RICE UNIVERSITY

Like and Like
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Abstract

The subject of *Like and like* is the everyday, in particular ordinary designed objects that we all come in contact with. For pragmatic reasons, they make an easier target. We all see them. They have a universal quality to them. At first I wanted to pick an object that we design for. I also picked a designed object that has so many characteristics and provokes so much change.

Transportation, moving through space, is one of the fundamental principles of architecture. During the 19th and 20th century this mobility has been one of the most important catalysts for change. The first objects I choose to compare were transport vehicles. This grew out into a large comparison of other elements in the city such as housing, office buildings, parking garages, etc.

The project *Like and like* is about the similarities and differences in the world around us. The point of my thesis investigation is looking at the similarities and revealing their differences. For me, the most interesting manifestation of this exchange between similar and different is in the designed object and designed environment. This is important because the differences relate to identity; my task is to point this identity out. Identity is brought out through the use of the designed object.

Using photography as my method, I started to compare "like" things. In photographing them I produced a new way of seeing: seeing as an act of stilling "like" things and therefore I could examine them. Through documenting moments in our cities I could compare like against like.
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Identity? Identity: does it have to been shown/seen in big gestures? Can it be easily traced to very small gestures? Are they the same? How close to the same are they? Are they all as close to the same? Are they all different or as similar by the same amount? Are they all different? Does this remind you of anything, have you seen this before? Where do these photographs take place? Not in my city. It must be; it is a mess. Why are we so bland? Why is this place like this? How boring! Why is this city so boring? Why is everybody the same? Is this generic? Is this banal? How can it be interesting? Money controls architecture. It is a machine, the city is a machine. This place is controlled by capital. Capital, capitalism, free market, assembly, freedom of assembly, assembly line. Nothing to it and nothing shocking. And democracy, enterprise, free enterprise, freeways, Toyota, Honda, Fiat, Eclipse, Volvo, Chrysler, Dodge, SUV, VW, BMW, beamer, hummer, country clubber, bummer, Florida.

There is nothing to say about it, the city that is. It has simply become anonymous. The city is anonymous: one place after another, one car after another, one person after another, another one after another one, another after another, one after another. I see it all the time. Okay, now this I understand this. This is everyday, I kind of get this. Now I see there is a uniformity. I see the uniform. I believe in the uniform. I don't believe in the uniform. There is choice. Freedom and freedom of choice. Free will. Freedom of will. This is choice. Lots of choice. So many colors. Too many colors. All the colors to choose from: black, white, gray, brown, blue, light blue, dark blue, black blue, green blue, yellow blue, purple blue, red blue, after blue, between red and blue, citrus blue, forest blue, navy blue, army blue, American blue, the color blue. That blue suits you! Yes we have the right to choose, and everybody looks the same. All cars are the same. All houses look the same. Out there, in there, over there, under there, everywhere, especially there. I would not live there. I live there.

Money decides everything... If you have the money you can have it custom made. Custom built. Custom is custom. Mass produced. Custom, customer, mass. Sales department, customers, sales rep. Selling stuff to government. Big government, small government, city government,
neighborhood government, good government, bad government, my
government, your government, friendly government, too much government,
not enough government, more government, better government, cheaper
government. No government. Hegemony, yeah hegemony. That's it:
control. American Hegemony. No, western Hegemony. No, eastern
Hegemony, Soviet Hegemony, red Hegemony, blue Hegemony. No Hegemony.

Well by now you have taken it all in. The difference, the
same. Is it the same difference? I tried to show you the city. Is it
all the same? Are you any different? Is this what I found? Is this
what all the looking is for? Was I even looking? Of course, it must
have been a mistake. Or better yet, an accident. Or better still,
obsession. Or yet better, just looking on.

Let's look at it again. "What does this term "generic"
mean to the discipline of architecture and how does the
discipline of architecture define it? The term "generic"
is often used in architectural discourse in an ambiguous
way; it can have completely different meanings depending on
the user. It can be a flexible term, it can be a general
term, it can have good connotations, and it can have bad
connotations. It can mean generally anything that is left
unspecified and is used in a variety of contexts. What
does it mean to describe space in a general way? How
unspecific can we get before this flexible term means
nothing."

Could the city produce the same event twice? Does time repeat?
What would architecture be like without repetition? What if we were
less alike? Can everything make sense? From sea level the energy of
this bayou just sat in the air, giving me an unbearable headache. At
the turning basin we pulled away from land and started moving toward
the gulf. I shot all day. Later I found a new one in the water. I had
been used to this. Nothing shocked me out here. I meant to come out
here. My intention was to track all of them, capture them, order them,
and digest them.

In the air above Atlanta I finally caught a photo of the plane
that moved me so quickly and had from an early age taught me to make
such violent progress. The rain has not slowed things down, not even
slightly. The rain has not slowed them down, not even slightly. The
rain hasn’t slowed me down, not, well slightly. Monday or Tuesday afternoon Barbour’s cut, Houston. Wednesday, Houston. I caught my first glimpse. I did not realize what it was. I knew what I shot at the day before, but this was different. I sat again next to the freeway 288. Out here the city is less and less. Out here it is reduced. The clearing was active with movement. I had not yet learned to sharpen my eye. However, not even this would matter. The landscape produced what seemed to be a life of its own. Well, of course, it was not. Vans, cars, small trucks, big trucks, buses, taxis, motorbikes, dump trucks, pickup trucks, oil Tankers, SUV’s, Cadillacs, Subarus, Harley Davidson, Honda, Toyota, BMW, Mercedes Benz and stop... Of course, Ford.

When do we receive identity when does it become clear that we have Identity? Identity: does it have to been shown/seen in big gestures? Can it be easily traced to very small gestures? Identity is not in the mass produced object but in the object’s use. Placeless. How is it placeless? We always come to this conclusion but we always disagree.

Well in the orbit of production and production economics all of this is reasoned out. It is a function of the system. Yes, but much more, and so on so forth. Is it efficacy or health? Is it circulation or distribution? Or is it just the globe? Clustering labor pools and network nodes, ports with ingress and egress. Well, of course, that’s why it happens. But why don’t we see it? Or maybe we do see it. Maybe it’s a secret or maybe its not. Maybe it has no narrative. Does the story have a plot? No, but this is a condition. I am showing you the 21st century city/contemporary city/global city. Isn’t there a lot of double out there? We knew before the photos that economy of scale equals gray Toyota, and it being on a path-dependent evolution pushed it beyond “nations”. But did you take the time to look at the framework that can not contain itself. The car has cleared the freeway and has been set free. Outsourcing and organizational innovation makes this city possible but evolution makes it move. And where are we getting the fuel?

Is the project a prototype of the future? Of course not. It is the prototype that shows us prototypes are redundant. It is the present, and the present is proto-less; it shows us saying goodbye. Pool, viewers vs. dollars, when money doesn’t matter but when the consumer still does. Even more than when they were spending. That is
the future, when policy is entertainment and movement is... Well
movement stays right where it is: everywhere, and at the center and
never central.

This is what goes through my head when I am out here in the
city, out here looking. Is this right? Ahhh, I don’t know. I just
want another red truck to come by with a white cab, and it has to be in
the right hand lane away from all the others and nothing can come in
the other direction or else it is ruined. It also has to be shot
exactly between that telephone pole and the blue shed. I hope the rain
doesn’t pick up. That could fuck it up too. You know, I should stop
changing the focus. Why do I do that after every truck. I think I
will just set it to infinity. I moved too much on that shot. I am
picking up too much foreground shit. I hope not using a tripod was the
right way to go. Well it would be me. If I thought this through...
let’s face it, I am happy just to be working.

I wish I could photograph more people. That is impossible.
They are impossible to capture. They have no track and they go all
over the place. They are hard. I am glad I got them. Why do I need
them. The index got to keep track. I need them all, and I can’t wait
till I get them all together, it will read.

The amusing thing is they’re not all even very good photographs.
Well that is a mistake. Using photography as my method, I started
photographing “like” things. In photographing them I produced a new
way of seeing them: frozen.

I therefore could examine them. Through documenting moments in
our cities I could compare like against like.

You’re daft. Well surely this is just the beginning of this
mess. All this incredible re-occurrence. Plenty of copies, good
copies, bad copies, carbon copies. The amount of similarity is
overwhelming. I can’t miss. What am I worried about? I could walk
away. The project could make itself (it is making itself). Then don’t
make it. Who are you making it for? Is it a complicated order or
chaos? No it is not order. I believe it is neither order nor chaos.
Does it have to be one or the other? Can it be the same and different,
can it be big and small, order and chaos, playful and serious, good and
bad, stupid and smart, crooked and straight, long and short, drunk and
sober, full and empty, simple and complex, 1 and 2, and or 2 and 1,
flexible and specific, generalist and specialist, fine and thick, fork
and knife, female and male? And how about provable and unprovable?
Why do I make it? The most interesting manifestation of this exchange between similar and difference is for me in the designed object and the designed environment—the ubiquitous transport vehicle and the global city. This is important because the differences are related to identity; my task is to point out this identity. Identity is brought out through the use of the designed object and the designed environment. It can be seen at its most inescapable and its most impressive when comparing like against like, 2000 Buick Century against 2000 Buick Century.

The darkness and the solitude produce thought and thoughts. Hunting for objects to capture in this environment took place when they had been captured. The archive that I had begun to compile was starting to make sense. The work was generating a momentum. The city I had always seen was beginning to take shape. The city I had always seen was its shape.
Truck 1 or 2
Boat 1 or 2
Walking Person 1 or 2
Walking Person 1 or 2
Walking Person 1 or 2
Bus 1 or 2
Bus 2 or 1.
Bus 1 or 2
Bus 2 or 1.
Bus 1 or 2
Taxi 1 or 2
Taxi 1 or 2
Liberty Cab 1 or 2
Liberty Cab 2 or 1
Taxi 1 or 2
Taxi 1 or 2
Taxi 1 or 2
Taxi 1 or 2
Taxi 1 or 2
Taxi 1 or 2
Taxi 1 or 2
Taxi 1 or 2
Taxi 1 or 2
House 1 or 2
House 1 or 2
House 1 or 2
House 2 or 1
House 1 or 2
House 1 or 2
House 1 or 2
House 2 or 1
Office 1 or 2
Office 2 or 1
Office 1 or 2
Office 1 or 2
Office 1 or 2
Industrial 1 or 2
Garage 1 or 2
Door 2 or 1
Balcony 1 or 2
House 1 or 2
Tower 1 or 2
Airplane 1 or 2
Airplane 2 or 1
Truck 1 or 2
Reference:


