Mythology and Architecture

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Amidst the lights and charms of Las Vegas, there is a search for literal interpretations of world wonders, mass forms of entertainment, and larger-than-life fantasy. What if interpretation contained contained literature itself?

One of the greatest attributes of literature is the ability of a reader to translate in his own mind the accounts of what is written in rigid form. Multiple readers have multiple translations, and the literature becomes endless. The same impact can be achieved through architectural narrative. Not only does translation vary by user, but translation varies by each user's returning visits as well. This is the idea that brings classical mythology to architecture and Las Vegas.
Table of Contents

Acknowledgments 1
Abstract 2
Background 5
Objectives 6
Context 8
Research 10
Investigation 19
Site 26
Results 29
Bibliography 32
Background: Issues and Position

This project as a whole represents the literature of classical mythology, for without words, narrative can not take place. Along the narrative, definitions need to be provided. Definition has its own role of comprehension and understanding. Did man understand the gods? Mankind thought they did. There was a common comprehension of higher beings, only the gods could not be supernatural if they were completely understood. This leads to a supernatural project, and with this project, one cannot let reason rule completely, for man is the user. This project ultimately controls the functions of man just as the gods ruled the realms of the world.

There are many plays, poems, and other writings that could fit into the broad category of classical mythology. For the purposes of this project, classical mythology will be defined by the epic poetry of Hesiod, Homer and Virgil. These epic poets have been chosen because almost any classical scholar would agree that these authors are the origin of written mythology, and the births of the gods, the interaction between the gods, the interactions of gods and man, and the realms of the cosmos are a few things covered in their works. Epic poetry also has a distinct structure and composition that will be described later.

Before literature, there was oratory. The bardic creation of mythology unified scattered people. As the narrative was passed from person to person, mythology existed in its most ideal form. For example: Homer was a bard; in fact, he was such a good bard that no one could do better. His work began to be imitated and memorized. When a Greek writing system was finally developed, Homer’s poems were written down for the sake of holding bardic competitions.

When mythology was written for the masses, it lost its ideal form and became rigid interpretation. Obtaining the ideal form once again is achieved through architecural narrative. The user experiences the rigid narrative of architecture, logs his experiences in memory, and then orally narrates his version of mythology again and again when he shares his experiences with others.
The main purpose of this project is to create a synthesis between mythology and architecture. This pairing is intended to exist beyond any classical or neo-classical forms. Much research and study, such as interviews, readings, writings, modeling, collage, and field study will prove beneficial during the development of this project.

December: Final Proposal
Preliminary Programme
Topic Research
Site Research

January: Conceptualization of idea
Idea development
Research Development
Schematic Design

February: Idea Development
Research Development
Design Development

March: Design Development

April: Finalize Design
Notes for Publication

May: Produce Publication
Graduate
Programme Outline

This project takes the form of a Las Vegas casino through the senses of audiences seeking many forms of entertainment. The casino is a constructed translation of mythology by means of poetic tools which provide orientation and unification within the massive scale of gaming areas and the surrounding complex. Every visitor, must make the passage of mortal death in order to enter this casino floor. Upon discovery of the ancient after-life, an epic sequence is begun, that provides an authentic experience to each individual in the audience.

Programme Outline:

- Gaming Floor (includes E.G.D's): 250,000 sq. ft.
- Lounge: 3,000 sq. ft.
- Money Exchange: 2,720 sq. ft.
- Safe and Money counting: 9,200 sq. ft.
- Security: 8,500 sq. ft.
- Bar: 8,500 sq. ft.
- Liquor Storage: 7,500 sq. ft.
- Restrooms: 13,160 sq. ft.
Context

Top Left: Boardwalk Hotel and Casino
Bottom Left: Flamingo Hotel and Casino
Bottom Right: Caesar's Palace
Context

From left to right:
Flamingo, Barabary Coast, Bally's, Paris.
Bottom: North facing perspective of strip.
Any good poet grasps the attention of his listeners. An ancient poet had a variety of audiences throughout his travels, and the success of his profession depended on his storytelling skills. Certain components aid the success of poetry, the rests lie in the hands of inspiration and artistic license.

Classical mythology coincided with certain perceptions of the universe. All things living, dead, and immortal existed in different realms. Association with these realms brought recognition and truth to the poet's narratives.
Invocation refers to pulling the Muses' divine influence into the story. "Sing, goddess, ..." or "Tell me, Muse, ..." are examples of the request for mythic authority mentioned earlier.

In medias res is simply the order in which events are revealed. "Into the midst of things" draws the listeners right into the action, flashes them back to the beginning, and finishes at the end.

Vast setting brings listeners so close to the drama and action that they might actually feel as if they were a part of what is being told. Large oceans and battlefields are described without borders.

Gods are involved in the action. The gods either held love or resentment for certain humans, and their encounters were the cause of story action.

Dactylic Hexameter is a type of poetic structure. This structure includes six measures of two beats. The only constant measures are the last two. The other four measures seem to have infinite variables.

Examples:

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This book is laid out into a meter as well.
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Olympus is the home of the gods, and only immortals can live there. Here the gods complain to and react with each other and decide the trials men will face.

Earth is the home of all mortals. The gods visit earth to test or visit men. Here mankind lives, feasts, and realizes the gods.

Underworld is every mortal's final destination. Only the Fates control the final outcome of man. Hades rules this realm, and the other gods (except for Hermes the messenger) do not visit or have control here. Underworld contains four rivers and the regions of Tartarus and Elysium. Tartarus is the worst possible place in the Underworld, and Elysium is the destination of the most pure and enlightened souls.

Cosmos and Sky are areas where interactions occur beyond the control of the gods. This is also where the gods, and sometimes men, travel and circulate.

Gods and man. Mankind feasts in honor of the gods. The gods are the basis of all men's mythological tales. The architecture of man becomes its own theater.
Research and Concepts

Mythology and Poet

Mythos, a Greek word referring to spoken word, indicates a story or narrative. The narrated words or events of a mythical tale cannot be proved to be true or accurate. The mythoorgan is almost always unknown, but claimed to be truth.

The capacity to tell or all-embracing fable is believed to be the privilege of the gods and men. A tale was therefore told by the gods to men, and the poet was regarded as the highest authority of the divine story. Only the poet inspired by the Muses (goddesses of Memory) was permitted to transmit inspiration to his fellow human beings.

...a kind of possession and madness comes from the Muses. The tales held up a model and past example to the poet, and inspired him to create a symbolic vision of the ancient gods, heroes, and kings. But he, who, with his own divine madness comes to the doors of the Muse, will be told that he will be a godly, brilliant, wise, with his success, and the poetry of the song will produce as much more power in him of the inspired madness of the Muses.

Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story of a man skilled in all ways of contending, the wanderer, harried for years on end, after he plundered the stronghold on the proud height of Troy... Muse, daughter of Zeus, tell us in our time, lift the great song again.

—Homer
Research and Concepts

Architect and Las Vegas

How are the poetic components expressed architecturally? A representative narration thrives beyond the literal and literary. And what isn't literal in Las Vegas? The architect must engage the audience with natural familiarity as they undergo a passage through choreographed sequence of sensual manipulation.
Invocation is the architectural passageway of inspiration. Here the guests become aware that they are leaving one world and entering another.

In medias res is the sequence that provides an ambiguous path. The casino is the quintessential beginning to any tale in Las Vegas. This ideal for every guest to have to enter the casino before reaching any other desired destination; therefore, the casino becomes the perfect middle.

Vast setting is easier to define in reference to the realms, specifically Olympus, Earth, and Underworld. Architecture allows the audience to actually be a part of the drama and action within its setting.

Gods are involved in the action. Gods of activity necessary areas such as money exchange, hotel check-in, and lounges project the image of dependency. These courts can be considered tomes which the audience must show reverence.

Dactyle Hexameter is the rhythm, time, and meter that flows past and through each visitor and ties the project together. Without it, the patrons have neither entertainment nor association among the realms.

Olympus is the tower of suites. The suites should be large and accommodating to mainly high rollers. It can then be implied that this is still the home of the gods. Olympus holds the throne of Zeus.

Earth is the realm that holds the functions of dining, shopping, theater, and banqueting. Moral and immoral are the amenities of Earth. Earth holds the throne of Apollo.

Underworld is the casino. Every mortal eventually travels to the Underworld. Every guest must visit the casino. The enlightened high rollers are able to enjoy the pleasures of Olympus. Underworld holds the throne of Hades.

Cosmos and Sky. Transition is a flight, and people movers will create this transition. These flights will provide entertaining and experiential transportation throughout the complex.

Gods and man. Although this realm will be experienced everywhere, its main concentration will be within the theater and banqueting areas.
Mythology and Architect

The experience of an architect's product is unlike that of the verbal poet. Architectural narration envelopes a form and scale within written and spoken words.

"A myth might be represented graphically as on a vase painting or sculptural relief, architecturally, or spatially... But all of these partial representations of a myth do not 'add up' to the entire myth itself... Every version is limited in the first place by its medium (textual, material, or practical), and in the second place, by its existing to serve some purpose more limited and specific than any ideal version could accommodate."

The architect must take into consideration that his product restricts mythology and all of its infinite characteristics into something tangible. By realizing that the architect is not a poet; but a member of the poet's audience it can be understood that the truth of the divine tales will be corrupted by practical purposes. The architect can only utilize the poet's words and the earlier mentioned components and realms in hopes of achieving a synthesis between mythology and architecture.
Research and Concepts

Mythology and Las Vegas

Mythology has an timeless, spaceless quality that is nearly incomprehensible. The character of Las Vegas spawns an audience distant, experience, and entertainment. By associating the audience with the mythological realm, they are able to perceive themselves within the Greek world. The audience eventually becomes susceptible to mythology, and the action within their world becomes controlled by the supernatural forces of an archetypal influenced by the inspired poet.

The procession to eternity in underworld is synonymous with the life force of a Las Vegas casino. “The combination of darkness and enclosure of the gambling room and its subspaces makes for privacy, protection, concentration, and control... Space is limitless, because the artificial light obscures rather than defines its boundaries. Lights not used to define space... Space is enclosed but limitless, because its edges are dark.”
Research and Concepts

Larger open spaces tend to make players feel uncomfortable;因而, they spend less time and money at the tables. Smaller, more intimate gaming spaces are essential for a successful design. This is brought home to Underworld through its own “layers” and “thresholds.” Separating areas according to play is one way of doing this. High rollers are not comfortable near low-end players and vice versa. It is logical then to create clusters of tables based desirable for each group in different locations. A bars and martini area and a poker and black jack section are two examples of gaming pits.

Laying out the gaming areas in such a way will also be advantageous to the house. The above mentioned games consume nearly the same space. Providing space for games of the same size makes it easier for the house to rotate the tables as they feel necessary, and cameras do not have to be moved.

The mythological Underworld had layers such as the Fields of Mourning, Elysium, and Tartarus, which were the destinations of certain souls depending on how they had lived or died. Casino guests will be able to associate the layout of the casino by the location of their desired games’ groupings.

...here the road divides
into two directions: on the right it runs
beneath the ramparts of the great Dis (Pluto
or Hades). This is
our highway to Elysium; the wicked are pun-
ished on the left—that path leads down
to godless Tartarus.

Andreas suddenly looked back, beneath
a rock upon his left he saw a broad
fortress erected by a triple wall
and guarded by a rapid flow of flames
that raged: Tartarean Phlegethon whirring
resounding rocks. A giant gateway stands
in front, with solid adamantine pillars—
no force of man, not even heaven’s sons,
would dare to level these in war; a tower
of iron rises in the dirt;...

Both groans and savage scourgings echo there,
and then the clang of iron and dragging chains.

—Virgil
Concepts and Investigation
Concepts and Investigation
Here starts the pathway to the waters of Tartarean Acheron. A whirlpool thick with sludge, its giant eddy seething, vomits all of its swirling sand into Cocytus. Grim Charon is the squalid ferryman, the guardian of these streams, these rivers; his white hair is thick, disheveled on his chin; his eyes are fires that stare, a filthy mantle hangs down his shoulder by a knot. Alone, he poles the boat and tends the sails and carries the dead in his dark ship, old as he is; but old age in a god is tough and green.

And here a multitude was rushing, swelling shoreward, with men and mothers, bodies of high-hearted heroes stripped of life, and boys and unloved girls, and young men set upon the pyre of death before their fathers' eyes: thick as the leaves that with the early frost of autumn drop and fall within the forest, or as the birds that flock along the beaches, in flight from frenzied seas when the chill season drives them across the waves to lands of sun. They stand; each pleads to be the first to cross the stream; their hands reach out in longing for the farther shore. But Charon, sullen boatman, now takes these souls, now those; the rest he leaves; thrusting them back, he keeps them from the beach.

Virgil
Concepts and Investigation
Transition is a flight.

Whether it be a winged helmet, sandals, or chariots pulled by magical creatures, all gods of Olympus have the ability to fly. Few heroes in mythology were given the gift of flight, but every visitor is given the gift of god-like transport throughout the casino and complex. Most transition circulation occurs within the bounds of elevators and stairs, but several passages are removed from ground and walls. Within the casino these "flight" experiences provide multiple aerial views of the entire gaming floor and allow for unique transportation for all guests whether weary, exploring, or hurried.
Concepts and Investigation

RMTV

Slot machines are the most invariable casino commodity. In almost every casino, the guest encounters numerous types of these electronic gaming devices. Exposure to these games is the key to most of the casino's income, and their placement is vital.

Every soul is required to cross the river Styx before entering the Underworld. Entry into the mythological casino will equal this experience. Glimpses of the casino from the different realms will relay the sounds and visions of the unavoidable destination of the mortal soul. Individuals are swallowed into the depths of Kharr, below (see p. 5), which then delivers them to the river of electronic games. The only way one can reach any other gaming area is by crossing this river. Exiting the casino does not require that an individual return through this river, but re-entry does.

The river is the stage play of this river through the gaming devices themselves. Each game is designed with certain height and grouping (3-6). These multiple variations provide a backdrop of environments. The first is the associative rhythm of poetry as one walks past them. The second is a physical backdrop for the multitude of various visitors with differing heights and walking speeds. Views from within and above this gaming area reveal a river of people.
Concepts and Investigation
Site Context
The site is on a corner that neighbors the Bellagio hotel/casino and looks directly across to the Aladdin hotel/casino. It fills an area 250 ft x 200 ft and connects to one of the street light pedestrian intersections which occur every two blocks. A tram (the monorail) runs behind the site which connects every hotel between the Monte Carlo and Caesar's Palace. The site is presently a parking lot and mini strip of rental agencies and souvenir shops.
Hexameter is joined with the gaming area in a manner similar to the electronic game. A single table or three smaller tables in each room, and rooms are grouped together as three or six. Each room varies in height from its neighbor. Openings into each space allow easy access to the tables, and the groupings permit the guests to survey different varieties and options while gaming. Hip walls form the barriers to the pedestrian paths between the rooms. Windows provide views to and for the rest of the casino.
Results
Bibliography


Brygos. Attic Red Figure Skyphos. p. 98.


Dokimasia Attic Red Figure Cup. p. 190.


