

Project Title: “Code: Survey”

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**Project Commissioned By: California Department of Transportation/Caltrans
District 7 Headquarters**

Architects: Thom Mayne and Morphosis

code (noun,verb)

1.any systematic collection of the existing laws of a country, or of those relating to a particular subject: *the Civil Code of France*. 2. any system or collection of rules and regulations. 3. a system for communication by telegraph, heliograph, etc., in which long and short sound, light flashes, etc. are used to symbolize the content of a message. 4. a system used for brevity or secrecy of communication, in which arbitrarily chosen words, letters, or symbols are assigned definite meanings. 5. a word, letter, number, or other symbol used to mark, represent, or identify something. 6. *Computer Technol.* A system of symbols for representing information and the rules for their use. -v.t. 7. to arrange in a code; enter in a code. 8. to translate (a message) into a code; encode. 9. *Computer Technol.* To translate (a program) into language which can be communicated to the computer.

survey (verb, noun)

1.to take a general or comprehensive view of or appraise as a situation, area of study, etc. 2. to view in detail, esp. to inspect, examine, or appraise formally or officially in order to ascertain condition, value, etc. 3. to determine the exact form, boundaries, position, extent, etc., of (a tract of land, section of a country, etc.) by linear and angular measurements and the application of the principles of geometry and trigonometry 8. a sampling, or partial collection, of facts, figures, or opinions taken and used to approximate or indicate what a complete collection and analysis might reveal. 9. the act of determining the exact form, boundaries, position, etc.c as a tract of land or section of a country by linear measurements, angular measurements, etc. 10. the plan or description resulting from such an operation. 11. an agency for making determinations.

In my initial letter of interest I posed the question: How can transportation be thought and transmuted into another form within the location which is it’s hub (The California Department of Transportation)? To address how I imagine this can be done I’d like to begin by giving a brief background of my related work which provides a context for my engagement with this project.

Investigating the processes of travel and of collection have been key areas in which I have focussed my work. Both of these areas are relevant to this project which is entitled “Code: Survey.” I imagine this project as a continuation of the work with which I’m engaged. These images from several projects demonstrate how I’ve dealt with a density of information and impressions in relation to travel and in relation to collections and archives. I imagine “Code: Survey” as a sensual and informational source. Much of this work has been engaged with excavating embedded material. Codes function in various ways which relate to how material is condensed, yet the vastness of material can be revealed if the proper codes are used to gain access. But the fact that there is a lot available doesn’t mean that the material will be digested or distilled, yet it exists as a possibility for those who are interested to probe.

Images from: *World Tour, Camino Road, Certain Miscellanies, Shadows and Signals, Between and Including, Artist/Author, and Negotiations in the Contact Zone.* (see illustrations)

Creating an intimate relation to space, within a large public building was another point mentioned in my letter of interest. Allowing the possibility for a perceiver to probe this experience over time is one of the goals of this work. One aspect of my work involves digging into the deeper meanings and layers of things which we encounter daily and another aspect involves extending the access for further reflection upon these encounters over time.

“The coherency is tested by taking apart, dismantling, breaking and then by reconstructing. These projects are not complete or closed but must remain in ever-changing relationship to a continually changing milieu.”

(Thom Mayne, *A + U*(Tokyo) (June 1994): 6)

I can imagine ways in which the work of Morphosis and what I propose can complement each other. Some of the key points of consideration in my process of preparing this proposed work included aspects mentioned in the "Vision and Approach Commission Statement for Artists" in which the building was described as "emphasiz[ing] transparency, natural lighting, social spaces, conservation and efficient utilization of natural resources" which occur "witin a formal vocabulary evocative of the Department's key functions, the construction of public works." Also of interest to me in the preparation of this work has been to think of the relationships between dynamism, stasis, movement and mutation. These ideas are incorporated formally, physically and intellectually in the proposed project.

Movement in this proposed project occurs within the building and elsewhere. The skip stop lobbies are the physical location designated. Each wall will have a different configuration of panels which can be seen by moving between the floors. Different information can be pieced together between different floors. The work functions as an indicator which points the perceiver elsewhere.

Narrative in this project is broken and non-linear and related to the fragmentary approach used by Morphosis. It is available in bits, visually within the space and in the website. It is also possible to find within the website narrative material of varying lengths and depth.

Again these ideas intersect those expressed by Thom Mayne and Morphosis:

"Fragments, like molecular fragments, belong to a greater but indeterminate whole, and imply the existence of something beyond... Through its visual understanding the meanings shift to notions of connections, combinations and relationships. The rest of this strategy, like cubism, denies the eye a stable focussing point.... New fluid, more open-ended spaces are created." (Thom Mayne, A + U(Tokyo) (June 1994): 6)

Codes, Surveys, Systems and Links

This work which involves collectania also involves examining a variety of systems. Coding is a way of being able to tag systems for further investigation. An example is detailed below:

system (noun)

1. an assemblage or combination of things or parts forming a complex or unitary whole: *a mountain system* ; *a railroad system*. 2. any assemblage or set of correlated members: *a system of currency* ; *a system of shorthand characters*. 3. an ordered and comprehensive assemblage of facts, principles, doctrines, or the like, in a particular field of knowledge or thought: *a system of philosophy*. 4. a coordinated body of methods or a complex scheme or plan of procedure: *a system of government* ; *a winning system at bridge*. 5. any formulated, regular, or special method or plan of procedure: *a system of marking, numbering, measuring*. 6. due method or orderly manner of arrangement or procedure: *There is no system in his work*. 7. a number of heavenly bodies associated and acting together according to certain natural laws: *the solar system*. 8. the world or universe. 9. *Astron.* a hypothesis or theory of the disposition and arrangements of the heavenly bodies by which their phenomena, motions, changes, etc. are explained: *the Ptolemaic system*; *the Copernican system*. 10. *Biol.* a. an assemblage of parts of organs of the same or similar tissues, or concerned with the same function: *the nervous system*; *the digestive system*. b. the entire human or animal body: *an ingredient toxic to the system*. 11. one's personality, character, etc.: *to get the meanness out of one's system*. 12. a method or scheme of classification: *the Linnean system of plants*. 13. *Geol.* a major division of rocks comprising sedimentary deposits and igneous masses formed during a geological period. 14. *Physical Chem.* a combination of two or more phases, as a binary system, each of which consists of one or more substances, that is attaining or is in equilibrium. 15. *Checkers.* either of the two groups of 16 playing squares on four alternate columns. 16. the structure or organization of society, business, or politics or of society in general: *She could never adapt herself to the system*.
--Syn. 1. organization. 6. articulation. 8. cosmos. 10b. organism.

The above definition gives an indication of the breadth and depth possible in exploring the world and the cosmos via the perception of systems. The design of the Caltrans building by Morphosis is an example of complex interlocking of systems. The systems used within the building resonate with the circulation systems used by the Department of Transportation. My

focus on systems of various kinds suggests ways of thinking which allow comparison and relational thinking, yet with an understanding that analogies may be too simply made. Specificity is important. From examining how a small particle contains microscopic processes to seeing this particle as a component of solid matter and being able to imagine the ramifications of that information, these kinds of perceptions demonstrate ways of thinking which are relevant to the project, "Code: Survey."

PROJECT NARRATIVE

How I chose this approach: the space of the wall, the space of the website

I'm proposing a multiple work to allow for a different approach to content than is usually possible in an iconic public art work. It will be visible on the walls of several lobbies in the form of photographic and diagrammatic images and I'm also proposing that another layer of narrative content be accessible via a website, which I will create, and which can be linked to the Caltrans website.

TITLE: *Code: Survey*

LOCATIONAL ELEMENTS: Wall and website.

Walls which are not just walls, but are comprised of coded panels and can lead to other locations via the website.

CONCEPT:

To allow for the possibility to probe deeper and embedded meanings of the relationship between what is produced to transport people and cargo within the context of culture and history based on data obtained by surveying the notion of transportation. To create a more intimate possibility for experiencing the space and structure of the building, which refers to the circuitous, engineered, constructed and physical aspects of how movement and transportation take place and how they are imagined in a specific sense, which refers to Caltrans, District 7 and California, as well as in relation to the world and beyond. To allow individuals a chance to search at their own leisure material related to what they produce, as well as to provide a space which others can access to explore these dimensions.

LOCATION: Wall

Skip stop lobbies and the website. This project exists in several locations.

One is in physical spaces within the building and the other is within the space of a website linked to the Caltrans webpage. The area in which I propose to have my work situated are the four skip-stop lobbies against the wall facing the elevator banks. The size of the wall is 22' 6" H x 32' 2" W. The ideally proposed wall work will consist of one hundred sixty five (165) laminated glass panels @ 1/4"x 24" x 24" if the work covers an area of 22' x 30', but as the work is modular it can be adjusted to a smaller size depending on factors which may arise, such as the actual costs to produce the work or other spatial concerns.

Each panel will contain a unique digital image, which will include photographic (archival, contemporary, film stills), graphic, typographic, documentary and map sources. It can appear translucent and opaque, allowing reflections and muting with the light throughout the day as the building does.

The exact configuration of the laminated glass will be 1/8" clear glass, .030TPU (clear polyurethane) film, 11 mill Duraclear film with the digital image, .030" 80% white film and again a layer of 1/8" clear glass. The resolution of the digital print will be 4000 dpi.

The codes correspond to locations on the proposed website, which functions as the linked location. The juxtaposition of the images may appear arbitrary,

although they are highly specified. The code numbers will be sandblast-etched into the front surface. This code is estimated to consist of up to five digits and will be 3/4" to 1" high numbers and / or letters.

A unistrut **frame system** will be constructed on site to assimilate the mounting of the glass panels to the wall. The unistrut will be mounted to the wall via toggler bolts into the studs or as dictated by an engineering review. The glass panels will be mounted to the unistrut using custom aluminum clips that have an anodized finish. It may be partially visible through translucent elements of the glass, if desired.

LOCATION: Website

The codes and images visible in the wall work appear on the *Code: Survey* website. It will be possible to view plans and renderings of the building from the exterior to the interior, to the wall locations, to the grid, to groupings of panels, to individual panels and to the codes on each panel. Static links will be created within the website, which in turn will require next to no maintenance, and these are to be backed up by the webserver. The density of elements within this static and highly organized system creates the sense of dynamism within the work as random searches can be made within it, giving the user the perception of chance operations because the number of variables are many. It will also be possible to locate specific information. This may occur using an index of keywords and bibliography with subject listings. Links can be available to other websites and need to be checked periodically to avoid link rot. It will involve little scripting. For example, it can be possible to use a hit counter linked to a style sheet to affect the screen colors in relation to the number of people who log on to specific areas, mimicking the Caltrans coded highway watch system. Contents will include texts, graphics, audio and video. The audio and video elements will be limited to two minutes elements, making streaming unnecessary.

PERCEIVER CONTACT:

In addition to an informational panel (type and in braille), access to a project description can be visible via an engraved website address on a wall panel and in a printed brochure, which can be made available at main lobby desk or which can be stored in a wall fixture receptacle to hold brochures, which someone would be responsible to replace.

Website

The website will be uploaded as a closed document. Open access, wickys and other devices that require a webmaster or regular maintenance will not be used. To avoid requiring a streaming server, the audio and video clips will be limited to two minutes maximum. The website will be backed up when the Caltrans website is. A regular revision might be necessary to avoid link rot. It can be easily executed by the Caltrans webmaster.

Caltrans' webmaster, Marc Wong, is supportive of the project and willing to host the site on the Caltrans server and visibly post the link on the Caltrans webpage.