Maggie McDonnell Will
Layperson Summary
10 November 2015

Dresden Datum: A Spatial Investigation of Restoration through Projected Memory

Background

*Dresden, Germany – 1945.* Only three months away from the end of World War II, Great Britain and US forces bombed this city, creating an immense firestorm.

*Fast-forward to 1985.* The ruins of Dresden lay dormant for decades. The Church of Our Lady, or Frauenkirche, which was originally completed in 1743 was reduced to a grazing pasture for sheep, sprigs of grass poking through this once iconic component of the city fabric.

*Dresden – 2005 to Present.* Though it was not until the mid-80s that the reconstruction of the church began, it was recently completed just in time for the celebration of the city’s 800th birthday. The footprint is just as the original, and every piece of the puzzle that could be salvaged was incorporated conspicuously into the new structure. This distinction can most readily be seen in the pale face of the new materials meant as infill around the historic stones, still black from char. This feature is key and denoted the structure as a *palimpsest:* something that has changed over time and shows evidence of that change. The rebuilding of this church not only removed the dismal sight of a sheep pasture in the middle of a once bustling city, but allowed for the remembrance of the past without the prevision of deceptive construction.

Objective

It is my intention to investigate the memories of The Church of our Lady, and the destruction and restoration of Dresden as a whole at the human scale. I want to better understand
the process of restoration and the choices involved in recreating a sacred object that can never truly be what is was.

**Expected Outcomes**

The final product will be a marriage of historic research and scenic design that will culminate in the construction of an inhabitable datum: a plane from which program is produced. The following is an excerpt from Ching’s *Architecture: Form Space and Order*:

> A datum refers to a line, plane, or volume of reference to which other elements in a composition can relate. It organizes a random pattern of elements through its regularity, continuity, and constant presence.

I foresee this investigation being realized with the construction of an armature (or series of armatures) suspending an arrangement of materials to act as a screen to have imagery projected upon it. As for the scale, I foresee it being at least 15 feet tall and 20 feet across.

The main plane being suspended from the armature acting as a datum from which other physical materials may be projected as well as a plane that may be projected on to. The imagery to be projected would be an orchestrated compilation of still and moving depictions of the city and the fragility and elasticity of recreating a memory. The viewer will have the opportunity to interact with and move through the piece, thus further distorting the memory. Rather than only walking around this broken memory, I plan to create at least one central aperture through which a viewer may pass to better inhabit the moment in time.
Running Bibliography

Excerpt refers to what this city has come to symbolize for the German people.
Goes into detail about the position of the citizens of the city since its destruction.


Two main sections entitled The Scientific Approach to the Study of Architectural Heritage and Structural Analysis of Masonry Buildings.

Spread on the New Synagogue in Dresden, a part of the ongoing reconstruction of the city. Notes the tension of the old and new in the city center.


Notes that rebuilding an exact replica would no longer be authentic or a work of art.

How the German people have been reshaping their identity since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Commends the city planners and architects for coming to a solution that gave the citizens back their historic background without being blind to the destruction that befell the town.

“Citizen don’t want to look at a pile of rubble.” Briefly touches on the need to put something in the place destroyed architecture.