

Competition Elective Arch 384  
Peep Show 2006 “Truth and Lies”

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20062436

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## Project Brief

Peepshow 2006 is an annual competition organized by *Artcity*, Calgary, Alberta. The competition is to design a pavilion within a prescribed area, location and budget to display a form of art. A curator selects the art piece or pieces; it is the challenge of the designer to make the most effective place to display that art form within the overall theme of the competition. In 2006, Peepshow's theme is "Truth and Lies". The pavilion must address the theme of truth and lies, replication and illusion. The project must also have a developed assembly and disassembly instruction and costing to show it meets the maximum budget of \$10 000 (CDN). Each year for five year's now, *Artcity* has built the winning entry for a month long exhibition during September and each subsequent year, rebuilds and adds to the collection a new winning pavilion.

The submission to *Artcity* is two 24" X 36" panels, a .PDF copy of the board on compact disk, a \$75 (CDN) entry fee and an entry form including details such as entrant team names, project title, e-mail contact, and checklist of the previous entry items. All projects are included in a weeklong exhibition in Calgary, and at the end of the week a winner is selected. Past year's juries have included artists and architects. This year's jury includes the 'baroque' film director Peter Greenaway, and Randall Stout, Principal of Randall Stout Architects based in Los Angeles.

*House of the Doppelgangers: A room for two portraits (and any number of doubles)* is the title of my pavilion



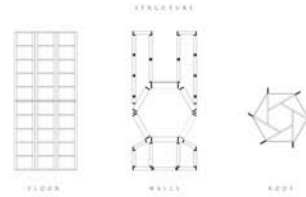
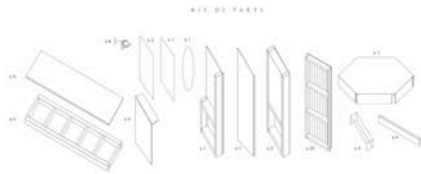
Front elevation of the *House of the Doppelgangers*



# HOUSE OF THE DOPPELGÄNGERS

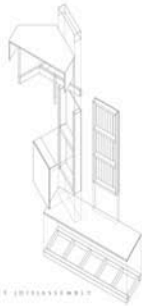


A ROOM FOR TWO PORTRAITS { AND ANY NUMBER OF DOUBLES }



PREPARE A FACE TO MEET THE FACES THAT YOU MEET IN SLIDE

The House of the Doppelgänger. A crypt? A vault? A chamber of representation? Through a doorway, intricate spaces, infinite reflections, infinite doubles. The portrait itself is not the original. Neither is the double. But in your reflection, a dialogue begins: portrait, portrait, viewer, portrait double, portrait double, your double, your double, your double, your double. Here, beyond the mirror, a double cannot be other double? A door to the outside.



KOMPONENTE (ZUSAMMENGEBAUT)

GENERAL COST SUMMARY

NO.	DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL PRICE
1	Steel structure	m <sup>2</sup>	100	100	10000
2	Paint	kg	50	200	10000
3	Lighting	unit	10	1000	10000
4	Mirror	m <sup>2</sup>	50	200	10000
5	Door	unit	1	10000	10000
6	Portrait	unit	2	5000	10000
7	Installation	unit	1	10000	10000
8	Transport	unit	1	10000	10000
9	Insurance	unit	1	10000	10000
10	Other	unit	1	10000	10000
<b>Total</b>					<b>100000</b>



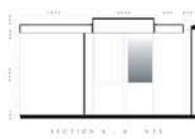
PLAN 1:00



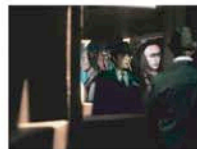
DETAIL SECTION 1: SHOWING AND DISPLAY 1:10



SECTION A - A 1:10



SECTION A - A 1:10



<sup>1</sup> Presentation board for *House of the Doppelgänger*: two 24"X36" panels stacked horizontally

## Portrait. Site, Precedents and Sketches

*Prepare a face for the faces that you meet.*

*-TS Eliot*

*Only a very small part of architecture belongs to art: the tomb and the monument.*

*-Adolf Loos*

Portraiture appealed to me as the most suitable piece to display on the subject of truth and lies. Portraiture is a particularly personal investigation for the subject into what is and what are not the things we believe ourselves to be. For the subject, the portrait presents both opportunities to wonder and analyze the content of the self. When we look at our portrait we step out of one's self and look back, in self-examination, (in surprise?) scrutinizing and questioning the content before us. Portraits pretend to be a mirror of the self, yet portraits do not reflect accurate representations of the subject. Do not assume symmetry because deep inside we know we are looking for the clues to prove the inherent asymmetry of the portrait. When we look at portraits not of ourselves but others, this challenge only becomes greater, more difficult and more exciting. Is the portrait the remains of some real person, or is it all fiction. In what context was this portrait painted? What was the life behind the face I see before me? How much of myself is imaging the person I see before me. We are engaged with the portrait on a level distinct from all other forms of art. And for as long as the portrait stands in the gaze of the subject these kinds of interactions and moments of imagination persist. The portrait lives on forever, even after the real subject's life has extinguished. I wanted to design the place where the portrait would reside. Important therefore, was to consider these questions about mortality/immortality, symmetry/asymmetry, dialogue between subject and object, reality/fiction.

I added a final and crucial dimension to these considerations by deciding that the home for our portrait would include not one, but two pieces, and a mirror. This decision is important because it solidifies the intention of creating not simply a dialogue between the viewer and the piece, but between the piece and another piece, the piece and its own reflection, the viewer and the viewer's reflection, the viewer reflection and the reflection of the two portraits, and so on... Confusion, intrigue, discovery, ensue, on a level that starts to truly involve the participant and the art in a meaningful discussion on the nature of portraiture, and the theme of the competition: truth and lies.

What then becomes the design of such a place? Into what site will we create this home for the portrait?

The site of the project is a parking lot located along Steven Avenue Mall, in downtown Calgary. Named after the first director of the Canadian Pacific Railway Corporation<sup>2</sup>, and later named a National Historic

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.touralbertamainstreets.ca/calgary/s\\_stephen\\_ave.htm](http://www.touralbertamainstreets.ca/calgary/s_stephen_ave.htm)

District by the Federal Government, the street is lined with over forty historic turn-of-the-century buildings, mostly covered with sandstone. So popular is the material that the Calgary is nicknamed Sandstone city.

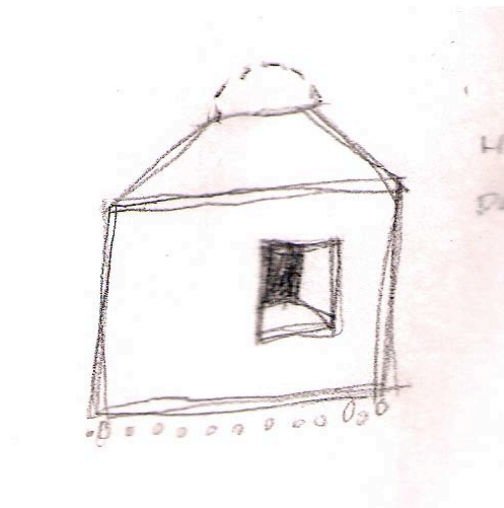


Archival Photo of Steven Avenue Mall, City of Calgary



Architectural Details of the Historic Facade

The light stone appealed to me as a great material perhaps to use as a façade finish because of its heritage in the city's history. I envisioned a monolith parked on the pedestrian street, like a stalled car. The form is a volume measuring the exact dimensions given for the site: a sandstone tomb for the portraits.



preliminary sketch: the tomb of the portraits



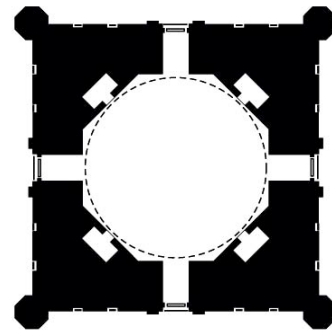
sandstone sample

The idea of the city of tombs is an important image to the design. There are several examples of the City of the Dead. Pere LaChaise cemetery in Paris is a virtual modern city of buildings lining streets, mausoleums that look like houses: see the front doors, windows and a sidewalk in front curving around the tree lined avenue. The resting places for the dead take on the characteristics of a real living city. Are we to believe then that indeed this is a real city, or is the one we live in only an imitation of a cemetery. These are some critical questions that arise from the very act of city making: creating for the collective memory and history vessels of culture. As observed by the Baroque Viennese architect and historian J.B. Fisher von Erlach, the ultimate role of architecture is to preserve memory, and those that do so are the

urn. Though these vessels become the holders of deceased persons, their memory is proliferated and the will of subject is sustained in later times. Inside the vessel we confront the issues that are also addressed in the pavilion design: dead yet alive, past and future, ourselves looking behind and seeing what may become of us. When we interact with the portrait in his very mausoleum, we become intertwined in the flux of time being warped, of the place where culture is sealed and proliferated, and of identities being swapped and certainty suspended.



Pere LaChaise cemetery, Paris



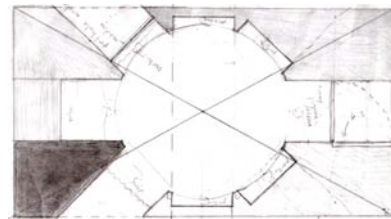
Typical Ancient Mausoleum Plan



axo view of preliminary model



plan view of preliminary model



plan drawing of preliminary model

The visitor enters through a door centered on the short end. Inside the rectangular pavilion is a circular chamber. From one end, the visitor enters and is confronted by an array of equally spaced thresholds. The exit from the chamber is not through a deeper threshold straight ahead, but rather to the side. Opposite to the frame with a door to the outside is a window, which visitors from the outside may look into the pavilion. Light enters into the pavilion from skylights located above the thresholds that display artwork. It would appear as though the ceiling were suspended.

Unfortunately, there were several problems with this initial design, and a few other initial plans. The angles of the octagon failed to provide the right plan where reflections of artwork would appear equidistant to the visitor upon entering the space. An equilateral inspired plan was required so that the visitor, upon entering the chamber would see both the real piece of art, and its reflection simultaneously.

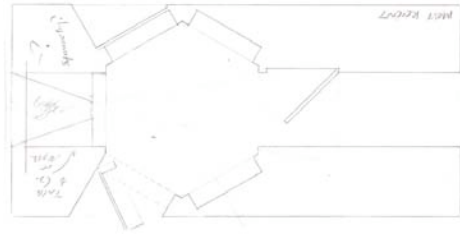
A more rigorous plan was required to meet the desired effect of confusion through replication, and opening up of spaces. The visitor would find himself moving deeper and deeper into the space and a variety of relationships achieved through reflections, observation, and dialogue between him, and the two portraits. Secondly, the space was too tight to be an octagon and still maintain proper dimensions for opening and corridors and a chamber. So next up was a hexagon plan, and a whole slew of new models:



bird's eye view



section through model



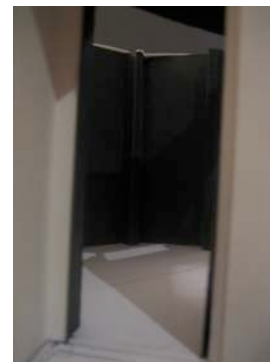
plan drawing of pavilion model



view through main threshold



view through the window



view through the second door

The hexagon works best because of the sixty-degree angles bouncing equilaterally between the painting, the mirror and the occupant from the moment he enters the chamber.

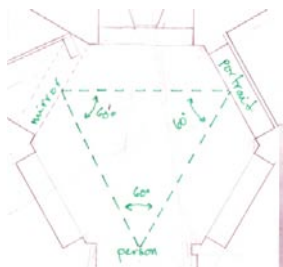


diagram of reflection in plan



model study: photograph of interior and reflections of painting in the mirror (left)



The plan of the hexagon delivers the desired effect of full reflection. A series of photographic studies helped a great deal in developing the project, as well as understanding construction concerns that needed to be addressed for the competition. We will look at the construction of the pavilion in a later part. When the occupant enters, he is struck by the vision of two portraits: one real, and one a reflection. Not only is there the reflection of the portrait, there is the view of entirely new chamber. As he approaches the reflection, his view catches sight of the second portrait, which in reality is behind him, and was not visible when he entered the room. To exit the chamber, the visitor passes through the door leading into the next chamber. The reflection of more space is in reality the return to the outside world.

The two portraits used for the model are by Cindy Sherman. A master of illusion and disguise, Cindy has a history of photographing herself as imaginary people. There were several other examples of portraits considered for the pavilion, generally renaissance and baroque types. Inspiration also came from the Holbein portraits of Thomas Cromwell and Thomas Moore. The historical figures both operated in the Henry the Eighth's court and were archenemies. Today, their portraits face each other across a mantelpiece inside the Frick Collection in New York City:



Holbein's *Thomas Moore*



Holbein's *Thomas Cromwell*



Cindy Sherman *Untitled*



Cindy Sherman *Untitled*

By placing ourselves between the two figures we become participants in their drama. There is also a great use of light in the portraits. Faces are brightly illuminated. Light diffused from above enhance the glow of the face and enhance the three dimensional illusion of the face that is so characteristic of baroque portraits.

Following the selection of the two portraits, a couple of models were constructed to develop the exterior façade so that it better matched the new dimension of the interior, the shape of the blind door and the real door that was a secondary exit, and the interior ceiling heights, the shape of the light-wells, and light studies of the interior.





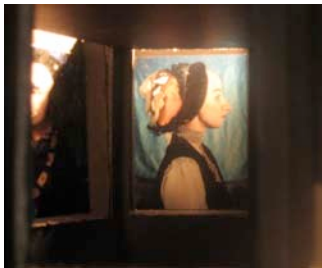
sectional study of side with mirror blind display box (1:20)



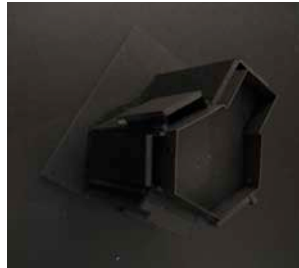
section model of side with two portrait display spaces (1:20)



light study of portraits (1:20)



detail light study of portraits inside the black model box (first right ->)



model box of interior chamber (1:20)



model study of exterior volume (1:25)

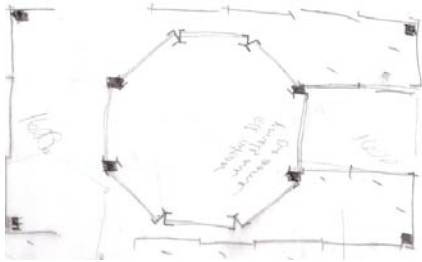
## (dis)Assembly and Costing

The winning pavilion is constructed each year for the *Artcity* festival in September in Calgary. Part of the competition required that the entrant develop an assembly and disassembly plan. And an elementary cost breakdown to meet the maximum budget of \$10,000 (CDN) needed to be provided on the final board.

The plan's repeating modular panels helps to make an efficient construction. At first glance, it was determined that there would be one type of wall construction, and two different modular: timber ladder frames: one dimension for the interior space and one for the exterior frame. The frames of the inside are connected like a Chinese screen, while the exterior frames and placed into the floor frame (also built with modular ladders). The roof is divided into two elements: the hexagon and the skylights rest on the interior walls, the rest of the area rests on the exterior walls.

A kit of parts was designed and developed to clarify the dimensions, the assembly and the quantity for costing later on. It was decided that the overall structure would be timber beams: 2X6 beams for the interior wall ladders and 2X4 beams for the exterior frame. The floor and roof are built of 2X4 beams, plywood finish. Instead of using stone tiles, a timber veneer painted white was selected as the final exterior finish. The decision does away with the cliché of the stone tomb and instead presents an aged

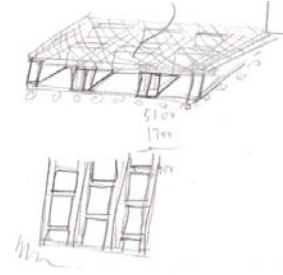
timber box, ghostly white, each year fading more and more. It is a gesture that signals to the ethereal quality of the experience. The interior is finished with black enamel drywall, walls and ceiling.



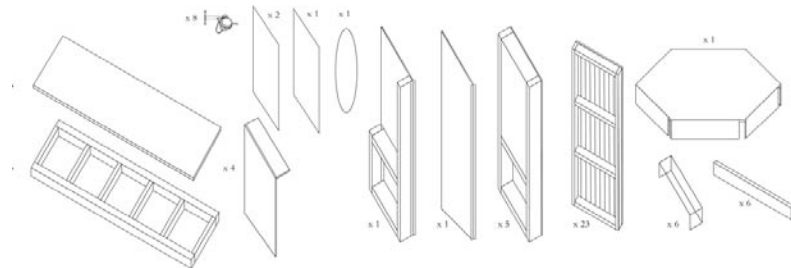
notional structure system – plan



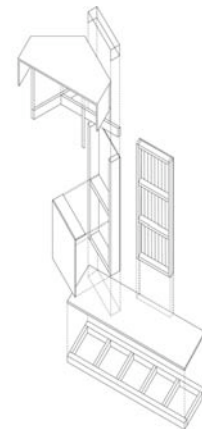
notional section structure



notional ladder system



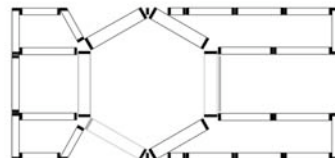
*kit of parts* resolved system of parts and quantities



assembly and disassembly axonometric



floor assembly: timber framed ladders



plan structural diagram



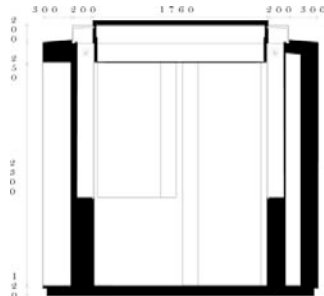
roof structure diagram

In addition to the list of basic assembly components, there was included a more detailed assembly of the display and lighting system of the portraits. Two sections, short and long were also resolved. A decision

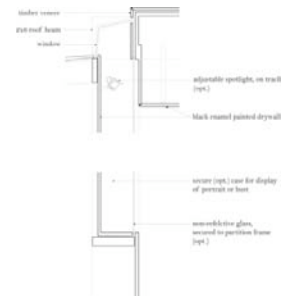
was made to keep the drawings relatively diagrammatic. While more information could be provided to show a full construction section of the display, it was felt that in this instance too many details would overwhelm the jury. This might result in confusing the phenomenological aspect of the section.



notional section through chamber skylights and display



final section through chamber skylight and display (1:20)



detail section through skylight and display (1:10)

Working with the notional section, a final section was developed had the ceiling's volume carried on slender beams. The beams run above the roof to the side of the opening above the display and connect to perpendicular frame of the interior partitions. There are six beams in total, one per partition. As a caution to weatherproofing the interior, there was the detail of a glass skylight, as well as a non-reflective glass frame in front of the piece. Artificial lighting was also specified for the pavilion. To capture the same degree and direction of lighting, dual track lights are located in the cavity measuring the depth of the ceiling suspended in front of the partition.

Specifying locally available materials and products aided in the costing of the scheme. Most of the research for costing special items such as the lighting, and the skylights came from Internet research. Costing for the frame came from the Yardstick reference book and notes from my Arch 473 class. On the following page is an elemental cost summary of the pavilion.

Based on the pricing, it was clear that the double wall system: exterior façade and interior chamber was cost the project much more than had it been only one partition system. However, thanks to the repetitive construction system of ladder frames for walls, floor and ceiling, and the modular system partition sizes, other pricing aspects (labour, materials) could be marginalized.

All that was left was to take the previous information, including the final scheme and create a final presentation board.

## ELEMENTAL COST SUMMARY

G.F.A.	12.24 m2	qty	m2	\$ /m2	\$ total	G.F.A.	12.24 m2	qty	m2	\$ /m2	\$ total
Structure						Doors		2 units		50 ea	100
"	Floor construction	12.24		25	306	Interior Finishes					
"	-timber frame ladder					"	Floor	9		50	450
"	-plywood sheathing					"	-wood decking finished with black enamel paint				
"	Roof Construction	12.24		34	428	"	Ceiling	6		8	48
"	-timber frame ladder					"	-black enamel on drywall				
"	-timber purlins					Wall Partitions		13.2		8	106
Exterior	Walls	43.68		80	3494	-black enamel on drywall					
"	-timber frame ladder					Fittings and Equipment					
"	-plywood sheathing					Adjustable Spotlights (opt. for night lighting)		8 units		60 ea	480
"	-vapour barrier					Mirrors		2 units		25 ea	50
"	-timber purlins					Non Reflective Glass (opt. for security)		2 units		25 ea	50
"	-wood veneer finished with white enamel paint					Service					
"	Roof Covering	12.24		80	979	Electrical Distribution (inc. generator)		8		60	480
"	-vapour barrier										
"	-wood veneer finished with white enamel paint					Net Building Cost					8735
"	Skylights (opt.)	5 units		300 ea	1500	Construction Cost (13 % of Net Building Cost)					1135
Interior	Walls	13.2		20	264	<b>Total Construction Estimate</b>					<b>9870</b>
"	-timber frame ladder										

Elemental cost summary of the pavilion

## Presentation and Submission

The final board is composed of two horizontally stacked 24"X36" panels. A rococo frame super-graphic blurs the edges of the board and helps to focus on the content in-between the four decorative sides. This void left between the four picture frames (supposedly leading off the all sides), become the space to fill with a new and equally illustrative image. The image is the collection of drawing, renderings, plans and sections of the pavilion scheme. The plan is placed in the centre and looks like a peephole key; its shape is reminiscent of the popular image and theme in rococo painting. When I peer through the keyhole, what will I see: something forbidden, magical, and sensuous? Above the plan, an enlarged elevation rendered with a man about to enter the pavilion, checking out his reflection in the doorway. Below the plan, a narrative sequence in three renderings inside the crypt of the two portraits. First the encounter of the double, second the view into the space beyond and the recognition of a second portrait, and third, the reflection looking back at his own self and the two real portraits behind. Below the renderings (shots taken of the physical model) are the four elevations done with the physical model and an axonometric of the model. To the right of the plan are two sections, and a detail section to the top right hand. Overall,

darker images stay in line with the centre of the panel and help to guide back and forth from the plan to the other relevant information on the board.



montage one: entering the chamber



montage two: looking at self and reflection



montage three: reflection looking back at real self and pieces

The day before the deadline, the two panels were shipped to Calgary, express post! Below is the proof of the entry:



\$75 money order required as entry fee into the competition

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Calgary History:

[http://www.touralbertmainstreets.ca/calgary's\\_stephen\\_ave\\_.htm](http://www.touralbertmainstreets.ca/calgary's_stephen_ave_.htm)

Cindy Sherman:

<http://www.cindysherman.com/>

Frick Art Collection and Frick Art Reference Library:

<http://www.frick.org/>

Peepshow Website:

<http://www.art-city.ca/>

Pere Lachaise Cemetery:

<http://www.pere-lachaise.com/>