

## PUBLIC PROJECTION

*Krzysztof Wodiczko*

### MOTTO

*It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time.*

Michel Foucault, *Truth and Power*

### THE BODY

We are looking at the multiple sites of its body, and at the shapes of its external organs; the colonnades, porticos, domes, helmets, arches, columns, pilasters, pediments, stairs, doors, windows, . . . Attracted by its appearance, we begin to gravitate around its body. Gazing, viewing, observing, and staring, we are trying to fathom its mysterious grammar. Standing face to face with the front, pacing along the facade, touring all of the elevations of its vast structure, we are being transformed into the mediums of a gigantic cultural seance. We are being drawn into the magnetic field of its architectural appeal and symbolic influence.

### THE AURA

Crossing the monstrous shade of its elevation, we are halted by the blow of a cool wind which is cruising around the corners of its lofty massif. As we approach its body, we are confronted by an intimate protective warmth radiating through the walls, wings, and open doors, confused with the heavy breath of the air conditioning ventilators.

We feel desire to identify with or to become part of the building. We recognize the familiarity of our body and of that of the building. We feel a drive to "complete" the building and we desire to be "completed" by it. We sense that there is something about us which is incomplete, and which can only be com-

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pleted by a full integration with the building.

Superficially, we resent the authority of its massive monumental structure. We rebel against a tyranny of its deaf, motionless, immortal walls, yet in our heart of hearts, we not only allow ourselves to be outwitted by an academic methodicalness of the hierachal order, charm, loftiness of its parts, and the harmony of its proportional body, but, more dangerously, we will allow ourselves to become intoxicated and seduced by its structuralability to embody, and to artistically grasp our intimate, unspoken drive for the disciplined collaboration with its power.

## **SOCIAL BODY**

Its body is both individual and social; its harmony is based upon the same discipline, governing a totality of relationships of the whole structure to the parts and of each part to the other. This embodies and physically represents the concept of the organization of a utopian society in the form of a disciplined-disciplining body, allowing for both the multidirectional flow of power and the controlled circulation of the individual bodies.

## **THE FATHER**

In the process of our socialization, the very first contact with a public building is no less important than the moment of social confrontation with the father, through which our sexual role and place in society is constructed. Early socialization through patriarchal sexual discipline is extended by the later socialization through the institutional architecturalization of our bodies.

Thus the spirit of the father never dies, continuously living as it does in the building which was, is, and will be embodying, structuring, mastering, representing, and reproducing his "eternal" and "universal" presence as a patriarchal wisdom-body of power.

## **THE MEDIUM**

The building is not only an institutional "site of the discourse of power", but, more importantly, it is a metainstitutional, spatial medium for the continuous and simultaneous symbolic reproduction of both the general myth of power and of the individual desire for power.

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For these purposes, the building is "sculptured" to operate as an ascetic structure, thus assisting in the process of inspiring and symbolically concretizing (reflecting) our mental projections of power.

### **SOCIAL EFFECT**

The prime occupation of the building is to remain still, to be rooted permanently to the ground, abstaining from any visible movement.

This static occupation—annexation of time and territory—creates both a dynamic and a somnambulistic social effect. The "aura" of the unmoving building hypnotically animates and sustains our ritualistic movement around its body.

Circulating around and between the buildings, we cannot stop moving. We are unable to concentrate and focus on their bodies. This establishes an absent-minded relation to the building, an unconscious contact, a passive gaze.

By imposing our permanent circulation, our absent-minded perception, by ordering our gaze, by structuring our unconscious, by embodying our desire, masking and mythifying the relations of power, by operating under the discrete camouflage of a cultural and aesthetic "background", the building constitutes an effective medium and ideological instrument of power.

### **THE METHOD OF PROJECTION**

We must stop this ideological "ritual", interrupt this journey-in-fiction, arrest the somnambulistic movement, restore a public focus, a concentration on the building and its architecture. What is implicit about the building must be exposed as explicit; the myth must be visually concretized and unmasked. The absent-minded, hypnotic relation with architecture must be challenged by a conscious and critical public discourse taking place in front of the building.

Public visualization of this myth can unmask the myth, recognize it "physically", force it to the surface and hold it visible, so that the people on the street can observe and celebrate its final formal capitulation.

This must happen at the very place of myth, on the site of its production, on its body—the building.

Only physical, public projection of the myth on the physical body of myth (projection of myth on myth), can successfully demythify the myth.

The look, the appearance, the costume, the mask of the buildings is the most valuable and expensive investment. In the power discourse of the "public" domain, the architectural form is the most secret and protected property.

Public Projection involves questioning both the function and the ownership of this property.

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In defending the public as the communal against the public as the private, the projection reveals and is effected by the political contradictions of the culture of capitalism.

As a private property, the architectural appearance is well protected by the police, the guards, and the city by-laws.

The attack must be unexpected, frontal, and must come with the night when the building, undisturbed by its daily functions, is asleep and when its body dreams of itself, when the architecture has its nightmares.

This will be a symbol-attack, a public psychoanalytical seance, unmasking and revealing the unconscious of the building, its body, the "medium" of power.

By introducing the technique of an outdoor slide montage and the immediately recognizable language of popular imagery, the Public Projection can become a communal, aesthetic counter-ritual. It can become an urban night festival, an architectural "epic theatre", inviting both reflection and relaxation, where the street public follows the narrative forms with an emotional engagement and a critical detachment.

## **WARNING**

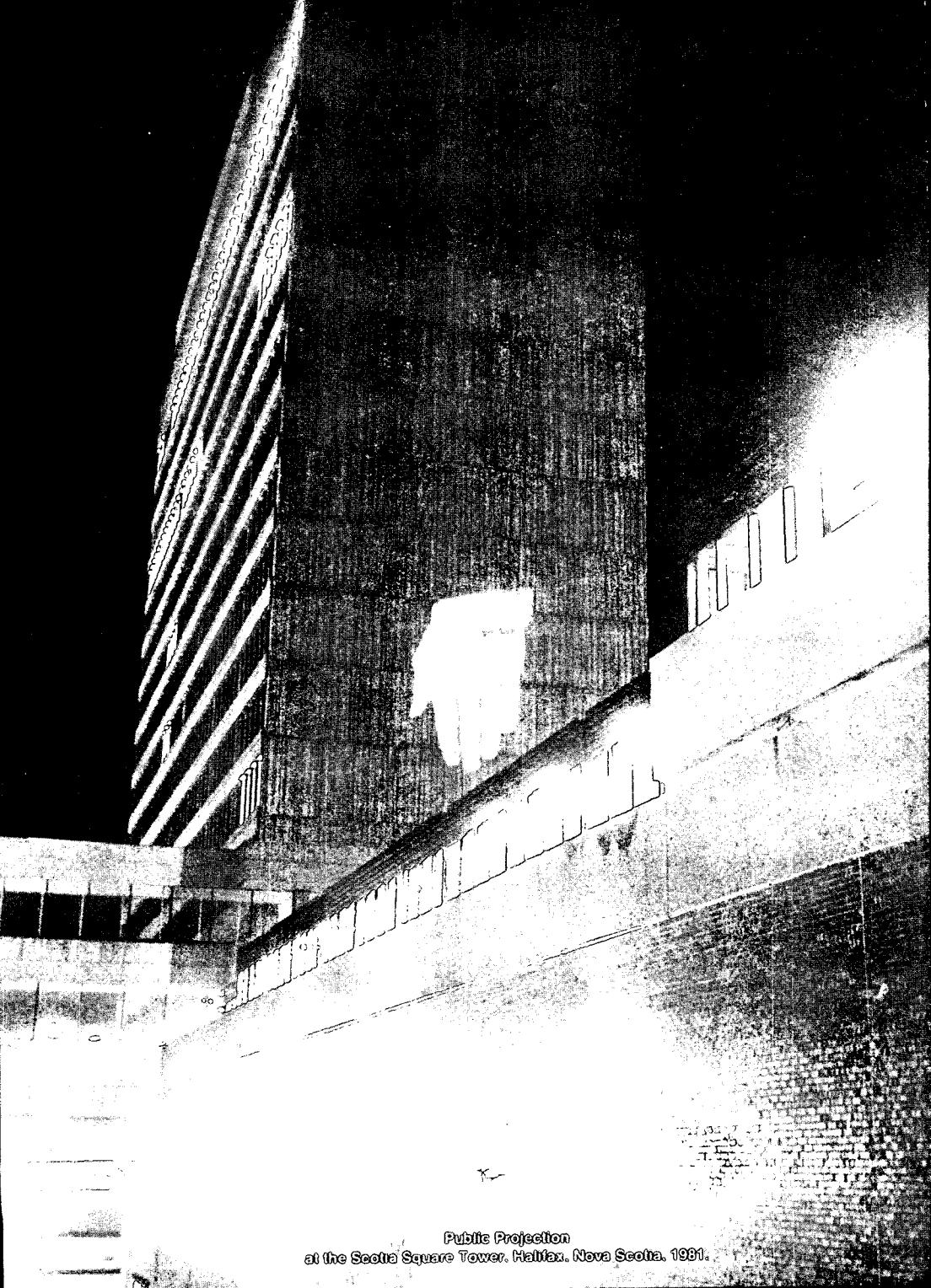
Slide projectors must be switched off before the image loses its impact and becomes vulnerable to the appropriation by the building as a decoration.

## ***POST SCRIPTUM***

...It may be noted, by the way, that there is no better start for thinking than laughter. And, in particular, the convulsion of the diaphragm usually provides better opportunities for thought than convulsion of the soul.

—Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer"

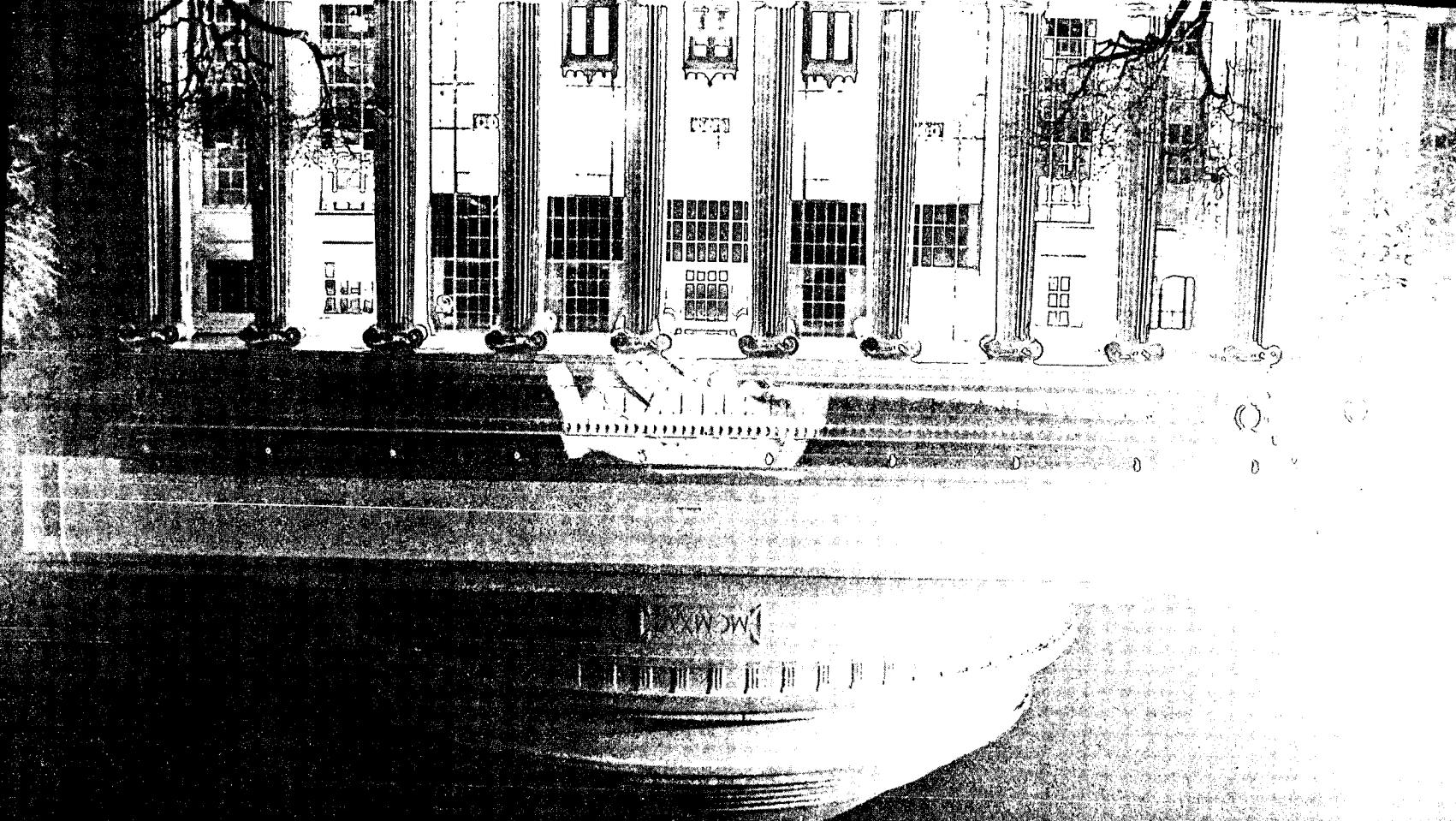
Toronto



Public Projection  
at the Scotia Square Tower, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1991.



Public Projection  
at the War Memorial, Adelaide, South Australia, 1982.

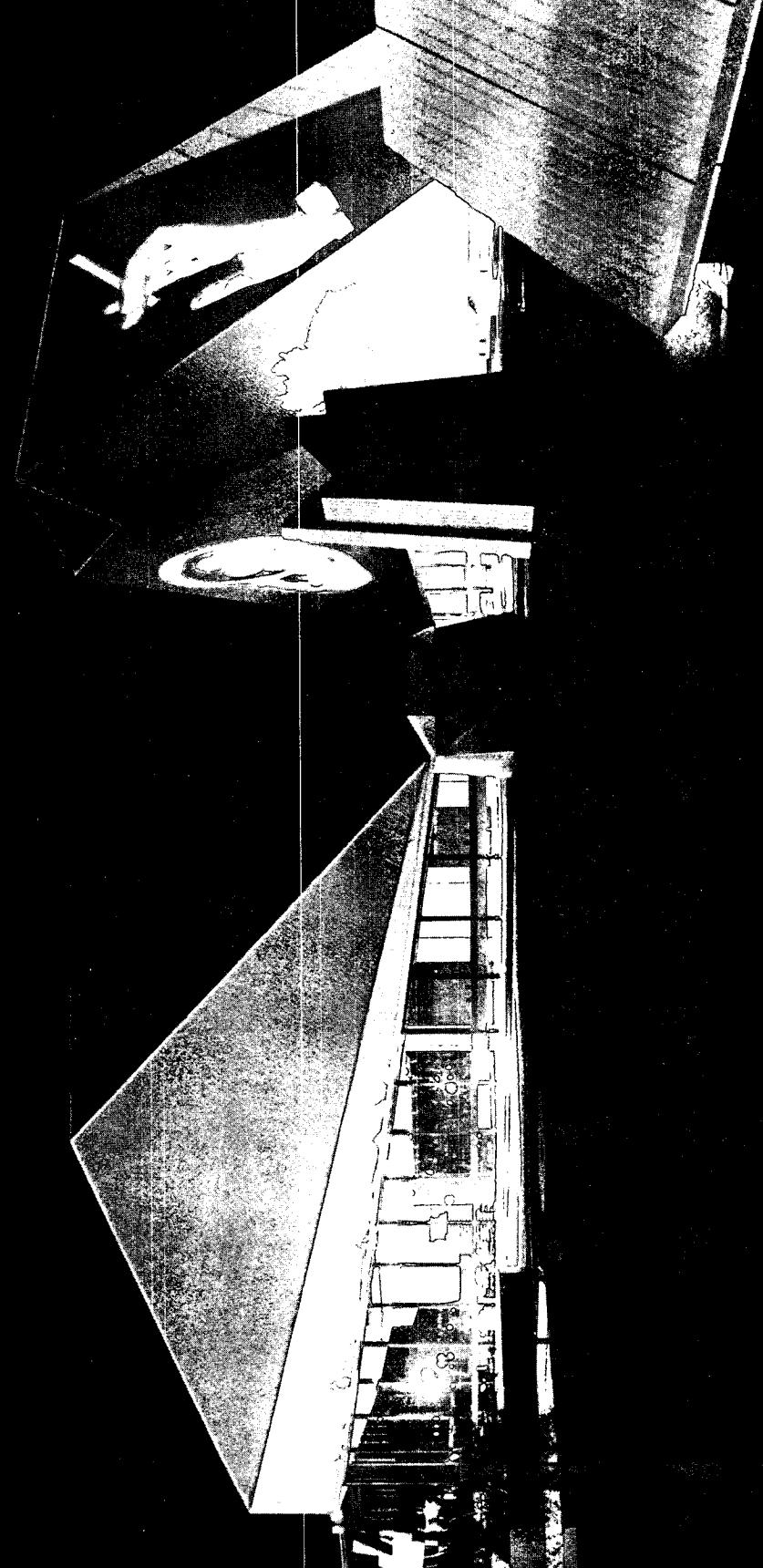


Public Projection  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston, Massachusetts, 1981



Public Projection  
at the School of Architecture, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1981

Fujiwa Projection  
at the Festival Centre, Adelaide, South Australia, 1982.





at the Art Gallery of New South Wales during the opening of the Biennale of Sydney, N.S.W. 1982

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