Amps

Title: Phantasmagoria and the Architecture of the Contemporary City

Nadir Lahiji

Architecture_media_politics_society. **vol. 7, no.4.**

October 2015

Affiliation: Professor, Drexel University

Abstract:

In a provocative reversal of Guy Debord's aphorism in Society of the Spectacle, that "The spectacle is capital to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image," Hal Foster writes that spectacle is "an image accumulated to the point where it becomes capital." Foster's aphorism shifts attention onto the question of image and, in the context of architecture, served him as a vehicle to severely criticize the architecture of the spectacle as most obviously represented by the work of Frank Gehry.

However, Foster's critique can be applied to all the buildings that come out of the new age of parametric designs and enter the global circle of image circulation: spectacular museums or art galleries, corporate headquarters, shopping centres etc. – whether they be designed by the stars of the moment or not. Indeed, going even further, it is arguable that this critique can, and should, be applied to companies, cities and even states who are seen as partaking in the image accumulation made possible by the "spectacle".

In this essay, the technological and capitalist urbanism produced by this contemporary condition will be referred to as the "hyper-mediated" city – a concept developed and explored through the prism of the work of Walter Benjamin, in particular, the notion "Phantasmagoria" this paper suggests it is a notion of potentially fundamental importance to the analysis of today's hyper-mediated city, its digital architecture of spectacle and the underlying economic forces that shape it.