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**Between the Freedom Center and the Abu Ghraib Prison**  
**GROUND ZERO (4)**

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Late in the evening, on November 3, 2005, driving from Montréal to New York, I crossed the international border between Canada and the United States heading towards Manhattan where I was going to do some on-site research at Ground Zero. After half an hour or so of driving through the state of New York, well inside U.S. territory, I was met by a huge electronic road sign, the kind that is used to temporarily redirect traffic at the approach to a roadside construction zone. Before I could make sense of the sign, there was a second one, and then a clearing flooded by the lights of gigantic projectors, as would be the night set of a movie scene. Right across the highway was a bulwark of police and security vehicles in front of which stood, also blocking the road, a phalanx of armed border patrol guards wearing their full protective gear.

*Pick a lane*, ordered the first road sign. *Don't change lanes*, indicated the other one. As I was getting closer to this unexpected flying checkpoint, to this second border crossing inside the U.S., I wondered which lane to pick, but also, about the consequences of changing lanes. After hearing this story, appalled New York friends figured that this “exceptional” security measure might have had to do with the imminence of the November 8<sup>th</sup> election in a number of major U.S. cities, amongst them the City of New York, where Republican mayor Michael Bloomberg ended up being re-elected.

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**INSIDE THE NEW AMERICAN HOME**

A year after the events of September 11, 2001, *Time Magazine's* American edition (USA and Canada) presented a special *Lifestyles* section whose feature article was the cover story *Inside the New American Home* (*Time*, October 2002). A photomontage illustrated the subject by reconstructing the canonical form of a house through enlarged views of different rooms, including a chef's kitchen and giant master suite, creating what the writers call “a resort and a comfortable refuge”. On a banner, the magazine also announces a debate on *The Pros & Cons of Attacking Iraq*, a subject that proves to be at the heart of this issue. For or against an attack on Iraq? In that post-9/11 context, it was more a case of asking *when* and *how* to attack Iraq.

The image on the cover invites readers of *Time* to take part in a guided tour of the *New American Home* that is displayed on and in the magazine. Strategically placed in the foreground, this image of the house, and the *Lifestyles* section that shows the trends to follow (or to obey?), serves in a way to “domesticate” the debate about war – both in the sense of taming or dominating it, and in the sense of rendering it internal to the house – at the precise moment that, in the United States, the mid-term electoral battle is unfolding, a battle in which the stakes were the creation of the *Homeland Security Department* and support for an attack on Iraq. In the end, the election allowed the Republican Party to gain a dozen seats in Congress, a year after 9/11.

The October 2002 issue of *Time Magazine* and its cover appear to me exemplary of those stakes but also of the cultural strategies specific to the response led by the United States of America in the immediate aftershock/math of the September 11, 2001, attacks and since. If the war began at Ground Zero on 9/11, as maintained (then) by the governor of New York State, George Pataki, one of the main fronts of this *War on Terror* certainly remains the American domestic space, that is, in this perspective, the national internal space and the private home/house. The global, yet “deterritorialized” post-9/11 war, as all wars, is first and foremost a domestic war, that is the exteriorization of an internal conflict.

### RECONSTRUCTION

The redevelopment plans and the reconstruction on the World Trade Center’s site are a significant expression of the United States’ response to the events of 9/11. Architecture (among others) has in effect been entrusted with the role of first responders to the events by constructing an acceptable system of explanation. Along with commemoration, architecture crystallizes the issue of the transformation of the site of catastrophe into a site where (re)construction becomes possible. The towers, the dead and the skyline were immediately placed under the protection of the law of memory, which allowed their conversion into the form of an architectural project, an historical archive and a memorial. Shock and fear were also transformed into a force of cultural elaboration and, where the political and military are concerned, into principles of cohesion and control.

At Ground Zero the architecture responds perfectly to this order, to this “dream assignment” (Rudy Giuliani: 2002), notably by saving the skyscraper, this emblematic American form, and the lifestyles or economy that play out on its stage, a rescue that comes from reinforcements of all kinds allowing, once again, the construction of the “tallest building in the world”. By producing an interpretation that aligns with the American myth as well as the dominant American political discourse, this reconstruction revives the fundamental military logic of paradigmatic elements such as the tower, the wall enclosing the city or the house. At Ground Zero, it is about commemoration but also about counter-attack: architecture, like war, becomes *preventive* (Lachapelle: 2005).

## WASTES

Considering the different architectural design competitions, the planning and actual on-site reconstruction but also the management of the World Trade Center rubble and cleansing of Ground Zero (Lachapelle: 2008, 2010), has also brought me to study some of the main collections of 9/11 artefacts that have been created, immediately after the events, by various museums; as well as a first body of exhibitions associated with this documentation, historicization and commemoration of 9/11 – 26 exhibitions, some of which are travelling exhibitions that were shown in many locations (Lachapelle: 2011). These collections are primarily based on the sorted wastes of the WTC, on archived tributary objects and private or personal domestic objects, whether found or donated, as well as on a body of exhibitions associated with this documentation, historicization and commemoration of 9/11.

The reconstruction on the site of the World Trade Center is based on a spectacular economy of waste, remains and ruins. The speed with which the clean-up of the site was begun is not justifiable simply by the search for survivors and human remains, for personal effects and clues for the police investigation. To produce the location of catastrophe as a site where (re)construction becomes possible, it was also necessary to rapidly exclude the reality of the remains, debris and other ruins, and create a void that could be filled through the mythic American new beginning. This economy is about the material vestiges that remain as witnesses to the event on the site of Ground Zero like the deep prints left by the collapse of the towers, the “bathtub” or “slurry wall”. It is also about those *remains* that are still being sought, and those that must be chosen to be discarded or conserved (in a museological sense).

Among the material remains of 9/11, some create an immediate “consensus”: from debris they become remnants, and the necessity to archive and historicise many vestiges of the WTC towers, as well as fragments of artworks, seems “evident” early on in the media and public discourse. Many of these “9/11 artefacts” are stored in Hangar 17 at JFK International Airport. Without having been “seen”, these objects are generally “known” and at least a partial version of their story is also common knowledge (steel column, flags, photos of close relatives, posters of the *Missing*, private cars, fire trucks, identifying elements of the buildings or the site, etc.). They constitute a reference body of artefacts that, very soon after the events, helps to dictate or educate a collective memory. Many public commentaries insist upon the efficiency of this primary informal “collection” of objects to communicate the catastrophic proportions of the attack, feel the chaos and the raw emotions, the magnitude of the event, its significance or power.

The management of vestiges of 9/11 and of the World Trade Center’s debris collected and removed from Ground Zero was part of an emergent process by which the events of September 11, 2001, are being domesticated. This process still contributes, even after 10 years, to the socially and

economically productive rhetoric of the resilient city and nation<sup>1</sup>. This framework or form of collective denial aims not only to contain the event, to enclose it within the limits of a dominant interpretation, but also to respond to the symbolic defeat, in the same way as the War on Terror aims to respond to aggression, that is, beginning from the same culture and values (domination, power, profit, faith, progress, a certain idea of democracy and identity). This symbolic counteroffensive thus corresponds to the attempt to save a culture that is trying desperately to protect itself from dangers such as that which it excludes.

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### **BETWEEN THE FREEDOM CENTER AND THE ABU GHRAIB PRISON**

Building on previous studies and sometimes even taking this opportunity to integrate some extracts translated from the French, this paper will refer less to architecture and waste, then on museology, as recently analysed in the latest development of this “GROUND ZERO series”. It will also bring its attention towards a brief case study, the exclusion of the International Freedom Center from the Ground Zero site in light of what seems to me to be an influential precedent: the Enola Gay controversy surrounding the planning of the *Crossroads* exhibition in 1995.

As a contribution to the present reflection on *The 9/11 Decade, Between the Freedom Center and the Abu Ghraib Prison (GROUND ZERO 4)* aims to put forward the pervasive yet diffuse role of culture and, especially, of what I shall call “big culture”, in the post-9/11 omnipresent sense of peril and fear and in the convergence of powers that Naomi Klein identifies as corporatism in the rising disaster capitalism, a dynamic that she defines in the following words: “big business and big government combining their formidable powers to regulate and control the citizenry.” (N. Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*: 2007). In *The Shock Doctrine*, Klein also offers an image that rightly describes this convergence of unsupervised police powers and unsupervised capitalism; she suggests that it corresponds to “a merger of the *shopping mall* and the *secret prison*” (2007, 367. My emphasis). This fusion is key for the existence and the safety of the American home and the upholding of a global economy of exploitation, as we were reminded, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, by George W. Bush’s speech linking inner security and domestic economy, and insisting that U.S. citizens spend money and go shopping as a humanitarian gesture. As the offensive/defensive system of the *New American Home* openly takes the form of a fortress, of a bunker and a militarized zone (one could also say, of a prison camp), as is well illustrated both on a domestic and national scale by the *Time* issue of October 2002 (Saporito *et al.* 2002), many institutions of America’s “big culture” contribute accordingly to the (re)construction of a symbolic rampart protecting U.S. territory and particularly Ground Zero, this “sacred center” of America’s globalized world.

The planning of the reconstruction on the World Trade Center’s site, the clean-up of the ruins and their return to the site, notably through the

National September 11 Memorial & Museum, seek to re-establish this collapsed world center. On the first anniversary of 9/11, the first phase of an exhibition called *The Viewing Wall* was posted on the security fence covering the perimeter of the Ground Zero site, blocking access as well as taking away the possibility to see the site. The informal shrines, tributary objects and other mementos that the city kept trying to remove from the site and broader urban space were then returned on site as archives through scripted information and historical panels, anticipating on the National September 11 Memorial & Museum and its curatorial approach and content. This salvaging (which is also a salvation) tends to inscribe Ground Zero in the “disciplinary (and enclosing) devices” and the “prison network” (Michel Foucault) that jeopardize civil liberties and contribute to the same global post-9/11 detention system as Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib.

Architecture on the WTC site, the management of the wastes, remains and ruins of 9/11, and a growing network of public collections, traveling exhibitions, museums and memorials can be considered as part of domestic as well as foreign post-9/11 political and military strategies that contribute to reinforcing boundaries, at least on a symbolic and cultural level, around the familiar domestic centre or space and along a “newly secured” (or wishfully secured) national and symbolic periphery. The museum’s institutional authority and these exhibitions and collections have been, and still are, instrumental in building a dominant narrative and cultural representation of September 11, 2001. Hence they contribute to recreating the space of “safe” living. They disseminate an official public discourse that reaffirms what Michel Deguy calls “the non-negotiable imperative [...] of the American way of life”, which he considers to be an influential “model of human desire”, and “a motor for the worldwide consumer economy.” (Deguy 2008, 212, 203. My translation).

Israeli art historian Ariella Azoulay stresses that the museum border marks a particularly effective cultural device for enclosing meaning and leading the visitor to see, particularly to see death. “One is trained to see thus and not otherwise,” writes Azoulay, “[trained] to see under certain conditions of visibility, to see certain objects under certain aspects – the aesthetic aspect for example – and ignore other aspects” (2001, 268). 9/11 generates a vertiginous proliferation of images, objects, sounds, stories, archives placed under the sign of memory and resilience. The post-9/11 curatorial and museological strategies practiced by many leading cultural institutions in the U.S. correspond, in my understanding, to a “museology of war”. This last expression echoes one of Susan Sontag’s insightful comment: “If governments had their way, war photography, like most war poetry, would drum up support for soldiers’ sacrifice” (2003).

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## WAR MUSEOLOGY

When the reconstruction process is considered through the analysis of how some of the collections and archives related to the events of September 11,

2001, are being constituted, and, in particular, how the collections held by national museal institutions were essentially created through the direct sorting and recuperation of the remains of 9/11, the trail of September 11, 2001 related wastes and remains can be followed from Ground Zero to the Fresh Kills Landfill and, after a sorting process, this trail heads right back within the protective barriers of the nation, the city and the house.

The “war museology” relative to 9/11 accentuates the commemorative function of the museum. In the rush of “initiatives” by institutions such as the Museum of American History of the Smithsonian Institution or the New York Historical Society, and the travelling exhibitions that they undertook, the memorial-museum approach of 9/11 spreads across the country its cultural strategy in the service of “public salvation” and national security, also integrating the domestic surround in the ramparts thus constructed.

As of autumn 2001, a consortium of thirty-three museums worked together with the aim of documenting the reactions to the events of September 11, and to recuperating and preserving a selection of objects, principally on the site of the Fresh Kills Landfill. The assistance sought early on from the authority of the museum and its expertise in disseminating “the” truth (and enshrouding other versions) quickly contributed to the establishment of rules or “priorities of commemoration” (Feldman 2003)<sup>2</sup> and to imparting the 9/11 “curatorial tone”. Ten years after the events, this war museology still has for function (and for effect) the systematization of the form of normative collective instruction and memory that Azoulay describes, hence creating a framework for the socially and economically productive rhetoric of the resilient city and nation that, in turn, allows the spectacular growth of archives and the multiplication of scripted public exhibitions of 9/11 artefacts, stories and mementos to take place in a “safe and controlled environment”.

The step of sorting and selecting objects and artefacts, which led to their archiving within the framework of the development of collections particular to the WTC and 9/11 and to their exhibition, was and is still strongly informed by a group of factors contributing, in the immediate aftermath, to setting the ‘curatorial tone’ and to the historicization, commemoration and representation of September 11, 2001. Among the principal factors I would isolate the following elements:

- the cultural and collective shock, and the personal trauma provoked by the events;
- the diversity of immediate efforts to interpret the attacks;
- the models that comprise, despite the diversity of their respective current or historical expression: the museology of the Shoah;
- the public culture of the memorial and the popular secular practices of tribute and commemoration that are also a factor;
- the impressive spontaneous public response that the local authorities tried more or less successfully to contain.

These collections (and this almost real-time archaeology), as well as many exhibitions based on the collections themselves, lift the initial interdiction (Giuliani's media blackout) against seeing or showing the ruins, the remains (but not yet that of showing bodies) and allows these domesticated remnants to be returned to the public gaze. Lifting this interdiction and (dis)placing these remains within the framed context in which they are to be seen promotes the public appropriation and valorization of these mementos and vestiges. Indeed, many of these 9/11 artefacts are invested with religiosity and patriotism - some of those objects spontaneously attained the status and value of relics - and become instruments for political propaganda and national security (very much on the model of Cold War cultural programming and diplomacy as Liam Kennedy has shown in his study of Joel Mayerowitz's photo exhibitions).

The majority of these exhibitions and collections have an interactive component through which members of the public are invited to "bear witness" and "make history" by recording their own reactions to the events of September 11, 2001, and, in certain cases, their reactions to the exhibitions themselves<sup>3</sup>. Travelling versions of these exhibitions are sent out on tour, principally around the United States, thus making available a kind of pilgrimage to Ground Zero removed from the Ground Zero site itself, to which access is still extremely limited or impossible (9/11 Memorial – 2011 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary; Museum – 2012; Remains Repository WTC site – 2013). Many travelling exhibitions offer a common sequence disseminating a similar interpretation of and approach to the events of September 11, 2001, and putting forward some form of commemorative expression often involving victims' family members. They are also an opportunity to fundraise. This was the case for the *September 11 Tribute Exhibition*, organized by the National September 11 Memorial & Museum now shown at the WTC/Tribute Center<sup>4</sup>, whose national tour aimed to collect funds for the construction of the memorial on-site at Ground Zero and for the children of survivors. Visitors to this exhibition were invited to sign a steel column that will apparently be integrated into the construction of the memorial and museum.

The personal experiences of the victims' families, the survivors and the general American population are rapidly included in the official documentation and historical archives through a systematic and spectacular collecting and archiving of personal accounts and individual testimonies gathered across the country as citizens and members of the public are invited to "bear witness" and "make history"; through the continuous audio-visual methods of documentation of the stories and narratives of visitors; and the invitation to donate material, share stories and make monetary donations, sponsorship for the national memorial at Ground Zero. This process also contribute massively to rallying the local and personal events to the dominant national story that is being created, well aligned to the militarized discourse of faith and progress, a discourse that these conquering representations and narratives reinforce in turn, thanks to the power of the cultural forms and technologies of faith and progress.

These diverse versions of the narrative constitute variables, which, ultimately, lead back to the same interpretation of the event or the artefacts. Thus, the dominant interpretation appears to not be contested; on the contrary, it appears to potentially be reaffirmed and “authenticated” by each of these individual expressions. The sacrificial heroization of the victims becomes equivalent to that of soldiers (and, by extension, that of their families or their victimized compatriots). This large scale museal-memorial operation becomes part of the war effort if I may say, by its attempt to stimulate social cohesion through the generation of diffuse “perpetual” terror, a sense of shared fear, of a common threat and of a common enemy.

The analysis of this first body of exhibitions also shows that the 9/11 curatorial approach (including its main museal devices) consists not only of a strategy based on and demanding the compiling and the disseminating of an account, it also includes the putting in place of a vast network that can effectively relay and feed into this account. During the course of the summer and autumn of 2002 for example, the American Association of Museums (AAM) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services addressed an appeal to all the museums across the country inviting them to combine efforts with their communities for the commemoration of September 11, 2001. Most of these exhibitions and events were organized, welcomed and, often, put into circulation, by the same few cultural institutions, including the New York State Museum, the Museum of American History of the Smithsonian Institution, the New York Historical Society and the Skyscraper Museum. My reading of this growing number of 9/11-related memorial-museums, memorials and travelling exhibitions is that they tend to be integrated into (or tend to feed) an active defensive/offensive network across the whole national territory of the United States and inside the border of the (American) home. It is in these conditions that what I name *9/11 war museology* is to be considered as a *cultural Security Fence* and a military strategy efficiently reinforcing the American domestic enclosure, as well as its cultural hold and stamp.

Indeed, the heavy deployment of this *cultural Security Fence* through “war museology”, amongst other means, can also be looked at in relation with other post-9/11 *disciplinary devices* (Foucault) or *house-breaking* strategies and specifically, in relation with the military and security measures that activate similar dominant and dominating cultural representations of home and identity – such as the resolution (1368) of the Security Council of the United Nations, adopted on September 12, 2001 that created a world coalition against international and “home-grown terrorism”; the (October 2001) *USA Patriot Act* which widened the definition of terrorism to include “domestic terrorism” and, at the same time, broadened the reach of surveillance measures (that include the law itself); the *Homeland Security Act* (November 2002), the *Secure Border Initiative* (2005) and the *Security Fence Act* (2006). As Arum Shiekh points out in *Detained without Cause: Muslims’ Stories of Detention and Deportation in America after 9/11*, there is after all a domestic policy tradition in the U.S. “of creating domestic



enemy aliens, whether by labelling immigrants or detaining political dissenters”... “in wartime”, she adds (Shiekh, 2011: 2). But I would like to underline that this *law of the house* (*oikos nomos*, etymologically from the word for economy) is no “wartime exception”, it is the very foundation of a culture and an ethics of separation.

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**GROUND ZERO HAS BEEN STOLEN, RIGHT FROM UNDER OUR NOSES.  
HOW DO WE GET IT BACK?**

At this point in my presentation, I would like to propose a brief and exemplary case study based on the exclusion of the International Freedom Center (IFC) from the planned reconstruction on the WTC site, a decision that took place around the same period as the publication of the Abu Ghraib photos of “American soldiers tormenting Iraqi prisoners” (J. Hafetz) created a widespread public outcry. The IFC was the museum component of the World Trade Center Memorial Cultural Complex. Paradoxically, it was originally meant to be the concrete expression of the “living memorial” featured in Daniel Libeskind’s initial 2002 master plan. Following families’ protests led by Debra Burlingame, sister of a 9/11 victim – namely the pilot of the plane that crashed into the Pentagon – and member of the World Trade Center Memorial Foundation, “mourning and memory” seem to have conquered the site “over art and culture” in order to (re)produce the saving memory (and the saving narrative) of a contemporary culture exposed to danger. Cultural and political war, as well as on site power plays would require a detailed and more exhaustive analysis.

On June 30, 2003, in response to comments made at public meetings and a statement by Governor Pataki, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) sent out an official *Invitation to Cultural Institutions For the World Trade Center site* (ICI) which aimed to further develop its 2002 *Blueprint for the Future of Lower Manhattan* especially in regards to a possibly “expanded role for culture [in the revitalization of] Lower Manhattan” (all the following quotes are taken from the *Invitation* document unless otherwise stated). This process was open to public debate and was aiming towards “seeking information from cultural institutions or organizations interested in locating, or being a part of, cultural facilities or programs on the World Trade Center site”, in addition to “an interpretative museum to the events of February 26, 1993, and September 11, 2001”. Several locations and building spaces were made available as potential cultural areas on the site, but already, this call for submissions specified that: “The cultural buildings have been clustered to form a complex of institutions framing and protecting the memorial site”. The results of the Memorial competition had already been announced in April 2003.

The LMDC received more than a hundred proposals (113) coming from a wide range of cultural institutions and narrowed down its choices to a short list of four “feasible and promising [submissions] for developing the curatorial approach or content for the Memorial Center, and occupying a

performing arts center and cultural buildings on the WTC Site”. The Joyce Theatre Foundation, the Signature Theater Company, the Drawing Center and the International Freedom Center were given planning grants, announced in July 2004. To date, only the dance company, the Joyce Theatre Foundation, remains in what became, as of 2006, the National September 11 Memorial and Museum, previously the World Trade Center Memorial Foundation. The Signature Theater Company, an Off-Broadway group, was dropped in 2007 (cost and logistics, two institutions in one space: the Performing Arts Center). The Drawing Center, an art museum based in SoHo “was pushed out of the Ground Zero plan in 2005 amid a controversy about its programming” (NY Times March 28, 2007) it opted out by looking for an alternative location instead of complying with Gov. Patacki’s demand of an “absolute guarantee” that the institution would not do anything to “denigrate America”. On September 28, 2005, the plans for both the IFC and the Drawing Center were withdrawn.

In an article published in *The Nation* on September 9, 2005, entitled “Memorial Chauvinism”, Alisa Solomon remarks: “While the assault on the Drawing Center (launched by NY’s *Daily News*) deployed the familiar artillery of the culture wars – misrepresentations of selective aspects of complex artworks – the battering of the IFC drew from the playbook of post-9/11 clampdowns on dissent.” A month after the beginning of the controversy, the *NY Times*’ editorial (July 29, 2005) presented the great opposition the IFC was facing as “a campaign about political purity – about how people remember 9/11 and about how we choose to read its aftermath, including the Iraq war.” The *Times* referred to the *Take back the Memorial* website ([www.takebackthememorial.org](http://www.takebackthememorial.org)) which had collected more than 43000 signatures in a couple of months and to the arguments it defended relative to the cultural plan at Ground Zero in a resolution called “Campaign America” that was also affirming that “ground zero must contain no facilities ‘that house controversial debate, dialogue, artistic impressions, or exhibitions referring to extraneous historical events’.”

Governor Patacki challenged the construction of the International Freedom Center cultural complex in September 2005 in large part as a result of protests expressed by certain families of the 9/11 victims about the mandate and programming of the Freedom Center. Debra Burlingame, one of the principal opponents to the presence of the IFC on the site of the collapsed twin towers, is herself a member of the World Trade Center Memorial Foundation, the non-profit corporation created to “coordinate a large scale fund-raising campaign for the construction, programming and commemoration activities of the WTC Memorial and memorial Center (now the official). She “called for a boycott of fund-raising for the memorial until the IFC and the Drawing Center have been banished from ground zero” (*NY Times* July 29, 2005) which found popular and official support, namely from the union representing the city’s firefighters and Senator Hilary Clinton. Burlingame wrote a letter that was published in the *Wall Street Journal* at the beginning of June 2005 whose impact was significant: by the end of September of the same year, not only had the plans for the IFC and

Drawing Center been withdrawn – even though the Board of the IFC had pledged, in a July 6, 2005, letter to the LMDC, that their museum would never “be used as a forum for denigrating the country we love” (cited in *NY Times*) – but the whole IFC project was discarded, since this new organization had been created for the World Trade Center site.

Burlingame’s letter, entitled “The Great Ground Zero Heist”, addresses a response to what she understood as being anti-American comments on behalf of one of the organizations the IFC had consulted to further develop its programming. Burlingame also personally attacks some of the IFC think-tank, who she refers to as being “a Who’s Who of the human rights, Guantanamo-obsessed world”. Apparently speaking in the name of “the public”, on the basis of the authority belonging to the “authentic experience” (of loss) and “irreproachable” morality imprinted with a warrior’s patriotism<sup>5</sup>, Debra Burlingame affirms that the public will want the memorial and artefacts to address their “yearning to return to that day”, “to take them back to who they were on that [...] morning”. Based on this premise, she argues that *coming to see 9/11* and *to pay a respectful tribute* is opposed to or rendered impossible by a “history lesson” or a “didactic lecture on the meaning of liberty in a post-9/11 world”. Burlingame’s words in this influential letter are representative of the way in which the authority of specific forms of mourning and commemoration are affirmed symbolically but also concretely on the Ground Zero site.

The International Freedom Center’s intention to present a program that will correspond to a “journey through the history of freedom” is also portrayed by Burlingame as a “high-tech, multimedia tutorial about man’s inhumanity to man” and a “heaping foreign policy discussion over the greater meaning of Abu Ghraib and what it portends for the country and the rest of the world.” Even though Burlingame’s argumentation comprises factual errors or misleading information about usage of space, budget allocation or opinions expressed, she nevertheless openly attacks the IFC programming and attempts to discredit the people directly supporting the IFC project, and she does so on the basis of a negative presentation of criticisms they expressed towards the Patriot Act, of their comments on the Abu Ghraib pictures, or what she calls their “inflammatory claims of a deliberate torture policy at Guantanamo Bay [that, according to her] are undermining this country’s efforts to foster freedom elsewhere in the world.” Burlingame ends her letter with an emotional declaration of war: “Ground Zero has been stolen, right from under our noses. [She adds,] How do we get it back?”

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#### **THE ABU GHRAIB EXPOSURE**

The reference to the Abu Ghraib photos of American soldiers torturing and mistreating Iraqi detainees (note that the terms “security detainees” and “enemy combatants” are the one being used by the political and military apparatus and not the category “war prisoners”) is as central as it is structural to Burlingame’s demagogue rhetoric, as the subtitle of her

published letter already indicates: “Will the 9/11 ‘Memorial’ have More about Abu Ghraib than New York’s Heroic Firemen?” Burlingame’s words speak about the conquest of a site and about domination on the ground as well as on the symbolic level: “these activist and academics are salivating at the prospect of holding forth on the ‘perfect platform’ where the domestic and foreign policy they despise was born.” Reminder: The Abu Ghraib pictures, first reported by CBS’s 60 Minutes II in April 2004, created a widespread public outcry. These photos were “published a week later in *The New Yorker*, and were absorbed into a wider public consciousness as they were featured in numerous newspapers, magazines, and internet sites” (Williams). From September to November 2004, NY’s International Center for Photography (ICP) even held an exhibition titled *Inconvenient Evidence: Iraqi Prison Photographs from Abu Ghraib*. The general impact of these photographs cannot be overstated, as Jonathan Hafetz wrote in *Habeas Corpus After 9/11: Confronting America’s New Global Detention System*: “Although written descriptions of prisoner mistreatment already existed [...] the Abu Ghraib photographs [...] exposed the Bush administration’s lie that the United States was treating prisoners humanely”. The visual evidence that these pictures carry was overwhelming to a broad public in comparison to less spectacular written accounts of prisoner mistreatment and state-sanctioned secret torture and it was potentially more devastating for the kind of “domestic naiveté and ignorance so necessary to the American bid to *dominate* and *instrumentalize* the supranational structures of global order” (Ray 2005, 51-59, my emphasis) and, I would add, so necessary to the 9/11 self-empowering rhetoric of “you’re either with us or against us” (speech by George W. Bush, November 6, 2001), a rhetoric that is better served by the building of a victim’s identity and of a heroic stance; in other words, by an approach such as the one defended by Burlingame and the WTC Memorial Foundation.

The event, that is often referred to as (and sometimes collapsed in) the “Abu Ghraib scandal”, troubled the *us* versus *them* dichotomy, but also a whole set of other collapsing oppositions that the 9/11 war museology and memorial culture aim to restore, maintain, and polarize, as does, ultimately, the war on terror: good/bad; victim/perpetrator; here/there center/periphery; democracy/exploitation; freedom/confinement; home, house/prison<sup>6</sup>. I can’t help but wonder if the exposure of the Abu Ghraib pictures might have even contributed to prolonging the “ghosting” of the Guantanamo prison complex. Within the complex power play involved around the development of the national 9/11 memorial-museum project at Ground Zero, the domestic conflict created by the public exposure given to the Abu Ghraib photos might have offered the opponents of the International Freedom Center a different target, but maybe also an effective scapegoat, allowing to “pick-a-lane” by safeguarding the “proper” vision of the commemoration and historicization of 9/11 through the exclusion of the IFC and the affirmation and even, reinforcement, of the World Trade Center Memorial Foundation’s mission. Some commentators, as Solomon cited earlier, did underline that the IFC’s proposals were not uncontroversial”, that for example, it bought into George W. Bush’s “invocation of freedom to justify the war in Iraq”,

but that it also did have the merit to “represent a legitimate attempt to use the memory of the terrorist attacks in an exemplary fashion that would have linked the victims of the attacks and the United States itself to the international community”, even though the American historian, Eric Foner, resigned from the advisory board after the IFC (contrary to the Drawing Center) accepted to have its programming submitted to “multiple layers of internal controls” and to be “appropriately celebratory of our nation’s role in the global fight for freedom” and questioned the IFC’s intellectual rigour because the board was “unwilling to say a word in favour of freedom of expression” (Solomon).

Paul Williams rightly underlines that “Memorial museum based on national ‘us’ and foreign ‘them’ incidents share an affinity with conventional war memorials.” (2007) In February 2006, Alice Greenwald, the associate director for programs at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum was appointed to be director of the World Trade Center Memorial Museum. “When asked about the now-abandoned International Freedom Center, Greenwald called it ‘an incredibly creative idea that was woefully premature.’ By contrast, ‘this is a museum of memory. And when you’re talking about memory, it is never too soon.” According to Williams, “Implicit in Greenwald’s statement is the distinction between history, which deals with ‘big ideas’ and is hence combative, and memory, which acts as salve. She may have also been wary of the problematic conflation of quite disparate historic experiences at a Freedom Center. Questions of scale, context, and meaning were to be potentially collapsed under the airy, variable heading of ‘freedom’ which, before 9/11, would not necessarily have had ‘terror’ as its opposite.”

During this episode, which is part of the reconstruction saga on the World Trade Center site, mourning and memory, defined in opposition to art and culture, and even, to some extent, in opposition to a broader sense of history, commanded the exclusive appropriation of a distinct and secure space: the soon to be opened *National September 11 Memorial & Museum*. Thus the September 11, 2001, attacks will not likely be the subject of a critical contextualization or a growing historic complexity on the site of Ground Zero in New York, any more than the bombing of Hiroshima could be in Washington through the *Crossroads: the End of WWII, the Atomic Bomb and the Origins of Coldwar* exhibition.

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### **THE *CROSSROADS* PRECEDENT**

The 9/11 war museology should indeed be examined against a comparative background: the then relatively recent public controversy surrounding the *Crossroads* exhibition that the National Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institution was preparing in 1995 for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War (Lachapelle: 2011). This exhibition featured, as one of its main artefacts, the Enola Gay – the B-29 bomber from which Paul Tibbits dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan<sup>7</sup>. The

debate began in private with the fears expressed by veterans who were concerned that their sacrifice would be neither forgotten nor denigrated. In my opinion, this controversy constitutes a precedent that considerably influenced the museum's immediate and direct implication in the sorting of the World Trade Center's remains and the curatorial approach to the artefacts associated with 9/11.

In the first hours after the fall of the twin towers ideological strategy prevailed and, as a result, determined the domestic cultural policy to do with September 11, 2001. This influence of the Enola Gay controversy is even more evident when one considers the similarities between the many tensions characteristic of the public debate surrounding the initial plan for the *Crossroads* exhibition and those which gave way, in 2005, to the exclusion of the International Freedom Center from the actual reconstruction on the World Trade Center site: the tensions and conflicts between memory and history, between interpretation and mourning, between experience and representation (to name a few); and especially the way in which these tensions were addressed and resolved by the American government, which, in 1995, annulled the *Crossroads* exhibition and voted in a law broadening and reinforcing the mandate of the Smithsonian Institution. The law states that "the Smithsonian Institution shall commemorate and display the contributions made by the military forces of the nation toward creating, developing, and maintaining a free, peaceful, and independent society and culture in the United States" (Senate resolution cited by Dower : 1996, 260). This broadening of the initial mandate of the institution is also strengthened by the inclusion of a passage from another law dating from 1961 and stating that "the value and sacrificial service of men and women of the Armed Forces shall be portrayed as an inspiration to the present and future generations of America" (Dower 1996 : 73). The museum has a legal obligation "to portray history in the proper context of the times" and to demonstrate sensitivity to the veterans and those who gave their lives for freedom. Through this law, the U.S. government somehow reaffirms similar mandate that other cultural institutions, like the Smithsonian, are legally bound to respect. It is this freshly reinforced mandate that I think will contribute to influence the 9/11 museology and place it among the cultural, political and military strategies of the war economy.

In December 2001, it was also the Smithsonian Institution that was designated by Congress as the official depository for the artefacts of the September 11, 2001, attacks. Later, in December 2001, Congress officially gave the National Museum of American History, a part of the Smithsonian Institution, the mandate (and budget) to collect and preserve the artefacts, documentation and accounts that the secretary of the Smithsonian believes are of "lasting historical significance."

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The analysis of the reconstruction on the WTC site and especially of what I call the post-9/11 war museology, tends to confirm that the current

memorial culture and, in a general way, a culture driven by terrorism, well serves the interests of “disaster capitalism”, as analyzed by Naomi Klein in *The Shock Doctrine* (2007). According to Klein, “9/11 launched disaster capitalism” (359) particularly by way of the *Homeland Security Bubble*<sup>8</sup>: a fusion of the political goals and an enormous security, occupation and reconstruction industry that develops from the need to be protected from terrorism and, consequently, necessitates the perpetuation of the omnipresence of fear, the constant reminder of danger and their representations in the images of threat and the enemy<sup>9</sup> (and their counterparts, heroism, sacrifice and self-righteousness) Klein considers that this “power grab” strategy – which, it must be remembered, is primarily a cultural strategy – is very clear on the Iraqi battlefield. It seems to me that it is equally clear in the post-9/11 architecture and reconstruction at Ground Zero, in many of the archive collections and public exhibitions under study and in the 9/11-related curatorial practices, as it is in the issue of *Time* presented earlier, where, beginning on the cover page, the fused narratives of 9/11 and the War on Terror<sup>10</sup>, and the dominant narrative of security and fear meet in a naïve and conventional representation of a recomposed house and an isolated domestic space “enfolding” *Inside the New American Home* the values of home, war and the ostentatious economy of sacrifice.

If, in the contemporary imaginary, September 11, 2001, appears to mark the birth of a 21<sup>st</sup> century creation myth (ÉRIC LINT), this process of mythification of the event undoubtedly underpins the urban planning and dominant cultural stance as seen in the reconstruction on the WTC’s site and the post-9/11 museology. This mythification of 9/11 appears to re-enact a cosmological founding myth – the (re)creation of a world (by) passing from chaos to cosmos – and hence to repeat one of the dominant expressions, the mythical American new beginning, the *New American Home*.<sup>11</sup>

According to the authors of the *Time magazine* section *Inside the New American Home*, the “national tragedy of September 11” reinforced an already strong tendency (Saporito *et al.* *Time* October 2002): quote “the home is not just everyone’s castle, it’s becoming a resort, an island of comfort in an ocean of insecurity.” end of quote This tendency, characteristic of a certain American identity, is profoundly linked to the conquest of the American continent and engraved in the founding myths of American culture, as well as in the “American way of life” dream and its promises of new beginnings, an ideal that is certainly no longer exclusive to the imaginary or even to the value system of this “house-hunting, house-remodelling, house-rich and house-proud America”, hence our common responsibility in the prison-house “co-dependency” relationship<sup>12</sup>.

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- <sup>1</sup> Laurence J. Vale and Thomas J. Campanella, *The Resilient City: How modern cities recover from disaster*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2005. p. 340. According to Vale and Campanella who studied how modern cities recover from disaster, quote “Urban resilience is an interpretative framework proposed by local and national leaders and shaped and accepted by citizens in the wake of disaster. However equitable or unjust, efficient or untenable, that framework serves as the foundation upon which the society builds anew.”
- <sup>2</sup> Working from the study of three examples of exhibitions that took place over the course of the first year following 9/11, Feldman shows that “collection and conservation constitute one set of memorial priorities together with more contingent and historically shaped concepts as proximity, naming, and redemption” (Feldman 2003, 842).
- <sup>3</sup> See for example the National 9/11 Memorial & Museum initiative: “you saved materials that speak to your experiences during the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 or February 26, 1993 and their aftermath? The Memorial Museum is actively acquiring materials for its permanent collection such as photographs, videotapes, voice messages, recovered property, clothing and other personal effects, workplace memorabilia, incident-specific documents, and original writings including letters, e-mails and diaries that help to illuminate people’s experiences during and after 9/11/01 and 2/26/93.”
- <sup>4</sup> The Tribute Center: a small museum focusing on personal stories is a project of the 9/11 Families’ Association. 2007: there is the launch of the travelling exhibition, *Tribute*; 2008 and 2010: the National September 11 Memorial and Museum’s letter of invitation to victims’ families and witnesses for donations / collection / exhibition.
- <sup>5</sup> “The organizers of its principal tenant, the International Freedom Center (IFC), have stated that they intend to take us on ‘a journey through the history of freedom’ – but do not be fooled into thinking that their idea of freedom is the same as that of those Marines. To the IFC’s organizers, it is not only history’s triumphs that illuminate, but also its failures. The public will have come to see 9/11 but will be given a high-tech, multimedia tutorial about man’s inhumanity to man, from Native American genocide to the lynchings and cross-burnings of the Jim Crow South, from the Third Reich’s Final Solution to the Soviet gulags and beyond. This is a history all should know and learn, but dispensing it over the ashes of Ground Zero is like creating a Museum of Tolerance over the sunken graves of the USS Arizona” (Burlingame 2005).
- <sup>6</sup> Further development of this analysis of the impact of the Abu Ghraib pictures in relation to IFC should include considerations about the Bush government’s response (namely the *Us vs Them* rhetoric in George W. Bush’s speech, November 6, 2001); the United Nations Security Council’s approach and the more or less open support of the media and population, but also the response of the “international community” (at least at the outset).
- <sup>7</sup> Gene Ray suggests that the Enola Gay controversy, which had recently exposed the majority of Americans to the origin of the term Ground Zero (the Lower Manhattan Project) explains the return of this expression immediately following September 11, 2001, whereas Hiroshima came to haunt 9/11, notably as a reminder of the attack on Pearl Harbor (Ray: 2005).
- <sup>8</sup> Chapter 14 of the Klein work is entitled “Shock Therapy in the U.S.A.: The Homeland Security Bubble” (Klein 2007, 358-359).
- <sup>9</sup> “First, the White House used the omnipresent sense of peril in the aftermath of 9/11 to dramatically increase the policing, surveillance, detention and war-waging powers of the executive branch – a power grab [...]” (Klein 2007, 358)
- <sup>10</sup> See also Erika Doss (2008, 2010): “Multiple memorials are framed by merged narratives of Sept. 11 and the war on terror. Fusing sacred relics of Sept. 11 with notions of unity, innocence and sacrifice, such memorials justify the retaliatory wrath of the United States and pointedly frame the memory and meaning of Sept. 11 in terms of righteous American military response.” (Doss 2008, 5)  
“In both political and memorial cultures, those killed by terrorism on Sept. 11 are not remembered as murder victims but as the price all Americans must pay to defend their way of life.” (*Idem*, 7)
- <sup>11</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Briser le toit de la maison : La créativité et ses symboles*, Paris, Gallimard, coll. Les essais, [1085]1986. Mircea Eliade interprets the act of creation as being the passage from chaos to cosmos. All creation would be symbolic repetition of the cosmological act, the foundation of a world at the Centre of the World, a space organized and rendered habitable thanks to a central axis which guarantees both the orientation and the opening: *imago mundi* and *axis mundi*.
- <sup>12</sup> In the closing chapter of her book *Silencing Political Dissent* (2002), Nancy Chang, a senior litigation attorney at the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York City, affirms, one year after 9/11, that the related antiterrorism measures placing ‘our’ civil liberties in jeopardy are likely to become a permanent feature of American life. Hence for Chang the impression that “the task of reclaiming our civil liberties in the post-September 11 world will not be an easy one.”