

ARCHITECTURAL COLLAGES

URBAN IMAGES IN LAS VEGAS HOTEL/CASINOS AND THEIR PRODUCTION
OF PLACE

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by

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HOTEL/CASINOS AND THEIR PRODUCTION OF PLACE

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ARCHITECTURAL COLLAGES: URBAN IMAGES IN LAS VEGAS
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ABSTRACT

DR. KEITH EGGENER, THESIS SUPERVISOR

This essay discusses the Las Vegas hotel/casinos The New York New York Las Vegas, The Paris Las Vegas, and The Venetian Las Vegas as producers of place during the 1990's and early 2000's. This is in contrast to the common perception that themed environments are placeless. To examine this contradiction this paper will first discuss place and placelessness as it has been historically defined. Using the concept of place as a unique environment that participates in the historical, cultural, and geographical contexts of its location this paper will show how the hotels themed environments, copied from existent places, can produce their own meanings and become places themselves.

Formal analysis will show that each hotel is not placeless due to their production of experience and meaning for their visitors. Through the context of geographer Brian Massumi's examination of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's redefinition of the *simulacra* as producers of meaning it will become possible to understand the Las Vegas hotel/casinos as producers of place due to the synthesis between the copied forms of their respective cities and the Las Vegas imagery and experiences that causes the hotel/casinos to participate in the context of Las Vegas. In this manner each hotel becomes, respectively, authentic New York Las Vegas, Paris Las Vegas, and Venice Las Vegas.

Introduction

As have many architects, critics, and historians, during my study of architecture I have found Las Vegas fascinating. In popular culture it has been both sanctified and vilified. It offers unprecedented personal freedom, the ability to become anyone or anything, and an eternal optimism. The city is also depicted as a place of decadence, sin, crime, and vice. Prior to beginning this project these mediated perceptions of the city were my only personal experiences with the city.

Throughout my education the concept of the duck (a building that is a sign in which meaning and symbol are the same) and the decorated shed (a building where a sign, separate from the building, is applied to give it meaning), developed by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour's book *Learning From Las Vegas*, was omnipresent. The possibility to create equally magnificent structures, rich both in their cost and presentation, but built for the 'average' person that the authors championed, has always intrigued me. Their use of semiotics to explore meaning in architectural imagery resonates with my own training in art history while the subject of architecture parallels my interests. These three authors have been a mainstay in my understanding of Post-modern architecture, and their work on Las Vegas drew me to this project.

Complicating my interest in Las Vegas, however, was the realization that my own perception of Las Vegas was a mediated one. Prior to beginning this project, I had not visited the city, seen the Strip, or set foot inside a Las Vegas casino. Everything I knew of Las Vegas was through popular imagery and literary research. With this in mind I set out to 'discover' Las Vegas anew, to explore the American conception of the city, but also the reality of its forms, functions, and existence outside of the mediated presence that I had previously experienced. What I found instead was a journey through the debate of place and placelessness, and how the mediation of the city into American culture affects the forms of the casino/hotels on The Strip.

I chose to look at three Las Vegas casino/hotels themed after tourist destinations: The New York New York Las Vegas, The Paris Las Vegas, and The Venetian Las Vegas. I had originally chosen these as a means of exploring how megaprojects with enormous budgets were being constructed in a city known for its constant aesthetic and formal redefinition. I was interested in how they could exist, why they were themed, and what they meant for a quickly growing city. However, as I began my literary research I continually found references to themed environments as 'placeless'.

Upon my first visit to the Strip in January of 2009, as I stood at the reception desk inside the New York New York waiting to check in, I had to wonder how the hotel's environment could be considered placeless. During my education I have come to understand place in a variety of ways. From Martin Heidegger's example of place coming into being when there is an intentional act

of human creation, to Christian Norberg-Schultz community based theory where place is dependent upon dwelling, to Kenneth Frampton's Critical Regionalism in which geographical contextualism becomes predominant and is used to combat placelessness, place has been widely discussed in relation to architecture. Even with this knowledge I could not define why the hotel I was currently experiencing was placeless. The problem of perceiving the Las Vegas hotels as placeless, and the possible alternative of viewing them as significant place rather than mere geographical location, will be the focus of this essay.

For the purpose of this paper place will be considered to be a unique entity with its own specific historical, cultural, and geographical contexts, while something placeless has the same meaning, even when reproduced at any location. This is surmised from the book *Place and Placelessness* by geographer Edward Relph in which he associates placelessness with tourist districts, entertainment districts, and commercial strips. Each of these characterizes the Las Vegas hotels and is considered to be placeless because they are 'other-directed' environments made for tourists or consumers. Relph also puts themed locations, which he terms 'Disneyfied', as placeless manifestations, pseudo-places, and synthetic places constructed out of fantasy with little or no relation to their geographical setting's history.¹ This disconnection from history means that something placeless can be located anywhere and hold the same meaning. Furthermore, the definition to be used here is predicated

¹ Relph, E. (1976). *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion Pp. 121. It is important to note that Relph states the necessity of differentiating between authenticity and inauthenticity as orders of being and existence without positive or negative connotations.

upon Critical Regionalism's answer to placelessness, in which placelessness is considered to be caused by modernization's reproduction and universality, where a building is tied to the geographical context of a place through integration into the natural site, a basis on tactility rather than the visual, and an emphasis on individual cultures rather than universal globalism. According to art historian Keith Eggener, the primary proponent of Critical Regionalism, historian Kenneth Frampton, believed "Critical Regionalism, in its emphasis on place, 'seemed to offer the sole possibility of resisting' the alienating and dehumanizing assault of the placeless, consumption-driven 'universal Megalopolis.'"² This association with reproduction and universality is consistent with the dichotomy created by Relph when associates placelessness with inauthenticity due to commercialism and reproduction. Since Relph also creates a dichotomy of place vs. placelessness, or authenticity vs. inauthenticity, this also allows for the definition of place to be understood as unique rather than universal or reproduced. I intend to open the possibility of these three hotels as places due to their possession of unique meanings and forms that are dependent upon the history of, culture of, and their geographical inclusion within, Las Vegas.

At this point it seems to be prudent to state that although I do intend to raise the possibility that these three hotels are not placeless, in direct contradiction to the architectural and art historical professions' perception of themed environments, I do not believe that all themed environments, as

²Eggener, K. (2002). Placing Resistance: A Critique of Critical Regionalism. *Journal of Architectural Education*, 55 (4), 228-237. Eggener is quoting Frampton from Frampton, K. (1983). Prospects for a Critical Regionalism. *Prospecta*, 20, 147-162.

consumption-driven reproductions of our global economy, are not placeless. Rather, what I see in these three hotels is the exception, the asterisk or footnote, they are something different that draw upon the history and perception of Las Vegas to become unique places even though they rely on reproduced images of other cities.

The primary theoretical source drawn from by historians to make the claim that themed environments, such as the Las Vegas hotel/casinos, are placeless is from philosopher Jean Baudrillard's work *Simulacra and Simulation*. Similar to Relph, Baudrillard is concerned with the affects of reproduction in which the fake replaces the real and eradicats its history. Baudrillard even goes as far as to state that everything in the United States is Hyperreal simulation and the themed environments are set up as imaginary to distract from the fact that American cities are no longer real.³ These simulated environments have been given many different terms including fake, placeless, and unreal, all of which share the concept of unauthentic at the root of their definition, similar to the meaning Relph gave to placelessness.

However, placelessness is not as neat and tidy as authentic vs. inauthentic, or real vs. fantasy/illusion. It has messy area of grays in which a significant portion of our architecture falls, including these three Las Vegas hotel/casinos. Luckily, I am not alone in this viewpoint. Architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable writes in her book *The Unreal America: Architecture and Illusion*;

My primary purpose is to show things as they are, in all of their shades of gray; my second is to show that they are not necessarily what they

³ Baudrillard, J. (2006). *Simulacra and Simulation*. (S. F. Glaser, Trans.) Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

seem... What concerns me as much as the state of American building is the American state of mind, in which illusion is preferred over reality to the point where the replica is accepted as genuine and the simulacrum replaces the source.⁴

Not only is Huxtable addressing the possibility that architecture is rarely easy to define as a dichotomy, such as authentic vs. inauthentic, but she is also directly engaging with Baudrillard's assertion that America has chosen the fake over the real. Likewise, art critic Dave Hickey also questions both authenticity and the dichotomy of real vs. fake when he writes;

I...suspect that 'authenticity' is all together elsewhere...that the question of the sunset and The Strip is more a matter of one's taste in duplicity. One either prefers the honest fakery of the neon or the fake honesty of the sunset-the undisguised artifice of culture or the cultural construction of 'authenticity'-the genuine rhinestone, finally, or the imitation pearl.⁵

Hickey calls into question the concept of authenticity by asserting that everything is a copy, whether it is natural or manmade. What becomes important is the enhancement of reality, or the honesty with which the fake operates. As

Huxtable writes;

The standard is no longer real vs. phony, but the relative merits of the imitation. What makes the good ones better is their improvement on reality... The real fake reaches its apogée in places like Las Vegas where it has been developed to a high art form... an entire vocabulary and language of architectural forms has been invented to satisfy new social, commercial, and cultural requirements and criteria... The result is completely and sublimely itself. What was once the gambling casino and is now being transformed into the 'gaming resort' has become on its own terms the real thing. The outrageously fake fake has developed its own indigenous style and lifestyle to become a real place.⁶

⁴ Huxtable, A. L. (1993). *The Unreal American: Architecture and Illusion*. New York: New York Press. Pp. 2

⁵ Hickey, D. (1997). *Air Guitar: Essays on Art and Democracy*. Los Angeles: Art Issues Press.

⁶ (Huxtable, 1993) Pp. 75

Both Huxtable and Hickey are open to understanding the Las Vegas hotel/casinos as real places rather than placeless spaces. But what remains unanswered is how it is possible to view them, when they are clearly make use of fakes and reproduced copies, as places.

Exploring how the hotel/casinos can become places is the goal of this paper. It is my belief that it is their reliance upon popular imagery of both the cities represented and Las Vegas itself, as well as the history and the context of Las Vegas that make this possible. The concept of the simulacra will be very useful for this, but not as Baudrillard defined it since the cities of New York, Paris, and Venice have not been replaced by the reality of Las Vegas. They continue to produce their own histories and meanings. The hotel/casinos also need to produce unique meaning with respect to their forms and the history of Las Vegas to become place. It is through the writings of philosophers Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Brian Massumi that this becomes possible. They assess the simulacrum as a method of production in which both copy and original create separate meanings. The hotel/casinos, however, do not reproduce their respective cities, rather they are referring to the portrayal of the cities in popular imagery. This meaning is grounded in the history and popular imagery of Las Vegas, which the commercialism and advertising prevents the patrons from forgetting.

Further framing this paper is the fact that it is a historical view of a specific time and place, namely Las Vegas in the 1990's to early 2000's. Since I am writing about a specific historical moment, it is useful to briefly examine the

media portrayal of the cities inspiring the themed casinos during this time period as both products and representations of American popular imagery. First, New York at the turn of the century was depicted in contradictory terms due to a reinvention of its identity. As a megalopolis it continued to be identified as the dangerous place that had been established by the media in the 70's and 80's in films like *The Godfather Trilogy*, *Taxi Driver*, *The Warriors*, and *The Deathwish* just to name a few. In these films, a lack of law is shown and vigilantism is depicted as heroic. During the 90's and early 2000's the popularity of TV crime dramas such as *Law & Order*, *NYPD Blue*, *New York Undercover*, and *Third Watch* depicted the dangers of the city from the other side of the law. The portrayal of New York as a dangerous city also continued during this time in films such as *Goodfellas*, *New Jack City*, *One Good Cop*, *Bad Lieutenant*, *Carlito's Way*, *Die Hard: With a Vengeance*, *Devil's Advocate*, and *American Psycho*. There were so many films depicting New York as a dangerous city that this became the representative image of New York during the time period. The hotel/casinos provide an escape from this by providing a controlled environment.

However, New York was portrayed as things other than dangerous. If this was the only perception of it, there probably would have been very little desire to see it as a Las Vegas hotel. During the 90's and 2000's there was also a focus on New York as a glamorous social place for gathering and romance. This can be seen in the popularity of TV shows like *Seinfeld*, *Friends*, *Sex and the City*, *Mad About You*, and *Spin City*, as well as movies such as *Sleepless in Seattle*, *Studio 54*, *One Fine Day*, *As Good As It Gets*, and *You've Got Mail*. It is this

glamour and social interaction, without the perceived dangers of the city that the New York New York Las Vegas offers.

In contrast, Paris and Venice were depicted as exotic and romantic. Films such as *Forget Paris*, *Moulin Rouge!*, *French Kiss*, and *Everyone Says I Love You* continued to depict the French city in this way drawing upon previous films such as *Last Tango in Paris*, *A Little Romance*, and *Paris When it Sizzles*. As Humphrey Bogart said while playing Rick Blaine in *Casablanca*, "We'll always have Paris."⁷ Venice was portrayed likewise in films such as *Bloom in Love*, *Bread and Tulips*, *A Little Romance*, *Only You*, and *The Story of Us*. It was where a person could hold their lover in their arms as the gondolier guided them effortlessly through the waterways of the city as the closing scene of the *Italian Job* depicted. Paris and Venice were cities of sidewalk cafés, restaurants, and vendors. They were serene, timeless and untouched by the rapid advancement of technology with historical monuments as backdrops for their love stories. Both Paris and Venice were places to visit, and to fall in love in, with the primary dangers being rude treatment by the locals. At least, this is how they were portrayed in American popular imagery.

It is also necessary to discuss here the popular imagery of Las Vegas. As will be shown in later chapters, the primary function of these hotel/casinos is to provide a fantasy experience of both the represented city and Las Vegas. In the mass media Las Vegas has primarily been shown in three modes. The first of which is as a city of vice, violence, and mob control such as in movies like *Bugsy*,

⁷ Curtiz, M. (Director). (1942). *Casablanca* [Motion Picture].

Casino, Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, Showgirls, and The Cooler. In contrast to this perception about the forces behind Las Vegas, it is also depicted as a place of opportunity and freedom, a place where you can be anyone or anything and strike it rich. Movies like *Ocean's Eleven, Rain Man, and Swingers* all depict the city as containing an optimistic potential for a better life and social position. Finally, the third portrayal of Las Vegas within mass culture is largely in response to the shift in Las Vegas' identity during the late 80's and early 90's. In this method films such as *Honeymoon in Vegas* and *Vegas Vacation* Las Vegas is depicted as a tourist destination that is friendly enough to attract families like the Griswolds. It is with these conceptions of the four cities in mind that the hotel/casinos have been designed.

A definition of place based upon unique forms that interact with the history and context of its location, in concert with the popular imagery of the time and cities will be informative when examining the Las Vegas hotel/casinos in detail. It is my goal within this paper to show how these hotel/casinos have become producers of place. This will be discussed over the course of three chapters. The first chapter assesses how the hotels can become producers of meaning. This production is dependent upon Deleuze and Guattari's definition of the simulacra and the hotel/casinos use of popular imagery. This imagery is used for the forms of the spaces to create *simulated* places of New York, Paris, and Venice. These pseudo-place themes produce their own meanings of travel and fantasy to differentiate between the hotel/casinos that are located in close proximity on the strip.

The second chapter assesses the relationship between the hotels and the cities they represent. It shows that they are not strict reproductions of New York, Paris, or Venice but productions of Las Vegas that appropriate the forms of each respective city to provide a specific experience to patrons. This is done by focusing on the exterior façades of the hotels and their presentation as images used to both attract customers and define the experiences that are available within for them. The exterior façades are where the hotel/casinos meet and interact with the fabric of The Strip. They façades are also covered with a system of signs separate from the theme. This system is constructed from imagery and advertisements of Las Vegas. This system reminds the patron that they are experiencing Las Vegas, while the themes presented by the façade offer experiences within unique from the other hotel/casinos.

The third and final chapter deals with the problem of authenticity. The focus is placed on the production of an authentic experience for the visitor. The chapter defines this experience as a synthesis between the popular imagery of the cities being referred to by the hotels and Las Vegas. This experience is not dependent upon a perfectly accurate portrayal of the cities and depends upon a willing disbelief of the architecture's inhabitants. Rather, it is constructed by a total immersion of the senses in the theme being portrayed. This will show that the authentic/inauthentic dichotomy is not entirely necessary due to the willing disbelief employed so that the patrons can engage in fantasy experiences within a real place. By combining the production of a *feeling* of authenticity through themed simulacra with the imagery and experience of Las Vegas what is created

is an authentic Las Vegas experience unique to each hotel. In other words, what is provided to the patrons of the hotels is an authentic New York Las Vegas, Paris Las Vegas, or Venice Las Vegas. This authenticity in concert with the unique environments and participation of the hotels within the historical, cultural, and geographical context of Las Vegas causes each hotel/casino to become significant place.

Chapter 1:

Theming as Production of Popular Imagery

To begin, let me assert that I intend to argue in this chapter that each hotel is a Las Vegas place in which its forms are created as simulacra to differentiate itself from the other Las Vegas places. Each hotel markets itself as a place for the possibility of assuming a different role to be played by the tourist. However, it is not New York, Paris, or Venice that is being experienced, but rather New York Las Vegas, or Paris Las Vegas, or Venice Las Vegas. This is evidenced by the full names of each hotel/casino as each identifies itself as a Las Vegas place. In order they name themselves: The New York New York Las Vegas Hotel & Casino⁸, Paris Las Vegas⁹, and The Venetian Las Vegas.¹⁰ The full titles of the hotel/casinos serve to create two differentiations that aid in their production of unique places. First, each distinguishes itself from its referent city through the inclusion of Las Vegas in its title. Perhaps even more telling is their differentiation from one another. Since each hotel/casino identifies itself as part of Las Vegas, and a part of the Las Vegas experience, it becomes necessary to differ from the other hotel/casinos present in Las Vegas and their subsequent experiences. This then is the necessary role that theming plays in the construction of the hotel/casinos identities. Theming allows for each business to

⁸ (New York New York Las Vegas Hotel & Casino, 2009)

⁹ (Paris Las Vegas, 2010)

¹⁰ (The Venetian Las Vegas, 2010)

market itself to potential consumers as both a Las Vegas experience, and also an experience that differs from other Las Vegas hotels. In this manner advertising and commercialism becomes integral to the production of the place's meaning. It is the advertising and marketing campaigns, the commodification of Las Vegas, its shows, and its experiences, that serve as constant reminders to patrons that they are in fact participating in a Las Vegas experience. It is the omnipresent signs and advertisements, each of which includes the name Las Vegas, that prevent the hotels from becoming mere replicas of the cities they represent. They serve as producers of meaning for the hotels as Las Vegas places for the tourists.

The logical place to begin the discussion on differentiating between the forms of the Las Vegas hotel/casinos New York New York, The Paris, and The Venetian from their associated cities is an investigation of the simulacra as a method of producing meaning. If the hotel/casinos are not replications of their namesake cities, but rather, as conglomerations created from popular images of these cities merged with the identity of Las Vegas, which will be discussed in later chapters, then it is necessary to first explore why this distinction is important. This chapter uses writings by Brian Massumi, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari to discuss the simulacra and challenge the popular views of Las Vegas as placeless. Ultimately, this chapter will explore how the hotels become producers of meaning as simulacra. By producing meaning and functioning within a specific historical identity, the hotels can be considered places rather than placeless simulated places despite the origins of their forms as simulacra.

The simulacrum, as it relates to art, is the concept of an imitation replacing the original object. This idea was developed by Jean Baudrillard, who defines the simulacrum in his book "Simulacra and Simulation." He writes:

Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal... by crossing a space whose curvature is no longer that of the real, nor that of truth, the era of simulation is inaugurated by a liquidation of all referentials... It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real¹¹

In other words, as simulacra, an image replaces the meaning of the original with that of its own. It does not imitate, duplicate, or parody the original object because it has replaced it. Frederic Jameson gives photorealism, such as the works of Richard Estes, as an example of the simulacrum in which the painting is a copy of a copy. The first level of reproduction is the photographing of an object, the second is the creation of a painting from the photograph. In this example the painting is what Baudrillard would consider hyperreal because each of the modes of production is trying to define reality. There is of course reality itself, which as Baudrillard would argue, the photograph then attempts to replace, only to once again be replaced by the photorealist painting. Finally, geographer Brian Massumi defines simulacrum as "a copy of a copy whose relation to the model has become so attenuated that it can no longer properly be said to be a copy. It stands on its own as a copy without a model."¹² Massumi is stating here

¹¹ Baudrillard, J. (2006). *Simulacra and Simulation*. (S. F. Glaser, Trans.) Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Pp. 1-2

¹² Massumi, B. (2002). *A Shock to Thought: Expressions After Deleuze & Guattari*. New York: Routledge.

that, like Baudrillard's assertion, a copy of a copy has lost its connection to the original because it is referring to the copy.

The copy's replacement of the original's meaning is integral in understanding the conception of the Las Vegas hotels as simulacra. The hotel/casinos are operating as copies no longer requiring models. They function as simulacra because their forms are copies not of their representative cities, New York, Paris, and Venice, but rather, they are copies of the popular imagery of these places. The production of the hotel/casinos is several steps of copying removed from the reality of the cities themselves. To understand them in this manner it is necessary to consider the American popular imagery of these cities as both ever-changing and self-perpetuating. In other words, the popular imagery upon which the hotel/casinos design is predicated is constantly changing due to the continual mediation of the artists, directors, producers, writers, etc. of the media that is informing the American collective memory.

For instance, if a writer were to compose a script for a television show in which the characters travelled to Rome, yet they based their writing off their mediated conception of Rome, rather than the city itself, then the television show would function as simulacra. However, it would also become popular imagery and would be used as referent for future copies, causing them to possibly be simulacra a further step removed from the city. Those copies could then take their place in popular imagery to once again be copied. This process could repeat itself again and again until infinity creating any number of steps of removal between the object and the original. This same process exists as separation

between the hotel/casinos and their respective originals. The dissimilarities present within the casinos in contrast with New York, Paris, and Venice, suggest that this is in fact the case as the hotel/casinos relate not to the cities but rather the popular imagery of them as discussed in the following two chapters.

Definitions of placelessness give varying reasons for its production that are relevant to the Las Vegas hotel/casinos. Both Relph and fellow geographer Doreen Massey attribute the loss of meaning caused by reproduction to the minimization of significance as a unique place. Likewise, Massey and Relph claim that Capitalism and consumerism cause placelessness due to a removal of meaning through the standardization of content to provide products that are easily mass produced and acceptable to large portions of the public. Finally, tourism itself has been argued by Relph and Massey, as producing placelessness due to the 'othering' that takes place in such landscapes.¹³ Each of these reasons for placelessness becomes problematic when trying to define the Las Vegas hotel/casinos as environments that are not places due to this loss of meaning.

In order to describe the New York New York, the Paris, and the Venetian hotels as place, it becomes essential to find a method in which they establish meaning. This is necessary since the arguments for placelessness are dependent upon inauthenticity and the loss of meaning due to reproduction, commodification, and othering. However, by using Deleuze and Guattari's

¹³ Massey, D. (1994). *Space, Place, and Gender*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Pp. 146

adaptation of the simulacra to a method of meaning production, it is also possible to view the hotels as both simulacra, due to their reproduction of forms from popular imagery which in turn is a reproduction of the forms of the original cities, and place, as unique entities with their own individual meanings as the participate in the history and context of Las Vegas.

Brian Massumi's treatment of Deleuze and Guattari's provides this alternative method of understanding the role of simulacra. When defining the simulacrum in this manner, as Massumi writes:

Beyond a certain point the distinction is no longer one of degree. The simulacrum is less a copy twice removed than a phenomenon of a different nature altogether: it undermines the very distinction between copy and model. The terms copy and model bind us to the world of representation and objective (re)production.¹⁴

Not only is the degree of separation between the original and the reproduction unimportant for the concept of the simulacrum, but the classification of the objects as copy and model is unnecessary. Massumi continues by stating that through the lens of Deleuzean theory both simulacra and original are modes of production. Massumi explores this when he writes:

A copy... is defined by the presence or absence of internal, essential relations of resemblance to a model. The simulacrum... bears only an external and deceptive resemblance to a putative mode. The process of its production, its inner dynamism, is entirely different from that of its supposed model; its resemblance to it is merely a surface effect, an illusion. The production and function of a photograph has no relation to that of the object photographed; and the photorealist painting in turn envelops an essential difference... the thrust of the process is not to become an equivalent of the 'model' but to turn against it and its world in order

¹⁴ Massumi, B. (1987). *Realer Than Real. Copyright*, no.1, 90-97. Pp. 91

to open a new space for the simulacrum's own mad proliferation.
*The simulacrum affirms its own difference... The resemblance of
the simulacrum is a means, not an end.*¹⁵

The simulacrum can exist not only as a mode of production, but more precisely as the production of meaning. This is due to the diminished relationship between the production of the hotel/casinos and the cities they refer to since they were created from the perception of the cities in the American popular imagery rather than directly from the cities themselves. In this manner, the simulacrum uses both difference and resemblance not to replace the reality of the original, but rather to produce its own meaning.

The New York New York, the Paris, and the Venetian hotel/casinos are simulacra due to their method of defining their forms. They use the production methods of the simulacra to construct their identities and meanings. In other words, they affirm their own difference from their referent cities, while at the same time using their resemblance to the original cities to create an environment of fantasy and theatricality for the consumer. By referencing and paralleling popular imagery of the cities while also preventing the consumer from forgetting that they are in the city of Las Vegas the hotel/casinos produce unique meanings for themselves. This creation of distinctive identities through the use of the simulacrum, and their participation in the history of Las Vegas, also enables them to become places. They do this by asserting that they are American places, Las Vegas places, and capitalist places. In other words, rather than becoming placeless due to the commercialization of their spaces, or allowing

¹⁵ (Massumi, *Realer Than Real*, 1987) Pp. 91, the italics are my own for emphasis.

commercialism to cause the forgetting of their history, or to create a sense of 'othering' through their touristic purposes, the hotel/casinos use the same precepts that are often said to define placelessness to instead characterize themselves as place.

The commodification of the spaces of these hotel/casinos *is* the meaning of the places created. This is due to the fact that the meanings of the forms that are present in the original cities have already been removed by their mediation into the American collective memory. Commodification is necessary for the hotel/casino's meaning production because the primary item for consumption offered by Las Vegas is experience. As environmental historian Hal Rothman writes:

When you could get anything you wanted in virtual time and space, a new premium was added to real experience. In an age when anyone with \$399 a month to spend could lease a BMW, when you could ski the Alps virtually from your computer terminal, actual experience, the commodity that Las Vegas specialized in, gained rather than lost significance. The microchip spawned a new world with a new set of rules. Against all odds, Las Vegas became one of the winners.¹⁶

The accessibility of places previously unreachable has become available through mediated images in our daily lives due to globalization and the internet.

Therefore, physical experience and tactility have become premium capitalist goods. It is this physical experience that Las Vegas sells and the glimmer of possibility that Massumi writes about when he states:

what Deleuze and Guattari offer... is a logic capable of grasping Baudrillard's failing world of representation as an effective illusion

¹⁶ (Rothman, 2003) Pp. XXII-XXIII

the demise of which offers a glimmer of possibility... a thin but fabulous hope—of ourselves becoming realer than real in a monstrous contagion of our own making.¹⁷

The Las Vegas hotel/casinos recombination of New York, Parisian, and Venetian images with the capitalist-based identity of the city, in which experience is for sale, has created the opportunity for the city to reterritorialize real experience by producing new meaning and reality amongst the placelessness of capitalist society. The hotel/casinos reconstitute the fake forms they have appropriated from popular imagery by combining them with capitalist ideals and images that remind the visitor of Las Vegas, due to the desire to sell Las Vegas as a commodity, to create unique Las Vegas places.

A second motivating factor in the argument that the Las Vegas strip is placeless is the perceived loss of history. Geographer Edward Relph claims that the loss of meaning directly correlates with the loss of place. He characterizes tourist landscapes, the International Style, suburbs, and commercial strips as examples of placelessness.¹⁸ This would most certainly include the Las Vegas strip and the hotel/casinos discussed here. Las Vegas tradition of formal metamorphosis that aids the city in its definition of self as an American place has often been viewed as an eradication of history.

However, the history of Las Vegas has been a history of colonialism and outside influence predicated upon the city's dependence upon outside capital for its growth and survival. Whether from the railroad, the mob, or entrepreneurial capitalists, Las Vegas has always depended upon the money of others for its

¹⁷ (Massumi, *Realer Than Real*, 1987) Pp. 95-96

¹⁸ (Relph E. , 1976)

expansion. The constant change and reinterpretation of the city by its inhabitants to meet the needs of its visitors has caused it to become timeless and without past, existing only in the present.¹⁹ As Hal Rothman writes about the period of reconstruction in the early nineties, “Timeless, chameleonlike, and supple, Las Vegas once again obliterated its past.”²⁰ However, this constant formal reconfiguration of the city does not cause it to be placeless. The history may no longer be visible, but it is still present within literary sources and popular imagery of the city. One only needs to read architectural critic Alan Hess’ book *Viva Las Vegas: After Hours Architecture* to understand the six architectural eras of Las Vegas, with the theming of the 90’s arguably the seventh, or Hal Rothman’s *Neon Metropolis* or *Devil’s Bargain’s: Tourism in the Twentieth’s-Century American West* for a more detailed look into the history of Las Vegas than a physical artifact alone can grant. The history has not been destroyed, only the artifacts. Rather, I believe that similar to Deleuze and Guttari’s interpretation of the simulacra as a means of producing meaning, the continual reinvention of Las Vegas’ image is also a producer of meaning.

Las Vegas has defined itself as an entertainment paradise with its history of recreating itself. By creating a tradition of formal malleability the city created a permanency in its image as an American entertainment place. It is, and has always been, a place that people go to enjoy freedom of choice and entertainment. As Rothman writes:

¹⁹ (Rothman, 2003) Pp. 3-32

²⁰ (Rothman, 2003) Pp. 27

When McCarran Airport expanded in 1963 to offer the city a market beyond California drivers, not everyone embraced the idea... Even after the Rat Pack made the strip home, after Frank and Sammy brought attention none of the legion of skilled publicity men and women who labored for Las Vegas could buy, the owners were afraid that the attractions they'd worked so hard to build were simply not enough, too flimsy to withstand the diversion of traffic to a nearby street. They didn't realize what they'd accomplished, how permanent even their first attempts to create pleasure space were, how successful their translation of vice into recreation had already become... The new Las Vegas has no such fear... they've made Las Vegas into entertainment, brought it to a place where it stands on its own, where the sum of the city's parts is, if possible, greater than the whole... it had become a town devoted to entertaining and funded by Wall Street, providing everyone with any experience they want.²¹

Through Las Vegas' past and present redefinitions of itself it has created a unique place for entertainment. These redefinitions have been superficial ones in which the methods of funding have changed, or the aesthetic presentation of the venues has altered, or the size and scope has been redefined to accommodate a larger clientele base, but in which the primary definition of the city as a place of leisure and freedom has produced these changes.

For the past 40 years the purpose of Las Vegas has been to entertain the visitors to the city.²² The city has not eradicated its past. The forms have

²¹ (Rothman, 2003) Pp. 318

²² GLS Research. (2009). *Las Vegas Visitor Profile*. Prepared for: Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. San Francisco, CA: GLS Research. Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. (2010). *Historical Las Vegas Visitor Statistics*. Retrieved February 17, 2010, from Only Vegas: <http://www.lvcva.com/getfile/80/Historical%201970%20to%202009.pdf>, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. (2010). *Population Trends*. Retrieved February 17, 2010, from Only Vegas: <http://www.lvcva.com/getfile/241/Population%202008.pdf>, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. (2010). *Year End Summary for 2009*. Retrieved February 17, 2010, from Only Vegas: <http://www.lvcva.com/getfile/479/ES-YTD2009.pdf>, In 2009 the "Las Vegas Visitor Profile Annual Report" by GLS Research showed that 40% (down from 61% in 2005 and 49% in 2006) of all Las Vegas visitors reason for travelling was vacation or pleasure, 83% of all visitors to Las Vegas in 2009 gambled, 64% attended shows. This places more than half of Las Vegas' yearly visitors as people seeking entertainment. In 2009 there were 36,351,469 visitors to Las Vegas, of which 78% were married, while 83% made \$40k or more, 88% were white, and 86% were American. Furthermore, it indicates that since there the average number of trips made to

changed, but they have not vanished from the popular imagery that these hotels reference. It has not changed what it has always defined itself as, a place for entertainment. It has changed the way it packages entertainment. It is not Las Vegas' values that have been changing, but rather America's perception and acceptance of them. It has produced new façades in concordance with the styles and fashions of its time. The New York New York, The Paris, and The Venetian are the current permutations of this.

Furthermore, the distancing from the original creates a distortion of the original cities historical facts. It does this by denying the original meanings, and their historical precedents, due to the fact that the new object is not replacing the original as reality. In other words, the hotel/casinos produce a reality that is separate from each original city since it is based upon the popular imagery of those cities rather than the cities themselves. They are creating experiences of a New York New York Las Vegas, a Paris Las Vegas, and a Venice Las Vegas. Furthermore, the histories fabricated, produced, and projected by the hotel/casinos differ from those of the original cities just as surely as the forms do. This results from the removal of the New York, Parisian, and Venetian forms from their historical and cultural contexts. Without the surrounding histories and forms of the cities the forms of the hotel/casinos no longer contain the same meanings;

Las Vegas by each visitor was 1.7 there were approximately 21,383,217 different people who visited last year. This would indicate that, at 86%, 18,389,567 American tourists in 2009, or approximately 6% of the entire American population, visited Las Vegas, or nearly ten times the population of Clark County in 2008. The 2009 population of 1,986,146 was approximately 5% of the total number of visitors in 2009. In comparison, in 1970 there were 273,288 residents of Clark County, or approximately 4% of the number of people living in the city when compared to the 6,787,650 visitors.

rather, they are ascribed a new meaning as both representation of their respective city and Las Vegas in which the original meanings of each respective city does not interfere with the understanding of the hotels as Las Vegas places. If a bank of slot machines were placed in the original Louvre it would be viewed as an immoral commodification of the space. However, when placed in a Las Vegas version of the Louvre the original meaning of art museum is no longer present to interfere with the Las Vegas experience. All that is left is Paris Las Vegas.

What is being produced is a freedom of choice between the hotels. When the majority of the people coming to Las Vegas are there for entertainment purposes it becomes necessary to differentiate between experiences. This serves two purposes. First, it gives the tourist the choice of fantasy that they want to pursue, but it also gives provides a means of persuading them to return for a different experience. The experience will always be a Las Vegas experience, rather than one predicated purely upon the original cities. As simulacra the Las Vegas hotel/casinos do not destroy the history of the cities the hotels are referring to because it is not trying to replace the history of those cities which continue to produce their own histories. As soon as they were constructed and opened each hotel started producing its own history as evidenced by the addition of the 9/11 memorial to The New York New York Las Vegas. The histories these hotels produce are predicated upon the original history of Las Vegas and continue to further its self-identification as an entertainment place.

Finally, the last criticism used to define placelessness is the dehumanization of people through tourism's 'othering' process between the visitors and the local inhabitants. This too becomes problematic in the case of Las Vegas due to the quality of life that is afforded to the local citizens through the service industry standards present in the hotel/casinos. Rather than placing the employees in an economically inferior class to the tourists, the hotel/casinos provide jobs that produce opportunity for locals as well as paying them wages/salaries similar to the level of income as the visitors. Furthermore, the wages and salaries are often higher than those of similar jobs in other cities while the cost of living is lower allowing a greater standard of living for Las Vegas residents.²³ This is primarily due to the strong presence of laborer's unions that ensure both the availability and quality of workers for the necessary service while simultaneously protecting the employees and procuring a proper portion of the profits for them. As Rothman writes about a specific example:

Dan Topps, a bulky man with graying close-cropped hair and the loud nasal voice of the South Side of Chicago, worked as an electrician in Chicago. The weather was hard on an electrician there. 'You get all weather-beaten quick,' he recalled, and he'd read about the boom in the desert. The move to a union job in Las Vegas improved the Topps' standard of living and helped them to a new life. 'I made \$68,000 last year,' he beamed. 'My best year ever there was \$55,000.' He added, "And the cost of living here is cheaper. \$68,000, that's real money in Las Vegas. You can live good on that.'²⁴

²³ (Rothman, 2003) Chapters 3,5,6&7

²⁴ (Rothman, 2003) Pp. 69

The amount of money that Mr. Topps was making when before Rothman published his book in 2003 was comparable to the \$40k that the majority of the visitors in 2009 were exceeding.

A second example shows the large difference in pay between Las Vegas and the places the visitors are travelling from. In 2000 I was working as a caterer for one of the nicest restaurants in Columbia Missouri to pay my way through my undergraduate degree. This was a city that had no shortage of catering work due to the three colleges and three hospitals that provided an endless supply of doctors, professors, and professional dinners. At the time I was paid the minimum food service wage in Missouri of \$2.35/hr plus tips. In comparison, the pay scale for a cocktail waitress in 2000 in Las Vegas started at \$9/hr plus tips if she was a nongaming waitress or \$14/hr plus tips if she was a gaming waitress.²⁵ Furthermore, due to unionization, the waitresses were provided with health care benefits, insurance plans, etc. The quality of life that can be afforded is extremely different between the two, while the work is nearly identical. In Las Vegas, due to the influence of the hotel/casinos and the tourist money that they produce for the community, low-skill work provides the possibility of owning homes in nice school districts, health care, and retirement options. Rather than struggling to make ends meet as many service workers do around the country. The Las Vegas hotel/casinos provide the opportunity for unskilled workers to become a part of the same economic class as the tourists who are visiting the

²⁵ (Rothman, 2003) Pp. 64-65

places they work at, which at the same time gives them the opportunity to take vacations and travel similar to the Las Vegas visitors.²⁶

Within this chapter I have discussed how the Las Vegas hotel/casinos produce individual meaning by appropriating forms from popular imagery. By participating in the history of Las Vegas as an entertainment district they also produce meaning for themselves and Las Vegas. Their commodification of experience also becomes a producer of meaning in defining it as part of American culture. Furthermore, since this commodification does not dehumanize the workers it prevents the hotel/casinos from being placeless in this regard. This creates a framework with which to assess the hotels/casinos. They can be considered simulacra through their appropriation of form and the experiences they seek to provide from popular imagery. The possibility of them being considered place is predicated upon the uniqueness they derive from combining these forms with the history and popular imagery of Las Vegas. The next step is a formal analysis of the differences between the hotels forms and the forms of the original cities.

²⁶ (Rothman, 2003)

Chapter 2:

Theming and the Las Vegas Representation of Popular Images

Themed environments are created to completely immerse the people within them in their meaning. They programmatically organize the signs and images necessary to convey this meaning to their inhabitants. In reference to consumer-driven themed spaces, Scott A. Lukas states “Theming involves the use of an overarching theme... to create a holistic and integrated spatial organization of a consumer venue.”²⁷ However, theming is not linked only to commercial environments. Under the definition that theming creates a single overarching theme to convey meaning through a holistic and integrated spatial organization it becomes clear that theming has long been a part of architectural space. The most common themed spaces consist of retail and entertainment chains as well as theme parks and tourist destinations. However, this definition can be applied to many other environments as well, such as World’s Fair Exhibitions, American national and state government courthouses and capitol

²⁷ Lukas, S. A. (2007). *The Themed Space: Locating Culture, Nation, and Self*. In S. A. Lukas, *The Themed Space* (pp. 1-22). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. Pp. 1

buildings, and yes, even churches. For example, gothic cathedrals were built to represent heavenly space on earth. They used symbolism and metaphor as well as pictorial image to create integrated spatial organizations that were intended to submerge their inhabitants in the religious meaning being relayed to them. In the context of this paper, theming is not something that is inherently good or bad, but rather a tool and method of communication used to relay meaning to the inhabitants of the spaces being examined.

The New York New York, the Paris, and the Venetian are highly themed casino/hotels. What purpose does such theming fulfill on the Las Vegas strip? These themed environments are intended to provide a fantasy escape from the mundane happenings of daily life. This approach to providing a fantastical setting in which a person can forget about their problems, if only for a short period of time, is similar to that found in theme parks such as Disneyland and Six Flags. In a Six Flags promotional video, shown to new employees, this fact is emphasized: “The parks are the stage and the scenery, and you are the actor. Just like a movie, Six Flags is fantasy. And the best way for our guests to have a great time is to believe the fantasy with theme-lands and your performance. They will believe!”²⁸ This use of theming to create a fantastical environment for the patrons is not only applicable to amusement parks but to the Las Vegas hotels as well. In reality there are two fantasies being played upon to create

²⁸ Lukas, S. A. (2007). “How the Theme Park Gets Its Power: Lived Theming, Social Control, and the Themed Worker Self.” In S. A. Lukas, *The Themed Space: Locating Culture, Nation, and Self* (pp. 183-206). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. Scott Lukas is an ethnographer who worked at the now defunct Six Flags Astro World in Houston Texas. This quote is taken from a video that he used when training employees at the park. Pp. 183

these environments: the fantasy of the cities referred to by the forms of the hotel/casinos and the perception of Las Vegas from popular imagery.

The first of these to be assessed is the perception of Las Vegas itself as a city of excess, gambling, prostitution, and commercialism on one side and freedom, opportunity, and the ability to become anyone or anything on the other. As sociologist Mark Gottdiener puts it, Las Vegas is a “multi-dimensional experience of seductive pleasures – money, sex, food, gambling, and nightlife. Las Vegas constitutes a specialized space, it is one of several global ‘pleasure zones.’”²⁹ This has been reinforced not only through advertisements, but also through the two greatest mediators of our times, movies and the internet. The perception of Las Vegas has been portrayed in films such as *Ocean’s Eleven* (1960), *Rain Man* (1988), *Indecent Proposal* (1993), *Casino* (1995), *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998), *What Happens in Vegas* (2008), *The Hangover* (2009) and many others that show the city as a place distinct from the rest of the United States. Even the official Las Vegas tourism website states:

In a city where you could BE ANYBODY, why not be somebody?
Be anybody you want to be in Las Vegas. We’ll give you a
profession and everything you need to back up your story,
including: a brief history, printable business card, pre-recorded 1-
800-number, and web site... create your identity.³⁰

This not only reinforces the idea of “What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas” through the implication that through the creation of a second persona no one in

²⁹ Gottdeiner, M., & Hutchison, R. (2006). *The New Urban Sociology*. Boulder: Westview Press. Pp. 100

³⁰ *Visit Las Vegas*. (2009). Retrieved February 2009, from <http://www.visitlasvegas.com>

Vegas will know who you are at home, but it also indicates that by leaving your former identity behind while in Las Vegas it will not be possible for the actions done under the guise of this new personality to follow you home from Vegas. In an age of electronic record keeping, this is itself a fantasy, but an appealing one apparently, given the millions who come to embrace it every year in Las Vegas. As much as Vegas may try to promote itself as fantasy, the city itself is reality, and it will follow you home, but this does not prevent the hotels from offering a multitude of different fantasies to their patrons.

If the desire to visit Las Vegas stems from wishing to leave behind your former self and the assumption that the city itself provides the means to do this, then it is the hotels that provide the frameworks for the fantasies available to experience while in the city, or at least on The Strip. The variance of themes not only helps to differentiate between hotels, but also allows for a person to live several fantasies during a single stay in Las Vegas. Thus, the second fantasy that is to be fulfilled by the architecture of the hotels is related to the representation of the places depicted by the buildings. Within this, the perception of travel and exoticism is relevant to all of the hotels and can be provided only through the theming of their environments. The creation of the hotels based on the popular imagery of the places depicted turns physically travelling overseas unnecessary. Furthermore, it prevents Las Vegas' visitors from having to either learn a foreign language or be outsiders in other countries, allowing them to be

safe and comfortable during their fantasies. This may be an expression of the fear that many Americans feel from travelling under the threat of terrorism.³¹

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At first glance this seems redundant in the case of the New York New York casino and hotel as travelling to New York is no more difficult than taking a flight to Las Vegas. However, this then simply lends credence the idea that the act of visiting Las Vegas is as desirable as the fantasy of visiting New York that is portrayed through the hotel itself since it allows both to be felt simultaneously.

The next question then, is what is portrayed by each of the hotels being examined, and how? Each of the hotels is representative of a popular tourist city. They use monuments and recognizable architectural figures to portray this. However, none of the hotel/casinos being examined in this paper use a single monument, form, or even style to represent their respective city. Each hotel is a conglomeration of symbols and signs that evoke the popular images associated with each city. In other words the hotels become methods of communicating their functions as entertainment environments through their themes:

³¹ Cass, J. (2004). Egypt on Steroids: Luxor Las Vegas and Postmodern Orientalism. In D. M. Lasansky, & B. McLaren, *architecture and tourism: perception, performance, and place* (pp. 241-264). New York: Berg. Pp. 245

Fantasy themes are developed through language and pictures that *connote* a specific ideology or set of cultural meanings relating to the announced theme. The metaphorical relation is declared both as a unifying motif exploited within the interior of the casino and developed as a particular set of connotations by the design of the exterior or façade of the casino-hotel.³²

The New York New York, Paris, and Venetian hotels share a common theme that is signified through this language. Each hotel represents the concept of the urban environment through a set of cultural icons intended to act as referents to their respective city as they are perceived by the tourists who visit them.

The New York New York hotel as the name suggests is a themed environment that relies upon the popular imagery of New York. It depends upon a tightly layered façade of recognizable iconic New York buildings to represent the city.(Figure 1) Located on the corner of Las Vegas Boulevard and Tropicana Avenue the façade progressively extends higher into the city's skyline as it regresses away from the sidewalks. Progressing backwards from the street corner the scene begins with a memorial to the rescue workers and victims of 9/11, which was added to the hotel after the attacks on the World Trade Center.(Figure 2) The memorial is crafted from a brown/red marble and has glass faced compartments that contain t-shirts, letters, and other memorabilia that were left at the base of the representation of the Statue of Liberty at the hotel after the attacks. Above the glass enclosures are quotes from famous Americans including President George W. Bush, Eleanor Roosevelt, Martin Luther King Jr., and Winston Churchill, among others. The addition of this monument acknowledges both the history of the original city and shows that the

³² (Gottdeiner & Hutchison, *The New Urban Sociology*, 2006) Pp. 100.

hotel/casino itself continues to produce its own history in accordance with local, regional, and national events.

Behind the memorial the New York Harbor is indicated through a pool of water that contains a red tugboat replica and surrounds a replicated Statue of Liberty.(Figure 1Figure 3Figure 4)³³ The differences from the actual sculpture at Liberty Island in New York are readily apparent even to the uninformed viewer. This can be seen not only in a lesser degree of detail apparent upon the base which the Las Vegas statue sits, but also in the statue itself. In comparison to the original, the star-patterned base that sits below the statue's pedestal is completely absent. The statue in front of the hotel appears to be proportioned slightly differently so that she appears a bit squatter and chubbier. Furthermore, the memorial and pool prohibit the viewer from reaching the Statue of Liberty. Even if one should jump the fence and swim the pool, it is still impossible to enter into the Las Vegas replica due to the lack of any entryways and its much smaller scale. Yet, the observatory that exists beneath the crown in the original is still indicated in the Las Vegas statue through lights that are illuminated at night.(Figure 4) Likewise porches and balconies of the pedestal that are accessible in the original are also lit, as is the torch, serving to signify the difference between the two sculptures.

³³ Ironically, this pool was empty during my visit due to the water shortage problems that are currently affecting the city due to its rapid expansion and desert location. This created an interestingly surreal depiction of a serious problem that many cities around the world are currently facing.

These disparities do not diminish the effect of the Las Vegas version or the hotel itself as images of New York meant to evoke the imagination of the viewer, and that is entirely the importance of them. It is not merely a copy, but its own object. The statue still serves its purpose of relating to the popular imagery of New York. The replica is easily recognizable as similar to the Statue of Liberty and thus creates within the viewer a recollection of the popular imagery that defines the original as both an American icon and a New York monument that defines the city. This shows that an accurate portrayal of forms is not necessary to create a sense of primacy, but rather that a representation of the mediated cultural images is visually sufficient to fulfill the patron's fantasies. This is a common theme throughout this hotel, as well as the Paris and Venetian.

Directly behind the pool representing New York Harbor is a depiction of the immigration depot, now a museum, at Ellis Island. (Figure 1, Figure 5, Figure 6) Once again, there is no doubt that this is not a perfect copy of the original building. This is due not only to the obvious fact that it is not nearly as large as the original, but also that any view that could possibly be afforded to the interior is blocked by what appears to be sheetrock. Not only do the windows not allow for inspection of the hotel's interior, which would be obviously different from the immigration depot's interior, but they also fail to emit any light from the inside. By not allowing for either of these, the original meaning of the window as a transparent portal is completely removed in respect to the façade of the hotel. Instead the windows of the mock Ellis Island immigration depot depiction are now ornament and given new meaning as part of the recreation. The windows are

given only a single function as signifiers of the popular imagery referenced by the replica where they appear similar to the style the original immigration depot was constructed in.

Alternatively, it is the adaptation and removal of ornament that helps to heighten the perception of the recreation of the Soldiers and Sailors monument.³⁴ The Grand Central Terminal, found by walking around the corner and down Tropicana Avenue, flanks the Ellis Island immigration depot and operates in much the same manner.(Figure 7) In the Las Vegas version of both they use the sculptural elements to identify the building, but radically change the architectural features. The bronze figure of a soldier placed atop the hotel's Soldiers and Sailors monument is meant to refer to the New York city monument, though such a sculpture doesn't exist in the original. The true monument is based on peripteral Corinthian temples. It is ringed by twelve Corinthian columns and built in the neo-classical Beaux-Arts style. This is markedly different from what is seen in Las Vegas which has minimal ornamentation. The Las Vegas version has odd scroll-less Ionic columns (or perhaps Doric columns with a simple capital

³⁴ It seems strange to me, and probably will to anyone who is familiar with the Soldiers and Sailors monument, that this is the accepted referent for the image due to its wide variance from the actual monument. However, it is placed as such by multiple sources, including the hotel's own press kit, though to be fair these sources are probably referring to the press kit. *a2zlasvegas*. (1995-2009). Retrieved January 2009, from <http://www.a2zlasvegas.com/hotels/strip/newyork.html>, *City Search*. (2009). Retrieved January 2009, from http://lasvegas.citysearch.com/profile/7021988/las_vegas_nv/new_york_new_york_hotel_casino.html, *City Search*. Retrieved January 2009, from http://lasvegas.citysearch.com/profile/7021988/las_vegas_nv/new_york_new_york_hotel_casino.html, MGM Mirage. (2009). *New York New York Hotel*. Retrieved February 2009, from http://www.nynyhotelcasino.com/press_room/press_room_releases_template.aspx?id=116, *New York New York Las Vegas Hotel & Casino*. (2009). Retrieved January 14, 2009, from http://www.nynyhotelcasino.com/press_room/press_room_releases_template.aspx?id=116

added), as well as no frieze and an odd exterior ribbed dome. (Figure 5, Figure 6)

Similarly, the original Grand Central Terminal was also created in the Beaux-Arts style, and yet once again the greatest resemblance to the original is the sculpture that appears over the entrance of both the original and the Las Vegas version. However, in this case it is a much more complex manner because, aside from the clock, the reproduction of the sculpture seems to be nearly identical to the original.(Figure 7) This then diminishes the possibility of a post-modern simplification and playfulness of form that was popular in buildings such as the Piazza d'Italia by Charles Moore. Many more dissimilarities remain, reinforcing the idea that this is not merely attempting to be a copy, but the hotel has become an object of its own. The large arcaded windows that dominated the original façade are gone entirely. Their only correspondence remaining is the arched doorway that allows entrance to pedestrian traffic. The remaining windows, which exist in the original between the enormous arched windows, seem to be accurately depicted from the original, complete with the surrounding wreathes. However, similar to the Soldiers and Sailors monument, the columns of the Grand Central Terminal visage have been altered. They appear to lack the proper classical scale of columns in the fact that they seem much taller than wide. Furthermore, the capitals once again are a strange variation of the normal classical orders, this time a far too thin version of a Corinthian capital. Lastly, they do not use entasis, the convex curvature of columns to correct an illusion of curvature in classical columns, which is present in the fluted columns of the

original Grand Central Terminal. These disparities do not indicate that the representations of these monuments fail at their purpose. In fact, they continue to succeed in the same manner as the differences in the previously discussed examples of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island permutations.

Through the adaptation and removal of ornament, the meaning associated with the history of the Beaux-Arts style has also been removed. What is left is a cultural referent that recalls popular imagery of the originals and thus *creates a contextual history* for the guest that is both grounded in the factual reality of the original, yet *unique* to the Las Vegas hotel. The hotel patrons have not come to experience the cities being referred to by the hotels, but rather to fulfill fantasies of travel and the experience of Las Vegas.

If the corner façade of the New York New York creates historical context through the inclusion of monuments, then the façade facing the strip recreates the concept of civic space. Once again a monument is included in the form of the Brooklyn Bridge. (Figure 8) Although the inclusion of this monument achieves a similar creation of contextual meaning, it also has another function with respect to the exterior space of the hotel. It provides a physical barrier between the streets of Las Vegas and the space of the New York New York. This is not to say that it is impossible to pass from one to the other, but rather through the replication of a city street within the context of the hotel's theme it then creates a division through physical distance, the perception of boundaries, and visual obstruction between the hotel and street.(Figure 8) This sectioning of space in this portion of the façade allows for the mimicking of exterior city spaces

that are relevant to New York, but separate from Las Vegas, on the exterior of the hotel. Aside from the presence of the U.N. flags the space is then defined by 'habitable' architectural forms, or places that begin to evoke the fantasy of a lived New York, rather than tourist attractions such as monuments. These include brownstone row houses, the Haughwout Building, theaters, and ESPN Zone. The use of recognizable and comfortable metropolitan images is important for this part of the hotel because in it is located the only exterior bar and café space available. The primary pedestrian entrance from the strip is also located here, which is even more telling since it is the point of mediation between the New York City fantasy and the Las Vegas strip.

This fantasy of the urban space of New York continues vertically with the forms of replicated New York skyscrapers such as the AT&T Building, Chrysler Building, Empire State Building, and Ziggurat Building. This adds an integral element of scale to a collage of buildings that is meant to portray the cultural perception of New York as a congested metropolis.³⁵ This façade is essential in understanding the purpose of the hotel as fulfillment of fantasy. It presents the appearance of New York as a metropolis to signify the urban fantasy that is available within the confines of the hotel. Yet, at the same time it is covered with a multitude of signs advertising Las Vegas amenities, such as its permanent attraction *Zumanity*, provided within. (Figure 8) This is necessary to differentiate the hotel/casino from other establishments on the strip so that prospective

³⁵ (MGM Mirage, 2009), (New York New York Las Vegas Hotel & Casino, 2009) The press kits' full list of replicated skyscrapers includes the "The Empire State Building, The Century Building, The Seagram's Building, The 55 Water Tower, The Lever House Soap Company, The Municipal Building, The AT&T Building, The Chrysler Building, The CBS Building, The New Yorker Hotel, The Liberty Plaza, The Ziggurat Building

patrons understand the fantasy that is available within. The differentiation from the original through the creation of unique forms found in popular imagery to advertise a fantasy experience of New York in concert with the inclusion of Las Vegas imagery and advertisements creates a unique environment grounded in the history of Las Vegas as an entertainment district allows The New York New York Las Vegas to become place.

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If the New York New York is a layered collage of signs then The Paris hotel is a violent collision. Unlike the differentiation between styles through individual facades used to indicate specific buildings the exterior of New York New York employs, The Paris hotel/casino represents the styles of its referent city by juxtaposing them into a layered collage for its façade. (Figure 9) Yet, it uses a consistent color palette and materials to unite them into a cohesive theme. Similar to the New York New York, this theme is intended to provide the patron with the experience of visiting both the fantasized referent city and the reality of Las Vegas.

To access the main entrance of the hotel whether arriving by car or as a pedestrian one must first pass a representation of the Arc de Triomphe. In comparison to the New York New York a much greater attention to accurately replicating the details of the ornamentation has been applied. The coffered

barrel vaults, sculptures, guttae, frieze, triglyphs, and metopes are all intricately detailed. (Figure 10, Figure 12) Yet, even though there is more emphasis on detail and inclusion of each formal element the actual representation of the Arc de Triomphe is not exact, nor is it intended to be a copy of the Paris version. This is readily evident when inspecting the statuary which is created with a lower relief than the original. The physical features of the people depicted, the cloth, and even the stones upon which they stand are all rendered much more softly with fewer sharp edges than in the original. (Figure 12) This gives it a sense of artificiality and plasticity that is not present in the Parisian triumphal arch. Heightening this sense is the fact that there are no signs of wear or aging to help date the Las Vegas statue. If the trend of relatively short lifespan of previous Las Vegas hotel/casinos were to continue, unlikely as this may be due to the cost of these megaresorts, then there is the possibility that these structures will never show signs of age and wear similar to the original monuments. This means that the Las Vegas hotel/casino displays an idealized version of the Parisian monument that exists within the collective perception of Paris, rather than the reality of the monuments as they truly exist today.

Above the Arc de Triomphe rises the hotel tower itself. Modeled after a French Chateau it comes complete with Mansard Roof. This makes its use a purely formal application meant to aid in the guests' recollection of Paris architecture since, at 33 floors, it is far too high to properly display any sort of sculpture. The scale of the building is used to aggrandize the façade for two purposes. First, the enormous size of the structure heightens the fantastical

experience of the hotels. The second is to increase the presence of the hotel on the strip to attract and accommodate more customers. Furthermore, the façade does not use a single factor of scale for the construction of the referenced monuments. For example, the Eiffel Tower in Las Vegas was built at ½ scale in comparison with the original in Paris, while the Las Vegas version of the Arc de Triomphe is at 2/3 scale of the original.³⁶ This is done to create a more consistent scale in reference to the patron, rather than the monuments themselves.

However, it is not at the roof, but rather the entrance where French styles begin to collide. The light brown stonework of the chateau matches that of the Arc de Triomphe that would create a unified feeling if it weren't for the green ironwork plastered on the front of the chateau, just underneath more indications of Mansard Roofs. (Figure 13) This overhang is made to look reminiscent of the Art Nouveau style and Hector Guimards' Paris Metro Stations.

Extending towards the strip, the ironwork ends at the Las Vegas incarnation of the Paris Opera House. Once again it is finished in the same brown stone as the chateau and triumphal arch, as well as having an accurate representation of detail. Similar to the true Paris Opera house, the Corinthian columns are paired and have classical dimensions, entasis, and true acanthus leaf capitals. However, more of Guimards' pavilions have been stuck above the entrances to the casino so that there is a meeting of Haussmann's Beaux Arts

³⁶ *Paris Las Vegas*. (2010). Retrieved February 2010, from <http://www.parislasvegas.com/casinos/paris-las-vegas/casino-misc/hotel-overview.html>

reconstruction with the Art Nouveau. (Figure 14) Furthermore, the Vegas representation lacks any signs of aging both in the sculpture and most notably in the dome which has been painted a light brown color to coordinate with the overarching color scheme of the hotel. This is an image that never would have existed on Garnier's Opera house, whose bronze dome has by now turned a beautiful green. The representations of Guimards' metro stations, as well as the hand rails and decorative lamp posts have even been painted green to indicate the patina that comes with aging, but done so that it appears pristine in its uniformity. This indicates an idealization of popular imagery rather than a portrayal of either the originals when they were first constructed or how they exist now after years of aging.

Crashing violently down over the Opera house, and through its roof into the interior of the casino, is a reproduction of the Eiffel Tower which has been painted a light brown to match the color scheme.(Figure 11) Unlike the Statue of Liberty representation at New York New York, this national monument replica is both accessible and functional. It includes an elevator that leads to observation decks and a restaurant. Through this the transposition and delineation of space becomes clear. The Paris does not attempt to create an exterior city street as New York New York does, it does not use the relationship of the buildings to each other to recreate a civic space. Rather, it uses its system of signs and references to Paris monuments to create a metaphoric image of the city as it is relevant to the popular imagery of Paris. It is not necessary for them to be exact copies of their referents, nor do they need to display the age and wear that

contains the contextual history of the city, or even a proximity to one another that exists in reality. They signify a new meaning, which says that upon entering the casino or hotel a guest will experience Parisian fantasy unique to the Las Vegas Strip.

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The Venetian hotel neither attempts to create a metropolitan space as the New York New York hotel, nor does it eliminate space and time as the Paris hotel, instead it reorganizes space. The space in question is the Piazza San Marco from Venice, Italy. The Venetian recognizes the importance of both the spatial relationship between buildings, as well as the formal qualities that incite the recollection of popular imagery. Thus, it redistributes the architectural forms that can be found in Venice's Piazza San Marco as a reconfiguration of a single space rather than the entirety of Venice's disparate geographical features. Gone from the piazza is any indication of St. Marks Basilica and its beautiful Byzantine domes. However, an outdoor square is still formed through the architecture. This square uses a linear axis to direct pedestrian traffic into the casino which is located in the replication of the Doge's Palace. (Figure 15) By comparing Las Vegas Boulevard to the Venetian Grand Canal as the primary means of non-pedestrian transportation it is possible to have a consistent perspective of entry into the two spaces being examined.

Both city squares are viewed from the primary transportation routes by looking through the columns of San Marco and San Teodoro, or their representations in the case of the Las Vegas permutation. However, this is where the similarities end. In Las Vegas, the Doge's palace has been moved so that its façade runs parallel to the line created by the columns, rather than at a ninety degree angle perpendicular to it. In other words, if one were to consider the exterior spaces to be rectilinear rooms, then in the Las Vegas version the invisible line drawn between the columns would form the wall opposite of the Doge's palace, whereas in the Italian space the two intersect so as to form one of the corners of the room along with the Basilica. However, in the original the columns sit opposite the Basilica façade which extends into the square as well as St. Marks clock tower. Since the space created in Las Vegas is rectangular, rather than the combination of two rectilinear spaces to form an elongated L-shape, the columns are used to frame and create a focal point on the façade of the hotel. The center of the two columns is aligned with the center of the representation of the Doge's Palace and crosses a bridge placed over the replication of a Venetian canal. This creates the axis that leads into the hotel.

The space is further distorted through the movement of St. Mark's clock tower which now creates one of the walls connecting Las Vegas Boulevard to the Doge's Palace.(Figure 16) Forming the last wall of the exterior space opposite the clock tower is the representation of the Biblioteca Marciana and a pedestrian bridge that connects it to the Doge's Palace.(Figure 17) In the original the Biblioteca is placed opposite the Doge's Palace rather than perpendicular to it.

Finally, in Las Vegas the replica of St. Marks Campanile is placed adjacent to the Biblioteca, which is similar to the original plan. However, rather than defining the interior corner of the L-shape, it is now moved slightly so that it helps to define the same wall as the two columns and thus creates the rectangular plan.(Figure 18)

Although the plan is changed drastically, the ornamentation and forms of the buildings are still very detailed. The Las Vegas façade to the Doge's palace seems to come closer to an exact replica of its referent than any of the other hotels has achieved thus far.(Figure 19) It does this by not only replicating the ornamentation, but the scale of the building as well. This prevents a distortion of the ornamental elements such as those that occur in New York New York's Grand Central Terminal. Further, they are not altered, or combined with other styles as in the Paris rendition of Garnier's Opera House. The same can be said for the Campanile and Biblioteca. Therefore, through the reorganization of the Piazza San Marco the theme of the hotel is relayed to the guests as being a Venetian space. There are two caveats to this however. The hotel tower that bears the name Venetian rises higher than the Campanile itself, making it the dominant spatial element. This is much different than that of the original space. It reinforces to the viewer that they have come for two experiences. The first of these is the reality of Las Vegas, and the second is a fantasy of Venice. The massive hotel rising above the piazza, and the advertisements adorning the Venetian forms, indicate that both are available within.

At this point it is necessary to distinguish between the idealization of a city and its place in reality. This is because similar to the perception of Las Vegas, the guests at these hotels and casinos already possess preconceived notions about the cities depicted. These notions are shown in a variety of ways that include historical context, formal imagery, and spatiality. However, it has also been shown that these preconceived concepts do not need to be copied exactly from their referents. Rather, on the exterior of the building they provide the guest with the signification of the fantasy experience of the respective city that is available within. A person unconsciously attributes far more to a city than its historical context (New York New York), formal imagery (the Paris), and spatiality (the Venetian).³⁷ For instance, Mark Gottdeiner and Ray Hutchinson define a city by stating that:

... the words *city* and *suburb* fail to connect with the more contemporary reality of daily life.

The metropolitan regions of the United States contain an incredible array of people. Circumstances vary according to social class, race, gender, ethnicity, age, family status, and religion, among other factors. These important social variables... interact with locational, or spatial, factors such as the clustering of homes according to family income, the journey to work or school, the diverse ways people peruse a particular lifestyle, the particular patterning of our social networks, the regional search for cultural experiences, and the daily pattern of commuting.³⁸

In other words a city is defined by much more than architectural forms and monuments, but rather by the necessary economical, emotional, physical, and social connections a group of individuals form with and within a place. Yet, these

³⁷ It is important to note that it could be argued that all three of these hotels can operate in any of these manners. However, I have chosen to use each as a separate example according to that which is most strongly tied to each hotel due to spatial limitations and to avoid redundancy.

³⁸ (Gottdeiner & Hutchison, *The New Urban Sociology*, 2006) Pp. 1

hotels do not use this to portray the fantasy of these places on their exteriors because their façades are signs, both used to advertise what is available inside, and to represent Las Vegas. They let the consumer know what to expect upon entry, since the goal of any casino is to attract consumers, and then keep them inside for as long as possible. Furthermore, when considering that the primary patrons of these hotel/casinos are tourists the traditional definitions of a city come into question.

How then can one of these hotels fulfill the ordinary associations with a city that Gottdeiner and Hutchison have suggested, and is it necessary that they do so? The answer is that the hotels are not cities, they are environments built to provide fantasy experiences for their patrons. The economic, physical, and social connections that are generally associated with a city can be left absent, so that what remains is a psychological construction of place. “The patron is expected to suspend his or her disbelief and engage in the immersive world created by theming.”³⁹ This suspension of reality is indicated through the desire of the patron to experience the fantasies the hotels provide. Furthermore, the suspension of disbelief is linked to authenticity. The concept of authenticity drives the design of these resorts, as is evidenced by the Venetian’s Press Kit which states “Sheldon G. Adelson... set out to *authentically* recreate the famous Italian city of Venice... The Venetian triumphs in recreating the glory of Venice:

³⁹ (Lukas S. A., *How the Theme Park Gets Its Power: Lived Theming, Social Control, and the Themed Worker Self*, 2007), Pp. 191

the famous landmarks, winding canals, *authentic* gondolas...”⁴⁰ By providing an ‘authentic feel’ to the hotels, the architecture is thus able to aid in the patron’s suspension of disbelief. This is integral to the functioning of the resorts as it enables them to keep the guests inside for longer periods of time before leaving. The true question that arises from this is what experience the patron expects to be authentic, one of Las Vegas, the cities the hotel/casinos represent, or a bit of both?

As has been shown in this chapter, the exterior of the hotels mediate between the Las Vegas strip and the available fantasy within, but do not rely on perfect reproduction to do so. The façades are collages of form, space, historical context, and Las Vegas advertising that provide reference to the popular imagery of Las Vegas and the cities portrayed. In this manner the façades become signifiers of the available fantasies meant to attract patrons. It is through the interior of the hotels that the ordinary associations with the concept of a city are displayed in an attempt to create an ‘authentic’ experience. This will be discussed in the next chapter through an examination of the hotel/casinos’ interiors

⁴⁰ *The Venetian Las Vegas*. (2010). Retrieved February 2010, from http://www.venetian.com/uploadedFiles/The_Venetian/More_Information/Press_Club/PressKit080609.pdf

Chapter 3:

Tripping the Fantasy Authentic

It is the expectation of a fulfilled fantasy that has drawn the patron into the hotel, and it is this same fulfillment of this fantasy that the architecture aims to achieve. Another way of stating this is that the hotel/casinos' aim is the realization of the patron's imagined New York Las Vegas, Parisian Las Vegas, or Venetian Las Vegas experience. To achieve this the themed environments must entice all the senses. As Juhani Pallasmaa writes:

We have an innate capacity for remembering and imagining places. Perception, memory and imagination are in constant interaction; the domain of presence fuses into images of memory and fantasy. We keep constructing an immense city of evocation and remembrance, and all the cities we have visited are precincts in this metropolis of the mind... Literature and cinema would be devoid of their power of enchantment without our capacity to *enter* a remembered or imagined place... The memory re-evokes the delightful city with all its sounds and smells and variations of light and shade. I can even choose whether to walk on the sunny side or the shaded side of the street in the pleasurable city of my remembrance. The real measure of the qualities of a city is whether one can imagine falling in love in it.⁴¹

⁴¹ Pallasmaa, J. (2005). *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*. Chichester: Wiley-Academy. Pp. 67-70

For these themed environments to be successful they must aid the patron in fusing images and fantasy so that the patron may physically enter the imagined space of the fantasy depicted by each hotel. Integral to this idea is the physical representation of the imagined space through each of the senses. By immersing all of the senses an *authentic experience* will be created for the visitors.

Having been enticed into a hotel to experience the fantasies expressed by their façades, a person enters with the knowledge of Las Vegas and the city each respective hotel represents as it has been depicted in popular imagery. The guest also now has been given the expectation of the fulfillment of their fantasy of the represented historical city and the reality of Las Vegas through the cultural signs that have been produced upon the hotel's exteriors. The immersion within each respective hotel's experience begins with the advertising. Each of the hotels promotes itself as an authentic experience. The Venetian's Press Kit states:

Located on the world-renowned Las Vegas Strip, on the historic site of the Sands Hotel, The Venetian Las Vegas rose from one man's dream. The man behind the vision was Sheldon G. Adelson... who set out to *authentically* recreate the famous Italian city of Venice, known the world over for its canals, gondoliers, and rich Italian history.⁴²

This promotes the Venetian as Las Vegas, by placing it on the Strip and within the history of Las Vegas, while at the same time defining it as Venice. It uses the meanings, histories, and popular imagery of both places to produce a single place.

⁴² (The Venetian Las Vegas, 2010)

Just as the Venetian promotes their authentic portrayal of Venice's rich history in concert with Las Vegas, so too does the Paris hotel:

Experience everything you love about Paris, right in the heart of Vegas. It's all the passion, excitement, and ambiance of Europe's most romantic city, in the entertainment capital of the world... Classic style, fine craftsmanship, and *authentic* details all combine to create Paris Las Vegas' unique ambiance.⁴³

This not only presents the hotel as authentic representation of Paris, but also as unique Las Vegas experience. It provides a Paris Las Vegas experience that is different from the Las Vegas experience other hotels offer.

Likewise, the New York, New York Hotel also emphasizes authenticity in its press kit when referencing the dining experiences available within the hotel/casino:

NINE FINE IRISHMEN – No blarney. Just *authentic* Irish food served with stouts lagers ales and fine Irish liquors...

GONZALEZ Y GONZALEZ – *Authentic* Mexican café and tequila bar. It's hotter than a fried habanero.⁴⁴

Providing a variety of culinary options is an important factor when depicting a city famous as a primary American immigration port, a city of diverse ethnicities. For this reason, the hotel attempts to provide not only authentic Irish and Mexican food, but also Italian, Chinese, and American restaurants as well. The difference between the New York New York presentation of the food as authentic and other major Las Vegas hotels is that the New York New York extends the popular images associated with each type of food to the theming of the place where it is

⁴³ (Paris Las Vegas, 2010)

⁴⁴ (New York New York Las Vegas Hotel & Casino, 2009)

served. In other words, the Nine Fine Irishmen not only serves Irish food but is an Irish themed bar, but since it is represented within a recreation of New York it does not break from the overarching New York Vegas theme in the hotel/casino to do so.

The success of creating the themes advertised by the hotels is dependent upon the creation of an authentic experience for their patrons. However, to become a New York New York Las Vegas experience, or a Parisian Las Vegas experience, or a Venetian Las Vegas experience it is necessary for tourists to willingly suspend their disbelief in the inaccuracies between the hotels and the places they represent. As Hal Rothman writes in *Neon Metropolis*:

Las Vegas is about options, nearly infinite, a choice of packages. This isn't Sante Fe, which claims one exotic moment out of the past as its authenticity, or even San Antonio, with the Alamo and all its baggage. It isn't Key West, with its paean to Hemingway, or New Orleans and the Vieux Carre, or even Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco Bay. In Las Vegas, nothing is real and *you know that*. *By admitting it is fake* and compensating with amenities, Las Vegas becomes how the world *should be*, how it would be if you told the story and it really was about you.⁴⁵

No one who visits or works in one of the themed Las Vegas hotels believes they are actually standing in New York, Paris or Venice. What is enticing about them is that they offer a Las Vegas experience of them. To create this as an authentic experience the hotels must also fully immerse the patron in the themes. This totality is possible only on the interiors of the hotel/casinos where there are no outside sources of sensory influence. In effect, they become snow globes, small

⁴⁵ Rothman, H. (2003). *Neon Metropolis: How Las Vegas Started the Twenty-first Century*. New York: Routledge. Pp. 38

microcosms unto themselves in which every facet of the New York Vegas, Paris Vegas, or Venetian Vegas experience is controlled by the hotel/casino. These interiors become unique places predicated upon referencing popular imagery and the history of Las Vegas as an entertainment district.

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Upon crossing the threshold of the Venetian hotel a person is immediately immersed within its theme. The footsteps of patron's heels clacking on the firm, rigid, marble floors echo around the enormous domed ceiling above the reception desk before continuing down the enormous barrel vaulted and colonnaded hall toward the casino. The echoes ascend above the faintly playing classical music as a hushed quiet is exuded within, providing a respectful air throughout the space. Occasionally sounds of electronic slot machines will drift down the hallway, rising above the gentle murmur of the water falling from the ornamented gold and marble fountain in the center of the room, inviting the patron to try their luck.(Figure 20) Upon the vaults and dome rising far above the patrons' heads are frescoes depicting Greek myths such as Bellerophon's defeat of the chimera with the aid of Pegasus, placed there as a visual cue to invoke the imagery of Venetian palaces and cathedrals.(Figure 21) Walking down the hallway the viewer is able to see and touch the smooth marble of paired columns.(Figure 22) These columns are placed upon a pedestal, not as they would be found on a

Greek temple, but rather as one would view them in a museum. They are meant to represent the mental image of Venice, not to be historically correct. This is evident in the fact that the Corinthian capitals are highlighted using lights placed in the pedestal to illuminate them from below.

The columns are not authentic in reference to classical Greek Corinthian columns as they have been used in Venetian architecture. However, this does not provide an inauthentic experience for the viewer. Cultural anthropologist Scott Lukas is exploring this phenomenon in *The Themed Space: Locating Culture, Nation, and Self* when he writes:

In the theme park and the themed casino, a new form of consumer authenticity is created. Its primary means of conveying its message is not information – though content matters in some themed displays, signage and other aspects of design, it is not the primary focus. The emphasis in theming is representation, or how something is said, not what is said. As the patron picks up on sensory cues, he or she is taken with the performative dimensions of the theme and the sense that things seem real or authentic because *they are happening*.⁴⁶

In other words, the content of the columns being represented is not the accurate recreation of a Corinthian column, but rather, they are meant as visual cues to stimulate the remembrance of Venice as part of the ancient Mediterranean in popular imagery. In this manner the viewer is informed that they are within the performative space of the themed fantasy. The theme makes it feel like a Venetian place, but the inclusion of constant visual reminders of Las Vegas names it a unique Venice Las Vegas place. The columns function much as the

⁴⁶ Lukas, S. A. (2007). "Theming as a Sensory Phenomenon." In S. A. Lukas, *The Themed Space: Locating Culture, Nation, and Self* (pp. 75-96). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. Pp. 81

frescoes in that they are not included in the architecture of the space for their beauty, their historical accuracy, or even the content that is depicted within them. Their inclusion in the space creates a feeling of authenticity due to the cultural contexts that are understood by the patron due to their prior mediated experiences of the city of Venice. For this reason, it is not a coincidence that the forms of a lavish Venetian palazzo were chosen for the entry/exit point of the hotel/casino. After being enticed into the building through the images of the Venetian canals, the use of the Venetian palazzo provides a sense of wealth and awe. This is intended to create a lasting impression within the viewer in an attempt to both keep them inside, and to also aid in ensuring their return.

Arriving at the end of the long hallway, the patron has been lead to the casino floor. Here the Las Vegas fantasy unfolds before them. The architecture changes as classical Venice is used not for the gambling areas, but rather as a theme for the hotel and shopping district. The Venetian theme yields to Las Vegas, leaving the marble floors and bright lighting at the periphery to don dim accent lighting and carpeted floors. Venice has been deemed unnecessary here since the experience being fulfilled in this space is an entirely Las Vegas one. The cheers, laughs, and wails of gamblers, patrons, and workers mingle with the mechanical sounds of slot machines and televisions. Waitresses drift from table to table offering food and beverages. All employees are dressed alike, naming them the 'other' in the space. The constant presence of the pit bosses implies the existence of security, as well as the promise of the ability to procure more funds for gambling. The stacked chips before the dealers provide the hope and

dreams of striking it rich. All of this is meant to provide comfort, security, and incentive to the gamblers to stay at the tables as long as possible. When they finally tire of gambling, advertisements once again permeate the space, alluding to other possible Las Vegas distractions.

It is in “The Shoppes at the Palazzo” that the patron is invited to indulge in the fantasy of Venice. Running through the entire district are fabricated canals replete with gondolas and gondoliers singing in English with strange, mediated, fake Italian accents. (Figure 23) It is even possible to hire them for gondola rides which pass underneath the stone bridges connecting the tile pathways lining the canal. Both canals and walkways provide access to the multitude of shops along the sides of the faux street. From these shops one can often catch the smells of food, coffee, and wine that drift out of the restaurants and cafés. The ceiling has been painted to mimic an idyllic blue sky with puffy white clouds, meant to provide visual cues to the patron that this interior space of the hotel is actually an exterior space of sidewalk cafés. Every wall facing the canal has been decorated to look like an exterior wall. Arcades of elliptical, pointed, ogival, and round arches stand alongside one another creating an amalgamation of time and style. The walls themselves are covered in varying finishes.(Figure 24) The finishes generally differentiate between the lower and upper level of the space. Sometimes, but rarely, the upper level is accessible to the patrons. More often, it is merely a façade for the hidden mechanical and operational spaces and structure of the hotel and shops. The lower portion, though it varies from store to store, is created to look like varied patterns, sizes, and textures, of a similar gray

stone in either the walls or as part of the ornamentation. This allows for differentiation between shops while at the same time providing a unifying element that maintains the theme. Alternatively, the upper level is often painted in bright colors and textured to look like plaster or marble. In other areas it is stone to match the detailing of the lower level. Still others use brick to create their façade. This variation creates a visual and textual richness and layering characteristic of old, authentic cities, that have evolved over time.

The patron is able to perceive this as a Venetian street through a willing suspension of disbelief. It is clear that it is not an authentic street due to the lighted windows that serve no purpose other than to create the appearance of a building façade. These fake windows lead nowhere, often simply plastered to the side of the building with a non-functional planter, and offer no view of an interior space. Not only are they not functional, in some cases they are not even architecturally feasible.(Figure 24) The lower row of windows in the center of figure 24, no larger than three feet high, are far too small to indicate a floor of a building. If they were to indicate a floor it would be no larger than 4 or 5 feet tall due to the height of the arch below and the balcony above. Though there is most likely a functional space within the interior, it probably is inconsistent with the spatial representation of the façade. The necessary suspension of disbelief is emphasized within the space presented to the patron as well. Once again this is done through the walls. Although the materials differ from shop to shop, the planar surface remains continuous. If this were actually a Venetian street, then the building façades would protrude and recede slightly from one another due to

having been constructed individually. Rather, the walls provide a smooth well-defined interior space. Due to these inconsistencies, the patron can only interpret the interior as representational of an exterior Venetian space through the use of sensual cues that allude to the mediated cultural perception of Venice AND through a willing suspension of disbelief. In this way their fantasy of Venice can be fulfilled within the confines of Las Vegas. What is being offered is not an authentic Venice, but rather, an authentic Venice Las Vegas experience that combines fake images, sounds, and smells that define Venice in popular imagery with the expected experience of Las Vegas and its entertainment. This is what Dave Hickey would call real fakery. The patron is given a real Las Vegas experience, with all of its commodification and consumerism, in a package of fake Venice used to differentiate the hotel/casino from all the other hotel/casinos on the strip.

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In much the same manner as the Venetian, the Paris hotel/casino also provides the promise of an authentic experience. Once again this authenticity is dependent upon a complete immersion of the patron's senses. As Scott Lukas writes:

In themed casinos that purport to recreate an actual space, such as a city, the senses are used in a number of ways to connect the worker and patron to an economy of senses that, as simulated as it

is, recreates the holistic tableaux of sense that are present in real cities. At the Paris casino, sounds of street performers speaking French mingle with street signs written in the same native language and various French goods in store windows. The smell of crepes and fresh baguettes permeate the Parisian style street outside the casino space, while diners sample French wine on the boulevard that sits against the Strip, just under the recreation of the Eiffel Tower... The various senses that make up the thematic experiences found at casinos like Paris are interpreted by the viewer as distinct, seamless, and meaningful. Like the anthropological concept of culture, the theming complex that is created and maintained by the various senses is a holistic statement about the world. Similar to culture, theming often acts on the body in ways that are imperceptible, but definitely felt... Far from being a generalized impact within consumer society, theming is a specialized technology that directly acts on the self.⁴⁷

Lukas' assessment of the Paris hotel was confirmed by my own personal experience in which I felt multiple senses engrossed in the theme. He shows a link between culture and theming. As a technology that creates a miniature holistic world, contained within the walls of the hotels, theming in this case represents the creation of a group for the tourist to belong to. Theming provides shared, if synthetic, images unique to patrons of each hotel/casino.

Upon entering the Paris hotel/casino through the main entrance, patrons find themselves standing with a small bar to their left, beyond which the casino extends, and an 'authentic' Parisian street stretches before them.(Figure 25) The rough cobblestones of the floor simulate a medieval Parisian street without the muck and grime of an actual city street. Architecturally, the recreation of the shopping district street is more successful than that of the Venetian. Rather than a smooth planar wall that defines the space, nooks and crannies are created through the extension of store fronts into the space of the street. They also

⁴⁷ (Lukas, Theming as a Sensory Phenomenon) Pp. 80

create a layered depth that prevents the viewer from seeing everything at once, so that exploration is encouraged by the architecture. Concrete has been used to simulate differing varieties of rusticated stone and statuary on many of the façades. Even materials are mimicked to produce an authentic experience. However, rather than including it in nearly every store front, the Paris allows for a greater variety of differentiation between them. (

Figure 26) There are store fronts with lacquered wood, painted wood, stone, and brick façades that are not faked through other materials.

A system of signs, taken from popular imagery, that function as visual cues is used to create an organizational complex that unifies the theme. This system has three primary components that relate the information necessary for the patron to understand the setting as a Parisian space. These signs mirror the exterior of the hotel and include the mansard roof, iron work, and the French language. Though each store does not have every component, they all contain two or more of them, and the repetition of these signifiers creates the necessary unity of the theme.

A mansard roof can be found atop many of the simulated store fronts along the faux Parisian street. The majority of the store fronts using mansard roofs include nonfunctional dormer windows. These windows not only are inoperable, often they are not even illuminated. This lack of lighting removes all implication of an interior space. Furthermore, similar to the Venetian, the

windows are often too small to allow a scale that is indicative of a useable interior. (

Figure 26) Perhaps even odder is the placement of the chimneys. Looking at the chimney atop the windowless mansard roof in the upper rightmost portion of the picture, it is clear that if the chimney were to be extended downward, then the fireplace would be directly in front of the large bay window that extends over the store front. These inconsistencies once again indicate a willingness to disbelieve the inaccuracies. The forms are visual cues taken from popular imagery to make the space feel authentic.

In contrast to this, the iron work that adorns the front of the shops, and that is used for the street lamps, appears very similar to ironwork that can be found in Paris. The vegetal and floral motifs used look very similar to those designed by Guimard for his metro station entrances and gateway. The problem here arises not from an inauthentic recreation of the forms, but rather their use. The iron work is present everywhere throughout the interior of the building. Nearly every storefront sign, hand rail, and light fixture uses the green painted wrought iron. (Figure 25) This most certainly is not the case in Paris. Furthermore, upon close inspection, the application of the light fixtures and signs appears contrived, rather than natural. The Art Nouveau style, advocated harmonizing all the forms of a building with one another. In contrast to this, the Paris hotel's use of ironwork is far from harmonious with the architectural forms of the store fronts, often appearing merely stuck to the front of the shop. In one case it goes so far as to even cover lettering painted on the corner of the shop.(

Figure 26) However, once again these inconsistencies are unnecessary for the patron to believe in the authenticity of the fantasy. They are widely recognized images that produce a visual cue pointing to the American popular imagery of Paris.

Perhaps the strangest thematic component use is the French language itself. It is not strange that French is used in a Parisian-themed hotel. Rather, like the ironwork, the ways French is used seem absurd. Nearly every store, along with most areas of the casino, is identified using French. However, this occurs only when the French word is similar enough to the English word so that translation is unnecessary. Even the floor layout available online, or as a handout at the concierge desk, is printed in a strange combination of the two languages.⁴⁸ For instance, the elevators that lead to the Eiffel Tower recreation's restaurant are labeled on the map as "Elevators de la Tour Eiffel to the restaurant." Apparently, 'à le' is too difficult to recognize as "to the" even though *la*, *le*, and *les* are present throughout the map. Even stranger is the naming of some of the shops. For instance, the Diamond Lounge and Les Memoires sit directly adjacent to one another on Le Boulevard. Les Memoires can clearly be understood as "the memories", while to translate Diamond Lounge from English to French would be *Salon de Diamant*. This in and of itself would not be so strange, if it was not for the fact that just across the casino is *Le Salon des Tables*. The use of the word *salon* in one place and not the other, especially

⁴⁸ (Paris Las Vegas, 2010)
http://www.parislasvegas.com/images/non_image_assets/PLV_paris_las_vegas_property_map.pdf

when *diamant* is still easily recognizable as diamond, is contradictory. However, once again, this inconsistent use of language does not affect the fantasy of the viewer. It is not a matter of accuracy to produce a feeling of authenticity in a themed environment. The mere presence of even a little French is enough to act as a cue for triggering the patron's mediated perception of Paris.

Finally, in respect to the Paris hotel, the willingness of the patron to suspend their disbelief is most clearly shown within the casino floor itself. (Figure 27) In contrast to the relatively succinct interpretation of a Paris street, the casino floor is a violent collision of architectural forms. Not only do the forms barely signify Paris, but it is extremely evident that they exist purely out of structural necessity. Whereas in the Venetian the theme did not extend to the casino floor so that the gambling areas could exist purely as interior rooms of the building, the Paris attempts to maintain the Parisian theme within this space. This becomes extremely problematic due to the legs of the Eiffel Tower crashing through the ceiling. This leaves gaping holes in the sky which ruins the illusion, while at the same time providing only an extremely limited view of the Eiffel Tower. By only presenting the lowermost portion of two legs they can be read as nothing more than structural support, in this case for the sky. Furthering this effect is the presence of iron-clad reinforced-concrete pillars that aid in preventing the sky from falling. Not only do the strange tree-like structures have no referent to place them within a Parisian fantasy, but the similarity between them and the Eiffel Tower replica's legs prevent them from being easily distinguishable from one another. Even stranger is the mausoleum-like Greco-

Roman styled pillar in the center of a bank of slot machines. It is in no way integrated within the structure of the rest of the theme. This seems to indicate a willingness on the part of the patron to suspend their disbelief as they are immersed within the Parisian Las Vegas theme that is provided to them by the hotel/casino. This use of forms copied from popular imagery creates an authentic feeling necessary for the fulfillment of the patrons Venetian experience, but it is the ever present Las Vegas imagery that reminds the patron they are in a Venice Las Vegas place.

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The final hotel to be assessed in relation to the creation of an authentic experience is the New York New York Las Vegas. As with the other two hotels, the place that is most highly themed is the shopping district. However, unlike the Paris and Venetian, the shopping district of the New York New York does not represent the interior of the hotel/casino as a natural exterior space through the inclusion of trees and sky.(Figure 28) This can be seen from the fact that the architects here chose not to create an illusionistic ceiling. Rather, it is left bare, with the acoustical ceiling tile and lighting systems in full view, making the space appear nearly like a stage set from a distance. Yet, at the same time, it comes closer than the other hotels to capturing the feeling of an exterior civic space. It

is through this honest treatment of the ceiling that the New York New York also best captures the feel of an actual urban exterior space. The fact that the ceiling is fully removed from the represented buildings so that it hovers above them, allows for the buildings to be fully realized spatially. It is in fact possible to walk entirely around the represented city buildings in the center of shopping district. They feel complete. It is possible to imagine the spaces alluded to within them due to their volumetric representation. Furthermore, the large scale at which they are presented, with the ceiling hovering even higher above, only aids in mimicking the canyon-like feeling of the city. The concept of a busy street is fully realized here due to the narrow passageways that easily begin to feel crowded. Similar to the other hotels, the New York New York requires a willing suspension of disbelief; however it does away with the pretext of an illusionistic ceiling and creates a single large space for the recreation of the city to define rather than the structure of the hotel/casino.

The buildings themselves are constructed with a more consistent level of detail than the other two hotels as well. Whereas there were clear lapses in the Paris and Venetian, the New York New York pursues a much deeper experience. This can clearly be seen with the treatment of the façades of the buildings. The volumetric sense of depth is heightened through the representation of the façades. (Figure 29) This is accomplished through the allusion to an interior space through the windows. Some of these are covered with curtains, while others have blinds and air conditioner units, and still others appear open with televisions in them. Some are left dark, while others are illuminated. In one

building all the lights may be on, another may have them all turned off, while most have a combination of dark and illuminated. This provides a sense of inhabitants and their use of the entire volume rather than a simple illusion. Also, like the Paris, the façades of the building are not a flat plane and are allowed to define the space of the street, creating layering and depth. Lastly, the façades vary even more widely than those of the Paris. Rather than disrupting the theme's continuity, the façade variation enhances the theme by being a closer representation reality of the city's reality.

There are still inconsistencies present however. The scale of the buildings' upper levels is often too small to be used properly. (Figure 29) The fire escapes are clearly not functional. Not only is there not enough height between fire escape levels for an adult to stand, but there also is no way for them to proceed from one set to the next since there is no catwalk connecting them. This lack of a catwalk is due to the fact that the stairs are nearly flush with the faces of the buildings. Likewise, placed at the intersection of each 'street' is a street sign.(Figure 28) The presence of these signs is the only allusion to vehicular traffic since there are no sidewalks, and the delineation between street and sidewalk, or indication of anything but foot traffic. Both street signs and fire escapes need not be authentic representations, nor does there need to be an allusion to the sky for the fulfillment of the visitor's fantasies. Rather, they yet again serve as visual cues.

Finally, perhaps the simple fact that it is an American city being referenced by the hotel causes less of a necessary suspension of disbelief, or at least

makes it easier, because so many of the cultural signs and images that are being reproduced are from American popular imagery. For instance, whether in New York, Las Vegas, Topeka, or Chicago, it is not uncommon to see a billboard for Miller Lite hovering in civic space. The buildings referenced in the hotel/casinos' shopping district are referencing American architectural styles that can be found not only in New York, but many American mainstreets, downtowns, and cities. None of these forms require prior knowledge that cannot be found outside of daily life within the United States. By having more access to the previous meanings of the forms and images that are present in the New York New York hotel it feels, at least in my experience, that there is less of a need to suspend your disbelief because of the existence of these images in the everyday American experience. These forms exist as images representing New York allowing the visitor access to its fantastical experience, at the same time without any of the dangers associated with it, and also as scenes from their daily lives.

To provide an authentic experience a perfectly accurate representation of the city being referenced is not necessary for immersing the viewer in the theme's fantasy. Rather, they need to prompt the visitor in associating the spaces with their mediated cultural perception of the place, or as Jeffrey Cass writes:

the 'imagineers' create architectural commodities that consumers need not interpret for themselves because 'the mass culture of the

consumer marketplace' has already dictated their semiotic significance and cultural meaning.⁴⁹

In other words, the viewer approaches the themed building with pre-conceived mediated cultural meanings. However, the patron of these hotels also enters with a pre-conceived mediated concept of 'the tourist.' These spaces become less about the recreation of the represented places, and more about the creation of spaces of performance. The hotels provide socially acceptable places to perform the act of being a tourist.(Figure 30) As Cass writes in his assessment of the Luxor:

[in] many of the newest hotels on the strip – Paris, the Venetian, the Bellagio, and Mandalay Bay... Tourists no longer need be aliens in culturally 'other' environments. Instead, Like Anne Tyler's 'accidental tourists', consumers may vicariously enjoy their archeological excavations in predictable comfort and dull safety, which in an age of homeland security and terrorist threats makes the protected experience of the Cultural Other even more attractive.⁵⁰

The patrons now have the freedom to be tourists without becoming the 'others' in a foreign environment. The possibility of travel to an environment that they might consider their own cultural 'other' is also made unnecessary. What has been constructed here is a stage for the safe realization of a fantasy. It is not just the fantasies of Paris, Venice, and New York in Las Vegas that are offered through these hotels. They also offer the fantasy of tourism. Here, a place is established where a visitor can act like a tourist with people similar to themselves, people seeking the same experience.

⁴⁹ (Cass, 2004) Pp. 246, when Cass refers to 'imagineers' he is responding to a portion of Stanley Matthews essay "Architecture in the Age of Hyperreality' in which he relates architects to Disney imagineers

⁵⁰ (Cass, 2004) Pp. 245

Conclusion

I began this paper with the ducks and decorated sheds of *Learning from Las Vegas*. However, there is also a third category that Brown, Venturi, and Izenour identify in the books as well, the decorated duck. They give the example of a Gothic Cathedral as both duck and shed in which the form of the building is symbolic of its meaning *and* which is covered in a system of signs that also convey the buildings meaning.⁵¹ The crucifix plan of Gothic Cathedrals names them ducks, and the collages of bas reliefs that cover their surfaces define them as decorated sheds as well. The Las Vegas hotel/casinos operate in much the same manner. Not only is the New York New York Las Vegas covered with a system of signs that refers to popular imagery, but it also is a collection of high rise towers that contain the hotel rooms for guests to stay in. The form of the building is symbolic of a city. The Venetian's entrance *is* a piazza and the popular imagery of Venice has been applied to the structures around it. However, there is also a third system of signs applied to the hotels; the inclusion of Las Vegas imagery in the form of commercial advertisements and banners bearing the city's name.

⁵¹ Brown, D. S., Venturi, R., & Izenour, S. (1977). *Learning from Las Vegas*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press. Pp. 104-105

The combination of these three systems allows the hotel/casinos to become unique environments participating in the culture and history of their specific geographic location, and can be considered places. The hotels' forms function as simulacra since they are copied from popular imagery. The themed images the hotels use to define their spaces create simulated places in the guise of New York, Paris, and Venice to provide fantasy experiences for the patrons. The themed experience each hotel provides is used to differentiate itself from the other fantasies available on The Strip, making them unique in the landscape of Las Vegas. The hotels' participation in the history and culture of Las Vegas through their inclusion of entertainment such as gambling, theatrical shows, and musical performances also defines them as unique. Were these hotel/casinos to be stripped of all Las Vegas advertising and imagery and then placed in Seattle, Boulder, or Topeka they would have a much different meaning than they do as a part of Las Vegas.

Finally, these hotels create authentic experiences. They are not authentic New York, Paris, or Venice experiences. The fantasies of these cities are made to *feel* authentic to lend credibility to the authenticity of Las Vegas as an entertainment district. If they were to provide poor fantasy experiences of the fantasy of visiting the respective city then they would not aid in establishing Las Vegas' self-identification as a pleasure zone. What they do create are the authentic Las Vegas experiences of New York Las Vegas, Paris Las Vegas, and Venice Las Vegas. This is only possible through the themed forms functioning

as simulacra so that they produce their own meanings, separate from the original cities history and context.

The Las Vegas hotel/casinos the New York New York, the Paris, and the Venetian are producers of meaning which allows them to become unique. Although they do refer to existent cities, they do not attempt to copy them. The hotel/casinos appropriate the forms of the original cities as they are perceived in American popular imagery to provide a theatrical stage upon which the visitor can perform the role of a tourist in safety. Each hotel is designed to provide an experience that is both inherent to Las Vegas, and unique to itself. Furthermore, since it is this experience that is commodified and sold to the consumer rather than the original city, the city of Las Vegas, or the hotel/casino, it does not prevent the hotel/casinos from becoming place. Likewise, the commodification of experience and entertainment has become the history of Las Vegas which also prevents the hotel/casinos from becoming placeless. This is due to the fact that the hotel/casinos are using the forms of the referent cities in concert with the mediated American collective perception of Las Vegas to continue producing a historic tradition of providing entertainment to visitors. Lastly, the opportunities that the hotel/casinos provided for the workers through a partially unionized system prevented their exploitation and produced a relative equality between worker and visitor.

When I first visited these hotel/casinos I wondered how they could be considered placeless. After writing this paper, I continue to believe that they are significant places. In the end, through their architectural references the New

York New York produces a Las Vegas experience of New York streets, the Paris Las Vegas produces a Las Vegas experience of gambling and dining while sitting under the legs of the Eiffel Tower, and the Venetian produces gondola rides and shopping just a few footsteps away from the Strip. The seamless blend of architectural referent, American popular imagery, Las Vegas advertising, and the visitors' desire for experience creates in the hotels significant places, places that are unique both on the local and global level, places that are participating in both the history and culture of Las Vegas.



Figure 1 - New York New York Façade

Neal Gaskin of Gaskin and Bezanski (Architect), Yates Silverman (Interior Design and Conceptual Planning), 1995-97
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 2 - 9/11 Memorial

Unknown designer

(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 3 - Statue Of Liberty

Neal Gaskin of Gaskin and Bezanski (Architect), Yates Silverman (Interior Design and Conceptual Planning), 1995-97
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 4 - Statue of Liberty, night

Neal Gaskin of Gaskin and Bezanski (Architect), Yates Silverman (Interior Design and Conceptual Planning), 1995-97
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 5 - Soldiers and Sailors Monument, Ellis Island

Neal Gaskin of Gaskin and Bezanski (Architect), Yates Silverman (Interior Design and Conceptual Planning), 1995-97
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 6 - Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, NYC

Stoughton, Charles and Arthur Stoughton, Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, NYC, 1902 (Detroit Publishing Company Photograph Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington D.C., 1903)



Figure 7- Grand Central Terminal

Neal Gaskin of Gaskin and Bezanski (Architect), Yates Silverman (Interior Design and Conceptual Planning), 1995-97
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 8 - Brooklyn Bridge, UN, Rowhousing

Neal Gaskin of Gaskin and Bezanski (Architect), Yates Silverman (Interior Design and Conceptual Planning), 1995-97
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 9 - The Paris Hotel - front entrance

Bergman, Walls & Youngblood Ltd. (Architect), Yates-Silverman, Inc. / Kovacs & Assoc. (Interior Designers) and Perini Building (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 10 - Arc de Triomphe

Bergman, Walls & Youngblood Ltd. (Architect), Yates-Silverman, Inc. / Kovacs & Assoc. (Interior Designers) and Perini Building (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 11- Paris Opera House, Eiffel Tower, Louvre

Bergman, Walls & Youngblood Ltd. (Architect), Yates-Silverman, Inc. / Kovacs & Assoc. (Interior Designers) and Perini Building (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 12 - Arc de Triomphe Relief

Bergman, Walls & Youngblood Ltd. (Architect), Yates-Silverman, Inc. / Kovacs & Assoc. (Interior Designers) and Perini Building (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 13 – The Paris Hotel roundabout, entrance

Bergman, Walls & Youngblood Ltd. (Architect), Yates-Silverman, Inc. / Kovacs & Assoc. (Interior Designers) and Perini Building (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 14 – Guimard pavilions, Opera House

Bergman, Walls & Youngblood Ltd. (Architect), Yates-Silverman, Inc. / Kovacs & Assoc. (Interior Designers) and Perini Building (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 15- Doge's Palace, Columns of San Marco and San Teodoro

The Stubbins Assoc. / Wimberly, Allison, Tong, & Goo (Architect) and Las Vegas Sands, Inc. (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 16 - St. Marks clock tower

The Stubbins Assoc. / Wimberly, Allison, Tong, & Goo (Architect) and Las Vegas Sands, Inc. (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 17 - Biblioteca Marciana, connecting pedestrian bridge

The Stubbins Assoc. / Wimberly, Allison, Tong, & Goo (Architect) and Las Vegas Sands, Inc. (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 18 - St. Marks Campanile, Venetian hotel tower, Biblioteca Mariana

The Stubbins Assoc. / Wimberly, Allison, Tong, & Goo (Architect) and Las Vegas Sands, Inc. (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 19 - Doge's Palace Façade

The Stubbins Assoc. / Wimberly, Allison, Tong, & Goo (Architect) and Las Vegas Sands, Inc. (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 20 - Venetian Entrance

The Stubbins Assoc. / Wimberly, Allison, Tong, & Goo (Architect) and Las Vegas Sands, Inc. (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 21 - Venetian Entrance, Dome

The Stubbins Assoc. / Wimberly, Allison, Tong, & Goo (Architect) and Las Vegas Sands, Inc. (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 22 - Venetian Entrance, Columns

The Stubbins Assoc. / Wimberly, Allison, Tong, & Goo (Architect) and Las Vegas Sands, Inc. (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 23 - Venetian, Canals and Shops

The Stubbins Assoc. / Wimberly, Allison, Tong, & Goo (Architect) and Las Vegas Sands, Inc. (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 24 - Venetian, Canals and Shops 2

The Stubbins Assoc. / Wimberly, Allison, Tong, & Goo (Architect) and Las Vegas Sands, Inc. (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 25 - Paris Hotel, entrance

Bergman, Walls & Youngblood Ltd. (Architect), Yates-Silverman, Inc. / Kovacs & Assoc. (Interior Designers) and Perini Building (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 26- Paris Hotel, shopping district

Bergman, Walls & Youngblood Ltd. (Architect), Yates-Silverman, Inc. / Kovacs & Assoc. (Interior Designers) and Perini Building (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)

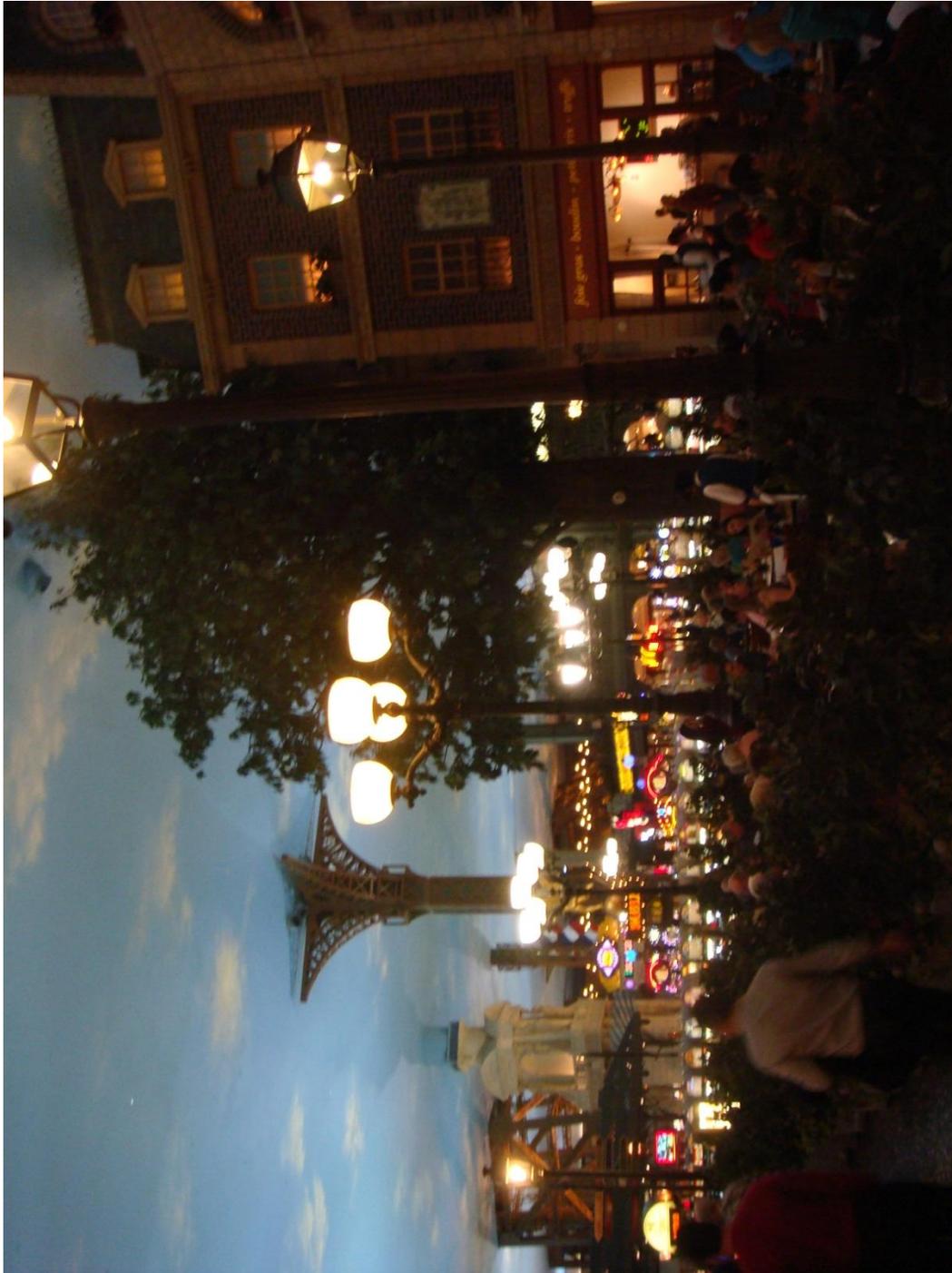


Figure 27 - Paris Hotel, casino floor

Bergman, Walls & Youngblood Ltd. (Architect), Yates-Silverman, Inc. / Kovacs & Assoc. (Interior Designers) and Perini Building (General Contractor), 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 28 - New York New York, interior street

Neal Gaskin of Gaskin and Bezanski (Architect), Yates Silverman (Interior Design and Conceptual Planning), 1995-97
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 29 - New York New York, interior street 2

Neal Gaskin of Gaskin and Bezanski (Architect), Yates Silverman (Interior Design and Conceptual Planning), 1995-97
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)



Figure 30 - The Venetian, tourists

The Stubbins Assoc. / Wimberly, Allison, Tong, & Goo (Architect) and Las Vegas Sands, Inc. (General Contractor), tourists, 1997-99
(Photographed by Justin Kaden, 2009)

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