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Designing Dissensus, Exposing the Common

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Abstract

As one of the most incisive critics of the so-called "post-political" condition, urban theorist and geographer Erik Swyngedouw calls upon the "insurgent architects" of global protest movements to reclaim the city as polis through protest as sites for the emergence of the political. How can design, space and place be understood in relation to the political as such? How is this relation actualized in the reappropriation of urban spaces in protest? And how might the practices of architecture and urbanism develop approaches for nurturing and supporting concerted action to repoliticize urban spaces by political actors? This essay outlines a response to these questions through a discussion of the 2011 Occupy Wall Street protest in New York City in relation to Hannah Arendt's conception of political action, appearance, and the common world, and contemplates how this may suggest approaches for design practices to anticipate and nourish the appearance of the political in urban spaces as the "exposure" of the condition of the common, following Jean-Luc Nancy, not only in protest, but also the whole of urban life.

Introduction

The question of the city as a political space has re-emerged in light of the global urban protest movements of the last decade that sought to reappropriate urban places from the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism which, according to theorist and geographer Erik Swyngedouw, has effectuated the retreat of the political dimension from contemporary life and the spaces of cities.[1,2,3] As one of the most incisive critics of the so-called "post-political" condition, Swyngedouw calls upon the "insurgent architects" of global protest movements to reclaim the city as polis – to "redesign" the material and symbolic spaces of the city as sites for the emergence of the political by asserting the dissensual conditions of radical inclusion, equality and agonism against the depoliticized consensus produced by the apparatuses of governmentality.[1,2,3] In view of such calls to repoliticize the space of the city, how can design, space and place be understood in relation to the political as such? How might this relation be actualized in the reappropriation of urban spaces in protest? How are the design and perception of urban places relevant to the emergence of what is essentially political in urban protest? And finally, how might design, as the practices of architecture and urbanism, develop approaches for nourishing and supporting concerted action to repoliticize urban spaces by political actors?

In what follows I'll attempt to outline a response to these questions through a discussion of the 2011 Occupy Wall Street protest in New York City with reference to Hannah Arendt's conceptions of political action and appearance, and in particular how they encompass a political sense of reality that depends upon a concrete "common world." I will first examine how Swyngedouw, as a theorist concerned with the intrinsic relation between politics, space and place, conceptualizes the nature and role of design in relation to repoliticizing the space of the city through protest. I will also consider how, in aspiring to a politics of both appearance and emancipation, this notion of design predicates an operative reality that threatens the emergence of the political as the domain of human freedom and obscures the role that urban places can and must play in it. I will then discuss how, according to Arendt's theory, an "actionable" sense of reality arises out of the concerted, corporeal presence of heterogeneous, plural and equal actors within the event-places of protest, in which the co-corporeality of actors and the common world allows for the political to emerge and to inhere within place. In considering how action in Arendt's view can potentially repoliticize place, I will then examine how Occupy Wall Street's "occupation" of New York's Zuccotti Park in Lower Manhattan not only reappropriated the park as a properly public, political space, but also changed the perception of it as a place such that "the common" as the shared horizon of all being-in-the-world – following Jean-Luc Nancy – sensuously appeared, as it were, through the park's material qualities. I will conclude by reflecting on how the interrelationship between protest, place and the political in the Occupy Wall Street protest may suggest approaches for design practices to anticipate and nourish the appearance of the political as the "exposure" of the condition of the common, according to Nancy, in fabricating the material texture of the world not only to undergird action and speech in protest, but also throughout the whole of urban life.

Figure 1: New York City police officers entering Zuccotti Park the morning of November 14-15, 2011 to remove Occupy Wall Street protesters and their belongings. Image: Robert Stolarik/The New York Times/Redux.

Designing Dissensus

Swyngedouw's call for an insurgent, political "urban design" stems from his critique of the post-political condition following from Jacques Rancière, Chantal Mouffe, Slavoj Žižek, Henri Lefebvre and other theorists in which he charges that "a consensus has been built around the inevitability of state-backed capitalism as an economic system, parliamentary democracy as the political ideal, and humanitarianism and inclusive cosmopolitanism as a moral foundation."[3 p.21] Ostensibly "democratic" and born of rational agreement, this consensus in reality is founded on the radical exclusion of different voices and values, of alternative models of being-in-common, and of actors who reject the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism and resist the governmental apparatuses that perfect and perpetuate it.[1,2,3] In this view, "the political" as the essential condition of human experience wherein the question of being-in-common can be collectively engaged is actively foreclosed, preventing the politicization of individuals and obliterating the space – literally and figuratively – in which the political can take place.[1,2,3] To this end, according to Swyngedouw, a new "urban design" has emerged "materially and managerially" to effectively "vacuum out" the political as the originary condition of politics from the spaces of the city. This "urban design" manifests both as the governmental policing of the city and as the global, capitalist redevelopment of cities through emblematic projects such as Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, the megaprojects of cities such as Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and bids by cities to host the Olympics and other international spectacles.[3]

In response, Swyngedouw calls for a "dissensual urban design" to "desuture" neoliberal consensus by reclaiming urban spaces as sites of protest and conflict (fig. 1). He writes

that dissensual design "revolves around recentring/redesigning the urban as a democratic political field of dispute/disagreement: It is about enunciating dissent and rupture, literally opening up spaces that permit speech acts that claim a place in the order of things."[3p51] "Insurgent" urban designers produce the conditions of the political themselves by enacting radical inclusivity, equality and agonism in order to "foster dissent, create disagreement and trigger the debating of and experimentation with more egalitarian and inclusive urban futures" that are "immediately realizable."[3] At stake, Swyngedouw asserts, "is the practice of real democracy, the public space for the encounter and negotiation of disagreement, for inaugurating a new sense and sensibility, where those who have no place, are not counted, named, acquire speech, or better still, appropriate voice, become visible and perceptible, and perform the egalitarian capacity to govern."[1 p.37]

Protesters are "designers" not so much in organizing their actions to achieve particular configurations or states of affairs, but in their very acting in dissent against neoliberal capitalist hegemony. In so doing, they effectively enact alternative configurations of being-in-common, whether intentionally or incidentally, and produce conceptual, material and symbolic spaces as "designs" that in turn can become models for further action. "Design" for Swyngedouw thus simultaneously encompasses both intentionality and action, and means as well as ends. Furthermore, the political – the horizon within which the question of human being-in-common comes to light, appears and can be recognized as such – emerges immanently in and through the action-as-design of protesters, and themselves as actor-designers. Swyngedouw writes that "the political emerges through...the process of immanent appearance in public of those who disrupt the state of the situation in the name of 'equality,' 'the people,' the 'common,' and the 'democratic'", and is "discernable in the immanence of spaces and activities that aspire to the arrangement of egalitarian public encounter of heterogenous groups and individuals."[1 p.24] Here action-design is also an instrumental, "spatialized political 'truth' procedure" to effect the "desuturing" of consensus, the "materializing [of] claims of equality, freedom and solidarity", and ultimately the opening up of "possibilities and trajectories for emancipatory change within the instituted order."[1 p.25] Design for Swyngedouw thus realizes and manifests the political through the intentionality, action, appearance and effectivity of insurgent actor-designers, and produces and politicizes space and place.

While Swyngedouw follows from Mouffe and Rancière in emphasizing the political as inherently agonistic and dissensual, he draws upon Hannah Arendt's thought in emphasizing that the space of the political is a "space of appearance."[1] Yet Swyngedouw's notion of design collapses the crucial distinction that Arendt makes between action and other forms of human activity, such as work and labor, upon which her conception of appearance depends, and in so doing, threatens the essential freedom at the heart of any sense of the political. For Arendt, the sphere of the properly political is outside of the bounds of means and ends, in which the human can appear freely in and through speech and action that transcend merely private concerns, and all necessity.[4] Action and speech open a "space of appearance" between actors, in which they disclose their identities as human in acting solely for the sake of their being-in-common.[4] For Arendt, the properly human sense of reality depends upon appearance, and the experience of this reality, and of one's own identity as human within it, comprise the substance of the political sphere.[4,5] Within the space of appearance writ large as the public realm, action and speech actualize a radical freedom to envision, contest and initiate new trajectories for being-in-common, but they do not themselves emancipate actors or achieve instrumental ends.[4,5] Appearance for Arendt is for its own sake; it cannot actualize and give worldly reality to human freedom while encompassed within any notion of design, or constrained to effect any goal or outcome, however worthy or desired.[4,5]

In light of Arendt's conception of appearance, design as a modality of the political threatens to preclude the very emergence of the political as the actualization of freedom and thus the politicized space in which it appears. As both means and end, in Swyngedouw's view, design locates the political squarely within the paradigm of work according to Arendt, subjecting human affairs to the violence of the making process in being forced to conform to preconceived models of action within chains of causes and effects.[4] Action in the mode of making furthermore displaces political agency and responsibility from human actors into fabricative processes and the fixity of forms. But more than this, design entrains the political within a sense of reality that is wholly susceptible to instrumental action, and that ultimately consists in its operability and operativity within the framework of ends and means. This operative, instrumental reality is the techno-scientific reality of the governmental apparatus of capital for which only what works, produces or achieves an end counts as real. The space of this operative reality is furthermore the effective medium of post-political governmentality in Swyngedouw's view. Circumscribing the political within design can only validate and reproduce this reality and space, and legitimize force and violence as the means of employing or contesting political power. Furthermore, in taking up the political as both means and end within an operative reality, design cannot help but become subsumed within, and even co-opted by, apparatuses of power. Swyngedouw acknowledges that the "insurgent architects" of global protest have been ultimately impotent in challenging neoliberal hegemony. Political appearance as an "immanent practice" has not been instrumentally effective, and the models of society staged and prefigured in protests have not been able to found a new politics beyond the events themselves.[1,2,3] As such, Swyngedouw's notion of "insurgent design" appears highly problematic for the emergence of the political as either free or transformatively effective in confronting the operative order of power, and ultimately obscures any role that urban places can potentially play in the emergence of the political in protest.

Appearance, Reality and the Common

Questions of design aside, insurgent protest movements have been undeniably potent, even if ultimately ineffectual, and the political has undeniably emerged – or appeared, as Swyngedouw writes – in new material, metaphorical and symbolic urban spaces (fig.2). [1,2,3] If not "by design", how can this appearance in space and place be accounted for, and how can the distinct nature of the political be discerned within it outside of an instrumental, operative sense of reality? Among the various protest movements of the past decade, the essentially non-instrumental nature of political appearance can be seen most clearly in the 2011 Occupy Wall Street protests in New York City. As a protest movement, Occupy Wall Street famously had no stated goals, agenda or demands other than to refuse the injustice of the consensual status quo of as it had brutally come to light in the economic crisis of 2007-2008. The protesters themselves were unified only in their demand to be otherwise, and to appear together in protest for the sake of the just, and to identify with and enact it through action and speech. Protest action was hardly instrumental beyond maintaining the continuous presence and visibility of protesters, and in spite of the call to "occupy" Wall Street, the protest on the whole did not attempt to contest the control of places or things. The occupation of Zuccotti Park itself was a legal, if unexpected, utilization of a so-called "privately owned public space", which by law had to remain publicly accessible twenty-four hours a day. Organizers had chosen the park for this very reason so that protesters could remain present and visible for as long as possible. The park was "occupied" in order to open a space in which dissent could take place and itself appear through the actions of

the protesters. It was in this space of appearance that the political could emerge and itself become apparent, in the protesters' immediate modeling of a collective, non-hierarchical and radically democratic society (fig. 2).

Figure 2: Occupy Wall Street protesters having returned to Zuccotti Park after the encampment was cleared on the night of November 14-15, 2011, near Mark di Suvero's *Joie de Vivre* (1998). Image: Henny Ray Abrams/AP Photo.

The political reality of the Occupy Wall Street protest was then not one of operativity, but of action and appearance, and Arendt's thought can provide a productive framework for understanding the nature of this reality and its relation to the event-place of the protest within Zuccotti Park. Following Arendt, the sense of reality within the protest was effectively constituted through the mutual co-presence of actors with each other in action and speech. The human sense of objective reality is not pregiven for Arendt, but radically contingent on human presence, which, as Judith Butler asserts, is first and foremost the presence of human bodies.[4,6] Objective reality is constituted intersubjectively through the corporeal co-presence of plural, equal and distinctly diverse actors, and thus comprehends and preserves the sheer heterogeneity of their embodied perspectives on the world.[4] This essentially political sense of reality emerges within a common space, and around a shared concern for being-in-common. It can only subsist by preserving its constituitive plurality and difference in a "common" that is inherently dissensual. In this way, Arendt conceives the common similarly to Jean-Luc Nancy, for whom it is not a singularity that overcomes difference, but rather the condition wherein our irreducible alterity to others is exposed and can be grasped.[7,8] For Nancy, the common is thus the originary condition of the political and the site of all orientation towards the potential for being-in-common.[7,8] The common in this sense is the fundamental condition of action for Arendt, and the corporeal, worldly reality of the common is an "actionable" reality arising wholly out of action and appearance. This actionable reality is radically other from the unitary techno-scientific reality of the capitalist governmental apparatus, yet able to arise as an exception within it through action. It is only in this exceptional reality, born of exceptional action, that truly alternative spaces can open up to contest the hegemony of neoliberal consensus, and within which the political can emerge, appear, and be experienced.

Because it consists in the bodily presence of actors, the plural constitution of actionable reality necessarily depends on place. As Butler observes, Arendt's space of appearance is the space between different bodies, and action and speech produce the location of bodies in, and as, place.[6] Yet for Arendt, this emergent sense of place is preconditioned by the existence of a fabricated "common world" of things, whose durability and objectivity undergird the contingent and fleeting space of appearance.[4] Existing between actors, the common world is able to relate them while maintaining their equality and discrete identities, and in turn, preserving the priority of an actionable sense of political reality constituted through the presence of heterogeneous actors.[4] To do so, however, the world must be open enough to sustain the heterogeneity of perspectives upon it, and durable enough to perdure, in some fashion, beyond the actions and events that it accommodates. Circumscribing the common world exclusively within the operative reality of a unitary techno-scientific perspective denies the priority of the properly human, political sense of reality, and potentially forecloses the possibility of establishing it through action. The world so conceived, produced and experienced loses its ability to relate actors other than through sheer utility, becoming itself an assemblage of unrelated things that exist only as means to ends.[4] Such a world effectively realizes the depoliticization of space and life at the center of Swyngedouw's critique of the post-political condition, in which the capacity of the urban environment to sustain the plural constitution of an actionable political reality has been radically diminished. Yet any call for design to seize the spaces of the city as implements for repoliticization can only diminish this capacity further and obscure the role of place-as-world in nurturing the emergence of the political in action and appearance.

The concrete common world, according to Arendt, is thus one of the most important preconditions for the emergence of the political as the horizon of potential being-in-common, wherein human freedom may attain a worldly reality through action. The intangible realm of human affairs inheres in the common world, and its importance for the political according to Arendt cannot be overstated: "[F]or at the center of politics lies concern for the world, not for man."[9 p.106] Concern for the common world – the very ground and embodiment of all being-in-common – is thus the concern for the political itself. Furthermore, human appearance, for Arendt, demands for its fullest realization that the common world be fit for appearance – that it be capable of attesting to, resonating with, and orienting the beauty, dignity and power of human action that manifest the political.[4] By fitness, Arendt means that the common world itself must appear, as the world that is common, and by extension, that the common as a horizon of potentiality must appear immanently in the world.[4] The appearance of the common is the measure of fitness for human action and appearance, and thus a key condition for the fullest and most apparent emergence of the political. It follows that the corporeal nature and qualities of places – in their design, materiality, fabrication, and life over time – and the capacity of place to manifest the commonness of the world, must accordingly bear upon the potential for the political to emerge and appear through action.

Place and the Political: Occupy Wall Street

In light of the interrelationship between appearance, reality and the common world in Arendt's theory, what, can be said about the nature and qualities of particular places in relation to protest action and the appearance of the political arising from it? What is the relationship between the physical space of the city and the collective embodied space of appearance of particular protests? What happens to these urban spaces when they become

political event-places? Occupy Wall Street can serve to address these questions more clearly than many other protest movements which occurred in urban places with historical political significance such as Tahrir Square in Cairo and Syntagma Square in Athens. While these places largely remain public in a political sense and able to focus and orient political action, Zuccotti Park in Lower Manhattan is a prime exemplar of a post-political "public" space that was conceived and functions wholly within the neoliberal configuration of the city as the governmental apparatus of capital. As mentioned above, the park is a "privately owned public space" dating from the 1960s when the city of New York began allowing real estate developers to cede ground-level spaces for public use in return for exceeding planning limitations on height, setbacks and other aspects of skyscraper developments. [10,11] Then called Liberty Plaza Park, it functioned primarily to facilitate pedestrian access to city transit systems and as an open space amenity in the densely developed Financial District. After being damaged in the 9/11 attacks the park was renovated by its corporate owner, Brookfield Asset Management, to include a gridded bosque of honey locust trees, granite benches and tables with integral chessboards, in-ground lighting and public art, including Mark di Suvero's monumental *Joie de Vivre* (1998), and was renamed for John E. Zuccotti, Brookfield's chairman of global operations.[12] As a privately owned public space, the park was administered separately from city-owned parks, and, as also mentioned above, required to be public accessible fully twenty-four hours a day.[11] Having never been envisioned as public in the political sense, the park had no restrictions on public assemblies such as there were for city-owned parks, and users could not be evicted unless they had broken a law.[13]

As such, Zuccotti Park was the site of a lacuna in the regulatory regime that otherwise policed the political vacuity of urban space that the organizers of Occupy Wall Street had strategically identified. As mentioned above, the protest encampment was a legal inhabitation of the park, not a seizure of control. Protesters remained more or less continuously in the park for two months by abiding by, and even enforcing themselves, Brookfield's regulations on cleanliness, sanitation and behavior in order to pre-empt and nullify their invocation as pretexts for eviction, in spite of a court order that was obtained expressly prohibiting encampment.[14] After the park was cleared of tents, protesters continued to assemble in the park both day and night, holding assemblies and maintaining their presence without sleeping there. Through the bodily presence and appearance of protesters acting and speaking, Zuccotti Park located the concern for ways of being-in-common that were more just, and, in so doing, became a new place – a newly practiced space, following Michel de Certeau – in which a nascent and vital public realm unfolded. This politicized place was constituted through the radical heterogeneity of the protesters and their differing perspectives on the world, and partook of Arendt's actionable, political sense of reality. As such, the common could immanently appear in the new place of the park as the corporeal and exceptional emergence of the political within the otherwise depoliticized space of the capitalist apparatus.

In light of Arendt's notion of the fitness of the world for political appearance, how can Zuccotti Park then be understood as having been fit for the Occupy Wall Street protest and the manifestation of the political in action and speech? How did the world itself as common – and thus, the horizon of potential being-in-common – "materially and symbolically" appear within the newly practiced place of the park? At the time of the protest many observers and participants wondered how aspects of the park such as di Suvero's *Joie de Vivre*, or the massing of tarps and tents, might become iconic for the movement and its distinctive blending of outrage and optimism.[15] Yet Occupy Wall Street by nature seemed to resist reification in specific forms or images, just as it refused to formalize any particular

demands or goals. It appears that the potential iconicity of di Suvero's sculpture was hardly apprehended by protesters who generally referred to it as "the big red thing", or even "the weird red thing."[14 p.6,15] Judging from media accounts, the physical attributes of the park such as trees and street furniture did not seem to register much beyond how they could shelter and accommodate the protest. Formally, nothing distinguishes the space from the general sensibility of corporate urban development, nor does the park even vaguely recall traditional civic, public spaces such as the town square. Aesthetically pleasing, politically mute and strictly commodious as a public amenity, Zuccotti Park could hardly be expected to play the role of Tahrir Square for Occupy Wall Street.

In spite of the above, there was a clear consciousness of Zuccotti Park as a distinct place in relation to the protest, certainly as a backdrop to the encampment and protest actions,[17] but more subtly as an undergirding physical and material condition. The gamut of the park's physical characteristics is readily evident in media images of the protest as they foreground protesters and scenes of action. In narrative accounts of the protest, however, the park's physicality all but disappears except for certain essential aspects which are repeatedly recalled: gray granite, the honey locust trees and their yellow leaves, and the painted red steel of the "big red thing." These minimal descriptors are exemplified in journalist Nathan Schneider's *Thank You, Anarchy: Notes from the Occupy Apocalypse* (2013). Schneider opens his narrative with a curt description of Zuccotti Park contrasting the innocuousness of the place with how momentous it would become during the protest: "For nearly two months in the fall of 2011, a square block of granite and honey locust trees in New York's Financial District, right between Wall Street and the World Trade Center, became a canvas for the image of another world."[15 p.5] Referring to di Suvero's *Joie de Vivre* at the southeast corner of the park, he writes that "[t]he dumb piece of red sculpture that towers over Zuccotti Park— the "Big Red Thing"— now has in my nervous system the chill-inducing and undeserved status of Beacon of the Real, as the first thing I'd see when approaching the occupation from the subway."[15 p.6] Schneider describes his first impression of the park as he and other protesters approached it: "Moving up Broadway felt slow and maddening, but it was only a few minutes before we were at Zuccotti, filling the space between the granite and the treetop canopy. There were no police blocking it. Actually, it was beautiful. As we poured in, the hard, gray, corporate plaza looked like a promised land."[15 p.25] Finally, describing the protesters' return to the park the morning the police had cleared the encampment, he writes that "[w]hen the sun rose on November 15, Liberty Square looked an awful lot like Zuccotti Park again….The place had been completely cleared and power-washed, bare and dead except for the trees, whose leaves had turned a bright yellow for autumn. I don't think I noticed that they'd turned before; there was too much human commotion."[15 p.101]

These terse descriptions of Zuccotti Park as a physical place focus not on its forms, their function or signification, but on the materiality and qualities of things, natural and manmade – particularly their colors. On the one hand, these are the simplest ways to characterize the place in its relation to the protest, especially when action is the focus of the narrative. But on the other hand, the elemental descriptors also deny any signifying role for the park's architectural and urban forms in symbolically situating the protest in the city, and implicitly recognize an inherent autonomy of materiality and color independent from form. For Schneider, granite, locust trees, steel and their colors are not merely expedient descriptors for the park but were its most memorable aspects – those most worthy of remembering – by which his readers would recognize the particular place of the Occupy Wall Street protest. As Schneider writes, these seemingly mundane materials and qualities were apparently capable of beauty in spite of their forms and their deployment by capital,

and of lending that beauty to the place that the park had become in protest. Something of this beauty appears in many of the media images of the protest that were disseminated online, especially those of the general assemblies at night under the glowing yellow canopy of the honey locusts, illuminated by police spotlights (fig. 3). Schneider's narrative affirms the prominence of material qualities in the perception of Zuccotti Park as a place during the protest, a prominence that can be discerned in photographs and which exceeds their aesthetic and editorial appeal.

Figure 3: Protesters assembled under the canopy of honey locust trees in Zuccotti Park hours after the encampment had been cleared the morning of November 14-15, 2011. Image: Todd Heisler/The New York Times/Redux.

In this becoming beautiful of otherwise mundane and mute granite, leaves, steel, and even the polyethylene of ubiquitous tarps and tents, I argue that Zuccotti Park became fit for human appearance in the sense called for by Arendt, wherein the common world appears as such, and the common itself appears immanently within it. Historically, the commonness of the world for Arendt appeared in monuments and works of art that embodied the memory and continuity of human action and of human thought. Through their beauty and durability, they evoked the ideality, brilliance and what Kimberley Curtis calls the tragic dignity of human action, which ultimate partook of the divine.[4,18] However, in the case of Occupy Wall Street, the commonness of the world did not appear through traces of human action, but in the properties and qualities of materials – in the very materiality of the world. In so doing, the commonness of the world, I argue, appeared – or was "exposed" – in its most essential form, following Nancy, as the originary condition of all being-in-the-world, human and non-human, as being-with-others.[7] Thus the potentiality of being-in-common that forms the horizon of the political for human being was revealed as inherent in the world itself, and implicitly shared with all being. What appeared in the materiality of Zuccotti Park can be understood as the sheer potentiality of material being in its irreducible heterogeneity prior to any fixity in form. If, following from Arendt and Butler, the common

– as the potentiality for being-in-common – immanently appears in the corporeality of the world, then, following from Nancy, I argue that the originary conditionality of being-with shared by all being can immanently appear in the constituent materiality of place. Just as all being for Nancy is being-with, all appearance of being is already an appearing-with, or co-appearance.[7] Through the materiality of Zuccotti Park as a place, the potentiality for being-in-common, as such, immanently appeared, and allowed for a more essential exposure of the common as the site of the political. The emergent beauty of materiality in Zuccotti Park, occasioned by and resonating with the beauty of human action in protest, can thus be understood as the co-appearance of the world's potentiality of being with that of human being. In this way might the world be understood as having, by virtue of its irreducible materiality, a latent potential for fitness for human appearance, a fitness that does not precede action, but rather is called forward – even compelled – from within places by action.

Human action, presence and appearance therefore transformed the space of Zuccotti Park materially and perceptually into the place where the potentiality of all being as being-with was called into appearance in solidarity, as it were, with the electrifying potentiality of human being-in-common – the horizon of the political. Borrowing from Arendt, this co-appearance "shone forth" as the beauty of acting bodies, resonating sympathetically in the material beauty of places, that cannot be reified but only remembered.[4] In Occupy Wall Street, the exhausted vestigial type-form of the urban plaza became newly articulate as the enunciatory frame of dissensual encounter and exchange called for by Swyngedouw, as the "square block of granite and honey locust trees" were compelled to shelter, reflect and amplify the exposure of the common as the appearance of the political in becoming "a canvas for the image of another world."[15 p.5] Zuccotti Park was remade "materially and symbolically" as a political place not by design, but through action and appearance, in which an actionable reality opened up within the space of park and compelled it to resonate with the appearance of the common.

Exposing the Common

However protest action may transform the nature of reality in places to allow for the political to emerge, the potential for architectural and urban design to take a substantive role in "repoliticizing" the spaces of the city in the post-political condition remains in question. Calls for design such as Swyngedouw's to "properly" construct material and symbolic spaces that "nurture" dissensus, "enunciate" dissent, and "literally" open up spaces for action and speech,[1,2,3] blur the distinction between making and acting and not only entrain the political within instrumentality, but also risk displacing properly political agency and responsibility from human actors into fabricative processes and the fixity of forms. Circumscribing action and appearance within the operative reality of governmental apparatuses effectively abandons the political to becoming subsumed within them and foreclosed as an essential dimension of human experience. To interpret Swyngedouw's call for "insurgent" design literally as a mode of architectural and urban design practice would be, moreover, to thoroughly instrumentalize politics and expressly politicize design. Occupy Wall Street, however, revealed how in asserting the priority of actionable over operative reality, in non-violent, non-instrumental confrontation with neoliberal capitalist order, an alternate space and place could open up for encountering the radical otherness at the heart of the common as the site and condition of possibility of the political. The protest also illuminated the integral relation between bodies and places inherent in political action

and appearance, and how places could be called materially to manifest the potentiality of being-in-common beyond, and in spite of, the significatory role of form. Yet it also revealed how the political emerged freely within the event-place of protest as the horizon of being-in-common, defying all fixity in form, place, process, and end.

Although the political as such may not be directly susceptible to design, the role of Zuccotti Park within the event-place of Occupy Wall Street points to how the practices of architecture and urban design may be able to play an important role in preparing the concrete and perceptual conditions for the emergence of the political in action and appearance. While the implications for design of the discussion above must be developed elsewhere, I conclude with a brief outline of how architecture and urban design might reconsider its relation to the political in practice. First of all, design must go beyond current debates about formal and operative strategies of accessibility, adaptability and "incompleteness" of public spaces that, while important, emphasize how places can be utilized physically by actors.[19] Design must furthermore recognize the original priority of an actionable sense of reality, constituted plurally through the bodily presence of heterogeneous, plural and equal actors, over any operative sense of reality. As a practice of world-building, it must preserve the capacity of the world to sustain this sense of reality, however provisionally, by sustaining in turn the heterogeneity, plurality and equality of possible perspectives on and within it. Design must also envision the potential for being-in-common that is shared with the world through the materiality of natural and manmade things, in their diversity and distinctness, such that this potential can appear and be recognized in places and manifest their fitness in turn for human appearance. Finally, design must anticipate how beauty – as the brilliance, ideality and "tragic" dignity of human action – may be compelled to appear within the material texture of the world, such that the potentiality of being-in-common can appear along with its exposure in political action. Following from these preliminary considerations, how can design ultimately prepare for, nurture and sustain the exposure and appearance of the common as it may be engendered within the world by political action? This, above all, is the crucial political task for architectural and urban design in confronting our post-political condition.

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FIGURE LIST

Fig. 1. New York City police officers entering Zuccotti Park the morning of November 14-15, 2011 to remove Occupy Wall Street protesters and their belongings. Original caption: New York City Police officers entered Zuccotti Park early Tuesday morning and removed Occupy Wall Street protesters and their belongings [Image on Internet]. Image: Robert Stolarik/The New York Times/Redux. In: Baker A and Goldstein J. After an Earlier Misstep, a Minutely Planned Raid. New York Times [Internet]. 2011 Nov 15 [cited 2019 Nov 17]; Available from: www.nytimes.com/2011/11/16/nyregion/police-clear-zuccotti-park-with-show-of-force-bright-lights-and-loudspeakers.html

Fig. 2. Occupy Wall Street protesters having returned to Zuccotti Park after the encampment was cleared on the night of November 14-15, 2011, near Mark di Suvero's *Joie de Vivre* (1998) [Image on Internet]. Image: Henny Ray Abrams/AP Photo. In: [no author listed]. Occupy Wall St. Faces Shaky Future. Daily Beast [Internet]. 2011 Nov 16. Updated 2017 Apr 24. [cited 2019 Nov 17]; Available from: www.thedailybeast.com/cheats/2011/11/16/occupy-wall-st-faces-shaky-future0

Fig. 3. Protesters assembled under the canopy of honey locust trees in Zuccotti Park hours after the encampment had been cleared the morning of November 14-15, 2011. Original caption: Hours after being evicted by the police, protesters returned to Zuccotti Park on Tuesday, without tents and sleeping bags [Image on Internet]. Image: Todd Heisler/The New York Times/Redux. In: Halbfinger DM, Barbaro M. Jolted, Wall St. Protesters Face Challenge for Future. New York Times [Internet]. 2011 Nov 15 [cited 2019 Nov 17]; Available from: www.nytimes.com/2011/11/16/nyregion/ousted-wall-street-protesters-face-an-uncertain-future.html