

**The 2002 Jon Adams Jerde, FAIA/USC Architectural Guild Traveling Fellowship:
Athens, Berlin, Sarajevo, Rome**

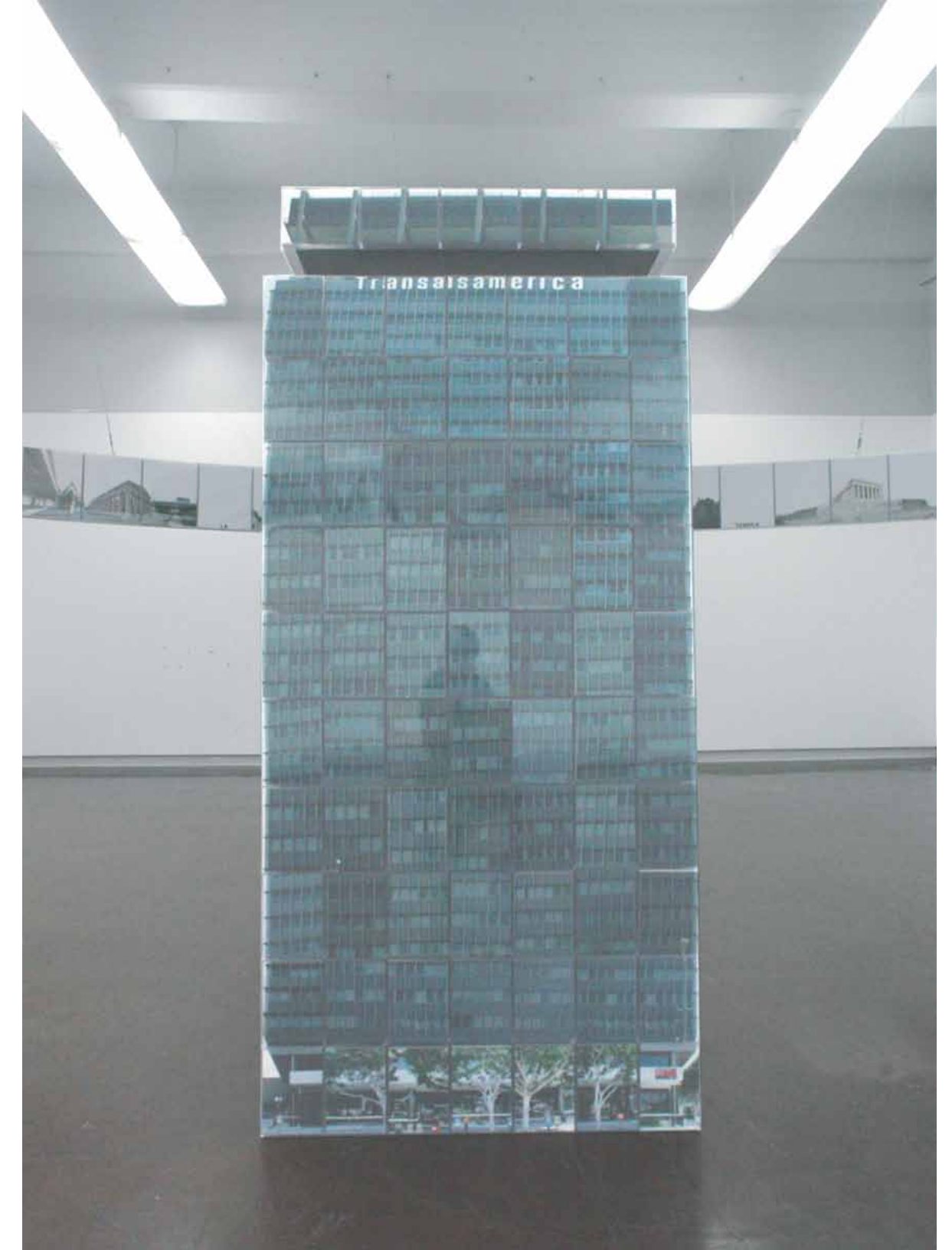
The impetus for this study was the South Park area of Downtown, my home. Though this area has recently gained the new Convention Center expansion and the Staples Center, it remains a desolate and largely vacant place. I studied the cities of Athens, Sarajevo, Berlin and Rome in order to formulate principles for transforming Downtown Los Angeles.

The element in South Park that inspires me most is the Transamerica Tower. It stands tall and alone amidst a wasteland of parking lots and low rise warehouses, like a lone finger pointing straight up at the heavens. I see this skyscraper as LA's version of a Roman obelisk, for it denotes a node for development to occur around. I studied the great public spaces of Rome to find ways to make the area around this modern obelisk into a center of life for LA.

One of the biggest reasons that South Park is so dead is that people are afraid of Downtown. Central LA's large homeless population and its reputation for riots and violence have caused most people to be apprehensive about spending their time Downtown. While thousands come and spend two to three hours inside the Staples Center every day, most Staples-goers spend only fifteen minutes outside, walking hurriedly to and from their cars. Downtown needs to shed its stigma. Sarajevo is also a city that is suffering from the scars of violence. Through my study of the ways that Sarajevo is overcoming its affliction, I can propose ways to for Los Angelenos to overcome theirs.

Two more reasons why South Park is so dreary are the 10 and the 110 freeways. Freeways in LA behave like walls in the way they sever would-be connected pieces of the city. Like the old Berlin wall, the freeways here are surrounded by a "no-man's land." Berlin has broken through their wall - LA needs to break through its.

One way that LA can do this is by transforming these "no-man's lands" into superb public spaces. The ancient Greeks used massive columns to hold up their temples to the Gods. Coincidentally, the undersides of the LA freeways are endowed with similarly scaled columns. My study of Ancient Greek architecture in and around Athens has given me insight for how to transform these dead zones into deified thresholds into the city.



Love Parade, Berlin: Millions gather to worship the obelisk.



Obelisk:

In the Sixteenth century, Pope Sixtus the Fifth developed a new urban masterplan for Rome. He erected obelisks at important locations throughout the city. These obelisks determined the points around which the city would expand. His plan was so vast that it is still in the process of filling in.

In 1957, the City of Los Angeles abolished its 150 foot building height limit. In 1962, the Occidental corporation [later to be bought by Transamerica] decided to capitalize on this. Occidental wanted to define a new building type and a new location for Downtown LA. So, they teamed up with architect William Pereira and built a 452 foot modernist tower in South Park. While their new high-rise building type idea caught on, the location did not. Today, Downtown LA stands tall, but remains north of Olympic boulevard. Although the Transamerica Tower is still alone in the south, like a fragment from some other world, there is still an opportunity for the city to fill in around it.

In Rome, obelisks are surrounded by piazzas and markets - centers of life. We should use our obelisk to hold down such types of public space.

Piazza del Popolo, Rome: Pope Sixtus the Fifth's Obelisk demarcates the origin of the city's main roads.



Piazza San Pietro, Rome. Temples curving around an obelisk.



Acropolis, Athens: Amphitheaters and agoras arranged around a city viewing temple.



Lipstick Church, Berlin: Using the shard of the old, bombed-out church is a great step towards not erasing history, but the new building needs to employ a language of destruction in order to respect the horror that took place.



Parliment, Sarajevo: This former symbol of freedom and hope, built in anticipation of the 1984 Olympic Games, has stood as a haunting ruin in the center of Sarajevo for the past 10 years.





Temple:

Under the 10 freeway in South Park is an amazing column-filled space that extends from Figueroa to Olive street. This is the Caltrans version of a hypostyle hall. Walking through this dark hypostyle while a mass of humanity is flowing above you on the freeway is awe-inspiring.

The column was the most important element of Ancient Greek architecture. The Greeks saw it as a symbol of the human body. And although they refer to something secular, columns were used as the primary element in Greek temples. The different orders of columns represented different regions of the empire. The temples were composed of agglomerations of the different orders to show that the building was a product of the whole society. In the center of a temple is either a single column or a sculpture that represents the deity of the city. So Greek temples are ultimately built to worship the city, which is also something secular. This temple configuration makes worldly elements sacrosanct.

I want people to see our freeway underpasses as sacred. The freeways are the definitive element of Los Angeles. They are the best representation of this city's collective spirit, and they are our most used public space. The function of the Caltrans's hypostyle hall, and other underpasses is to support this collective. I want to put public uses to these space that will transform the scary into the sacred.

The Ten Temple, South Park.