,’ the power of its cultural demagoguery addressed or confronted, its cultural function deconstructed or subject to critical assessment.”⁴⁰ They revolve around “the involuntary resistance of our aesthetic responses in seeing monumental form embedded in processes of change and forces of mutation [re-inscribing it] within the contexts of extreme ephemerality.”⁴¹ In broad terms, they reveal the intrinsic vulnerability of monumentality itself. Assuming this stance towards instances of world city monumentality is no intellectual exercise. Rather, it would mean to look at them by consciously and experientially discerning ‘what is implied by this material object?’

37 Graham, *Vertical*, 153.

38 See Young, James E. “The counter-monument: memory against itself in Germany today.” *Critical inquiry* 18, no. 2 (1992): 267-296.

39 See Widrich, Mechtild. *Performative Monuments: The rematerialisation of public art*. Manchester: University Press, 2014.

40 Vickery. “The past and possible future of counter monument.”, 2.

41 Ibid., 4.



FIG. 1 The Azrieli Center and the Shalom junction [credits: Ynhockey, CC BY-SA 4.0]

The following section is an effort to further articulate the discussion on the counter-practices of world city monumentality by presenting a critique of one typical example of a monument of the world city, namely the Azrieli Center in Tel Aviv, elaborated through our site-specific fictive intervention titled “Double Feature” as a case study of such counter-practices.

3. A case study of world city monumentality: The Azrieli Center, Tel Aviv

The Azrieli Center is a mixed-use skyscraper complex, built in 1999, situated at the Shalom crossroad, the most important intersection in the state of Israel and the entry gate to the city of Tel Aviv. The Center’s three towers are designed as a 170-meter-tall extrusion of basic geometrical forms a circle, a triangle, and a square clad in a white-and-blue gridded façade.

The Center is the first skyscraper complex to be constructed in the area, with the intention of establishing a new central business district. Its creation, launched by real estate magnate David Azrieli, after whom it is

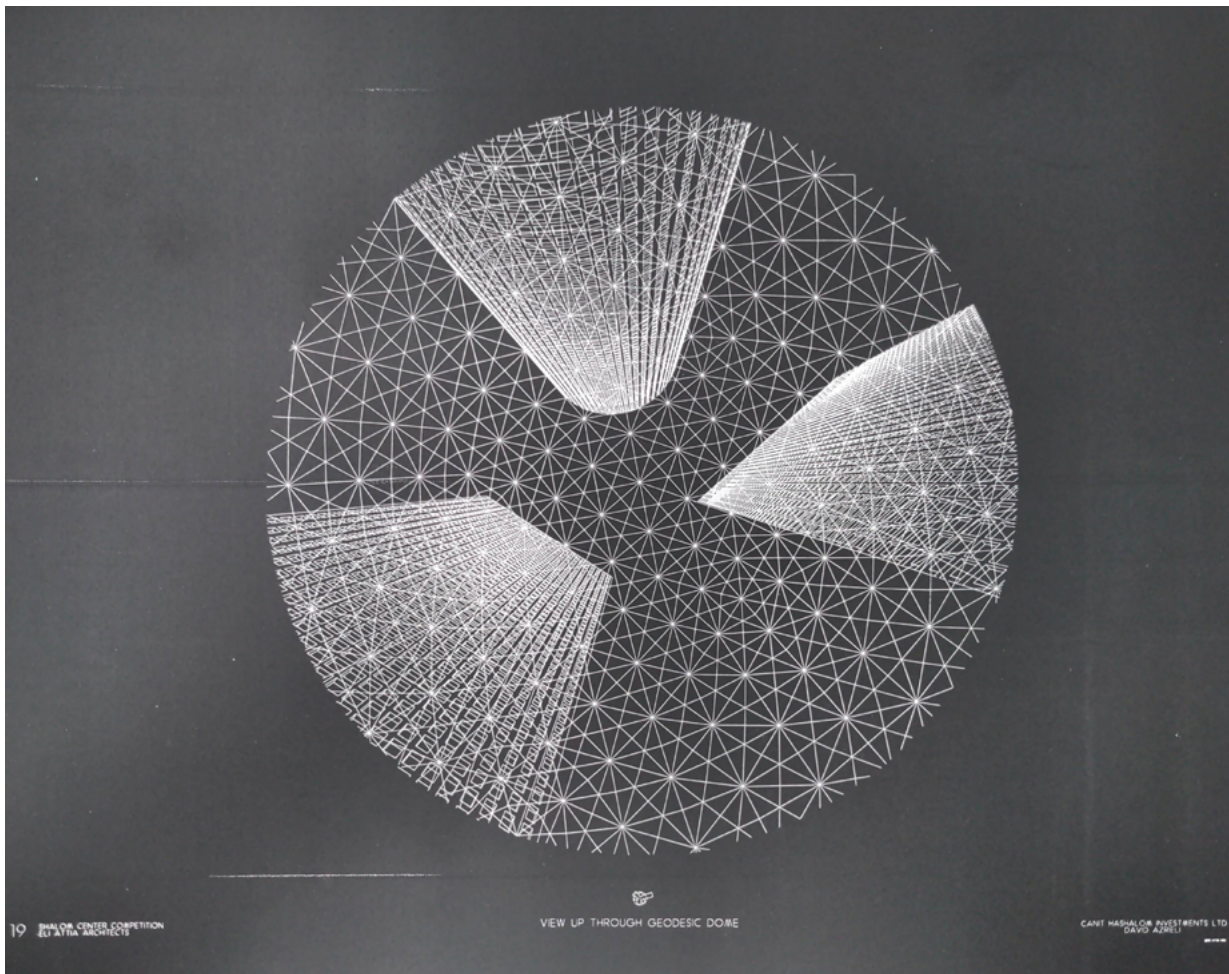


FIG. 2 Rendering showing the view from the mall's indoor spaces towards the towers, as presented in the official design submission by architect Eli Atti [credits: Credits Eli Attie Architects and Tel Aviv Municipality Archive]

named, was motivated by the 'little Tel Aviv's' aspirations to be a prominent world city. The city of Tel Aviv had a substantial economic downturn in the 1980s. Residents were fleeing the city, and companies were spreading into once residential neighborhoods. In this situation, the municipality demanded a significant project that would transform the city's image. With the intention of extending the existing commercial sector outside the city's historic core and in close proximity to transit links, local officials established a developing district adjacent to the Ayalon highway. The municipality treated the plot of land with special care, and in 1988 published an international tender titled "Tel Aviv Hashalom Center – Israel's Largest Commercial and Office Complex."⁴² The tender stressed three selection criteria: the developer's reputation as a globally renowned entrepreneur, an exceptional architectural design, and, of course, a competitive price. The plan was presented to the tender participants by Moshe Lahat, mayor of Tel Aviv, as "the most prestigious project of the city of Tel Aviv, lifting the flag in joining the era of big and modern business districts."⁴³

42 From the tender's official documents, Lahat, Shlomo. TEL AVIV HASHALOM CENTER – Israel's Largest Commercial and Office Complex, 001/27/2446 (1991).

43 Lahat, Shlomo. TEL AVIV HASHALOM CENTER Israel's Largest Commercial and Office Complex, 001/27/2446 § Mayor's statement (1991). [authors' own translation from Hebrew]



FIG. 3 Projection of the 2009 election's exit polls on the Center's façade [credits: News 13, Globus]

The skyscraper complex presents all the classic tropes of the monument-form in its founding vocabulary. The early design of the Center, chosen with the closure of the bidding in 1989, is evidence of this. Almost ten years of disagreements between developer David Azrieli—at the time regarded as the “Israeli father of shopping malls”—and architect Eli Atti, who initially conceived the complex as Shalom Center (the ‘peace center’) comprised its contentious origins. However, it is especially the competitive rhetoric used in its design statements that signals the will of its initiators to create and establish a permanent urban “marker”⁴⁴ of Tel Aviv’s future – that of the city as global. The second page of the design submission, titled “The Nature of the Towers,” declares, “one tower creates a marker or a statue, but a gathering or a group of towers creates a center and a focus.” It continues, “the Center is perceived as a group of solid forms and as a mirage. The fine-textured surface of the towers makes them appear scaleless, solidifies their masses, and accentuates the verticality and purity of their forms. [...] This ensemble of forms is like a gathering of different people into a harmonious whole, symbolizing the Center’s name: Shalom.”⁴⁵

Even before their completion, the three skyscrapers entered the collective imagination. During the years before its construction, the Center has been a prominent source of debate in Israeli media and on Israeli television. The press coverage of the design competition and the legal disputes between Azrieli and Atti portrayed the Azrieli Center as Israel’s greatest construction to date. From 1996 to 1999, until the project’s completion in 2007, traveling along Ayalon highway evoked senses of prospect

44 From the competition submission, Atti Architects, Eli. *Shalom Center Competition*. January 28, 1992.

45 Ibid, 12.

and anticipation among the general public. Much similarly to the practice of raising a monument, the construction of the Center became an “urban event,”⁴⁶ reverberating for years across the whole city and beyond. In fact, from the Center’s earliest building stages, its prominent visibility has often been used to project slogans and ads onto its façade, particularly during the celebration of national events. For instance, on December 31, 2000, a countdown was projected onto the building’s exteriors. However, instead of facing west towards the city’s center, the projection was symbolically oriented towards the highway, with its lights reflecting on the buildings surrounding it, as to convey to foreign broadcasting media a huge national accomplishment. This practice would eventually be institutionalized as a rite. Every significant national event was thus shown on the towers’ facades, from election results to Independence Day slogans, and even congratulations to Israeli star Gal Gadot on her film’s successes.

As the Center’s verticality would seem to imply a condition of distance, inaccessibility, and apparent exclusion from the city’s life at street level, the towers’ presence cast an eloquent visual narrative of the city’s desired future: its “entry into the upper echelons of the global economy.”⁴⁷ Today, the three towers are one of the most iconic elements of the city’s skyline—a world city monument.

3.1. Double Feature

In early 2020, as QUIZEPO Collective, we started a practice-based study and scholarly research on the current role of monuments, memory work, and their significance for contemporary artistic practices operating in public space. Our site-specific fictive intervention “Double Feature” (2021) is a result of our work on the topic, stemming from a response to a call for projects promoted by the Liebling Haus – White City Center association, based in Tel Aviv. Using the language of artistic practice in the form of a performative public installation, albeit unrealized, the project’s ultimate aim is to articulate a critique of the monumental qualities of the Azrieli Center, as an instance of a counter-practice of world city monumentality. The intervention understands the notion of ‘countering’ as a way of inverting, subverting, and re-interpreting the fundamental representational strategies employed in monumentality processes by the world city, and in particular with the Azrieli Center, which we have identified in the previous sections. Accordingly, in designing the intervention, we worked through a process of over-projecting—and thus, ultimately over-writing—of three main rhetorical qualities of the world city monument: verticality, timelessness, and bodily estrangement.

46 Ibid, 12.

47 Ford, Larry R. “World cities and global change,” 253.



FIG. 4 Top view of the full-scale representation of the Azrieli Center façade on Rothschild boulevard [credits: the Authors]

Let us briefly analyze the intervention's rationale. Working with the notion of projection as a way of reading the building in its aforementioned qualities, we started by extracting the literal representation of the towers' gridded pattern. By metaphorically countering the symbolic act of raising the monument with its direct opposite, that of its lowering its fall, the typical façade of the Azrieli Center is then reinterpreted as flattened in its graphical representation, and thus returned to the horizontal plane. As a critique of verticality, this specific action draws its reasoning from notable examples of the practice of counter-monumentality, such as the work of artists Krzysztof Wodiczko and Shimon Attie, among many. Likewise, we may also recall that this act has similarities with the many practices of activist and artistic contestation of the often violent and traumatic monuments that have taken place in recent years in many cities across Europe and the United States. By using performative visual strategies such as street-art and video projection, these practices effectively engaged in a process of re-signification of the contested monumental landscape vis-à-vis its original meaning, away from the destructive nature of 'classic' iconoclasm. Furthermore, what this action of 'generative disfigurement' brings about is the subversion of its temporality – which is also embedded in our very experiential understanding of the monumental form.

In this regard, because of its fictive nature, our intervention attempts to imagine real scenarios performed on Tel Aviv's urban public stage, holding

that these would stimulate the emergence of different narratives around the world city monument. Therefore, the ephemeral representation of the Center's façade is imagined as performed into a new encounter at the street level, returning to the urban ground by being spray painted full-scale on the ground surface of one of Tel Aviv most lively public spaces: the Rothschild boulevard.

As a dominant protagonist in the city narrative and everyday life, the boulevard—and the street in general—is often able to counter its own monumentality, because of its restless transient nature that “tends to erase monumental hierarchical orders”⁴⁸ as synthesized by the metaphor of horizontality. It is ultimately the collective act of walking on a monument, encouraged by the intervention, which allows a critical civic action through direct bodily understanding of the monumental form, its form and significance, while at the same time being playful and allowing people to walk, sit, and cycle on it.



FIG. 5 Top view of the intervention, detail [credits: the Authors]



FIG. 6 Imaginary scene of the intervention during its daily use [credits: the Authors]

As a way of countering the bodily estrangement caused by verticality, walking also functions as a fundamental way of measuring with the body, and thus brings a renewed awareness and understanding of an element of the city that would normally be addressed mostly through visibility. Lastly, the temporality of this encounter resides in the unavoidable gradual disappearance of the ephemeral façade's representation on the boulevard, thus subverting the attempted timelessness of the world city monument while locating the participating individual in its transiency. This promotes a materialized conscious process of rewriting alternative official narratives

48 Hénaff, Marcel. "Toward the Global city: Monument, Machine, and Network." *Journal of the Institute for the Humanities* 4 (2009): 22-33, 30.



FIG. 7 Top view of the intervention showing its gradual disappearance over time [credits: the Authors]

by introducing a conflict, i.e., the projection of multiple narratives on top of each other, dissolving the fixity of memory work and monumental histories, returning them to public authorship.

To conclude, in attempting to outline a critique of world city monumentality, our fictive intervention was aimed at enacting a different approach to monumentality in the context of the world city. Artistic interventionism in urban space provided us with a means to transition from an affirmative monumentality practice—that of dominant permanence, clarity, and unity—to an interpretive and thus political one, ultimately aimed at questioning the power of monumental signification in public space. We pose this experience as a recommendation that could broaden the understanding of monumentality as a didactic participatory action, a civic process, and a future-oriented product of social dialogue. Perhaps this suggests a way to imagine a renewed agency of monumentality.

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