ABSTRACT

Each spectacularly publicized terrorist event strengthens our fascination with death and destruction. Barricaded behind architectures of control, our anxieties and fears escalate. Rather than diminishing our dread, we watch with morbid pleasure as distant events unfold right before us.

The terrorist eagerly performs for an attentive audience.

For the tourist no longer satisfied with the mediated experience of terrorism, this thesis offers an alternative architectural response. It is the year 2010 and terrorism has popularized the city of Karachi in the international imaginary. Seized amidst the battle between progress and regression – barricaded and torn apart by terror – Karachi becomes the site for a new architectural typology of concentrated targets of terrorism.

Understanding the relationship between the tourist and the terrorist as one of supply and demand, Fatal Attractions aims to balance the oscillating equilibrium that ultimately absorbs the fatality of terrorism, replacing the traditional relationship of oppression with one of liberation.
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PREFACE

This thesis was born of a condition, both global, and personal. The repeated image of the terrorist event is at once repulsive and attractive. In spite of our horror, we watch it over and over, consuming the catastrophe at a distance. Having grown up amidst terrorism in Karachi and witnessing (first hand as well as through mediated experiences) the violence of numerous cities, the role of the voyeur is at once familiar and foreign. The waiting, the constant suspense and fear of what may occur, at any moment, anywhere in the city, is as devastating for the life of the city as the event itself.

The spectacularization of these depictions through the media creates a narrative for the event while instilling fear far and wide. Alongside that is the observation of architecture's typical response in this situation. It is the combination of recurring terrorist events and escalating fortification that normalizes fear as a constant way of life. Is the only possible response to terrorism a further militarization of the city?

This document addresses these concerns in three parts. The first is written with a potential investor in mind. An unconventional financier, who demands rationality in an argument even as it hovers on the brink of the absurd. Through the eyes of a citizen of Karachi who has seen the city through years of ups and downs, the second chapter makes an argument for location. With both love and disgust, Karachi’s violent past and future become a perfect backdrop for this project. The last chapter – a diverse travelogue – details the project through the process of its birth, its life and its eventual demise. Seen through multiple eyes, traversed by many pairs of feet, destroyed by some, spectacular for others – the stories of adventure are told through various media.
The intention of this thesis is not to condone terrorism, nor to perpetuate it. However, it is also not an attempt to 'resolve' the problem through naïve pacifications or destructive control mechanisms. *Fatal Attractions* desires nothing more than to take some seemingly disparate longings and juxtapose them. Perhaps this juxtaposition will reveal an inherent absurdity. Perhaps it is a means to reconsider architecture’s role amidst destruction. Perhaps it is an admission of its futility, or a profound faith in its ability to re-engage with contemporary issues.

Whichever way you are inclined to unravel this proposition, I invite you to do so in all seriousness, with an open mind, allowing a dash of irony and a touch of humour.
experience karachi
like counterstrike but REAL!

ministry of tourism
Pakistan national tourism organisation
TERROR TOURISM

The unfolding saga of terrorism sees an ever-escalating trend of murder and violence. These events are transmitted to us at breakneck speed – repeated images and narratives available at our fingertips by way of the multitudes of media channels that guide our lives. These mediated narratives of spectacular violence inform and create our collective memories and invariably stand in for personal experiences.

Terrorism is the systematic use of terror, especially as a means of coercion. Common definitions of terrorism refer only to those acts which are intended to create fear (terror), are perpetrated for an ideological goal, and deliberately target or disregard the safety of non-combatants. Consistently, the targets of terrorist attacks are the architectures of iconicity, of infrastructure and congestion, and of multiplicity.
WORLD MAP OF PAST / PRESENT / FUTURE EVENTS OF TERRORISM
detailing the geographical, temporal + typological constructions of major events of terrorism past, as well as those yet to occur.
Iconic structures may be habitable and/or monumental, but principally, they are ideological signs, with some factor in common with the represented ideology. In specifying what constitutes an iconic structure, Charles Jencks lists characteristics such as location and prominence within a city, the ability to function as a metaphor or brand image, and statuesque height - alluding to aspects of original religious iconicity by pointing towards the sky.²

Infrastructural systems, primarily transportation networks but also utility networks such as water and energy supplies are equally important targets of terrorism. The dependence cities develop on these networks for their survival enables a complete and utterly crippling effect - a city can be effectively destabilized by targeted attacks on only a limited number of strategic systems and network hubs. The Madrid bombings in 2004 attacked the city's commuter rail in four distinct locations while the London bombings in 2005 attacked the public transportation system (both the underground 'tube' as well as a public bus). In both cases, the attacks took place during rush hour, with peak traffic and

TARGET ARCHITECTURES
terrorism typically targets the architecture of iconicity, multiplicity, infrastructure + congestion.

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⁴ Infrastructural systems, primarily transportation networks but also utility networks such as water and energy supplies are equally important targets of terrorism. The dependence cities develop on these networks for their survival enables a complete and utterly crippling effect - a city can be effectively destabilized by targeted attacks on only a limited number of strategic systems and network hubs. The Madrid bombings in 2004 attacked the city's commuter rail in four distinct locations while the London bombings in 2005 attacked the public transportation system (both the underground 'tube' as well as a public bus). In both cases, the attacks took place during rush hour, with peak traffic and
system usage, effectively bringing the entire city to a standstill. Urbicide, or the 'killing of cities' encompasses a wide range of processes that ruin the urban environment and is the perverse logic that has driven a 'military urbanism'. Events such as the American policy of 'shock and awe' in Iraq, the destruction of Sarajevo and repeatedly of Beirut have all demonstrated the emergence of the distinctly urban forms of political violence.\(^3\)

As these events become more frequent, they also become more spectacular. The terrorism of maximum destruction achieves its aims not only by planning for material results, but additionally, by staging acts for ultimate publicity. The ultimate terrorist spectacles are carried out as sequences of events; either simultaneous, or strategically choreographed to emphasize a cohesive pattern of terror and instil greater fear. In 1998, the United States embassies in two African capitals, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya, were attacked by truck bomb explosions that were almost simultaneously detonated, roughly 700 km apart. Three years later in New York, the twin towers of the World Trade Centre were attacked within a duration of 20 minutes by hijacked commercial airplanes. The buildings were hit from opposite directions as the airplanes crashed into them. The world watched as "this global superpower destroyed – better, seeing it, in a sense, destroying itself, committing suicide in a blaze of glory".\(^4\) In 2008 in Mumbai, India, a series of over 10 coordinated attacks across the city targeted tourist sites and public spaces of congestion such as a hospital and the main railway station. The horrific attacks occupied an elongated temporal space over a period of three days – from the 26\(^{th}\) till the 29\(^{th}\) of November – creating not only widespread panic and a complete shutdown across the city, but also ample opportunity to broadcast the 'event' internationally.
As was the case in Mumbai, as well as the earlier attacks in East Africa, desired victims are often those who can easily be labelled as ‘the other’ as well as those creating the most heart-wrenching scenes. Timing, techniques, duration and repetition are all chosen with media coverage in mind. Willingly, the media obeys, creating through its spectacularized depiction, a perfect narrative for the events.

Terrorism is dependent for its success on the coverage and publicity provided by the media in order to accomplish its purpose of making ideological (political or religious) statements. The terrorist action must always be complemented by the target’s reaction in order to complete the scene. How the attack is carried out and who the victims are very often matters less than the manner in which it is received. The rationalization for the attack (the narrative) is provided by the media that, through mass-coverage and graphic reporting, imprints the images of the terrorist attacks in our heads.

News media and popular televised fiction both depend on the commodification of death, tragedy and destruction in the global communications market. In the media, the most popular material, and in fact most of the material in general, concerns death. Death via replication is not new to most people due to fiction. The news media provides footage of ‘real’ death at all times, however remote or unreal it may seem. Historic deaths, whether they be of singular iconic figures (such as the assassination of JFK, or of Benazir Bhutto) or a greater number of individuals through a singular ‘event’ (the holocaust, genocides) also become part of the media landscape. “If it bleeds it leads” – this popular phrase summarizes the impetus behind showings of horror in the media through fictional as well as real events that force – and enable – us to ‘experience’ death on a regular basis. Global media caters to the fascination we have with the topologies of violence by instrumentalizing different focal lengths to govern the relationship between the subject and viewer. Aerial photography or video footage from a distance of 100m 1000m doesn't guarantee accuracy, but rather, enables a certain abstraction to take place. The viewing eye sees the subject or the event as distant, far away, exotic. This view enables a high level of shock, without much of the trauma of intimacy. But it is when the camera
zooms in to occupy the same space as the subject (or spectacle) that an immediacy is achieved by the observing eye. The close-up image adopts an assumed sensitivity for the subject, on the one hand implying a well-meaning intention to empower, and on the other, lying in wait of the pornographic zoom to deliver the ‘money shot’.

EXPERIENCING DEATH
media depictions of death, both real + fictional, accustom us to the idea of death and dying. (above) March 3rd, 2009 - Lahore. Sri Lankan cricket team was attacked by terrorists. (below) scene from the film *Children of Men*.

The manipulation of the relationship between viewer and viewed has a distinct effect of blurring the boundary between the real and the fantastic. It is through these means that
both the media as well as the military create concepts, desires and collective memories such as the strategy of 'shock and awe' or rapid dominance. The US Army revolutionized the genre of 'action games' and became one of the world's largest video game producers, providing players with "the most authentic military experience available, from exploring the development of soldiers in individual and collective training to their deployment in simulated missions". Much like a reality TV show, military training in fake Iraqi villages in California's Mojave Desert simulates real war. Meanwhile, soldiers in the Creech
Air Force Base direct and fire real drones of immense destruction onto targets located in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and later that same afternoon are able to step out into the sunshine of Nevada.\textsuperscript{8} Distances, both real and imagined, are repeatedly stretched out and contracted, enabling the creation and consumption of terror as a spectacular but alien event.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\end{center}

\textit{ZOOM}

this aerial image of an Israeli attack on Gaza uses a distant zoom to capture the image. the long focal length alienates the event in the viewer's imagination.

In 2006, it was estimated by the US Census Bureau's \textit{Statistical Abstract} that the average American spent time amounting to up to 5 months per year watching television, surfing the internet, reading newspapers and listening to personal music devices.\textsuperscript{9} Clearly, exposure to the media was and continues to be tightly interwoven into the fabric of our daily lives. Tourists, or those seeking similar experiences, are those members of society who travel outside of their usual environment for activities involving leisure, business, education and other purposes. Invariably, this group of people is derived from the larger (practically all-encompassing) group of people who are exposed to some form or other of mass media. Consequently, as observed by Foley and Lennon for the purposes of \textit{Dark Tourism}, 'the viewing public is impossible to separate from those seeking tourism 'experiences'.\textsuperscript{10}
Tourists seek varying degrees of adventure and familiarity from their touristic experiences. A socio/psychographic model called in tourism science, the Plog model, presents us with a typological continuum, arranging touristic experiences from extreme danger activities to the banal and immediately familiar. "At one extreme end of the model are psycho-centric travelers, people who tend to be fearful tourists. They seek comfort and protection and prefer safety to experience. At the other end of the spectrum, Plog places the absolute allo-centric traveler, who tends to seek the unique, the daring. They desire adventure rather than safety and creature comforts." With the tourism industry constantly expanding and claiming new realms, it is not surprising that the boundaries between media depictions and tourism experiences -- both neatly packaged as valuable and popular commodities -- are blurred.

To this effect, from the perspective of tourism, Sternberg defines an icon as ‘an object, person, or experience that has acquired added value through the commercial heightening of meaning’. In the world of tourism, icons drive economies and tourism can easily be seen as an economic generator. ‘What the tourism industry sells is an iconic experience’. This ‘experience’ must be staged, arranged, contextualized and thematized. ‘Staging’ here does not mean falsified; it means, rather, that the visitor must see the tourism icon within its context. The overlap that occurs between tourism attractions and terrorist targets is hardly coincidental – both are drawn to the same attractions, use the same facilities and infrastructures, and as we extend the definition of the tourist from one who travels outside her usual environment, to one who does so as a consumer of the mediated experience, the relationship between the tourist and terrorism becomes one of mutual dependence.

The commodification of terrorism as a tourist experience for consumption arises from a long history of the tourism of the macabre, the morbid and the occasionally perverse. But it is the period of the Post Modern that provides the critical features essential to the tourism of terror today. Global telecommunication technologies play a major part in creating the initial interest, particularly in exploring the territory between the global
and the local, thereby introducing a collapse of space and time. Additionally it is the very objects and sites of 'terror tourism' themselves that appear to introduce anxiety and doubt about the project of Modernity (the industrial scale of death in many wars, the failure of science in events like the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal, India, accidents at nuclear power plants and the impact of assassinations on democracy). However, the educative elements of sites are accompanied by elements of commodification and a commercial ethic which accepts that visitation is an opportunity to develop a tourism product.

It is the unique temporal and cultural situation of the Post Modern, post-September 11th, oxymoron of the ongoing War on Terror that situates us in a position to appreciate the possibilities as well as the absurdity of a proposition as apparently perverse as this. Terror tourism, packaged as a pretext to 'understand' our own age enables opportunities for tourists to explore, to imagine and to create memories. Through it all, desires both hidden and apparent may be fulfilled. As an 'educational experience' visits to places of tragedies will be used to explain current political situations, as a pilgrimage in which the visitor is commanded to remember. Hovering between emotions of superiority, guilt and romanticism, tragedy cultivates a certain deep mysticism around itself. The visitor is made to feel superior to the perpetrator of the crime, or to imagine herself as fighting for a particular cause. The separation between 'us' and 'them' would enable tourists to feel compassion for the victims and disgust at the perpetrators. Based on a common
sense of humanity, where the event can arguably be said to have affected our age and society at large, the continuing remembrance would be a powerful factor.\textsuperscript{15}

Where similar forms of tourism have been employed before, there has been a distinct temporal disconnect between the event(s) that make a particular site attractive for terror tourism and the tourist visitations. Such tourism includes pilgrimages both religious and secular to sites of battles or martyrdoms. In more recent history it also includes the representation of concentration camps, and contemporary wars (such as in Sarajevo and Beirut) as sites of touristic potential. It is only in much more recent years that this temporal gap is diminished, or the perceived danger of such locations is minimised through arrangements with the necessary channels.

An ‘Israeli Settlement Tour’ through the settlement of Hebron is conducted by an organisation of veteran Israeli soldiers. According to the website of the organisation \textit{Breaking the Silence} “Soldiers who serve in the Territories are witness to, participate in, and carry out military actions which change them immensely. Cases of abuse towards Palestinians, looting, and destruction of property have been the norm for years, but are still excused as military necessities...\textit{Breaking the Silence} voices the experiences of those soldiers, in order to force Israeli society to address the reality which it created.”\textsuperscript{16} By taking tour groups through the settlements that they once protected, these ex-soldiers, and tourists, face danger once again. This time, however, it is from the Settlers themselves.

Tourists willingly placing themselves in situations of risk and potential violence can also tour Rio de Janeiro’s \textit{favelas}, infested with drug-related violence and wars between the city’s police and the mafia. In Belfast, the aptly named ‘\textit{Bombs and Bullets tour}’ enables tourists to have a first-hand experience of the Northern Ireland conflict. Not one of these tours achieves an objective viewpoint of the respective conflicts, just an on-the-ground subjectivity that, with the same close-up focal length of the pornographic money-shot, enables a pretext of sincere empathy.
TERROR TOURISM

(top) Breaking the Silence tour of Hebron, Israel (middle) Bombs and Bullets tour, Belfast, Northern Ireland (bottom) favela tours, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
Terror tourism is both a product of the circumstances of the late modern world and a significant influence upon these circumstances. Moreover, the politics, economics, sociologies and technologies of the contemporary world are as much important factors in the events upon which terror tourism is focused as they are central to the selection and interpretation of sites and events which become tourism products. It is the particular element of the commodification of anxiety and doubt and the design of the sites as both products and experiences that makes terror tourism both viable and attractive.

With the potential of collapsing space and time, terror tourism can appeal to many types of tourists—those who require high-adrenaline adventure as well as those who crave the familiar and comfortable. By further compressing the relationship between temporal and physical space as well as the space of media viewership, varying desires of the spectrum of tourists begin to encompass a similar zone. Terror tourism has an emphasis on crucial contemporary events that shape our socio-political space. Simultaneously, there is the possibility of heightened excitement and adventure by being faced in real time with death, tragedy and anxiety—the desires revealed by our increasing consumption of visual violence.

TOURISTS OF ABSENCE
Tourists photograph the void where the twin towers of the World Trade Center stood prior to September 11, 2001.

The commercial viability of the terror tourism attraction is confirmed by the aftermath of the September 11th attacks; Ground Zero is now one of the most popular tourism
attractions in New York City. "For $15 per head a guide will point out the spot where the firefighters first raised the flag, you can buy twin tower T-shirts or toilet paper bearing the face of Osama bin Laden, and climb up the fence to take the perfect picture of the big hole. The Trade Center's observation deck used to attract an average of 1.8 million people a year. Its ruins brought in 3.6 million the year directly after the attacks."17

"No matter how corrupt your moral sense, how contorted your view of the world, how vapid and inarticulate your ideas, how talentless you are and how exaggerated your grievance, an obsessive audience will watch your every move and turn you into what you most want to be, just before your death."18

- Cornish, P. The Age of Celebrity Terrorism

THE CELEBRITY TERRORIST
scene from the film Paradise Now, about two Palestinian men planning to undertake suicide attacks against Israel.

The interdependence of the terrorist spectacle and its broadcast by the media becomes even more apparent (outrageous, perverse) during the long three days of the Mumbai
terrorist attacks in 2008. As the devastating events unfold before us at diminishing
distances and increasing scales of temporality, we, the eager tourist-voyeurs of these
extremes of violence, watch with morbid pleasure. Increasingly, the terrorist performs for
us: the obsessive – and attentive – audience. The terrorists, exploiting our fascination for
the violence of the image, stage each attack for the many cameras and communication
media channels that mark the city. The voyeuristic rush that results from one episode
of violence ensures that the subsequent attack close-by has a live audience. As the
interview tapes of the lone surviving terrorist from Mumbai have revealed, the entire
gang of them being remote-controlled and instructed by their leaders in Pakistan, were
repeatedly told to act for the cameras – those wielded by the gathered media as well as
surveillance CCTV cameras positioned around the buildings they were ravaging. Both
repelled and attracted by the terrorist spectacle, we watched the images again and again
across the world. “Tell them this is just the trailer,” the Mumbai-accented Lashkar-e-
Taiba controller ordered two terrorists to tell the media during the assault. ‘The real movie is still to come.’”

As with the exorbitant increase in New York’s tourism revenues due to the new Lower Manhattan tourist attraction after September 11th, 2001, television and social media ratings rose exponentially during and following the Mumbai terrorist attacks. Across the world, audiences are glued to their television sets, their blogs, their twitter updates and their newsfeeds; each time something exciting happens in the world they ‘flock’ to it in media space. This series of events captivated the entire metropolis and was transmitted across the world in real time. It brought to the forefront potentialities of social media mechanisms that could on the one hand venture where conventional media would not dare. On the other hand, what can be used to broadcast a violent distortion of the urban network can also be used to mobilise that very distortion – by monitoring twitter updates, newsfeeds and breaking news concerning the Indian commando assault, the terrorists were able to create a detailed operational picture and effectively stay many steps ahead.

“The spectacle of terrorism forces the terrorism of spectacle upon us...and it is the radicality of the spectacle, the brutality of the spectacle, which alone is original and irreducible.”

- Baudrillard, J. The Spirit of Terrorism

On the one hand we see terrorism as an assault on our daily lives. Yet we never acknowledge how complicit we are in the formation of that assault. With the potential of collapsing spatial and temporal barriers that traditionally existed between the terrorist event and the tourist-voyeur, ‘terror-tourism’ seems inevitable in the increasing attraction of visual violence. No longer satisfied with the mediated spectacle, the terror-tourist will seek more ‘immersive’ experiences to fulfil her desires. The trade of terror will rush to comply, popularizing within the international imaginary those distant cities where terrorism is the norm and violence the way of life, and of death.
experience karachi
the ultimate travel experience!
A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

From devastating mornings of destabilization, to scattered snipers that punctuate the night, the city of Karachi is continuously ruptured by violence. This intimate relationship with terror grows stronger each day, overcast with shadows of fanaticism and intolerance. In a battle between progress and regression, the apparatus of promised safety turns first to control, and then to militancy.

Karachi was a small walled city in the 18th century with a population of 1000 inhabitants living within 0.12 km². With the creation of Pakistan in 1947, Karachi not only became the first capital of the new country, but it also became its economic hub. In addition, Karachi was the primary destination for the masses of Muslim immigrants who crossed over the border into Pakistan.
KARACHI’S TERRORISM / RECENT PAST

from major bomb blasts that have killed hundreds to lone snipers, Karachi has witnessed - and continues to be home to - numerous events of terrorism.
Over one million people migrated from India and a large number of migrants from elsewhere in the country also moved to Karachi. The population of the city shot up from around 450,000 in 1947 to well over a million by 1951. Uncontrolled, it has continued to grow and expand. Karachi's population in 2007 was estimated as approximately 18 million, spread over 3,530 square kilometres. If unchecked, the population of the city is expected to reach 25 million by the year 2020.

For at least 20 years, Karachi has continued without a master plan, mass transit or a central bus terminal. The city is for the most part a low-rise metropolis, with the occasional building over 6 stories. For years the only buildings of substantial

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A METROPOLIS
(top to bottom)
starting as a tiny fishing village near the Lyari River, the settlement of Kolachi grew towards the east + south-east, soon bringing into use a small port.

noticeable activity at the port + expanding settlements along the river were evidence of substantial growth till the early 1920s.

before the birth of Pakistan, Karachi already had a functioning airport, a railway system + an extending road network.

the huge influx of immigrants from India after the partition of the subcontinent saw the largest growth spurt in the new capital city, Karachi.

by the early 1970s, substantial + sustained growth of residential settlements across the city were supplemented by the development of land belonging to the armed forces, large suburban tracts developed in the north + east. by 2010, 18 million people live + die in one of the 'most dangerous cities in the world', as Karachi becomes internationally known.
height existed along the one central avenue of the business district, which is a high-density development close to the Karachi port. In more recent years however, other medium to high-rise structures have begun to be erected by the port, in the newer residential neighbourhoods, and on prime beach-front property. The majority of the rest of the city undulates in a sea of single storey houses ranging to 4-6 storey commercial and residential buildings. Large suburban residential areas extend towards the north and east. The lack of planning has led to the birth of many settlements in illegally-occupied, often marginal lands. Much of the land in the city has belonged to the armed forces since before the partition of the Subcontinent, and well laid out cantonments and military bases continue to occupy prime territory. Political, ethnic and religious strife exacerbate the shortage of basic utilities such as drinking water, electricity, public transportation and housing. For years, Karachiites have lived in fear of armed burglaries, muggings and kidnappings, influencing - nay, determining - the way in which their homes and public buildings are built and protected. The insufficient number of schools, hospitals, public open space and the widespread unemployment add to the regular problems of big-city life.

In the last few years, Karachi has seen some of the most catastrophic events of terrorism. Mafia-instigated violence and terror, particularly in lower class neighbourhoods affect the daily life and work of the residents. Sectarian and ethnic conflict has incessantly plagued the city, and illicit businesses of smuggling, drugs, arms, land and security are run by corruption and violence. Here is a city where aggression is easily traded and sold for as little as the price of a cup of coffee.

MILITARIZATION

With each mediated event of violence our fascination with death and destruction grows stronger. Barricading ourselves ever further behind architectures of control, we indulge in these perverse attractions. From a society of open yards and low boundary walls we have slowly but ever so steadily transformed our city into a fortress of aggressive defence. As Benjamin Bratton so aptly put it, “The defensive measure is to attack one’s own body,
To demonstrate the very capacity to attack, and to ward off the possibility of the event being tested, from occurring at some time in the future.”

To this end, civilian spaces within the city grow ever more militarized, armed men in uniform yielding AK47s patrol residential neighbourhoods and large ‘public’ spaces alike. Private security personnel, police and the armed forces intermingle to form a constant backdrop against multitudes of undefinable enemies. “The complexity of global society is qualified not just by risk, but by incomprehensible risk. The interconnectedness of political, natural, technological, and economic variables effects any expert system, but also makes it impossible to master the totality.”

Rather than diminishing our dread, these militarized cities and our architectures of control and surveillance exacerbate perceived danger. In the context of Karachi, where evidence of militarization is as common as events of disruption, an architectural example that shows the systemic changes that have occurred over the years is the building for the Consulate of the United States of America. Erected in the early 60s, it has been situated in the heart of the city of Karachi and occupies a prime location alongside a major thoroughfare, Abdullah Haroon Road. In the early days of its construction and opening, less than 20 years after the creation of Pakistan, the Consulate, which also housed a public-use library and auditorium, was a major cultural component of Karachi’s social life. With low hedges marking the property lines, the open lawns facing the road were often used as an open public park, accessible for picnics and open-air events. With changing events on a global front, the early 80s saw an initial wave of terrorism, and a terrorist attack in Mecca brought severe anger towards the US. The superpower’s embassies in Pakistan and Libya were burned to the ground by mobs. As a result, the Consulate in

AN ARCHITECTURE OF INCREASING CONTROL
the US Consulate in Karachi is a prime example of the increasing militarization of the city + its architecture. driven by a strong paranoia, material fortification combines with immaterial systems of surveillance + control to ‘protect’, or to encage.
Karachi built a three-meter high see-through metal fence around the perimeter of the building. Once an open cultural institute, the premises were now accessible only by those people who had some business inside. In 1998, the simultaneous terrorist attacks in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in East Africa heavily damaged US Embassies in both cities and resulted in the deaths of a number of diplomats as well as hundreds of civilians. As a result, in distant Karachi, the US Consulate hastened to protect itself behind a row of heavy concrete bollards, and the once transparent fence was filled-in to become a solid concrete wall. A brief three years later, the world changed, with the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington DC in 2001. In Karachi, electronic surveillance and constant police monitoring augmented the physical barricades; now, two rows of massive concrete cubes encroaching past the sidewalk onto the road itself, restricting traffic flow past the building. The boundary wall was extended an additional four feet in height and pedestrian access was completely obstructed close to the property. A tunnel connected the Consulate to the house of the Consul General a few hundred meters away. By 2006, with a further increase of terrorism in Karachi, and three bomb attacks over recent years on the Consulate building itself, no measure seemed enough. Barbed wire now accentuates the top of the wall that has yet again been extended. 24-hour surveillance is provided by the CIA and private foreign security personnel. Checkposts regulate traffic throughout the day and close it off at night. However, even the complete blockage of a major transportation artery of the city is not enough to satisfy the military Dobermans and their desire to eliminate 'chance', and finally a relocation of the Consulate will soon take it to a more remote location in the city.

The case of the ever-more-fortified Consulate building is not unique to Karachi. The new US Embassy building in Berlin has been severely criticized for its fortress-like construction. According to Bratton, "The new United States Embassy in Berlin has been met with howling disapproval by Berliners and architecture critics alike for its menacing fortress, and its official presentation of the United States abroad through a posture of aggressive defensiveness and unwelcome menace. Not only is the design more reminiscent of the cheap functionalism of a military hotel, its hosts are offended by
its real measures including triple reinforced, bomb-proof walls, and most of all, the surrounding by a security fence that separates it from the main road and the rest of the city. It has been dubbed ‘Hummer architecture’ after the grotesquely militarized consumer SUV's that became so popular in the psychological wake of 9/11.”

Across the world, the civilian space of urbanism is being taken over by military dominance, and in cities like Karachi this ‘Hummer architecture’ has been an escalating trend. The result is the lack, if not the complete absence, of truly public space. Even as the city is fortified, our anxieties and fears escalate, while these very fortresses are increasingly breached. In the vicious cycle that develops, those who benefit from the increased surveillance and security measures are the providers of military mechanisms and personnel and the developers of the technologies of control that simultaneously give a perception of security and limited freedoms, but in doing so, further perpetuate the society of fear.

RESPATIALIZATION
As the territory of war and violence enters the domain of the urban, it has specific implications on the ways in which the city is shaped or altered, and in the way it will henceforth continue to grow. Comparing the Situationist mappings of the city to the forces of re-spatialization as they occur during radical conflict, we can see a distinct comparison to the change of the city from the space of the spectacle to the space of the event/situation. Just as New York went through a radical reconfiguration of space and relationships after the September 11th attacks, Karachi too undergoes further changes with each bomb blast or episode of gun warfare. Ground Zero became a focus of tourists all over the city within two temporal radii; the attacks reassign relationships within the entire city by drawing tourists from other sites of tourism experiences and events, and the attacks – as repetitive events over time – soon gain a strong tourist audience.

This respatialization has the potential to (violently) charge the space of events. Amidst these dynamic vectors, physical and ephemeral systems of organisation collide with
each other over and across the zones of potential or past attacks. Based on previous, continuing and potential sites of violence, danger zones in the city are identified, and the forces and vortices they exert are altered. The different forms of conflict target specific people, structures and ideologies within the space of the city, and thus the urban implications of an episode of violence alters the city and its inhabitants in different ways.

In the sweltering heat of the desert city, the terrorist act is both spectacle and event at once – violently, it intensifies the experience of the city. Daily routes of transit are forced to reconfigure, new opportunities arise while old ones become inaccessible. The fear of attack in specific locations wields an abstract, psychological power over our traversal of the city while

SYSTEMS OF ORGANISATION + DISRUPTION
(top to bottom)
zones of physical repercussions in the city in sites of past, present + future spaces of violence;

emotional / psychological repercussions surrounding the spaces of violence in the city - cause a respatialization of the city fabric;

crippling targets of destruction in areas of dense population along major transportation axes;

the primary network of surveillance + control in the city is wielded by the important religious structures. the system of mosques + minarets are both a constant check on order/conduct and a visual and audible call to action;

in the places of historic + contemporary landmarks + attractions lie the iconic targets of ultimate spectacle.
the barriers of militarization and extreme security measures exert an added layer of raw physical control, disregarding convenience. The waiting and constant expectation of looming disaster, expecting at any moment that ‘something will happen’ is as devastating for the life of the city as the event itself when it does occur. This suspense is as crucial as the violence in destabilizing urban life and bringing about a reign of chaos. Suspense is intrinsically a mixture of fear and hope – fear that a certain outcome will occur, and a hope that it will not. Fear that it will happen right ‘here’, and the hope that it will happen elsewhere. Fear that it will affect you, your children, your friends. And the hope that the victims will be unknown, unrecognised. Meanwhile, amidst these varied desires, there is a banality in the event itself. Numbed by the incessant images and constant stream of reportage of past terror, when an attack occurs once more there is a terrifying mundanity. Life goes on, and the city absorbs yet another ravaging disaster upon its already-ruptured mantle. The resilience of this city is surpassed by few others.

THE TRADE IN TERROR
Within this context of incessant urban violence, Paul Virilio has aptly stated that “Once an act of terrorism occurs, it is already for the second time”. On the one hand terrorism and on the other militarization and fortification of the city has Karachi reeling. With all these necessary arrangements in place, the trade in terror rushes to comply, popularizing Karachi in the international imaginary.

Aggression in Karachi and other parts of Pakistan is readily available for the right price. Whether you require harmless demonstrators or violent rioters, a mob can be gathered and the ensuing turmoil in the city choreographed to your satisfaction. Karachi has consistently proven itself as a battlefield for all genres of urban violence ranging from semi-harmless disturbances of the peace (including rock-throwing, tyre-burning, looting, vandalising) to all-out warfare (such as gun battles, kidnapping, arson and bombings) between the many rival factions that control different aspects of the city’s trades and functions. The enmity between the popular government and the transportation mafia is well known, as are the common antagonisms between the Sunni and the Shiite sects of
extrapolating from the various studies of Karachi’s systems of organisation + disruption, this threat level indicator map displays
the danger + relative safety within the city center. From the previous mappings of this area, the most ‘dangerous’ regions of the
city are those at major intersections, in strategic locations or monumental axes of the city, at positions of high density areas, + in
places where previous or potential icons (such as the consulates, old monuments, certain markets etc.) are located.

Islam as well as between the different political parties. In some neighbourhoods the tk tk
tk tk tk tk of steady gunfire provides a constant soundtrack, provided by the land mafia.
In another part of town, it is the drug lords who call the shots, literally. An incompetent
and corrupt police force, when not actively manipulating the different power plays to
its own advantage, encourages chaos by turning a blind eye towards it. These violent
disruptions are experienced at different degrees of interaction within the city, and determined by the intensity and the proximity of the violence. Material destruction and the tragic loss of life follow each attack.

A low intensity of attack involves gunfire - either a one-sided volley of shots or a two-way gunbattle between military and militants. Material reactions to bullet impacts vary from surface registration, to mild deformation to small scale devastation. The registration of the bullets is due as much to the strength of the ammunition or the type of arm, as to the material and its distance from the weapon. Physical effects on the city are localised, though psychological effects vary according to magnitude and timing. Often a more 'precise' form of urban warfare, Kalashnikovs and other similar weapons are the weapons of choice for targeted killings and assassinations.

The higher degree of attack uses explosive material either from within or outside a built structure. The overall damage is dependent on the point of impact and the immediate environment. In each detonation, there are two consecutive explosions: a blast wave,
where the initial expansion of materials creates the greatest damage, and the shock wave, a smaller, weaker wave back to the vacuum at the epicentre. The explosion demolishes and excavates, resulting in ruptures of the immediate and surrounding city fabric. The rupturing effect acts volumetrically, incorporating the architecture into the explosion as shrapnel, which includes the debris from the destroyed object. The heat, the blast wind, and the sound waves generated also inflict enormous damage radially from the epicentre of the explosion. With our architectures of control dependent on material protection, an explosion of great force works contrarily with those very materials to destroy itself. Essentially, with the help of a small amount of plastic explosive such as C4, a seemingly large structure can be forced to commit suicide. Our perversity from within aids the exterior attack, intensifying the breach of control. The terror trade heightens events and narratives while a city, bereft of all other charm, dives into its role as staging ground for violent spectacle.

For a country where danger and safety have always been traded in cash, another variable soon enters the equation with extremist religious terrorism. Many—though by no means
a majority – of Pakistan’s thousands of madrassas churn out violent troublemakers, suicide bombers and warriors, who carry out their missives not for a tangible price but for ‘future rewards’. These institutions, existing across the country, do not all belong to the same denomination, nor do they follow a centralized course of education and training. Karachi being the largest city, is the central theatre for their wrath, but by no means is it the only one. Lahore was the location of a deadly terrorist attack against the Sri Lankan cricket team in 2009, and more recently, has suffered multiple attacks including two separate attacks targeting the police academy. Peshawar has long since been the stronghold of the Taliban, and seen numerous attacks, in crowded bazaars, against the military establishments, and targeting the US Consulate building. Islamabad and the neighbouring city Rawalpindi have also experienced their share of terrorism at hotels, Embassies and the General Headquarters of the Army. During the last months of 2009 and early 2010, police and military posts across the country were the targets of numerous deadly attacks due to the opposition against Pakistan’s war on terrorism.

One mosque and its adjacent madrassa in Islamabad dominated the local media for an extended period due to its teaching of radical Islam, and the subsequent actions of its students. The Lai Masjid, or Red Mosque, trained both male and female militants, and in fact with over 6,000
female students, was the largest Islamic seminary for women in the world. With the Pakistani Government's involvement in the war against terrorism following the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, the Lal Masjid, frequented as it was by known terrorist leaders, violently voiced its opposition to the government and the Pakistani military. By 2006, the Lal Masjid continued to challenge the authority of the government amidst multiple violent encounters and terrorist actions against what they claimed as 'evil' – prostitution, video stores and female students in universities among other things. As photographs and video clips of the machine-gun-toting burqa-clad warriors flooded the media, they threatened hundreds of suicide-bombings across the country unless their demands were met by the government.

Amidst this heightened tension between the terrorist institution and the State, the trade in terror thrives, and confirms what the country's turmoil has made clear for years: here is a rampant culture of violence, and in your currency of choice – be it a steady income, unconceived-of wealth or eternal salvation – the services of death and destruction can be bought and sold to the highest bidder.
And so the terror trade, under any other name, continues to be just that – the buying and selling of violence, disruption and terror. The many guises under which it appears – religious zealotry, political ideology, ethnic superiority – contribute to making Karachi an ‘explosive’ city. It isn’t long before a new business model combines the costs incurred by terrorism and the constant loss in potential revenue from tourism, in order to market Karachi in a wholly new and unconventional way. Rather than attempting to disguise Karachi in a shroud of false safety, the very nature of the city is exploited in its best interest in a massive tourism campaign to attract visitors from all over the world. In order to set it apart from Dubai (famous for its extravagance) Bangkok (renowned for its exoticism) Shanghai (the ultimate in consumerism) and Mumbai (popular for its multicoloured culture) they decide that what makes Karachi exciting is the prospect of near-death experiences. Instead of the expenditure in fortified systems of architectures that eliminate chance, here they foresee an infrastructure that exploits that very aspect of ultimate uncertainty.

Pakistan’s recently liberated media, with its newfound popularity, social power of influence, and raging passions, takes on the challenge of selling the ultimate immersive experience. Writing the collective memories of the future, to be constructed, destroyed, and rebuilt again, remembered momentarily, only to be forgotten. The burgeoning economy, booming with tourists, construction and reconstruction, is dependent for its success on the certainty of terrorism. Drawing tourists from across the world enamoured by the media’s seductive images of destruction, Fatal Attractions aims to balance the oscillating equilibrium that ultimately absorbs the fatality of terrorism, replacing the traditional relationship of oppression with one of liberation.

1 Bratton, Benjamin. Undesigning the Emergency: Against Prophylactic Urban Membranes
2 Ibid. Bratton, B.
3 Ibid. Bratton, B.
4 In conversation with Dr Noman Ahmed, Dean of Architecture, NED University, Karachi. Dr Ahmed’s research has investigated through visual documentation riots and political protests in Karachi. He has discovered that violent disrupters of the peace are ‘available for hire’ through contractors. Prices vary according to services to be rendered.
5 \m - dra-s , - drä\ A Muslim school, or seminary. An institution of religious education
experience karachi
you may never leave!
A new architectural typology grows within this resilient city, fulfilling the desire for the terrorist spectacle. Performative criteria of iconicity, multiplicity, infrastructure and congestion combine to create a hybridized system – concentrated targets of spectacular terror for the terror tourist waiting for something to happen.

Situated along the main arteries of the city, the system of towers or Manzar Minar as they are called, appear as temporary structures, positioning themselves amidst the existing urban fabric. At varying heights according to each neighbourhood, they are eventually interconnected within a canopy that spans the distances between them. Thick with traversable circulation routes, the system enables the speediest travel between any two points.
CREATING SPECTACULAR ICONICITY - DIAGRAM OF SIGHT LINES AT VARYING HEIGHTS | DOWNTOWN KARACHI
(left) ground level > structural support system | low-rise low-density (suburban scape) | low-rise high-density (squatter settlement).
(center) mid level > connective canopy | mid-rise (apartment blocks) business district (towers) mosque minarets.
(right) top level > elevated landscape | business center (towers) | beach avenue condos (towers).
(below) juxtaposed, the levels reveal an organisational system for the structure, up to the connective canopy for the Manzar Minar.
The transportation system is accessible on foot through vertical circulatory shafts, and by car via connections to the city’s existing road network. Tourists can follow routes of attraction along the city center – attractions of the past, the present and the future. Past sights of terrorism become indices of events, destruction and regression. Future moments of spectacle are heightened by expectation. The elongation of time through circular, endless, transitory movement keeps a steady level of suspense, anxiety, and constant anticipation. What will happen? Where? When?

DENSE NETWORK OF LATERAL CIRCULATION
in a state of constant anticipation, the tourists of terrorism wait with bated breath for the next strike. to aid the voyeuristic rush that follows an attack (or the expectation of one) the transit network will allow a dense interconnection, the shortest distance between two points; to rush towards, or to flee away from.
textiles that expand / thicken as heated or stretched

structure that shelters while forming a connective tissue across the city, the greatest coverage for the greatest spectacle

central mechanism controls the lateral transit system, allowing tourists to chase / flee events as they desire

connective highway forms entrance from city fabric

experiential condensers that create / accentuate fear, anxiety, desire

extendable legs for maximum flexibility and greatest integration into the city fabric. main structural system, also for vertical circulation

dense urban fabric is shaded by a dappled light through the woven canopy structure

dense urban fabric is shaded by a dappled light through the woven canopy structure

perspectival view / Karachi, Pakistan / Manzar Minor # 3 / amidst the busy city in a low-rise, densely populated neighbourhood, an attractive destination for tourism is constructed.
amidst widespread violence, disparities and chaotic disruptions, Karachi decides to undertake a new and untested project. They call the tower structure the Manzar Minar, after towers of old built for observation, doubling as hunting outposts. The tourists, already attracted to this violent city, are accommodated within these structures, that by their canopies, embrace an entire neighbourhood.
(top) June 5th, 2010 / Karachi, Pakistan / aerial view / on the final days of construction before its unveiling, the new iconic structure for tourism - the Manzar Minar - sparkles brightly in a city scarred by years of violence, eagerly, its opening is awaited by tourists from around the world, as the citizens of Karachi look on in mitigated yet fearful anticipation.

(bottom) June 10th, 2010 / Karachi, Pakistan / as one of the first tourists to visit Karachi after the inauguration of the new tourism campaign + corresponding infrastructure, Craig Wilson witnesses events of violence in the already devastated city. always prepared, he pulls out his camera to take a picture.
June 5th, 2010 / Karachi, Pakistan / aerial view / construction of the first Manzar Minar amidst a city scarred by much violence and disruption over a long history.
June 10th, 2010 / Karachi, Pakistan / interior view / between taking the perfect money shot, information, thoughts and sightings are shared via twitter and facebook, pictures are uploaded onto flickr, and Karachi and its new Manzar Minar become world famous.
as tourists flocked to the city, they were accommodated within the Manzar Minar. The media concentration on these Minar brought them to the attention of a certain terrorist faction, looking for the next biggest spectacle, these unusual structures were attacked. As the woven tendrils sagged down with the explosion, pedestrians ran towards them, trying to pull themselves closer for a better look.
June 5th, 2015 / Karachi, Pakistan / aerial view / a few years have passed since the initial unveiling of the new Manzar Minars for terror-tourists in Karachi. Already, there are multiple structures, particularly around the port area. This day, the Al Intiha faction of the extremist groups stage an event on Manzar Minar #09. Smoke billows languidly across the calm desert sky as the attack creates heightened activity in the new elevated groundscape. Tourists within undoubtedly have the best view.

June 5th, 2015 / Karachi, Pakistan / worlds collide at the Karachi Hawk's Bay beach. Asim and Samiya enjoy the evening breeze as a photo shoot for the rising fashion icon Omar Jalal takes place at the water's edge. In the distance, the spectacular attack on Manzar Minar #09 is followed by multiple other events around the city. Heightened activity in the lateral transit system reveals the locations of the coordinated events. Sitting by the beach, it is hard to tell whether the activity is rushing towards, or away from, the explosion.
June 5th, 2015 / Karachi, Pakistan / aerial view / a terrifying explosion rocks the vicinity of the Manzar Minar, as people gather in awe. The entire Minar seems to sag, droop, and begin to drape the city.
June 5th, 2015 / Karachi, Pakistan / in the distance, the people of Karachi pay little attention to the spectacle. an orange glow in the otherwise dark sky makes Samiya look even more attractive, thinks Asim. with that thought, he updates his facebook status on his iphone.
repeated violence against the Minar brought about an eventual breakdown. Partial destruction resulted in a skeleton left standing, a ghost in the shell, constructed of a semi-rigid structure woven with advanced textiles reactive to intense heat and blasts, in death the Minar looked like no other known structure. Draping the city in a shroud, it brought new possibilities for Karachi's regeneration.
June 5th, 2025 / Karachi, Pakistan / aerial view / the infrastructural system of tower vortices and elevated groundscape has grown across the city. Concentrated targets of terrorist activity exist in a recurring life-cycle of birth/construction, life/violent spectacle and death/elevated groundscape. Suspense, anticipation and excitement fill the city, but in a strangely calming manner.

June 5th, 2025 / Karachi, Pakistan / a cleansing rain patters softly on the partially damaged elevated ground at Manzar Minor #43. The market appeal of spectacular terrorism in Karachi is fading, and has been for some years now. Occasional events continue to occur but they are less frequent, less publicized. Below, the city sparkles, glittering in the monsoon.
June 5th, 2025 / Karachi, Pakistan / aerial view / the connective system of the Manzar Minars has created a widespread, interconnected system across the city, growing radially from strategic nodes. Some Minars remain active, others have seen the end of their time.
June 5th, 2025 / Karachi, Pakistan / standing within the elevated landscape of the Manzar Minar is one of the best locations to enjoy a view of the city below. The monsoon rains steadily put out the fires...
The characteristic detachment of consumers of violence is shaken constantly as this very system becomes the target of the terrorist desire. Its iconicity has been determined in advance, deliberately manufactured for a dazzling, notorious, popular spectacle. Growing and changing over time, the Manzar Minar system experiences a journey of birth, of life and at the height of its beauty, a death. It will succumb to the events perpetrated against it, but a memory of it will remain, allowing the city to create a network of linkages between past and future moments of terror. What is this architecture of a loss of control? What is this architecture of colliding desires?

Karachi becomes what it is already, a destination where international tourists witness first-hand the greater-than-life spectacle of the terrorist event. Simultaneously visible and increasingly invisible as eventually, the media loses interest, and terrorism moves on to other spheres.

It has been heard that elsewhere, in other cities, they are adopting the Manzar Minar...
POSTCARDS FROM THE BLEEDING EDGE

as the fame of the ‘Manzar Minar’ swells and dissipates, it spreads to other cities around the world. Cities fearful of terrorism in the future, cities that have suffered from violence in the past, the tourism of terror continues, even as its popularity fades in Karachi.
sharing their fame with renowned monuments or providing attraction where none previously existed, the Manzar Minar invite tourists in search of adventure. They suffer the fate of many tourism sites: distrust of the foreign + gratitude for the revenues they bring.
Dear Cathy,

As you can see, I am in Istanbul now. You can see in this postcard the "Nazar Minar" in the foreground where I waited, and waited, for no avail near the Golden Horn, very close to this mosque - Süleymaniye Camii - as it is called here. Most disappointed, I was ready with my camera, hoping to witness a blast that didn't occur. Either yesterday or today. Much time lost. Have to move to another N.M. across the Bosphorus. Will keep you posted. Missing you!

JD

Ms. Cathy Buono
# 08, Apt. Casai
50 Avenue Louis
Geneva 1216
Switzerland
Hi John!
So how do you like this? I was on top of one of those god damned structures that you can't see so well in this picture, and just then a bomb exploded close by. I must say it shook the stars out of me and Mike but we jolted back to sanity and are thrilled that we saw all the mayhem up close. You need to get here buddy! It's super exciting stuff, though the place sucks.

tc! Graham

John Bright
APT # 64, FLOOR 6
CRANE PLACE
SIoux Falls Road
WICHITA, KANSAS
2UXUS
UNITED STATES
Dear Arun uncle & Lata aunty,
Namaskar!
I am well. Do not worry.
Yes, I was very close to the bomb but it was really incredible to view the blast from such a close range. The vantage point (you can see where I was in this p.c.) provided me with a view that can hardly be described in words. I was lucky to escape unhurt, but feel sad that my Diwali shopping was disturbed by this Delhi blast.
Will write more in a few days. Love you both, Archana
Dear Al,

Had a fantastic week here. The beach area is very close to Ruth’s place. But honestly, I am most disappointed that despite spending long hours on one of those ‘Na’aw Minar’ structures that you see on the postcard and waiting for that inevitable bomb to explode, I will now have to give up hope and move on.

How was your hike?

More from Cairo ....

Love you!

Beth
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