(Site) Specificity II

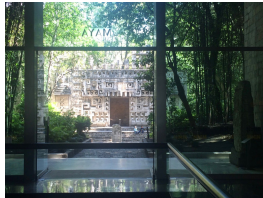There are different ways to mark a territory. Mexico offers a few good examples:

1. A dot
2. Buried human skulls
3. Lines and borders
4. Architectural styles

(dot)
[make circle with hand]
Maybe we were never supposed to be here.

(buried human skulls)

Robert Smithson warns us, back in 69 to be on our guards when we go down to Mexico. He said, "There is something about Mexico, an overall hidden concealed violence about the landscape itself. Many artists and writers have gone to Mexico and have been completely destroyed, you know. [...] So you have to be very careful when you go to Mexico so that you're not caught up in this- in any of this kind of unconscious, dangerous violence that is really lurking in every patch of earth."[1]

[place stool]

During periods of building and renovations, the Aztecs buried 50 skulls and 250 jawbones, on the site of Tenochtitlan.[2] In August 2012, construction workers unearthed them a s the same piece of land was excavated to build a new lobby for the Archeological Zone and Templo Mayor Museum.

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[1] *Hotel Palenque*, Robert Smithson, 1969-72

[2]

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2215527/Brutal-Aztec-rituals-revealed-gruesome-50-skulls-buried-sacrificial-stone-heart-Mexico-City.html

Death has efficiently marked the territory: at each dig for a new foundation, the old one emerges. We cannot cease to forget upon whose foundation we are building on.

Reenactments of the cycle of death and construction

are conducted daily, upon the discovery of the human-sacrificed skulls. As long as Mexico City does not sink on its own foundations, we owe it to the sacrifices of the Aztecs to keep the territory afloat.

(lines and borders)
[rip paper and draw lines]
While Mexico City is safeguarded by human sacrifices, the rest of the territory is drawn by dubious lines and borders. The Spanish conquest forces lines to be opened and others to be closed.

I have been watching Mexico across the Sonoran desert. There was a time when Tucson, Arizona was in the state of Sonora and there wasn't a border to be had. My journey took me up further north and, within the territory of San Francisco, once called Yerba Buena, I was still in Mexico. The territorial shifts are a thing of the past. [*juxtapositions SSII E,C,D with SSII F*]In the logic of conquest, borders open up pores, seeping in liquids that expand and contract it. Against the permeability of borders, we put on some kind of protection

On the contrary to the porous borders of Arizona and California, Texas has erected a wall to separate the twins, El Paso and Ciudad Juarez.

Driving on the I-10 on the side of El Paso, I saw the city on the other side of the wall. Its buildings sprawl alongside and up the Franklin mountains. The wall is simply a line of symmetry.

[*juxtaposition* SSII H and I] If we were to fold the two cities along the line, we would have a complete image of the basin of the Franklin Mountains.

The menace from the US forces Mexico to protect itself. But what are we really proud of here?

(architectural styles)
It seems that the expression of civic and national pride is translated through European Modernity.

Mayan and Aztec motifs have been adopted to create the same sensation of power through the internationalism of Modernist architecture, especially Art Deco. Skyscrapers are built and decorated in a way to lead people to believe they are contemplating a temple rather than "monuments to the economic, social and political progress of our time".[3]
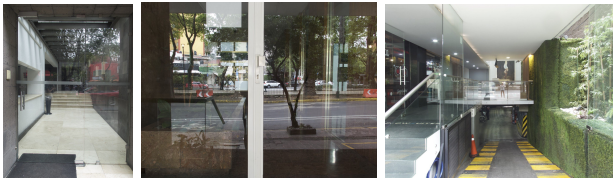
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[3] "An Insight into Art Deco", Xavier Esqueda, in *Una Puerta al Art Deco*, Galeria Universitaria Aristos, UNAM 1980
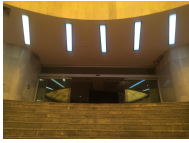
This is when borders become porous again.

The purity and solidity of concrete, marble, steel, aluminum and brass responded to the modernization of the Mayan arch and ornamentation.

Stained and clear glass, later introduced, offers an illusion of depth.

We may follow these different addresses (dots) and find lines in the continuity of architectural style. But we would come to the realization that it forms a closed circuit, not unlike the avenida Amsterdam around which they are scattered. Doors that seem opened, are closed. Gates lead to a hidden courtyard. When you look too closely you realize you're looking at an ad.