

Title: Empty Architecture and Empty Urbanism: The Remaking and Reframing on Contemporary Beijing

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Abstract:

The paper discusses a collage and montage understanding of modernity and argues that Beijing offers a contemporary simulacra of the global system of sign values that is epitomized by the new CCTV Headquarters and more directly mirrored in the Beijing World Park. In reading Beijing this way, the paper suggests that the city, as well as the global audience to which its spectacle architecture is addressed, is suffering an identity crisis in which our built environment has been reduced to series of signs. It discusses the architecture of the CCTV Headquarters, then Beijing World Park as the miniature of Beijing, and finally how the slogan of Beijing Olympics 2008, “One World! One Dream!”, helps to read the contemporary architecture in Beijing as a symbol of the city’s – and through the city, the government’s – view of itself as a new world leader. However, it begins by placing this argument in a particular social, political and economic framework – the attempts of the current Chinese authorities to position the Chinese economy, and its major cities, at the heart of the contemporary capitalist economy. These attempts, it is suggested, involve a more or less literal attempt to outstrip the city which throughout the 20th century epitomized that system, New York.