Abstract: The project entails transforming a former military fort into a theater. The scopic parameters native to both fort and theater can provide a field of operation for an architecture that simultaneously mobilizes and exposes the machinery of spectacle. In tandem, amplifying and distorting existing conditions of the fort and repurposing them for a theatrical program can provide catalytic parameters for design that are typically absent when designing from a clean slate.

Manifesto:

Site
About one kilometer south of Manhattan, Governors Island is a world unto itself. A diametric opposite to the dense urban constrictions of New York City, Governors Island is an open, foliage-saturated, hilly terrain populated by quaint 19th-century masonry buildings and virtually no occupants outside of the summer months. Aside from its otherworldly quality, choosing Governors Island was a first instinct as a site for the project purely out of the desire of providing New York’s ‘West End’ with its very own ‘South Bank.’ At that point, the project was going to start from a clear site and produce a theater catered toward experimental performance as an alternative to the musical-theatre focus of Broadway. The decision to instead renovate Fort Jay came with the discovery that Foster and Partners Architects will be renovating Castle Williams into what will be the New Globe Theater, based off of the original plans for Shakespeare’s Globe in London. Castle Williams and Fort Jay are the two oldest structures on Governors Island, built originally for the War of 1812 and undergoing various modifications since then. This project presents the forts as candidates for a Theatrical War of 2012 where Britain could indeed arise the victor. Upon visiting Governors Island, the monumental, iconographic quality of Fort Jay exhibited strong potential for re-visioning into a major performance venue. Some of its key features include:

- the highest point on all of Governors Island surrounded by open field
- one of its walls extend forty feet below ground
- its five-pointed star plan is an opportunity to reinterpret stage, audience, or both

Districts: The West End is similar to New York City’s Broadway, populated entirely with conventional theaters. London’s South Bank, across the River Thames, provides more varied theatrical experiences. It includes the London Eye, the Royal Festival Hall, the Royal National Theatre, and Shakespeare’s Globe.

1 The city of London contains two primary theatrical
Methodology

Renovation has been approached from numerous pragmatic necessities and theoretical dispositions. The one this project most directly reacts to (specifically, against), is Rem Koolhaas’ re-vision of the Arnhem panopticon prison. Here, an outdated prison ideal is maintained only iconographically, while a completely new diagrammatic ideal is grafted on top of it. It is the contention of this project that something both more precise and architecturally provocative would have come out of amplifying the existing architectural qualities, taking a step back, looking at it through different programmatic eyes, and distorting the result for the production of particular effects. Ultimately, this new work took place in a prison even more isolationist, and self-policing than the original design. Taking a step back, however, yielded that the relationships of power made for an excellent rock concert venue after only minor distortion.

that made an approaching army invulnerable to attack. In the design approach, beyond the strong unconventional nature of the natural site gamesmanship, the enemy/enemies role of attacker-defender, spectator, and performer became strong catalysts. The panopticon is a prison model designed by Jeremy Bentham in 1784. The concept of the design involves a central guard tower that provides a view of all encircling prison cells due to the distance and a mediating visual factor in the tower (such as blinds) prisoners are unable to tell if they are being watched or not. Rather than exploiting this powerful optical relationship, Koolhaas labeled it as an obsolete ideal and fashioned a renovation of the Arnhem prison ostensibly devoid of an optical hierarchy. 

This methodology yields a more charged architectural proposition than merely superimposing a new program on top of the existing one. Thus, in approaching Fort Jay, it became clear that the design process would span two phases: 1) amplify the inherent militant qualities to make it even more fort-like in its defensive capabilities, and 2) distort the results to optimize theater operation while maintaining its scopic traits. A key result of this would be an inversion of the ‘military theater’ from outside the fort, to be completely contained within. The goal of the first phase would not be to make a fort that could withstand modern warfare, but rather be a stronger fort for the time it was built, thus enhancing the characteristics it already contains. The goal of the second phase would be to distort this ‘enhanced’ fort as necessary to make a modern theater capable of housing performances and an audience.

Amplify-The following steps were taken to amplify the ‘fortness’ of the site: dropping the central courtyard and its buildings to sea level. This provided an alternative means of entering and exiting the fort which

4 ‘Military theater’ is a term used to describe a specific area of conflict bordered by areas of no conflict. In Fort Jay’s initial incarnation, the military theater would be the exterior of the fort during war. In Fort Jay’s realization as a theater, the exterior becomes de-militarized and the conflict is contained to the interior.
did not risk penetrating the outer wall.
- tunneling through Governors Island and up to Fort Jay. A submarine would provide transportation.
- extending the outer walls with holed masonry and strengthening them. This provided for another layer of defensive protection while providing small holes that give the defenders of the fort a hidden view to the outside as well as a means to fire smaller caliber artillery before the cannons. The moat then serves as a catch for any destruction without damaging the next layer of wall.
- raising the starpoints containing cannons to extend firing distance, should the fort wall be breached.
- enclosing the top of each pair of converging walls in order to create a rigging system that allows for extra walls to be brought down should areas of the fort need to be contained, such as after a section is breached.

Distort- The following steps were taken to distort this 'ultimate' fort to claim optimal usage as a theater:
- adjusting the rake of the starpoints to allow audience members situated on the level interior to see the entire stage while making it a readily occupiable space for performers. Each of the five starpoints becomes a separate stage. The perimeter geometry stays the same to allow for the already-present effect of forced perspective.

Sebastiano Serlio (1547-1554) was an architect-theorician and set designer who pioneered such stage effects as colored lights, mechanical rigging, and using forced perspective to produce the illusion of a greater depth than that which actually exists.

- modifying the interiors of each of the four existing buildings in order to house the program necessary to running a theater.
- adjusting the containment rigging system to function also as flywheels and to handle lighting.
- establishing interior cameras among the rigging systems to provide the audience with alternative means of viewing performances.
- allowing the submarine to not only dock at the bottom of the central atrium, but to travel to the top of it so as to provide the submarine audience with a panoptical view of all five stages.

The distorted result, in fact, continues to use military technology to achieve many of its ends. The thousands of cameras inhabiting the theater are only possible by means of advanced mobile microcamera technology developed by the military. The submarine is able to rise to the top of the atrium using a system based both on hydraulic pumps developed for the military, as well as missile silo design.

on the stage. The star-point geometry of Fort Jay allowing for five stages employing extreme forced perspective thanks to the convergence of its walls instead of the standard backwall. A reinterpretation of both 'periscope' and 'telescopium,' the submarine audience sacrifices the close view of an individual stage for the power of seeing all five stages without being seen themselves.

Currently, high definition cameras smaller than a microchip exist. They have wireless feeds of up to one kilometer (http://www.thainian.com/newsport3/health/ehealth/microchip-sized-digital-camera-to-provide-vision-for-us-military-injected-sized-aircraft_1001480.html). In this theater, the cameras are large enough to have a physical presence in theatrical space and become active performers.
The resulting theater maintains many of the fort's characteristics that mask the outside of the structure, only to leave the workings of the interior entirely exposed. Typically in a theater, this would be hidden by wing space and placing rigging much higher up. This project, however, is interested in maintaining the quality of epic spectacle without masking its incarnation.

**Experience**

Like its military incarnation, the submarine approach provides a dramatic event unlike anything most of the audience will have experienced. Rather than simply waiting for their arrival at the theater, the audience directly causes it. The usual passive qualities of transportation are lost as it is up to the collective audience to work together with their pedal strokes (as in the cooperation required for a kayak or paddleboat) toward the goal of ultimately viewing a performance; yet this in itself is a performance. This alternative mode of engagement establishes for the

8 Bertolt Brecht (playwright) advocated for epic theater that eschewed suspension of disbelief. Guy Debord (filmmaker) advocated for spectacles to contain "detournments" which call out attention to its falsehood as or not to be drawn into this. This theater provides grandly scaled spectacle while also displaying all the mechanics behind it. This will craft a visual conflict to induce a state of hyperawareness similar to the effects achieved by architects Piller and Scaffidio's Blur building, a pavilion made entirely of steel and fog. There: the obscuring of vision heightens the participant's awareness; here, the level of exposure and control of vision achieves a similar level of focus: but through engagement instead of exclusion.