

The Polyphonic Embassy

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ABSTRACT:

Polyphonic Embassy
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After the Iran hostage crisis in 1979, diplomatic relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America ceased. The hostage crisis was a diplomatic standoff between Iran and United States. Opinions differ over what has caused the cooling in relations. Iranian government explanations criticize the USA's desired hegemony on the other, and other reports include the Iranian government's need for an illusion of external bogeyman to furnish domestic repression against pro-democratic forces. While relations remained strained since the incident, in 2015 renewed conversations between the two countries resulted in a nuclear deal between Iran and USA. Additionally, hope in the Iranian Social and political atmosphere for a normalized relationship between Iran and USA was possible, however, the situation remains fragile. The nuclear deal created a vision in political global perspective to think about diplomatic strategies as a practical solution. In terms of reaction to the local and worldwide contexts, designing an Iranian embassy in Washington DC could create an architectural design discourse.

Polyphony is a philosophy by Mikhail Bakhtin (1895 – 1975), a Russian literary critic, derived from aesthetic point of views of Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821 -1881) in his novels toward life which includes a diversity of points of view and voices based on the idea of the relationship between the “other” and “I”. Bakhtin's Polyphonic theory frames an innovative discussion to design a new Iranian Embassy as the “I” within the United States as “other” against the background of their controversial historical and political contexts.

Keywords: Iranian Embassy, USA, Hostage Crisis, Mikhail Bakhtin, Polyphonic theory, Fyodor Dostoevsky, The “other” and “I”,

The Uncanny, Architectural Doppelgängers



“When we sit down to deal with Iranians **the ghost of the history** are in the room!”

-John Limbert, U.S. diplomat, he was held captive during the Iran hostage crisis.

FIGURE 1.1
Iran Hostage Crisis, USA Embassy, Tehran (1979), (Unknown)

1. Durant, Will *The Story of Civilization*, Vol I, Our oriental Heritage (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1942), viii.
2. Zibakalam, Sadegh *How Did We Become What We Are?*(Tehran: Rowzaneh Publication, 1998), 54.
3. Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi was the Shah (King) of Iran from 1941 until his overthrow by the Iranian Revolution 1979.
4. Milani, Abbas *The Shah* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2013), 441.
5. Kurzman, Charles *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2005), 77.
6. Kinzer, Stephen *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), 9.
7. Abrahamian, Ervand, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton Studies on the Near East (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 21.
8. Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men*, 34.
9. Dr. Mohammad Mosaddegh was the head of a democratically elected government holding office as the Prime Minister of Iran from 1951 until 1953, when his government was overthrown in a coup d'état aided by the United States' CIA and the United Kingdom's Secret Intelligence Service.
10. Iranian cleric and secretary general of the reformist Association of Combatant Clerics
- 11 Ebtakar, Massoumeh, Reed, Freed A. *Takeover in Tehran: The Inside Story of the 1979 U.S. Embassy Capture* (Montreal: Talonbooks, 2000), 25.
- 12 Masoumeh Ebtakar is current Vice President of Iran for Women and Family Affairs.
- 13 Ebtakar *Takeover in Tehran*, 36-37.

Chapter I

Political and Historical Context

Through colonialism and then globalization until now the Western culture has the dominance in global atmosphere; however, the importance of Eastern culture through history is indisputable. Iran as a Middle Eastern country had one of the main roles in creating the Eastern culture. Will Durant (1885-1981) insists on the importance of oriental heritage.

“Our story begins with the Orient, not merely because Asia was the scene of the oldest civilizations known to us, but because those civilizations formed the background and basis of that Greek and Roman culture”¹

Although Iran’s cultural and political power fluctuated over two thousand years, from 17th century it has deteriorated rapidly through Colonialism and then Capitalism, Modernism, and then Globalization.²

Starting in the 19th century, England, Russia and then the USA played a role behind the stage of the Iranian political condition. There were many

tensions between Iranian people, government and Western countries through history specifically Russia, Britain, and lately USA. In 1979 the political and social position of Iran provided a context for a revolution which is regarded as the Islamic revolution.

The main purpose and slogan of this revolution was independence and freedom since so many people believed that the Shah³ was a puppet of a non-Muslim Western power (the United States).⁴

Although there were many other voices in the revolution, at the end the political winners were the Islamic groups. The “Revolution produced profound change at great speed which resulted in the exile of many Iranians”⁵ and “replaced a pro-Western semi-absolute monarchy with an anti-Western authoritarian. The new government was a conservative backlash against the Westernizing and secularizing efforts of the Western-backed Shah.”⁶ Many Iranian Scholars believe that comparing bad to worse is always a flaw in political arguments; however, the Shah’s regime was arguably less horrific than what Iran faces today. Iranian people traded one tyrant for another.⁷

The diplomatic standoff between Iran and the United States began when 52 American diplomats and citizens were held hostage for 444 days, from November 1979 to January 1981, after a group of so called students, radicals, who supported the Iranian Revolution, occupied the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.

After Shah Overthrow, he was purportedly admitted to the United States for cancer treatment. Iran demanded that he be returned to stand trial for crimes he was accused of committing during his reign. “The Americans saw the hostage-taking as an egregious violation of the principles of international law, which granted diplomats immunity from arrest and made diplomatic compounds inviolable.”⁸

One should recall, despite the inexcusable act of invading the US Embassy, that same US Embassy had been used to topple Iran’s democracy in 1953, bring back the Shah, who was installed by the Central Intelligence Agency, CIA, in a coup that overthrew the democratically elected government⁹ and support and arm him through to 1979.

All the Shah's Men by Stephen Kinzer highlights this double standards perfectly.

Mohammad Mousavi Khomeini¹⁰ (1942) argues the “[So called] students considered the seizure of the embassy as their indisputable right of opposition to the American Government’s decision to welcome the Shah and to its general policy of hostility towards the Iranian revolution...Is it fair to view their action as a barbarous encroachment on the rights of a number of American citizens without a detailed inquiry into its logical and historical background?”¹¹

Massoumeh Ebtakar¹² (1960) was one of the students who occupied the Embassy and the one who wrote her memoir about it also says “...If this [Embassy Occupation] sounds like an extreme statement, consider that the embassy occupation clearly influenced the decision of the united states and its allies to back Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein’s invasion of the Infant Islamic Republic of Iran...If we are to judge by today’s international climate, the job will not be easy. The gap of misunderstanding and incomprehension that the embassy takeover revealed is still with us today.”¹³

14 Abdolkarim Soroush, is an Iranian thinker, reformer, Rumi scholar and a former professor of philosophy at the University of Tehran.
15 Ebtekar *Takeover in Tehran*, 20
16 Milani, *The Shah*, 362.
17 The term “axis of evil” was used by U.S. President George W. Bush to describe governments that his administration accused of sponsoring terrorism and seeking weapons of mass destruction.
18 “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action Share” state.gov. <https://www.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/iran/jcpoa/> (accessed November 22, 2016)
19 Bahrampour, Tara “Iranian Embassy, shuttered for decades, was known for hedonistic, star-studded gatherings” https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/iranian-embassy-shuttered-for-decades-was-known-for-hedonistic-star-studded-gatherings/2013/12/08/3a537fe0-57a8-11e3-8304-caf30787c0a9_story.html?utm_term=.21d0056494a5 (accessed January 21, 2018)
20 Beinart, Peter “Why the Iran Deal Makes Obama’s Critics So Angry” [theatlantic.com. https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/07/iran-nuclear-deal-obama/398450/](https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/07/iran-nuclear-deal-obama/398450/) (accessed January 13,
21 Trump, Donald “Remarks by President Trump on Iran Strategy” [whitehouse.gov https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-iran-strategy/](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-iran-strategy/) (accessed January 14, 2018)
22 Caba-Maria, Flavius “The Trump Administration’ Policies towards Iran” [themarketforideas.com http://www.themarketforideas.com/the-trump-administration-policies-towards-iran-a98/](http://www.themarketforideas.com/the-trump-administration-policies-towards-iran-a98/) (accessed January 12, 2018)
23. Ibid

Ebtekar’s and Khomeini’s point of views represent Iran government official narration; however, Khomeini’s question is valid and fundamental about the importance of historical background for both sides.

In keeping with the new spirit of frankness at large in Iranian society, so many voices, even Ebtekar and notably that of dissident Iranian philosopher Abdolkarim Soroush¹⁴ (1945) , argue that “the embassy capture, occupation and hostage taking should be seen as mistake.”¹⁵

After more than one year of tensions and negotiations, the hostages were eventually released, but the political and social situation in Iran is still fragile. American embassy in Iran was closed for more than thirty years and now is a museum for propaganda purposes of the Iran government.

The Iran embassy in USA is also closed. After all these years, there is no diplomatic and political relation between the two nations due to various controversial issues. The Iranian government misused this condition to create an illusion of an external bogeyman in the USA to furnish domestic repression against

pro-democratic forces¹⁶ while the USA justified its military attacks in the Middle East by considering Iran and other countries as the axis of evil.¹⁷

After the hostage crisis, the nuclear crisis was the most significant tension between the USA and Iran. While relations remained strained since the incident, in 14 July 2015 renewed conversations between the two countries resulted in a nuclear deal (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA) which was signed by the US along with Britain, Russia, China, the European Union and Iran.¹⁸ Additionally, hope in the Iranian social and political atmosphere for a normalized relationship between Iran and the USA was possible; however, the situation remains fragile.

JCPOA fueled hope that multilateral diplomacy is still possible. After the deal, opening Iran and USA embassies was the subject of gossip in both countries. This hope offered the encouragement to design a new Iranian embassy as the topic of this thesis.

“Nuclear negotiations ... have represented the

most extensive overt diplomatic contact in decades and have set off speculation about the possibility of renewed relations between the former allies...If this were to happen; it’s possible the embassy could reopen. But it’s unlikely it would ever play the same role it did in the 1970s.”¹⁹ However, the atmosphere was optimistic before the United States’ 2016 presidential election, and the election of President Donald Trump (1946). Republicans’ point of view towards nuclear deal was critical and completely different from democrats and mainly President Barack Obama’s (1961) view.²⁰

Candidate Trump promised during the presidential campaign that he will tear down the nuclear deal, as he considers it to be “as one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into.”²¹ After the election, President Trump also signed on Friday, 27 January 2017, an executive order temporarily preventing travel to the US for citizens of several Muslim-majority countries due to so called anti-Americanism of banned countries including Iran. “The last time Iran was faced with such a ban was in 1979, when President

Jimmy Carter (1977-1981) responded to the US Embassy hostage crisis in Tehran by cancelling thousands of visas, turning away travelers and not releasing new ones.”²²

These related incidents suggest that the nuclear deal might not be permanent and diplomatic relations could be altered, especially by shifting from administration to administration in USA and the national and international pressures on Iran’s regime.

The current political instability in USA helps hardliners in Iran to mount pressure on reformists due to their trust in United States and presenting the results of the nuclear deal as meager in order to convince the undecided side of the population in Iran that the deal was a blatant mistake.²³

President Trump might ultimately decide to live with the deal and with Iran although Europeans have different point of view as it could be seen

in Javier Solana’s²⁴ statement.

“The Iran nuclear deal and the Paris climate agreement offer hope that formalized, multilateral responses to global challenges are still possible. But Donald Trump has criticized both agreements, and the actions he takes as president could undermine them, and contribute to global instability.”²⁵

These political issues require political solution and architecture is not the key to success. However this thesis relies on one aspect of the situation which mentioned by Solana that the nuclear deal “offers hope that multilateral responses to global challenges are still possible.” Architecture could suggest an aesthetic for this possibility and design a new Iranian Embassy in USA based on an aesthetic for this complex political and historical condition. As it mentioned previously by Tara Bahrapour (1965),

The Washington Post journalist “it’s possible the embassy could reopen. But it’s unlikely it would ever play the same role it did in the 1970s.”²⁶

If the both countries, one day, want to reopen their new embassies they would need new buildings or renovation of previous embassies to feel around 14,000 days gap. This building or renovation should be the aesthetic reflection of the gap and situation Aesthetic is based on philosophical theory so next chapter will concentrate on the proper artistic and rhetorical theory for this thesis.

24 Javier Solana was EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy.

25. Solana, Javier “Trump, Iran, and Stability in the Middle East” project-syndicate.org <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/trump-iran-stability-middle-east-by-javier-solana-2017-01?barrier=accessreg> (accessed January 12, 2018)

26. Bahrapour, Tara “Iranian Embassy, shuttered for decades, was known for hedonistic, star-studded gatherings”

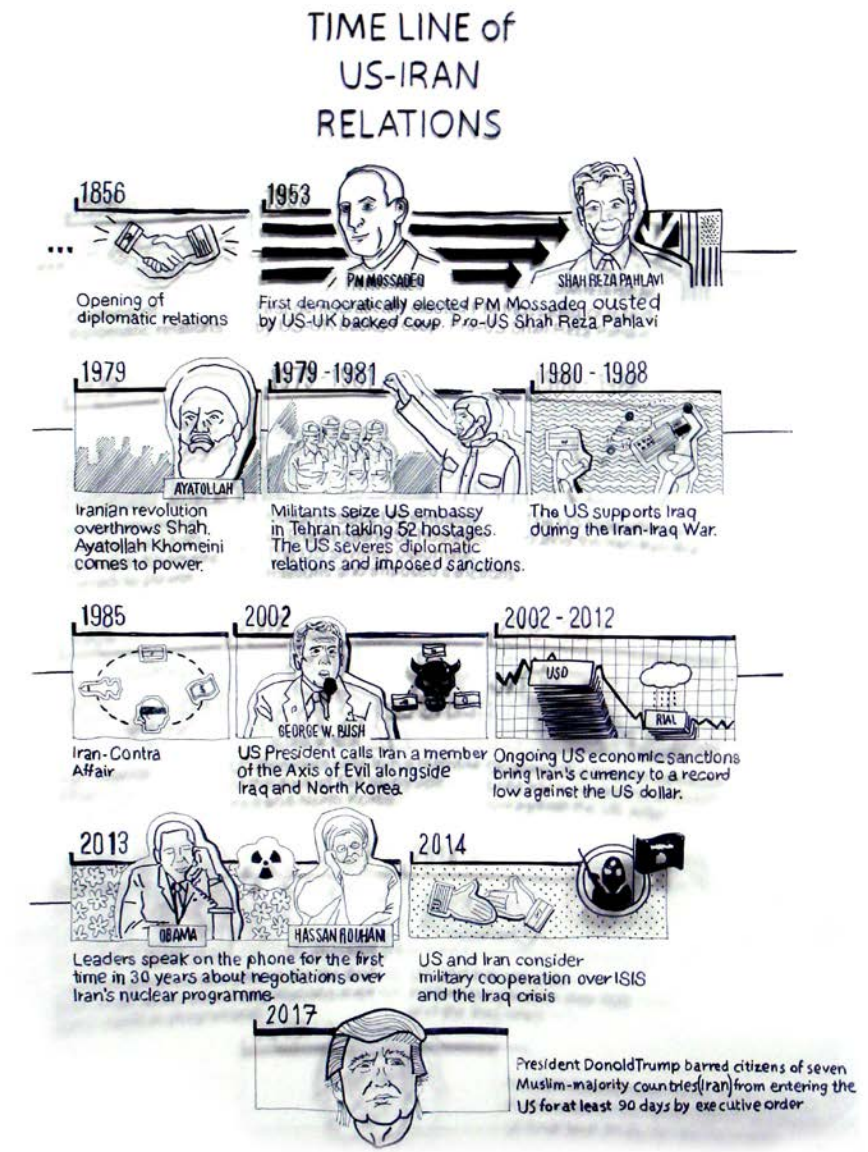


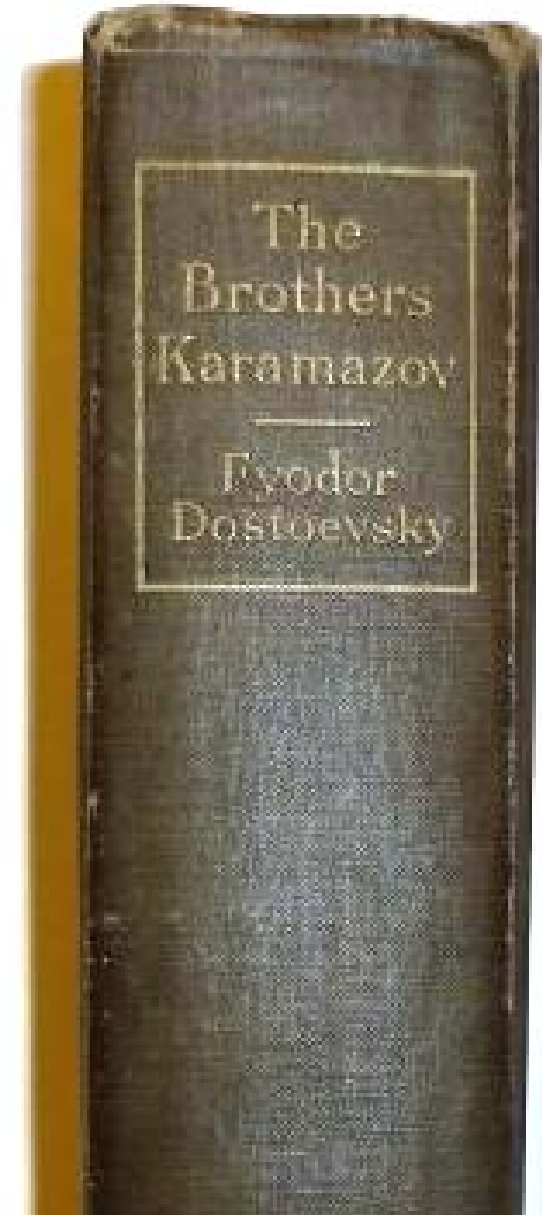
FIGURE 1.2 Time Line of US-Iran Relations (Author)

Chronology off the Occupation of the United States Embassy

in Tehran²³:

- 1979 November 4 occupation of the United States Embassy by so called Leftist-Muslim Students [Hardliners] November 14, U.S. government freezes Iranian assets.
December, students [hardliners] begin release of documents revealing U.S. intelligence activist in Iran
- 1980 January 1, U.N. Secretary General Kurt Waldheim arrives in Tehran, meets members of the Revolutionary Council. January 17, U.S. aircraft carrier Nimitz enters Persian Gulf.
Five-member U.N. special commission established
March, U.N. commission leaves Tehran without obtaining release of hostages.
April 7, President James Carter breaks diplomatic relations with Iran
April 25, U.S. hostage rescue mission fails in the desert at Tabas.
July 27, Mohammad-Reza Pahlavi dies in Cairo.
September 22, Iraq invades Iran, starting a war that was to last eight years.
- 1981 January 20, 52 American hostages released, after 444 days of captivity.
Inauguration of U.S. President Ronald Reagan.

²³ Ebtakar *Takeover in Tehran*, 13.



CHAPTER II
POLYPHONIC THEORY
MIKHAIL BAKHTIN
PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT

FIGURE 2.0

The Brothers Karamazov, Fyodor Dostoevsky 1880 (Author)



FIGURE 2.1
Portrait of Mikhail Bakhtin by Ivan Pavlov (1921) (Ivan Pavlov, 1891)

BAKHTIN POLYPHONIC THEORY THE “OTHER” AND “I”

“The way in which I create myself is by means of a quest, I go out into the world in order to come back with a self.”

-Mikhail Bakhtin

Chapter II

Philosophical Context:

Methodology

If one considers designing a new Iranian Embassy in USA as a problem, there are various methods for the solution. One could follow the official governmental design codes, word by word, similar to so many other governments' buildings or it could be a pure formalistic approach by disregarding history and context just as a starchitect self-expression or it could be a spatial interpretation of political and historical context.

The third approach would observe the issue in a wider context. The mentioned political, historical background in previous chapter needs a poetic of space with a philosophical approach, a philosophy that could define an aesthetic for Iranian embassy in the USA by considering historical and, political context. This theory should be inclusive and oriented in a way to fully grasp cultural aspect of Iran and the USA, similarities and differences, to demonstrate valuable aspects of Iranian

and American culture. Both countries need to understand each other's interests and objectives better. However, all these could be generalized in a philosophical issue of the "other" and "I", and in this thesis "I" could be as Iran and then "other" as USA or vice versa. Although the Iran and USA relationship may seem of concern to only both nations by representing it as the "other" and "I", it should in fact be the main concern of anyone who cares about the essence and aesthetic of the truth and reality.

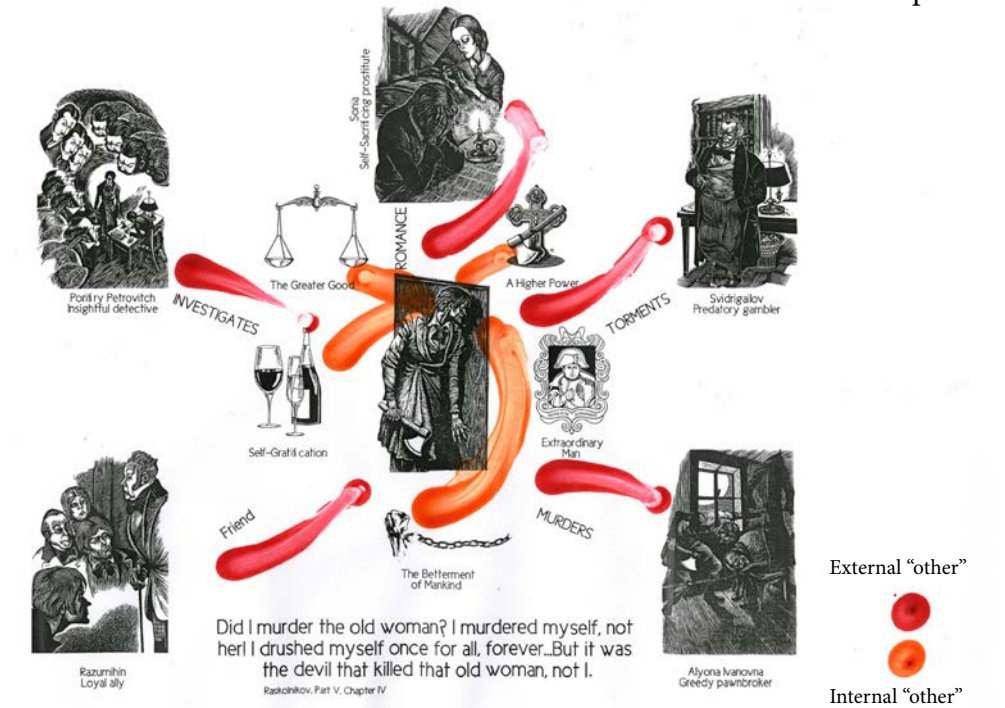
Theory and Thesis

In the term of theoretical approach, the theory of dialogism¹ and polyphonism by Mikhail Bakhtin² is a suitable philosophical point of view for this project since Bakhtin main concern is the issue of the "other" and "I". Caryl Emerson³, in her book, *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin*, maintains that "Dialogism happens when my "I" counters another "I" and healthy growth of any consciousness depends on its continual interaction of my "I" and "voice" with other "I" and "voice"

personalities and worldviews."⁴ In other words, Emerson believes that dialogue between different voices could create a neutral context for a form to be interpreted creatively by a reader or an observer, not by an author or an artist's political, gender, racial bias.

In Bakhtinian point of view, truth only flourishes in "multi-voiced", "multi-leveledness" context like a public space. For Bakhtin public space is a parable for truth. An art could only depict it when "heterogeneous material" is represented as "unified artistic creation". Bakhtin developed the idea of dialogism based on aesthetic point of view of Fyodor Dostoevsky in his novels. Bakhtin believes that "Dostoevsky created a completely new type of artistic thinking and model of the world, which its significance extends far beyond the limits of the novel alone and touches upon several basic principles of European aesthetics."⁵

The rationale behind why Dostoevsky's aesthetic is noteworthy is that all characters in his novels are "author-thinker" which means "his characters are treated as ideologically authoritative and independent as the author."⁶ The point is that Dostoevsky as a writer doesn't only want to justify his ideas. He wants



“Why am I to be pitied, you say? Yes! There's nothing to pity me for! I ought to be crucified, crucified on a cross, not pitied! Crucify me, oh judge, crucify me but pity me!”
- *Crime and Punishment*, Fyodor Dostoevsky

Figure 2.2
Crime and Punishment Diagram (Author)

¹ By dialogue Bakhtin does not mean dramatic dialogue or philosophical dialogue. He means heterogeneous material or artistic hybrid.

² A Russian philosopher, literary critic, semiotician and scholar who worked on literary theory, ethics, and the philosophy of language.

³ PhD in Comparative Literature from University of Texas at Austin and MAT in Russian Language Teaching, and Russian Studies from Harvard University

⁴ Emerson, Caryl *The First Hundred Years of Bakhtin*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 26.

⁵ Ibid, 3.

⁶ Ibid, 5.

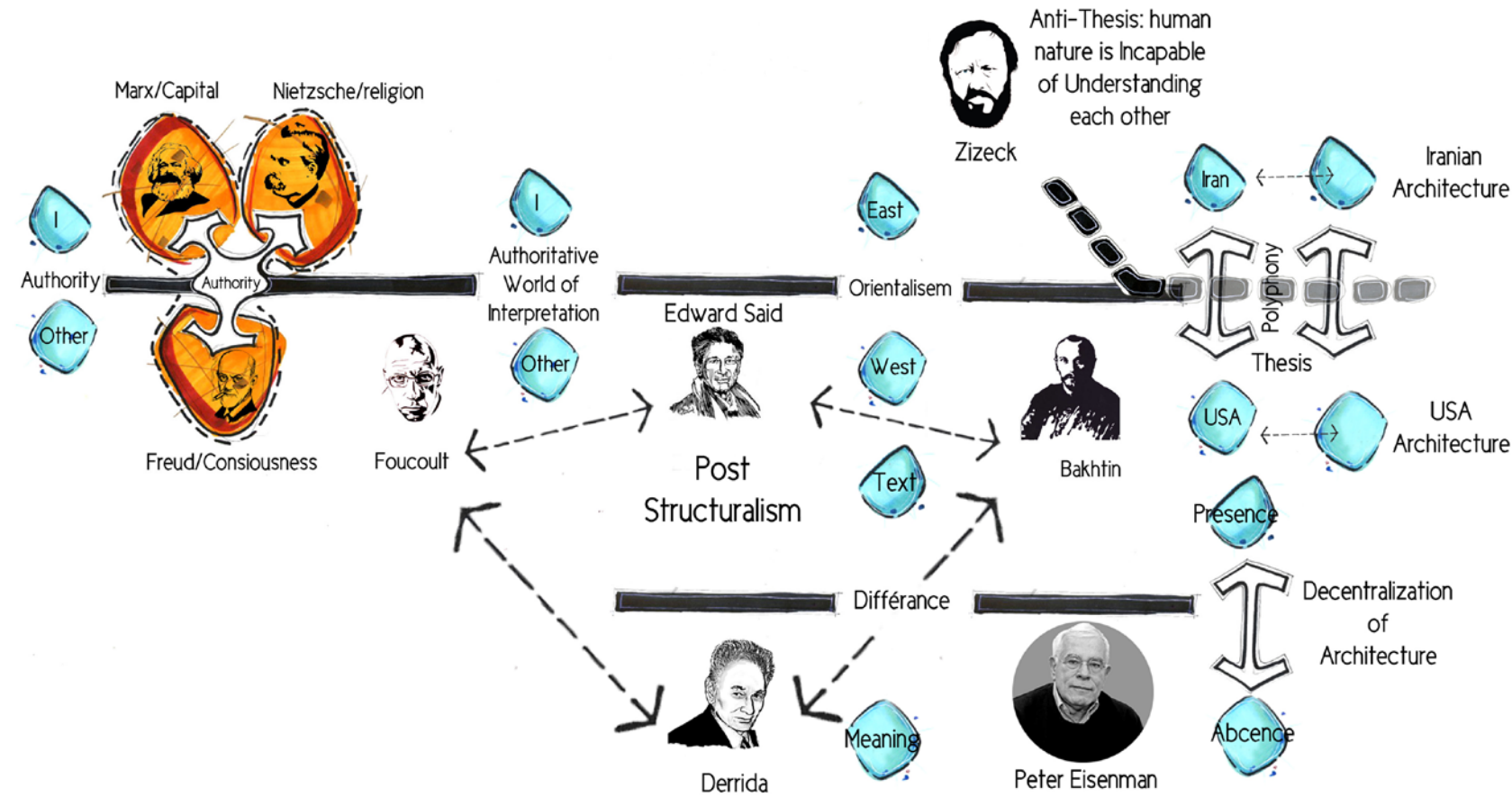


Figure 2.3
Theoretical Diagram (Author)

to enrich his artistic universe by various points of views without any judgment or “a Character’s word about himself and his world is just as fully weighted as the author’s word.”⁷ In the infographic (Figure 2.2), I illustrated Dostoevsky’s artistic strategy towards his characters in the *Crime and Punishment* or as another example, in *The Brothers Karamazov* novel, Dostoevsky as “the historiographer of the idea” put a sensualist (Dmitri Karamazov), a rationalist atheist (Ivan Karamazov) and a faithful orthodox (Alexei Karamazov) in dialogue with each other. All these characters in a many sided composition bound up in an organic unity; “Permitting nothing to rest easily in isolation, but at the same time resolving nothing.”⁸ His world could be illustrated as a “church with the communion of unmerged souls, where sinners and righteous men come together.”⁹ In this way he purely solved an artistic problem since there is no “dominant” in Dostoevsky’s aesthetic when “all things existed side by side and simultaneous as if they existed in space and not in time.”¹⁰ As a result, Dostoevsky’s novel ends up as a sort of artistic hybrid or as it mentioned before “heterogeneous materials” represented as “unified artistic creation”

without author’s bias and distortion.

Masters of Suspicion

It is impossible to fully comprehend Bakhtin’s ideas and artistic hybrid theories about the “other” and “I” in isolation since there is always a visible and invisible connection between ideas and thoughts. In this theoretical diagram (Figure 2.3), this connection has been illustrated where Bakhtin and his “I” and “other” theories stand in regard to some other philosophers in the context of this thesis. The following paragraphs are the explanation of these interconnections.

The issue of the “other” and “I” has been an important topic for various scholars through history till now. In the history of philosophy Karl Marx (1818 -1883), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900), and Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939) the three “masters of suspicion”¹¹ for the first time questioned authorities (capital, religion, conciseness, etc.) in the most innovative way. They revolutionized the world in a way which could be regarded as a counterpoint in history. Philosophy

⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 33.
⁸ *Ibid*, 19.
⁹ *Ibid*, 26.
¹⁰ *Ibid*, 28.
¹¹ School of suspicion” is a phrase coined by Paul Ricœur, French philosopher, to capture a common spirit that pervades the writings of Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche, the three “masters of suspicion”.

professor, Rick Roderick¹² (1949–2002) in his lecture said “Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, put in front of us false consciousness, the self-being false to itself... the problem of false consciousness is that you could be absolutely clear that you have no doubt and it can be a pure abstract cultural mechanism.”¹³

Michel Foucault (1926 -1984) pessimistically pushed forward Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud’s theories and summarized their philosophy by saying that “everything is an interpretation of interpretation”¹⁴ and Interpreters could interpret this world as authorities in a way they desire and this system could create a mechanism of exclusion since the “other” has the most capabilities for negative and biased interpretation. These interpretations created various ideologies. At this point, Bakhtin Theory (Dialogism) could be represented as a solution, a polyphonic (inclusive) approach toward this (exclusive) world of interpretation and ideologies. If one want to combine Foucault and Bakhtin theories the result could be that “either the “I” (in Foucault

terminology “I’s” interpretation) or the other (“other’s” interpretation) comes to dominate a given horizon wholly; then a monologic (“homophonic”) atmosphere appears.¹⁵ Bakhtin insists on the importance of meeting between this “I” and “other” interpretation. He wants a utopia and paradise of communication.

In the context of this thesis, the lack of dialogue between “I” and “other” in Bakhtinian point of view could be related to confrontation of East and West. The best scholar who reminded us of the problem of this confrontation is Edward Said (1935–2003) and his theory Orientalism.

Orientalism

What is Orientalism? “Certain mindset toward the third world which dictates a certain ways of structuring one’s thought about that world.”¹⁶ What is interesting in Said’s theory in “I” and “other” is opposition of orientalism to central self, in this case of being Western, and decentralized “other”.¹⁷ This mindset (“I” and “Non-I” or “Master/Slave”¹⁸) is a cultural phenomenon and has existed through

history from ancient times. For instance, Herodotus (c. 484–c. 425 BC), the father of history, in his book *The Histories* defined non-Greek, “other”, people compared to Greek people, “I”, as barbaric.

This mindset also increased dramatically after industrial revolution in 19th century colonial era to support colonial ideologies. In this period technology became the main tool in the hands of the colonizer. This attitude remained the same through history till now with various versions.

Said in one of his interviews said that “the most interesting human task is the task of interpretation for particular reason to understand my history in terms of other people history, to move beyond generalization. The great goal is in fact to become someone else. Transform itself from unitary identity to the identity that introduces the other without suppressing differs.”¹⁹

Although Said’s theory is more political and Bakhtin theory is more aesthetic, they both have certain similarities including the notion of “I”

and “other” as West and East. Analogies between Said’s and Bakhtin theory could show why Bakhtin theory can be apply as an aesthetic design theory to represent Iran (East) and USA (West) controversial historical and political issue as “I” and “other” problem.

Although Bakhtin polyphonic theory precedes Said’s theory, it could be considered as a responsive discourse towards Orientalism. Derived from Bakhtin theory only by dialogue between cultures, nations could alter these stereotyped and structured mindsets.

Western world through dialogue could alter the psyche from Eastern culture and vice versa. However, one should not consider Bakhtin as a romantic or sentimental philosopher; Bakhtin is completely aware and insist that the polyphonic situation is really rare and requires lots of theoretical and practical efforts.

¹² An American professor of philosophy, best known for his lectures for The Teaching Company.
¹³ Roderick, Rick “The Masters of Suspicion” YouTube video, posted by “The Partially Examined Life” Jan 25, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wetwETy4u0>
¹⁴ Foucault, Michel *Aesthetic Method and Epistemology* (New York, Robert Hurley and others, the new Press, 1994), 270
¹⁵ Roderick, Rick “Foucault - The Disappearance of the Human” YouTube video, posted by “The Partially Examined Life” Jan 25, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hP79SfCfRzo>
¹⁶ Fry, Paul H. “Introduction to Theory of Literature (ENGL 300)-Deconstruction” YouTube video, posted by “Yale Courses” Sep 1, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YY4CTSQ8nY&list=PLD-00D35CBC75941BD>
¹⁷ Ibid.
¹⁸ The master–slave dialectic is the common name for a famous passage of Friedrich Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In this dialectic Master and slave are necessary to each other in a structure of mutuality
¹⁹ Said, Edward “Edward Said On Orientalism” YouTube video, posted by “Palestine Diary” Oct 28, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVC8EY-d_Z_g

Bakhtin as a post-structuralist

In the architectural world Bakhtin is not as famous as philosophers like Martin Heidegger or Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) although one could see similarities between post-structuralist philosophers and Bakhtin²⁰. Among post-structuralist especially Derrida and Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) had an enormous impact on deconstructivist architecture and architects like Peter Eisenman (1932) and Bernard Tschumi (1944). For instance, the decentralized approach of Eisenman through architecture is under the influence of Derrida. Eisenman wants to decentralize, centralized architecture. He substitutes nature and culture with absence and presence.

“Traditionally architecture centers and its textuality speak of center or presence, and presence dominant over absence. The architecture I am pursuing is one which presence and absence operate equally; the presence of absence and absence of presence and refusing center.”²¹

Eisenman like Dostoyevsky, Bakhtin ideal polyphonic artist, omits the center to destroy the authority of particular element and create a context

for all aspects of the architectural shape and form.

However, the difference is that Bakhtin apart from insisting on the presence of various voices also wants a dialogue between heterogeneous elements.

In Eisenman works the dialogue is between formal architectural elements just as artistic self-expression rather than internal dialogue of formal or contextual parts. For Bakhtin a component could only exist or be present when it creates a dialogue with other components. Additionally, in Bakhtin theory, writer (designer) should also pay attention to the (architectural) interpretation of the reader (user) from text (architectural form and space).

Anti-Thesis

Opposed to Freud who insisted on unconscious human systems, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) observed the world as contractual meanings based on meaninglessness. Bakhtin stands somewhere in between not as a middle ground but as a dialog between the systematic world and the arbitrary world. This relativism of Bakhtin ideas could categorize him as a multiculturalist although there are fundamental differences between Bakhtin

thoughts and multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism is considered as a salad bowl, melting pot or as a mosaic. One of the main critics of multiculturalism is Slavoj Žižek (1949). Žižek complicates matters further when he said: “I strongly disagree with this Famous Multiculturalist motto ‘an enemy is someone whose story you did not hear.’ It sounds very noble as I objectify you. I should give you a chance to hear your side of the story as it were... You are human like me...ok...ok...sounds nice...to a certain level, it works...but just replace it with Hitler... this idea that I have to understand you to be open to you is false; I know I will never understand you when I could not understand myself, and then we all feel guilty all the time...the true problem of Multiculturalism is you are Indian; I’m Arab, and he is Latin American. We live in the same block and how can we be distant respectful to each other without this shitty understanding.”²²

Synthesis

Žižek in his recent lecture has offered harsh critiques of Multiculturalism; however, ultimately, he is right that there are some absolute values which are not negotiable, and it should be respected globally regardless of cultures and countries. For instance, human rights which are mentioned in *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* are proper examples. It does not matter which country or culture one live in; people at least should be respected towards certain values of human rights.

The main difference of Bakhtin theory as opposed to multiculturalism is that “Bakhtin was not sympathetic to the ultimate fusion or erasing of differences.”²³ as a multiculturalism goal. For Bakhtin, artistic materials should remain independent in a unity of a higher order than in homophony. Bakhtin like Žižek also believed “... Life in language is in fact dependent upon the preservation of a gap. Two speakers must not and never do, completely understand each other; they must remain only partially satisfied with each other’s replies, because the continuation of

²⁰ Some scholars categories Bakhtin as post-structuralist philosopher.
²¹ Derrida, Jacques and Peter Eisenman, *Chora L Works* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997), 7.
²² Zizek, Slavoj “Multiculturalism and Tolerance,” YouTube video, posted by “consumer” Nov 18, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DkkpOBvZLr8>
²³ Bakhtin, *The Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, xxxii.

dialogue is in large part dependent on neither party knowing exactly what the other means.”²⁴

What Žižek also castigates is the relativism of multiculturalism. Polyphonic approach is not about relativism or dogmatism since both equally exclude all argumentation, relativism makes dialogue unnecessary and dogmatism makes the dialogue impossible.²⁵ Dialogism creates a neutral space for spectator or reader to choose between characters (ideologies). Even if one analyzes Bakhtin philosophy as a political and social theory, it should be mentioned that dialogue with an enemy is significant. It does not mean that dialogue could justify immoral or criminal actions. Dialogism could create a wider perspective to understand the social and historical context which created an enemy.

Theoretical Conclusion

In discussion of art and particularly architecture, a controversial issue for so many years is whether form follows function, form follows form, form follows fiction or form follows function (fun). All

these examples in art and architecture could be summarized by Mikhail Bakhtin’s philosophy that form follows ideology.

Based on Bakhtin’s perspective towards philosophy and aesthetic, an art form could be highly successful when it has a potentiality to construct a dialogue between various voices, interpretations, and ideologies. This variation of voices in the art could be regarded as polyphony or dialogism. For instance, in this thesis context, considering the different cultural aspect of architecture from each country in the design of the building could create polyphonic or dialogic space.

This embassy could be a discourse between Iranian architecture and American architecture, a Composition and decomposition, a collage of Iran and USA architectural styles and identity simultaneously a “multi-styled”, “multi-accented” or “styleless”. Concerning semiotics, polyphonic architecture should give American or Iranian users room for their interpretation on form, function and space with this central question, is this an

24 Ibid
25. Ibid, 69
26. Ibid, 39.

American building or Iranian building? This issue could be a subject for further investigation in the design phase and I believe that the polyphonic building or “Dostoevskyism” Embassy would not have a solution for Iran and USA historical and poetical context. As Bakhtin said “As long as a work remained multi-leveled and multi-voiced, as long as the people in it were still arguing, then despair over the absence of a solution would not set in.”²⁶ Polyphonic design is the symposium of contradictoriness of social reality or “artistic hybrid “and coexistence and integration of “extreme heterogeneity of material” to represent a room or space for the spectator, user, and reader’s interpretations.

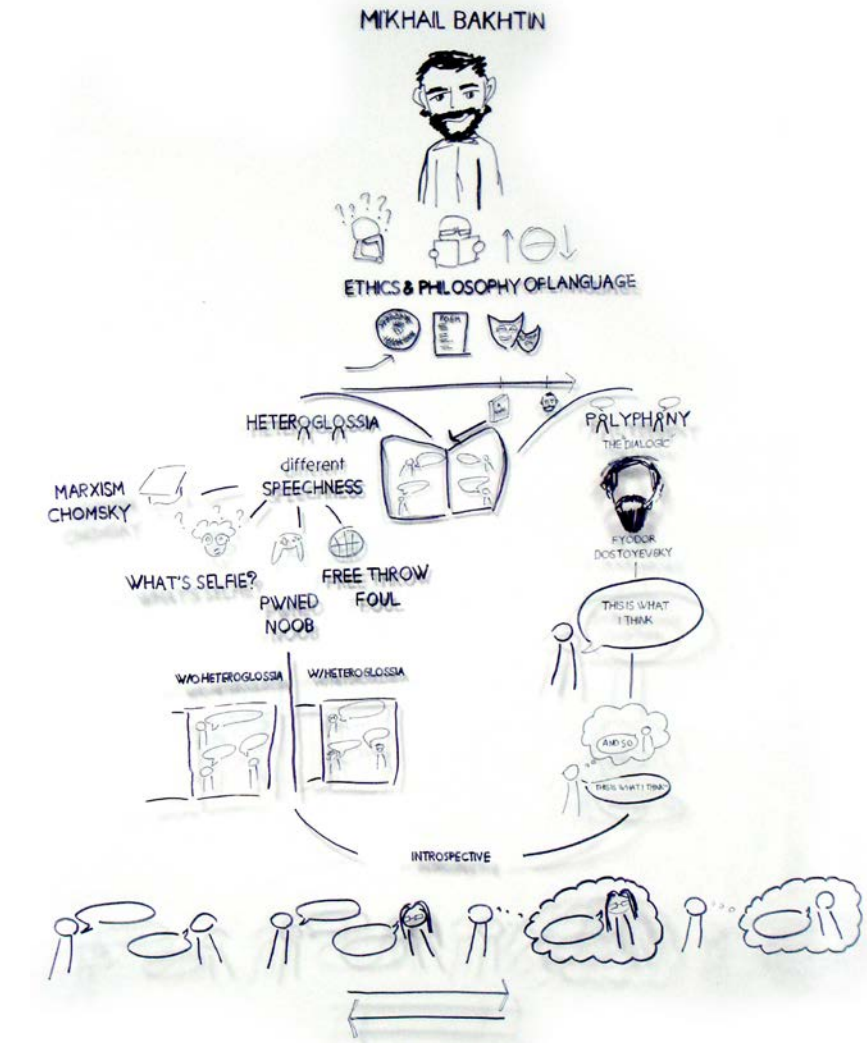


Figure 2.4
Mikhail Bakhtin’s Polyphonic Theoretical Diagram (Author)



Figure 2.5
Thesis Art Manifesto (Author)

Poetic Poetics of the “other” and “I”²⁷:

“Mirror, Mirror, on the wall, reveal to me who am “I”?” We are all enchanted; we are all Narcissus who fell in love with his reflection in the mirror of his mind, the reflection of “I”, the reflection of our country, race, nationality, sexuality; our religion. This is the curse of the goddess of love since we do not want to fall in love, we want to have love without the fall.

There is always an echo in the dark chambers of our mind, “Who is there?”, “Who am I”, “Is that you or is that I?”, is that the other hidden behind the next wall or is it just another shadow of mine? But we should ask the right questions. “How can I become something rather than I?” without the shame of a mirror, the shame of “I”. We should ask this of sculpture, painting, a film, a story or we should ask this of any work of art! Observation of an artwork is both window and the mirror at the same time.

How could this mirror, how could this “I” be the

window, be the “other” at the same time? It is impossible, but this is the possibility of art, struggling with the “other”, struggling with “I”. This game of “I” and “other” is not the game of fusion; it is the game of separation, gazing and reflection. Thousand mirrors in front of thousand mirrors and our presence trapped between with the hope of freedom, freedom of the “other”, “other” or “I”? This is a question without a response but let’s ask mirror; let’s ask art!

The Mirror says that there is no way to find the exit in this maze of lies, even when you look at yourself; you see the “other” instead of “I”. But art says when you see the reflection of the “other” put one step forward and then you will see that the “other” will put one step forward, towards the “other” towards the “I”. In this way, “I” and “other” could make a bridge, so there is still hope for Narcissus to break the spell since although God is dead, art is still alive!

²⁷ Thesis Art Manifesto Based on Mikhail Bakhtin’s Point of Views

**CHAPTER III
ARGUABLE POSITION
FORMER IRANIAN EMBASSY
IN WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Figure 3.0
Iran Embassy in DC, Thesis Site on Mirror (Author)

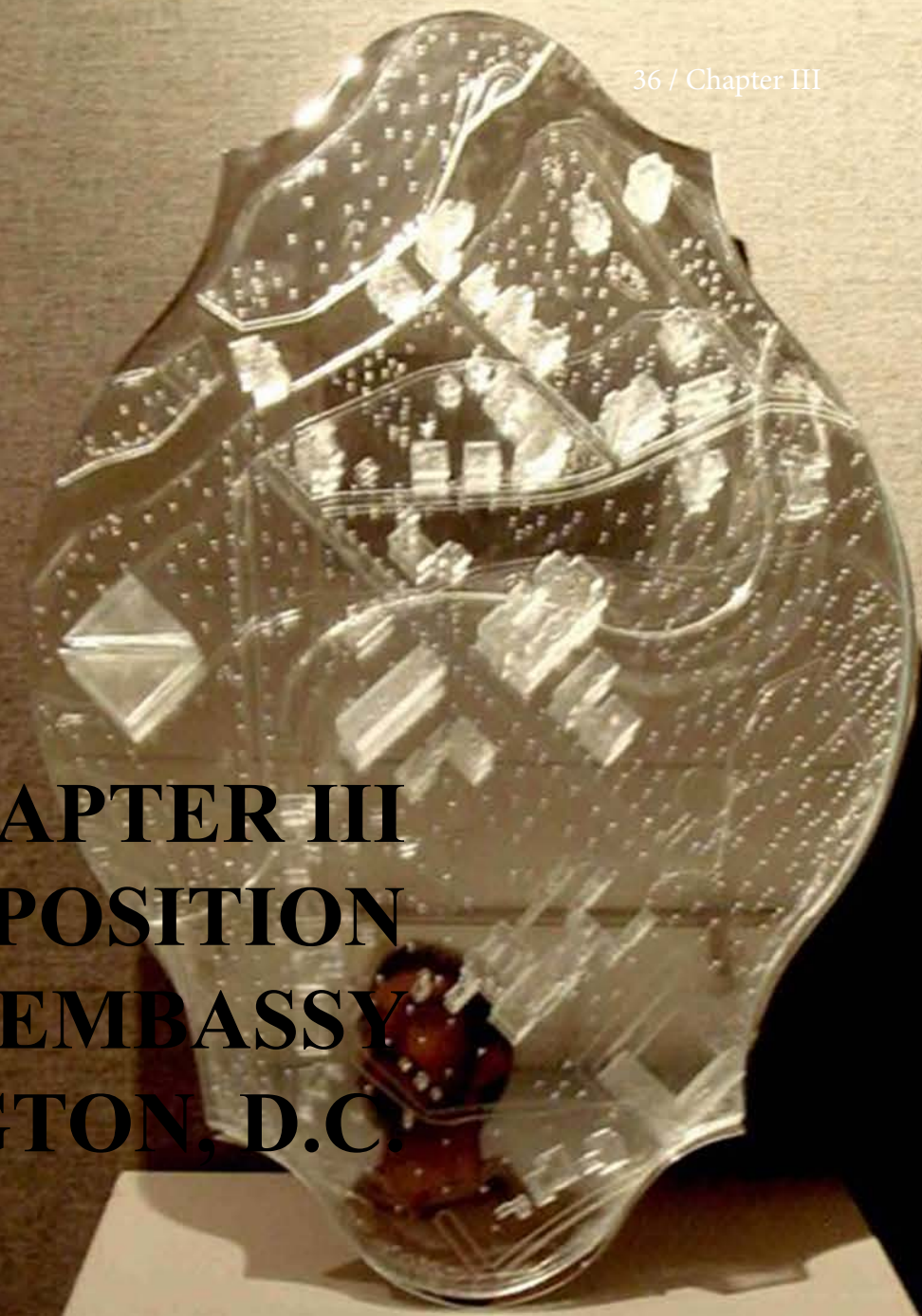




Figure 3.1
Custodian of Vacancy (2013)(Eric Parnes, 1979)

IRANIAN EMBASSY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

“We were afforded their [Iranian Embassy, USA] every desire, from champagne and caviar to sexual favors and recreational drugs.”

-Elizabeth Taylor

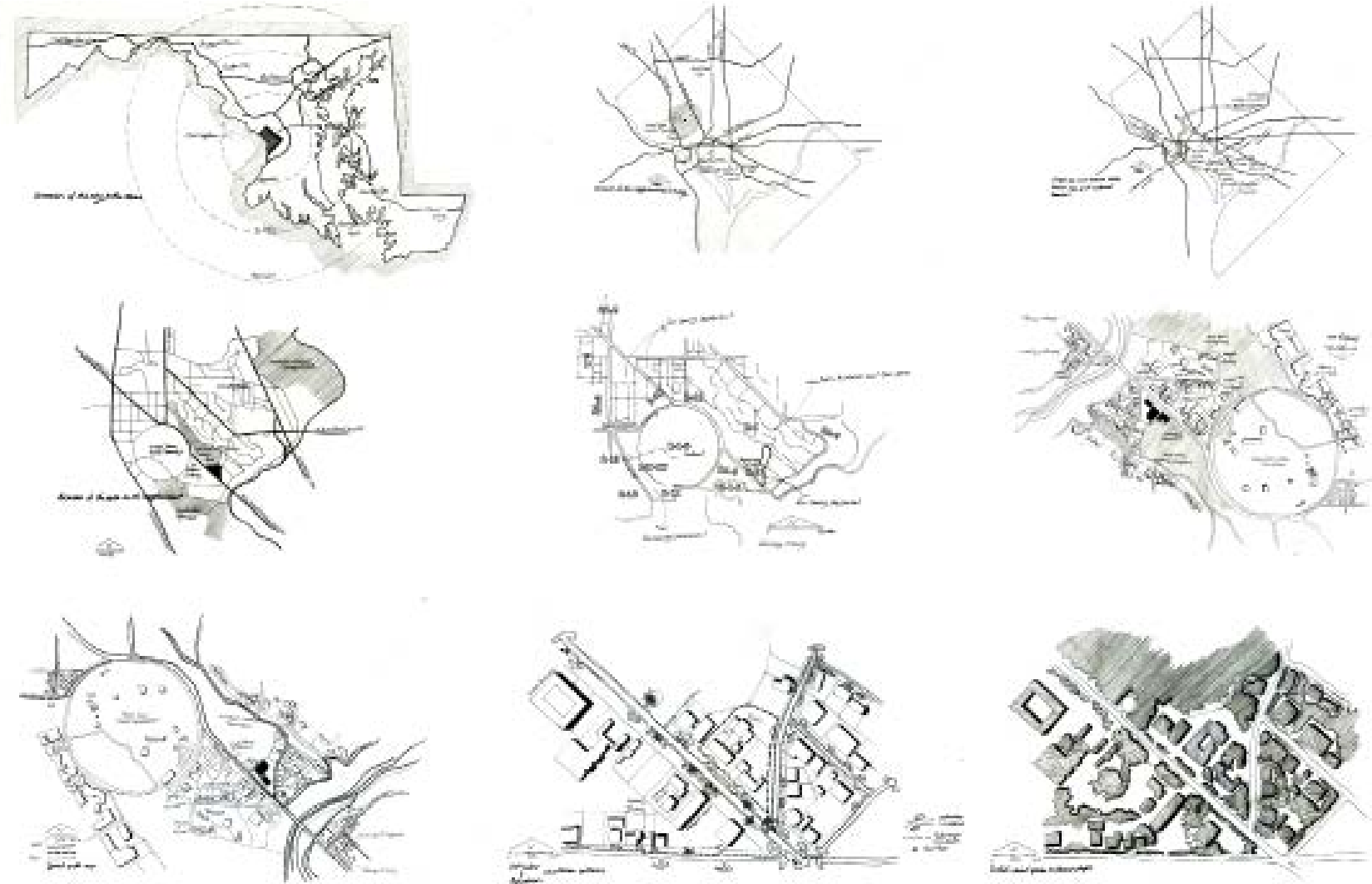


Figure 3.2
Thesis Site Analysis (Author)

Chapter III

Arguable Position

With more than 175 embassies, ambassador’s residences, chanceries and international cultural centers, Washington, DC is one of the most cultural and political cities in the US. These embassies are scattered all across the city, but there is a large concentration of them along Massachusetts Avenue NW between 18th and 35th streets. Massachusetts Avenue became known for its numerous mansions housing the city’s social and political elites.¹

The Great Depression² caused many Washington citizens to sell their homes. The expansive old estates proved well-suited for use as embassies, and also as lodges of social clubs, giving “Embassy Row” its present name, figure, and identity. Major embassies like Italy, Australia, India, Greece, Egypt, Ireland and Japan are located there.³ The former Iranian Embassy is also located at 3005 Massachusetts Ave which is in protected as the Historic District.

The Iranian Embassy as a historical building

remained from the era when USA and Iran had warm diplomatic relations. This historic building could create a polyphonic and dialogic context about the past and for the future, what it was and what it could be and the history behind the building illustrates historical events which led to the current situation. Choosing this location for this thesis as the site of the project is not for romanticism of the Embassy’s history, it is for political, historical and artistic potential of this place, and sense of identity.

Former Iranian Embassy:

Although I did the architectural site analysis, what makes this site unique is the history behind of it. The Former Embassy of Iran is a majestic building and the Georgian-style ambassador’s residence next door closed in April 1980 and has not been used by the Iranian government in the wake of the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis and the approximately 14,000 days freeze between Iran and the United States.⁴ “The Embassy complex since 1980 and its buildings and grounds are currently maintained by the U.S. Department of State.”⁵

1. Hotaling Eig, Emily and Julie Mueller, “National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Sheridan-Kalorama Historic District”
 2. From 1929 to 1939, and was the worst economic downturn in the history of the industrialized world.
 3. “Massachusetts Avenue Historic District brochure”, District of Columbia. 2000
 4. Bahrapour, Tara “Iranian Embassy, shuttered for decades, was known for hedonistic, star-studded gatherings”, washingtonpost.com
 5. Ibid.



Figure 3.3
The Shah (Getty Images)



Figure 3.4
Queen Fawzia (Getty Images)



Figure 3.5
Shah's Family (Getty Images)



Figure 3.6
Princess Shahnaz (Getty Images)

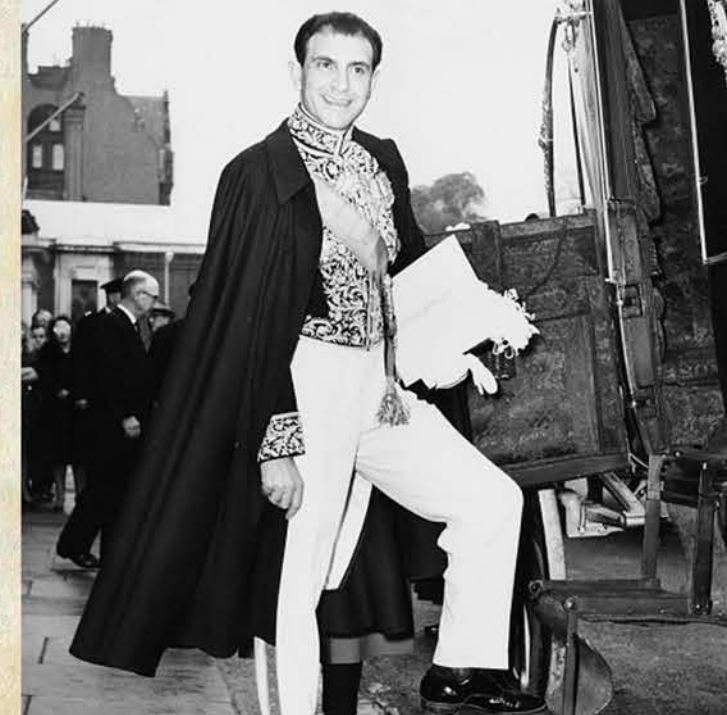


Figure 3.7
Ardeshir Zahedi (Getty Images)



Figure 3.8
Zahedi's Family (Getty Images)

People observe Iran and USA today and think that these two countries have been mortal adversaries for as long as it could be remembered. They are not informed that there was an Embassy and ambassador with lavish parties by encouraging diplomats, luminaries and pop stars including Elizabeth Taylor, Andy Warhol, Barbara Walters, Marlene Dietrich, Liza Minnelli, Frank Sinatra, Gregory Peck, Kirk Douglas, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Henry and

Nancy Kissinger, Nelson Rockefeller, and so on to enter.⁶
Great Gatsby in DC and Caviar Diplomacy
Ardeshir Zahedi (1928) was a former Iranian diplomat who served as ambassador to the United States. Zahedi's diplomatic career began in 1959 when he was appointed Ambassador to the United States and to the Court of St. James's in 1962. Four

years later, in 1966, Zahedi was recalled to Tehran and appointed Foreign Minister. Zahedi was appointed to a second term as the American Ambassador in 1973. Zahedi's diplomatic career began shortly after his marriage to Princess Shahnaz Pahlavi (1940), the daughter of the Shah and his first wife Princess Fawzia (1921-2013) of Egypt. The marriage ended in divorce in 1964 and Zahedi never remarried. Princess Shanaz lived for

few years with Zahedi in the residence. They had one daughter, Princess Mahnaz.⁷
By late 1977 Ardeshir Zahedi had become one of the most influential ambassadors in Washington. The Shah's visit to the United States in November of the same year was hailed a success despite the violent protests in front of the White House by Iranian students opposed to the monarchy.⁸

6. Zahedi, Ardeshir, *The Memoirs of Ardeshir Zahedi, Volume II Love, Marriage, Ambassadorship in The United States and the United Kingdom (1955-1966)*, trans. Farhang Jahanpour (Maryland: IBEX Publishers, 2014), 34.
7. Ibid, 13.



Figure 3.9
Zahedi and Barbara Streisand (Getty Images)



Figure 3.10
Zahedi and Elizabeth Taylor (Getty Images)



Figure 3.11
Zahedi and Queen Farah (Getty Images)



Figure 3.12
Andy Warhol at the Embassy (Getty Images)



Figure 3.13
Zahedi and Kirk Douglas (Getty Images)



Figure 3.14
Zahedi and Taylor (Getty Images)

8. Ibid, 75
 9. Ibid, 89.
 10. Ibid, 17.
 11. Walters, Barbara Audition: A Memoir (New York: Vintage, 2009), 53.
 12. Bahrapour, Tara "Iranian Embassy, shuttered for decades, was known for hedonistic, star-studded gatherings"
 13. Safavid era, 7th-century, is famous for its architecture and intricate art and tiles.
 14. Polyglot "Recalling Iran's former Embassy in Washington" the-polyglot.blogspot.com <http://the-polyglot.blogspot.com/2011/01/recalling-irans-former-embassy-in.html> (accessed January 25, 2018)

During the Iranian Revolution climaxed in January 1979, the Shah fled Iran. Zahedi was still serving as ambassador in Washington, but resigned as soon as Ayatollah Khomeini came to power.⁹

Many well-known people from Iran and USA lived, invited, and visited former Iranian Embassy. This rich historical background makes this building unique apart from architectural values.

It was during Zahedi's second stint in Washington that, he won a reputation for extravagance, courtesy of Iranian petrodollars. Invitation to one of his glittering events was the most sought after ticket in town.¹⁰

As Barbara Walters said in her memoir "the number one embassy when it came to extravagance"¹¹ or Barbara Howar, an author who attended the soirees said "No other ambassador has ever given parties

like that, It was almost dancing on tables, it was that kind of thing. There was more caviar than you could eat. Ardeshir used to send caviar around to people for Christmas."¹²

"Guests used to recline on low banquettes and cushions covered in traditional embroidered fabrics, enjoy a private recital in the Embassy's Persian Room... Zahedi insisted on serving the best wine

and finest cuisines with blue and white Safavid¹³ dinner ware; passing around bowls of golden Iranian caviar, taken from sturgeon that had been swimming in the Caspian Sea two days earlier."¹⁴

Andy Warhol wrote in his diaries of frequenting dinners alit with Hollywood glamour at the Embassy of Iran, which hosted events such as



45

Figure 3.15

Three Muslim ambassadors: Egypt's Ashraf Ghorbal, Pakistan's Sahabzada Yaqub-Khan and Iran's Zahedi. (Getty Images)



Figure 3.16

Henry Kissinger, Queen Farah, Zahedi (Getty Images)



Figure 3.17

Nancy and Henry Kissinger (Getty Images)



Figure 3.18

Taylor at the Embassy (Getty Images)



Figure 3.19

Rudolf Nureyev, Shah, Queen Farah (Getty Images)



Figure 3.20

Zahedi at the Embassy (Getty Images)

15. Nureyev is regarded as one of ballet's most gifted male dancers.
 16. Warhol, Andy *The Andy Warhol Diaries* (New York: Warner Books, 1991), 44
 17. Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men*, 142.
 18. *Ibid.*
 19. Zahedi, *The Memoirs of Ardeshir Zahedi*, 43.
 20. *Ibid.*, 53
 21. Zahedi, Ardeshir "Military Solutions for [Iran's] Nuclear Issue Must Be Avoided" [ardeshirzahedi.org](http://www.ardeshirzahedi.org) <http://www.ardeshirzahedi.org/military-solution.htm> (accessed January 25, 2018).

legendary dancer Rudolf Nureyev's¹⁵ birthday party.¹⁶ Luxurious style of Zahedi's party could be felt in the quotes, and he has been criticized for his caviar diplomacy, lavish parties, and his hypocrisy in pretending to be people of character and gentility while supporting brutality, inhumanity, targeting freedom of thought and action by heinous cases of detention, torture and assassinations.¹⁷

While Iranians were living hand-to-mouth and were reading about such extravagance by Iranian government officials who back draconian political hegemony, they would antagonize the Shah and his Ambassador, and all the party guests. This kind of excess was exactly why the Iranian regime was overthrown in the first place.¹⁸ However, scholars urge that facts and figures illustrate something else, during the seventies as oil-rich Iran was undergoing

tremendous changes, economic growth was enormous. Ambassador Zahedi due to his parties and connections made strong lobby with American and European countries. He enjoyed the confidence of Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations, while strengthening ties with US Congressmen, journalists, civic officials and university academics many of whom were invited to visit Iran.¹⁹

Zahedi said "I would talk about my country and they would ask me about geopolitics," he said. "Many of them, invited and they went to Iran."²⁰ Even after revolution and during the era when Zahedi does not have any diplomatic responsibilities, he insisted that "Iran and the U.S., they need each other. They may be friends; they must be friends."²¹



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Figure 3.21 **Figure 3.22**

The Tomb of Saadi, Mohsen Foroughi (1963)
 Ali Ansari (1963)

The Architecture of the Embassy:

The building's architect was Francis Keally (1889-1978). "Keally was born in Pittsburgh, had studied in Philadelphia, and set up a practice in New York. He was to design quite a number of university buildings, particularly Brooklyn Public Library. He was the president of the Fine Arts Federation of New York."²² While the building's proportions speak a rather modern language, it seems that the clients

were adamant about a few design items that make it rather eccentric-looking on this stretch of Massachusetts Avenue.

Although there is no source to support my argument, the building has striking similarities with The Tomb of Saadi, a mausoleum dedicated to the Persian poet Saadi (1208) in the Iranian city of Shiraz. The Tomb of Saadi was built between 1950 and 1952

by the well-known Iranian architect, Mohsen Foroughi²³ (1907- 1983) and is inspired by the Chehel Sotoun with a fusion of old and new architectural elements.²⁴

Four tall columns form an imposing entrance colonnade. A blue dome overlooks the building's inner courtyard are the most obviously Islamic inspired element of Iranian Embassy. These two elements could be inspired by the style of The

Tomb of Saadi which could be categorized as Pahlavi architecture after World War II²⁵. The combination of Modern architecture elements and Iranian oriental elements were the most important aspect of this architectural style in Iran.²⁶

The inside of the Embassy is similar to Iranian vernacular architecture with intricate decorative elements. This glitzy interior did not come with

22. Bansal, Ben "Former Iranian Embassy" benbansal.me <https://benbansal.me/?p=3188> (accessed January 25, 2018)
 23. Pioneer of modern architecture in Persia, an influential professor of architecture at the University of Tehran.
 24. Bani-Masoud, Amir "Contemporary Iranian Architecture" (Tehran: Art & Architecture, 2011),55.
 25 Pahlavi architecture after World War II is dominated by infrastructure and by monuments reflecting the national need for a renewed sense of cultural identity
 26. Nader, Ardalan "ARCHITECTURE, viii. Pahlavi, after World War II" [iranicaonline.org http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/architecture-viii](http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/architecture-viii) (accessed December 1, 2018)



Figure 3.23
Former Iranian Embassy in Washington, D.C. (Polyglot)

27. Zahedi, The Memoirs of Ardeshir Zahedi, 90.
 28. Szell a textile designer and a fabric designer to the Queen of the United Kingdom.
 29. Polyglot “Recalling Iran’s former Embassy in Washington”
 30. Zahedi, The Memoirs of Ardeshir Zahedi, 95.
 31. Parnes, Eric “Custodian of Vacancy: Embassy of Iran in the USA” eric-parnes.com http://www.eric-parnes.com/index.php?f=works_alldetails&id=88 (accessed February 2, 2017)

the original building, but was fitted later during the second tour of ambassador Zahedi.²⁷He charged UK designer Michael Szell²⁸ (1930-2002) to refurbish the interior and upgrade the building into a veritable Iranian Palace. Szell was well-known in England as a fabric designer; he had already decorated palaces, mansions and tents from Tehran to Persepolis. Yet although he was familiar with

Iranian culture and its decorative arts,²⁹ ambassador Zahedi, Known for being energetic, frank and detail oriented, worked closely with Szell on every phase of the project.³⁰

Moreover, the grand entrance doors, which featured the very traditional 12th century Iranian image of The Lion and The Sun as well as an array of other animal symbols, were also commissioned

works by the American architectural sculptor Ulysses Ricci (1888-1960).³¹

Pictures of the embassy’s interior show that the result was a series of sumptuous interiors that blended Persian antiques with a mix of European furniture and contemporary fabrics. For the Embassy’s Persian Room, Szell flew in a mirror artisan from Iran to transform the cavernous space into a glittering

dome as the pièce de résistance of the Embassy.

“Piece by piece, the Iranian artisan encrusted its enormous domed ceiling with a kaleidoscope of mirrored mosaics, glittering medallions and tendrils cascading thirty feet down the walls. The extraordinary effect was even more extraordinary at night, when the space was lit by candles. Guests reclined on bright cushions (their reflections mirrored a



Figure 3.24
Custodian of Vacancy (2013)(Eric Parnes, 1979)
43

thousand times), while listening to dulcimer music or a private dance performance by Dame Margot Fonteyn and Nureyev.”³²

By bolding oriental aspects of Iranian culture and creating exotic spaces, Zahedi as a client, Szell and Kelly as designers, directly followed the main stream and depict aspects of Iranian culture which was discussed as “Orientalism” by Edward Said.

Representing “I” as the way “other” desires or wants to see the “I” rather than the true identity of the “I” or what “I” really is.

Embassy as the subject of artistic curiosity:
In 2013, American/Iranian artist Eric Parnes (1979) was the first person in over 34 years to photograph the interior of the embassy. Eric Parnes as an artist wants to investigate the increasing effect of commercialism

and its successive global interaction as a compelling dialogue between the Middle East (The Orient) or “I” and the Western world (West) “other”.³³

Due to his vision, Parnes had this idea to investigate The unique history of the Iranian Embassy in the United States, as well as whatever its future may hold, offers a wealth of oriental imagery and aftereffects, besides remaining itself a veritable testament to what was once a hub of American celebrity

merged with, and immersed in, Persian culture.

The nostalgic definitions of Parnes from inside of the Iranian Embassy and his photos are phenomenological, and poetic. Photos shows that this building can still play an important role as a reminder for collective memories of the former allies, the “other” and “I”.
“Inside, a sense of time is quickly forgotten as the remnants of endless ballrooms, offices, and studies

32. Polyglot “Recalling Iran’s former Embassy in Washington”
33. Parnes, Eric, “Art Statement” eric-parnes.com, <http://www.eric-parnes.com/19/about.html> (accessed February 7, 2017)
34. Parnes, Eric “Custodian of Vacancy: Embassy of Iran in the USA”
35. Ibid.
36. Žižek, Slavoj “Slavoj Žižek on utopia as enacting the impossible” YouTube video, posted by “Michaël Samyn” Dec 12, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-jfEMJlgABo>

echo an environment that once ruled a mere four decades ago. Gilded mirrors, remarkably intact, leave us wondering who and what times they bore witness to, in the not too distant past. Jubilant lights and voices no longer fill the building; only sunlight crosses forth through beautiful stained glassworks.”³⁴

Parnes’ photos illustrate that the visuals of the Embassy’s current uninhabited status has a particular rich aesthetic that captures the exclusive solitary nature of this institution as the artistic emotion of seclusion, by bringing us to a magical space of the embassy that was once very celebrated and alive with vibrant festivities.

Parnes as an Iranian/American, as the combination of the “other” and “I” observes and describes the building as part of his identity and his dreams.

“The Iranian Embassy seems to have become a silent monument, yet now is akin to a memorial, one that is not recognized and never visited. I peer inside as an outsider, a metaphor for this American-born Iranian reaching into one’s dreams.”³⁵

Site Analysis of a Utopia:

After the Iranian nuclear deal 2015 the opening of an Iranian embassy was possible while in current political situation and after the USA’s 2016 election, with the political shifts, The Iranian Embassy in USA is unimaginable utopia since due to the rise of radicalism in both side there is no realistic political, national and international urge for such embassy. The 2018 political situation pushes this thesis towards utopian context; however, this thesis’s utopian vision is not based on Plato (427–347 B.C.E.), Thomas More (1478 - 1535) or capitalist utopia. Slavoj Žižek’s interpretation of utopia is more practical for this thesis. Žižek insists that

“The main task today is to reinvent the classical utopia. The true utopia is when the situation is so without issue, without the way to resolve it within the coordinates of the possible that out of the pure urge of survival you have to invent a new space.

Utopia is not a kind of exercise in free imagination or matter of the future. Utopia is something to be immediately enacted when there is no other way.

Utopia in this sense simply means do what appear within the given symbolic coordinates as impossible take the risk ... Even big classical well-known conservative acts have this utopian dimension ... Thirty years ago, Remember Richard Nixon’s trip to China. There was almost a utopian dimension to it why because he did what appear is impossible. China was portrayed as the ultimate evil superpower. That act changed the entire coordinates. It did the impossible.”³⁶

Žižek argues that instead of planning utopia, we should practice it. I believe Žižek’s example, Nixon’s trip to China, perfectly matches with Iran and USA’s relations and the Iranian Nuclear deal. One could easily substitute President Obama with President Nixon and Iran with China even though the situation was more controversial for the Iranian nuclear crisis. One option was the deal and the other alternative was war. All negotiators such as Senator John Kerry (1943) and Foreign Affairs Minister of Iran Javad Zarif (1960) made the impossible, possible to reach the agreement to prevent a war. As Žižek said the negotiators due to “the pure urge of survival have created a new space.”

This embassy could be realize in this utopian context and dimension, a world that has multilateral responses to global challenges and in Bakhtinian term is paradise of dialogue and communication.

34. Parnes, Eric “Custodian of Vacancy: Embassy of Iran in the USA”

35. Ibid.

36. Žižek, Slavoj “Slavoj Žižek on utopia as enacting the impossible” YouTube video, posted by “Michaël Samyn” Dec 12, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-jfEMJlgABo>



Figure 3.25
Iran Embassy in DC, Thesis Model (Author)



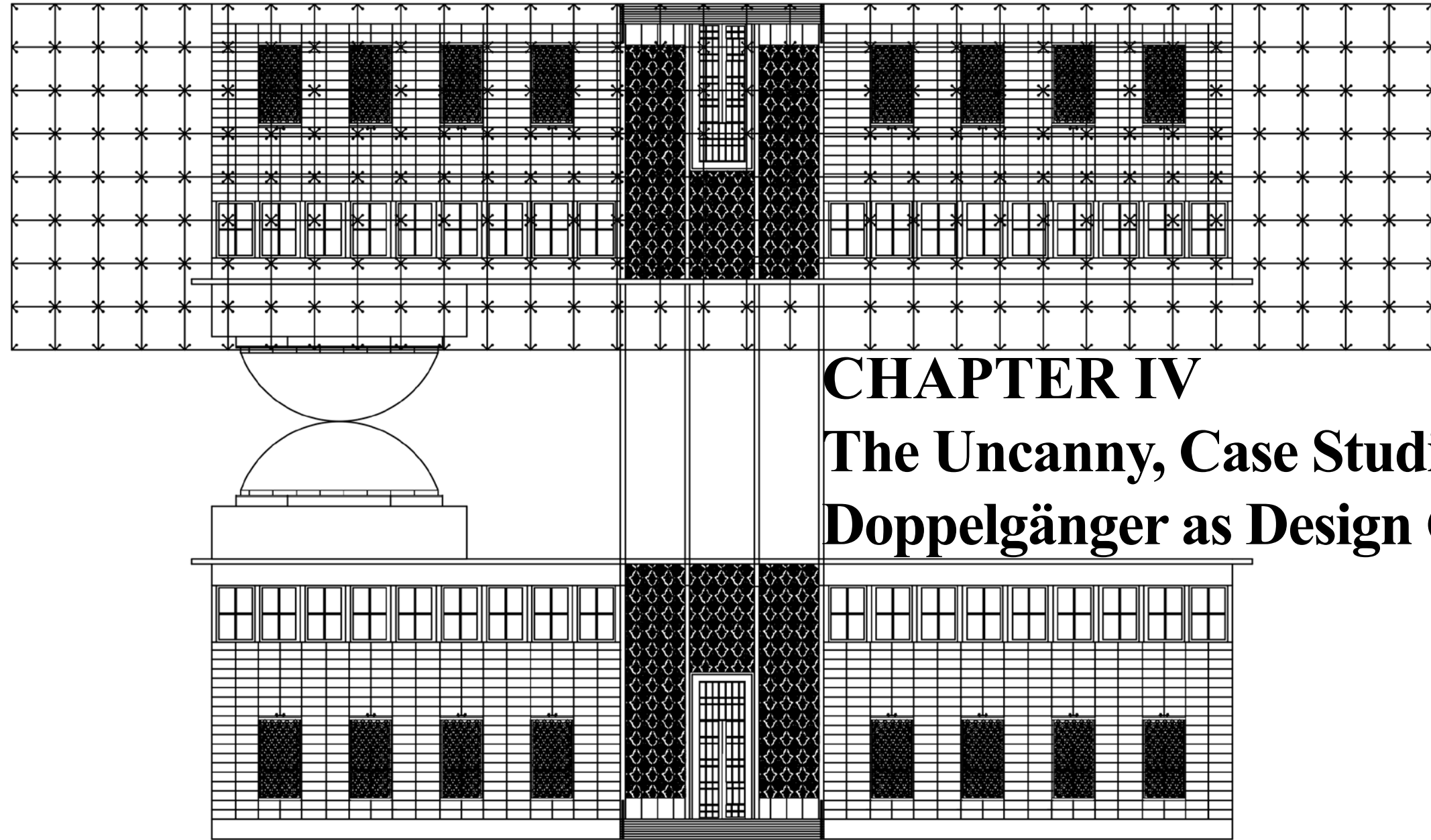
Figure 3.26
Iran Embassy in DC, Thesis Model (Author)



Figure 3.27
Iran Embassy in DC, Thesis Model (Author)



Figure 3.28
Iran Embassy in DC, Thesis Model (Author)



CHAPTER IV
The Uncanny, Case Studies, and Architectural
Doppelgänger as Design Concept

Figure 4.0
 Iranian Embassy for the Future (Author)



Figure 4.1
Portrait of Dostoyevsky by Vasily Perov (1872)

The Uncanny As Doppelgänger

“ Dear Sir, Yakov Petrovitch!

Either you or I, but both together is out of the question! And so
**I must inform you that your strange, absurd,
and at the same time impossible desire to**

appear to be my twin and to give yourself out as such serves no other purpose than to bring about your complete disgrace and discomfiture. And so I beg you, for the sake of your own advantage, to step aside and make way for really honourable men of loyal aims. In the opposite case I am ready to determine upon extreme measures. I lay down my pen and await . . . However, I remain ready to oblige or to meet you with pistols.
Y. Golyadkin.”

-Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Double*

Chapter IV
The Uncanny, Case Studies, and
Architectural Doppelgänger as Design Concept

Caryl Emerson defines polyphonism for Bakhtin as “psychology of self-other relations ... The reflection of the self in the empirical other through whom one must pass in order to reach “I” for myself.”¹ As Emerson insists “I” and “other” need each other to deconstruct finalized monologic image of reality. The question here is that why “I” and “other” could hardly reach this dialogic position without struggle or fusion.

Freud in his 1919 essay “Das Unheimliche”² which means uncanny sheds light on why “I” could dehumanize “other” or vice versa. Freud defines two key German words “Unheimliche” and “Heimliche”. “Heimlich” translates as canny or homey and “Unheimliche” translates as uncanny or un-homey. Freud’s thesis is that the uncanny is revelation of what is private and concealed of what is hidden, hidden not only from “other” but also from the self “I”.³

Uncanny is a concept coined by Freud to describe the feeling of unease you get when you experience something familiar as suddenly unfamiliar, something commonplace seen in a way that is suddenly strange. The recurring motif of the uncanny is the double (doppelgänger) that is someone or something that is disconcertingly like the self, “I” and yet completely separate from it as “other”. The idea of doppelgänger re-invokes repressed primitive narcissism.⁴

He wrote “These themes [the uncanny] are all concerned with the idea of a “double” in every shape and degree, with persons... the theme of the “double” has with reflections in mirrors, with shadows, guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and the fear of death.”⁵

Uncanny as doubles also can be found all over the horror genre taking the form of mirrors, shadows, dolls, and twins. Freud would argue that all these eerie figures are eerie since they are like the “I” and yet threateningly “other”.⁶

The concept of the “other” and “I” by Bakhtin in psychological world could be translated to “Uncanny” and “Canny” by Freud since “The Uncanny” (das Unheimliche, ‘the unhomely’) is in some way a species of the familiar (das Heimliche, ‘the homely’). This shows that Bakhtin and Ferued both believed that the “other” is in some way a species of the “I” and for Freud the tension between them is due to the undergone repression. Bakhtin believed that there are various “other” as various voices in “I” and Ferued even apart from “Ego”, “Id”, and “Super Ego” also considers the immortal soul as the first double for the body and the reason people doubling themselves is the way to serve their immortality.

The uncanniness of doppelgängers creates a kind of “intellectual uncertainty” and this uncertainty could deconstruct finalized monologic image of reality. Due to this doppelgänger could be a suitable formal strategy to introduce the new Iranian Embassy, as an artistic, formal, and architectural potential to create an intellectual uncertainty about the “other” and “I”. By following doppelgänger strategy designer

could reduce the formal authority to the least since the designer should have an imitation and a dialogue with the existing building, the former Iranian embassy. As Bakhtin said for creating polyphonic artistic form the author should relinquish absolute authority to characters, “heterogeneous materials”, in order to represent themselves. There are various artistic case studies from literature, cinema and paintings about the concept of the “other” and “I” and interpretation of doppelgänger as psychological concept. These movies and artworks show that how the notion of doppelgänger used to depict humans’ complicated character symbolically, psychologically, and artistically. These novels, movies and artworks impact the architectural process and formal strategy of this thesis.

Doppelgängers in Literature and Cinema

Literature

Ferued inspired by short story called *Sandman* written by E. T. A. Hoffmann for his article “The Uncanny” since doppelgänger is a permanent motif in literature from *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

1. Emerson, Caryl *The First Hundred Years of Bakhtin*, 46.

2. Freud, Sigmund. “The Uncanny.” first published (1919): 339-76. <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/freud1.pdf>

3. Ibid, 5

4. Jason Lieblang, “Sigmund Freud and E.T.A Hoffmann” YouTube video, posted by “The University of British Columbia” Jan 16, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q12RX2jig8c&t=5501s>

5. Freud, Sigmund. “The Uncanny.”, 9.

6. Ibid, 18.

to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The doppelgänger forms the ideas about selfhood that made it such a potent figure in the first place. In most novels with doppelgänger motif, protagonists struggle with doppelgänger as a form of self-knowledge as “I” about the “other”, or ignorant of “I” or “other” about true self.⁷

The double is also one of Dostoevsky’s most permanent themes. It recurs in his works many times such as *The Brothers Karamazov*, *The Possessed*, *A Raw Youth*, and the novella *The Double: A Petersburg Poem* as the main motif. Dmitri Chizhevsky in his article “The Theme of the Double in Dostoevsky”⁸ argues that the idea of the double is leading to Dostoevsky’s religious and ethical views as characters’ philosophical and psychological crisis with original interpretation of doppelgänger.

Sylvia Plath, in her undergraduate thesis on “Dostoevsky’s doubles”, argued that Dostoevsky does not remain on the surface of the question. He moves from the social and psychological problem (The Double). The character by giving his corrupt

urges to a double the “schizophrenic” relieves himself of guilt so doppelgängers are not the narrative consequences instead are psychological causes.⁹

For instance, Dostoevsky in *The Double* deals with the internal psychological struggle of its main character, Yakov Petrovich Golyadkin. The protagonist’s double appears to him first while he is in an abnormal state of mind. The plot concerns a government clerk who goes mad, obsessed by the idea that a fellow clerk has usurped his identity.¹⁰

Golyadkin describes the situation of facing the doppelgänger as: “[The double has] the strange pretension and dishonorable and fantastic desire to squeeze others out of the position which those others occupy, by their very existence in this world, and to take their place.”¹¹

Chizhevsky believes that Dostoevsky with the concept of double “raises the ethical and ontological problems of the fixity, reality, and

security of individual existence surely one of the most genuine problems of ethics.”¹²

This shows the extreme confrontation of “I” with “I” as “I” with “other” in The Double. Dostoevsky shows that the boundary between the “I” and “other” is not solid as the instability of the self. For Dostoevsky double is the mental split of “I” to two or “a duality of will and feelings.” As Chizhevsky wrote in his article the issue of the double is the issue of the ethical dualism in human. It shows that simply “to exist” and “to be” is not a sufficient condition for man’s existence as an ethical individual.”¹³ By considering Bakhtin’s interpretation of Dostoevsky this could be interpreted that “I” is never enough for growth, “I” always needs “other”.

As mentioned before, Bakhtin polyphonic theory is coming from the oeuvre of Dostoevsky. Since Dostoevsky is the origin of polyphonic theory and he also used the concept of doppelgänger as a motif then it could be argued that the concept of the doppelgänger is also a representation of the

“other” and “I” in Bakhtinian’s point of view. This connection makes the doppelgänger an important content to be scrutinized in other art mediums and genre as well.

Cinema

In cinema, in various movies, director, Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980) used doubles to explore the troubled nature of human relationships. Finding extreme similarities between two different people for Hitchcock like Dostoevsky can completely distort reality. Hitchcock represented this idea in his film *Vertigo*.

Hitchcock wraps this idea up with the shot of character, half in shadow, and half in light. He uses this doppelgänger effect to distort reality and confuse the viewer as it is supposed to distort reality for the protagonist as well. This is exactly the concept of double to create an “intellectual uncertainty”.¹⁴

In *Psycho*, Hitchcock also filled his landmark thriller with doubles, mirror reflections of many characters, further pressing the issue of doubles. Marion and Norman as main characters are also

7. Wellek, Rene *Doetovsky, A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Preice-Hall,1962), 12
 8. See Chizhevsky, Dmitri “The Theme of the Double in Dostoevsky” in *Doetovsky, A Collection of Critical Essays*, eds . Rene Wellek (New York: Preice-Hall,1962)
 9. See Plath, Sylvia, “The Magic Mirror: A Study of the Double in Two of Dostoevsky’s Novels.” (Honors thesis, Smith College, 1955)
 10. Dostoyevsky, Fyodor *The Double A Petersburg Poem*, trans. Constance Garnett. (New York: Adelaide, 1846)
 11. Ibid, 96.
 12. Chizhevsky, “The Theme of the Double in Dostoevsky”,132.
 13. Ibid, 122.
 14. Truffaut, Francois *Hitchcock* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 245

FIGURE 4.2
Vertigo (1958), Alfred Hitchcock (1899)

set up as uncanny doubles of each other, most of their interactions we can see a carefully placed mirror in the background suggesting they are in fact mirroring each other. They are complementary and cyclical like day and night.¹⁵

From Marion to Norman in a stylistic sense, Hitchcock is moving us from an apparently objective reality to subjective internal reality. At the end as a Freudian twist the fact that Marion and Norman's world turn out to be similar in their hidden perversity as Žižek said "Hitchcock showing us that these two worlds are just two sides of a Mobius strip¹⁶ keep going on one surface and eventually you will find yourself on the other."¹⁷

Hitchcock as an illustrator of Freud's theories also shows "I" and "other" in a Mobius strip. For Bakhtin, derived from Dostoevsky, "I" and "other" are even in more complicated connection apart from "other" as "I" there are various internal "others" in "I" as well.

Hitchcock illustrate "I" and "other" as an internal psychological subjective domain while another English director Christopher Nolan (1970) expands this Mobius

strip into the architectural and cosmological scale in his acclaimed, complicated movie *The Inception*.

The main theme in *The Inception* is dreams. This movie is about people who enter other people dreams in order to planting in somebody's mind an idea. This is another extreme confrontation of the "other" and "I" as "other" within "I" or in the movie dream within a dream on different levels. There is a key scene that the protagonist, Dom Cobb explains the dream world for one of the characters as dream architect, Ariadne.

"They say we only use a fraction of our brains true potential. That's when we are awake and we are asleep our mind can do almost anything. Imagine you are designing a building, continuously creating each aspect of it but sometimes it feels like it's almost creating itself, like discovering it, a genuine inspiration. In a dream our mind continuously does this. We create and perceive our world simultaneously and our mind does this so well that we don't even know what is happening."¹⁸

¹⁵ Margarita, "Understanding Psycho: The Uncanny" YouTube video, posted by "Is This Just Fantasy?" Aug 1, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_FMkGEZP3w0

¹⁶ The Mobius strip is a surface with only one side and only one boundary. The Mobius strip has the mathematical property of being unorientable. It can be realized as ruled surface.

¹⁷ Žižek, Slavoj, *Everything You Always Wanted to know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)* (New York: Verso, 1992), 127.

¹⁸ Thomas, Emma, *The Inception*: DVD, Directed by Christopher Nolan (London: Warner Bros.



FIGURE 4.3
Psycho (1958) Alfred Hitchcock (1929-1980)



FIGURE 4.4
Inception (2010) Christopher Nolan (1970)



FIGURE 4.5
Portrait of Paul Nougé (1927) René Magritte (1898)

This dialogue in the movie represents the dream world as subconscious imagination, as the “other” within “I”. In this film there is no need for characters to mirror each other instead reality and dream world mirrors each other.

As the movie goes on, there is no longer one reality, characters build world from their memory in their minds but they are confused what is reality and what is dream¹⁹ what is the copy and what is the original or in regard to this thesis, I could ask this fundamental question that what is “other” and what is “I”?

In a scene, Ariadne as an “Other” in the “I”, Cobb’s subconscious, by bending the city; she creates a doppelgänger for the city as a dream world, a city maze. Moreover, by putting two mirrors in front of Cobb, she creates various “other” within “I” with “I”. This shows how Nolan creatively expanded the notion of doppelgänger and the “other” and “I” in an anthro-cosmologic scale.

Doppelgängers in Fine Arts

René Magritte

Silvano Levy, in his article “Magritte: The Uncanny and The Image” defines the Surrealist concept of the image as “a correlation between elements which are apparently unrelated or even irreconcilable.”²⁰ Levy argues about uncanny in René Magritte’s (1898-1967) painting as a mixing of the secret with the familiar and violating taboo, the elements of the painting are not separated by “objective distance” but rather by “subjective dissociation,” which causes shock associated with the uncanny and the realization of repressed parts of the psyche. Thus, “convention, rather than objective necessity, imposes a disjunction in the ordering of conscious reality.”²¹ Plainly put, Magritte’s work sounds to be orthodoxically Surrealist in its effect, if not in its method.

For instance, when Magritte painted *Paul Nougé*, he doubled the image, reproducing his own image of his friend while subtly changing it. In doing so, he broke from the tradition that portraiture should “represent a singular self.” Rather, Magritte is

¹⁹. Irwin, Willian *Inception and Philosophy: Because It Is Never Just a Dream* (New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, Inc, 2011),34.

²⁰. Levy, Silvano. “MAGRITTE: THE UNCANNY AND THE IMAGE.” in *French Studies Bulletin* 13.46 (1993): 15

²¹. *Ibid*, 16.

saying that even one presenting multiple facets, the expression of which changes with context. Nougé is not a universal “object,” but an instantiation of himself “I” that will vary depending on his audience “other”.²²

Erwin Goffman in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* said “When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him. . . Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him. Informed in these ways, the others will know how best to act in order to call forth a desired response from him.”²³

This expectation of the “other” from “I” creates various “I” and “expectations of “I” also from “I” to make this situation even more complicated. Orientalism by Said also has interrelationship with the expectation and imagination of the “other” about “I”. Said talks about how Western world invent the East as an imagery East, beautiful East, poetic East,

mystic East instead of grasping what really East is. In general, these are expectations of the “other” from “I” rather than what “I” really is.

The theory of uncanny could be brought to bear on numerous works by Magritte; however, the most important painting of his as a formal and conceptual approach for this thesis is *Not to be Reproduced* since it has mirror, doppelgänger and the uncanny simultaneously.

What occurs in this painting is an intermingling of the hidden or secret with the homely and familiar, which is essential core of the uncanny. Magritte plan was to confuse, to evoke mystery, to show us that what “I” want is always behind the thing “I” see and the obstruction can never be removed completely because it is not in the object, it is in the “I”, it is in the vision and thought of the “I” itself. The artist plays on the fact that everybody will always ask about what they cannot observe about themselves. What is unknown to “I”?²⁴ Is it not part of “other” as “I”?

The painting illustrates the back of the figure in front of a mirror while the viewer expects to see the reflection of the figure. The observer sees the reflection, the double but not as it should be.²⁵ The viewer sees the “I” as the “other” in this painting. The figure is as familiar as the “I” and yet threateningly “other”.

The interesting part in meticulous observation is that the mantelpiece and the book on the right side of the picture have been correctly reflected; however, the “intellectual uncertainty” is only for the figure. This shows that the mirror is normal and only the character is the object of the uncanny.²⁶

22. Ibid.

23. Levy, Silvano *Decoding Magritte* (Bristol: Sansom & Company, 2015) iii.

24. Goffman, Erving *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959), 34.

25. Levy, *Decoding Magritte*, 10.

26. Ibid, 12.

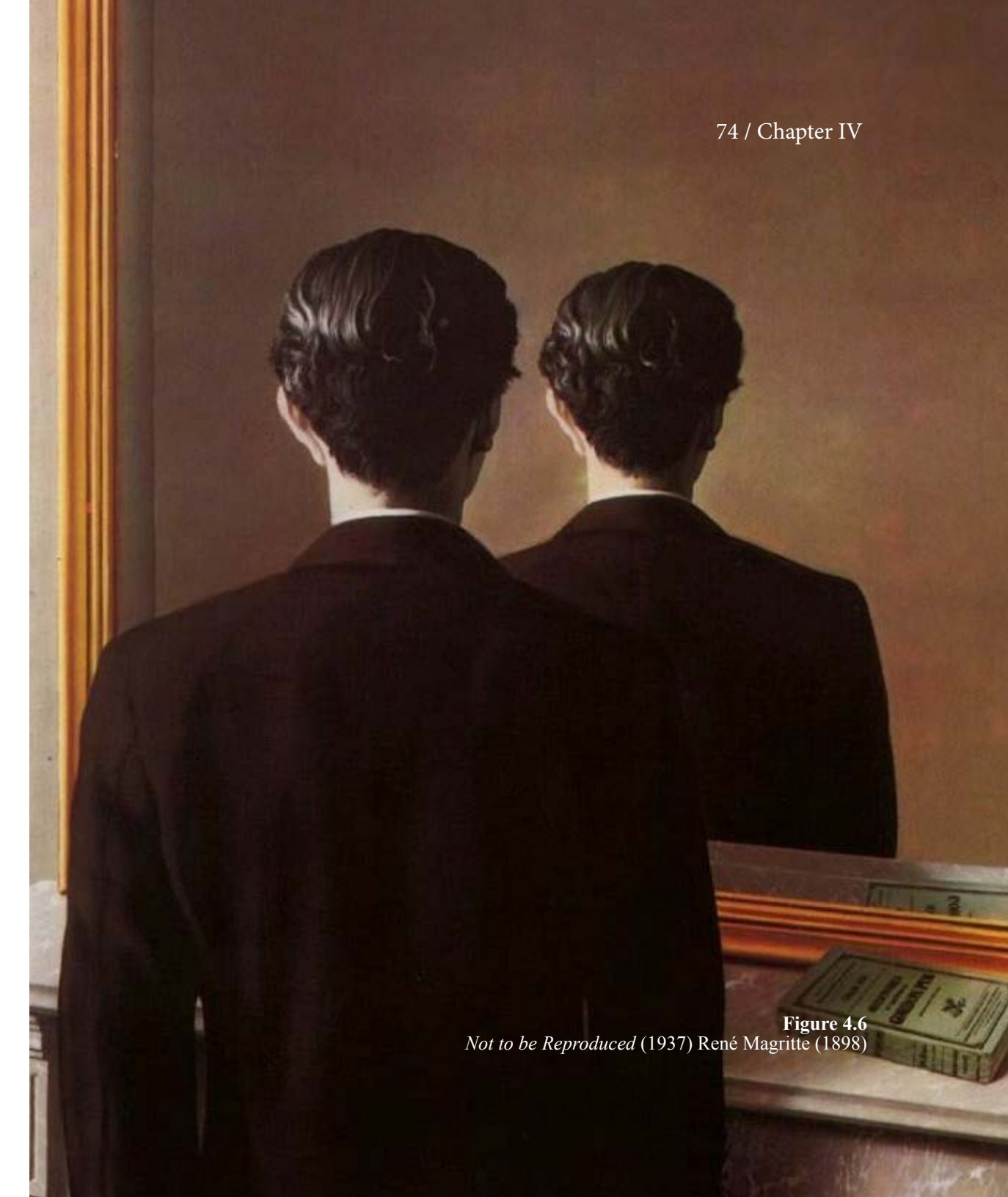


Figure 4.6
Not to be Reproduced (1937) René Magritte (1898)



Figure 4.7
Infinite Possibility, Monir Farmanfarmaian (2014) (David 2015)

Monir Farmanfarmaian

Another artist who also worked with the topic of reflection and mirror is Monir Farmanfarmaian (1924). She is an Iranian artist who studied art in New York. She merges American and Iranian culture into glittering artworks. After finishing art school in USA, she visited Iran with more curious eyes. Farmanfarmaian's artistic journey, led to her interest in mirror mosaic artwork.²⁷ According to her memoir, Farmanfarmaian has described the experience as transformative:

“The very space seemed on fire, the lamps blazing in hundreds of thousands of reflection... It was a universe unto itself, architecture transformed into performance, all movement and fluid light, all solids fractured and dissolved in brilliance in space, in prayer. I was overwhelmed.”²⁸

She was inspired by traditional craftsmanship and indigenous art forms. She created a number of mosaics and exhibition pieces by cutting mirrors and glass paintings into a multitude of shapes offering a modern way of looking at ancient aesthetic. Her

works are large-scale mirror sculptures, which she refers to as “geometric families”, and she coupled visual and spatial experience with the aesthetic traditions of Islamic architecture and decoration, mirror mosaic artworks.²⁹

In her work modern expressionism the “other” meets the traditional Persian “I”. Her use of geometry as form in sculptures allows for, in the artist's words, “infinite possibility.” or unlimited representation of “I” as “other” by the potentials of reflection and architectural geometry.

27. See Farmanfarmaian, Monir, Zara Houshmand *A Mirror Garden: A Memoir* (New York: Anchor, 2008)

28. Ibid, 47.

29. See Farmanfarmaian, Monir *Selected Works of Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian* (Tehran: Nazar Art Publication, 2008).



Figure 4.8
Broken Red Mirror 2003, (Daniel Rozin, 1961)

Daniel Rozin

Another artist who worked with mirrors within a psychological context rather than pure abstract approach such as Farmanfarmaian is Daniel Rozin (1961). Rozin is an artist in the area of interactive digital art. He creates installations/mirrors that have the unique ability to change and respond to the presence and point of view of the viewer. In many cases the viewer becomes the contents of the piece. He has unique interpretation of mirror as interactive and reflecting element in his works. He said

“I believe that no other invention has had a more significant impact on the way people perceive the world around them, and more importantly the way they perceive themselves. Mirrors have the ability to let us observe ourselves in the same manner we observe others, this is in complete contrast to the way we experience our being internally, which is a highly subjective process. In spite of its simplicity, a mirror is a profoundly complex object, a mirror has the ability to display for a multitude of viewers a unique reflection, in effect no two people looking into a mirror will ever see the same image even if



they are viewing together.”³⁰

For Rozin the mirror is an optical illusion and does not necessarily reflect reality. The way he talks about mirror shows the polyphonic essence and potentials of this material. Observing “I” as “other” and complex nature of mirror as reflective material which creates various perspective are identical to polyphonic philosophy of Bakhtin. Two project by him depicts these notions perfectly *Broken Red Mirror* and *Self-Centered Mirror*.

“*Broken Red Mirror* is a site-specific installation. It requires two opposing walls. On one wall a shattered mirror is hung, and on the other fragments of an image are splashed on the wall. When standing exactly in front of the broken mirror, the picture of Red Burns can be seen, from that particular angle the shattered mirror has the ability to collect the shattered image into its original state. One outcome of this arrangement is that when standing in front of this mirror you will not see yourself reflected in it, you will be replaced by Red Burn’s³¹ image.”³²

By putting this site-specific installation in the context

of the “other” and “I”, the uncanny aspect of it is that similar to Not to be reproduced, “I” expects to see the reflection of “I” but the mirror shows another person. The Broken Red Mirror exalts the sense of frustration in seeing reflected image of “I” with “other”. “I” transforms to the “other” as the object of the uncanny.

“Self-Centered Mirror is an arrangement of 34 vertical panes of mirror. It has a retro-reflective behavior, this means that anyone standing in front of this mirror will see themselves reflected on all 34 panels, the mirror will also remove anyone else in the space from being reflected.”³³

This piece lifts the last obstacle from in the quest to total narcissism. Moreover, by removing anyone else, “other” in the mirror, and retro-reflective of the “I”, this shows that even by omitting “other” there are various “other” in “I”. In short, omitting “other” is imposible or omitting “other” is equal to omitting “I”.



30. Rozin, Daniel “Daniel Rozin, Mirror Of The Soul” www.digicult.it <http://digicult.it/design/daniel-rozin-mirror-of-the-soul/> (accessed January 21, 2018)

31. Professor Red Burns, founder of Interactive Telecommunications Program at New York University (NYU).

32. Rozin, Daniel “Broken Red Mirror” www.smoothware.com <http://www.smoothware.com/danny/brokenmirror.html> (accessed January 25, 2018)

33. Rozin, Daniel “Self Centered Mirror” www.smoothware.com <http://www.smoothware.com/danny/selfcenteredmirror.html> (accessed January 25, 2018)

Figure 4.10
Self-Centered Mirror 2001, (Daniel Rozin, 1961)



Figure 4.11
Marseille's historic harbor Foster Partners 2013 (Maurice Ponty 2014)

Norman Foster

Rozin worked with reflection and mirror as an individual encounter; however, one could observe this concept as a collective approach in a slender sheet of mirror-polished stainless steel above a plaza on the edge of Marseille's historic harbor by Norman Foster. He created a new pavilion that reflects the activity of the bustling public space overhead to create the illusion of impossible thinness and is supported by eight thin stainless steel columns inset from the pavilion's edge to "appears as a simple silver line on the horizon."³⁴

Minimizing its profile and reducing the structure's visual impact and reclaiming the quaysides as civic space. This project in the context of the "other" and "I" turns world on its head with mirrored pavilion in the most minimalistic way. Instead of "I" in this urban project, "other" comes to see the reflection of "other" in a public space. "The project is an invitation to the people of Marseille to enjoy and use this grand space for events, markets and celebrations."³⁵

As a Bakhtinian approach, I think Foster reduced structure to the least and by reflection create a space that gives the citizens more room for interpretation on how to use the space as pavilions for events and special occasions.

³⁴. Foster, Norman "Marseille's Vieux Port" www.fosterandpartners.com <https://www.fosterandpartners.com/projects/marseille-vieux-port/> (accessed February 13, 2018)
³⁵. Ibid.

Rachel Whiteread

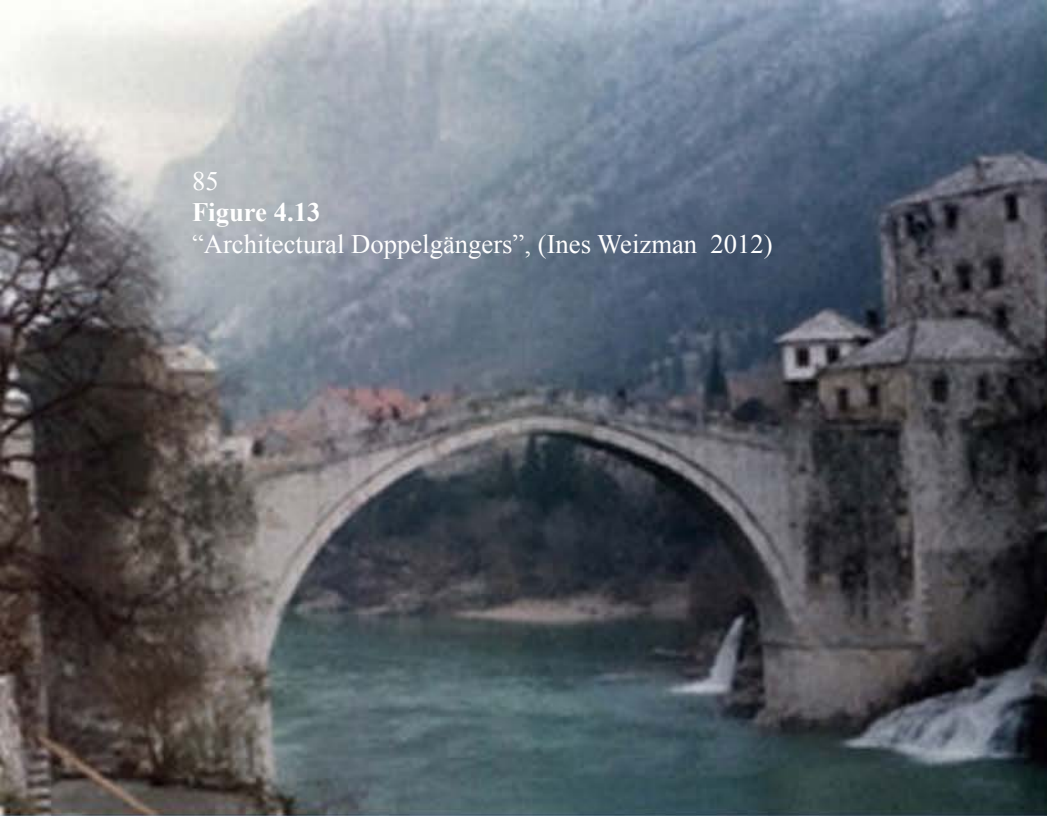
Reflection is not the only way to play with the concept of the double. Rachel Whiteread's (1963) sculptures, which typically take the form of casts, have an identical concept. Her minimalist forms explore the boundaries between the visible and invisible, solid and liquid, "other" and "I". She "mummifies the air in a room" and creates a doppelgänger for the solid space by casting the space surrounded by solid space as a preservation of everyday life to withhold the time and space with anthropomorphic quality.³⁶

For instance, in *Ghost* (1990), she hunts the ghost of a room. As a large concrete cast of the inside of an entire room, the space that her domestic objects could have inhabited. Moreover, as Freud said in his article "The Uncanny", the immortal soul is the first double for the body and the reason people double themselves is the way to serve their immortality. Whiteread does the same with stopping and marking time and space, she creates a double for architectural space.³⁷

36. Whiteread, Rachel "Rachel Whiteread: 'A memorial needs to be visible but not screaming' YouTube video, posted by "The Architectural Review" Mar 28, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bn6k13leFms>
 37. Whiteread, Rachel "Rachel Whiteread: Ghost" YouTube video, posted by "National Gallery of Art" May 30, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Z1Vjwsv4gw



Figure 4.12
Ghost, 1990 (Rachel Whiteread, 1963)



85
 Figure 4.13
 “Architectural Doppelgängers”, (Ines Weizman 2012)



Architectural Doppelgänger

In “Architectural Doppelgängers”³⁸, Ines Weizman³⁹ inspired by the concept of the uncanny in the architectural world. She believes that even copy in the realm of fine arts is both mysterious and mechanical and adds a layer of deep anxiety with deep psychological disturbance.

Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) famously wrote that “even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.”⁴⁰

Although Weizman defines the copy by following Walter Benjamin’s theory, she believes there is lots of artistic potential in architectural doppelgängers as realized fantasies. For Weizman Architectural doppelgängers are usually found far apart from each other, or more precisely, they emerge out of condition of distance. In this thesis, the doppelgänger of the embassy, the copy, located near the original to create the potential power of the double by creative tension between the copy and the original.

Weizman said “If the copy survives the initial challenge, then it might itself become a monument.”⁴¹

38. See Weizman, Ines “Architectural Doppelgängers” in AA Files, No. 65 (London: Architectural Association School of Architecture, 2012), 19-24
 39. Ines Weizman is professor of architecture theory at the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar.
 40. Benjamin, Walter, Hannah Arendt, ed. “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (London: Fontana, 1945), 214.
 41. Weizman, “Architectural Doppelgängers” in AA Files, 22.



Figure 4.14
Thesis Conceptual Diagram (Author)

The New Iranian Embassy

Before interpreting the concept diagram based on previous case studies, I should define each phase, initially.

Original:

Prior to the revolution, the Iranian embassy was a showcase for Persian culture, and can now have the role of social educator. Spaces and elements of the old Embassy have architectural value, and can adapt to a renovation, conservation, and rehabilitation due to the inherent high value of curiosity and aesthetic appreciation.

Inversion:

The new Iranian Embassy will cover this 38 year gap. The new architectural intervention will act as the doppelgänger of the original - an inverted version - both a mirror of the original and mold for the original; a new Embassy that uses the original, while further expanding it as well.

Iranian Embassy for Future:

Do the original (the “I” or the “other”?) and the copy (“I” or “other”?) erase the threshold between the “other” and “I”. The question becomes which

one is the original? Is it the past (the form) or the new (the mold) which creates the original?

In this thesis by creating the copy, the original will be the subject of the uncanny as a creative tension and “intellectual uncertainty”. The Iranian Embassy for the Future as a double illustrates that “other” is part of “I” identical to “un-homey” as part of “homey”, and uncanny as part of canny. The doppelgänger for the Embassy is similar to the double as a form of self-knowledge for the protagonist in *The Double*. The doppelgänger shows that what the protagonist (building) was and what it could be. Moreover, identical to Marion and Norman subjective Mobius strip in *Psycho* there is also a subjective Mobius strip between the original Embassy and the new one as the copy.

Instead of using mirror, I decided to use the mirror as an effect, and show the new Embassy as reflected object like *Not to be reproduced* painting and having mirror, reflection, and doppelgänger simultaneously.

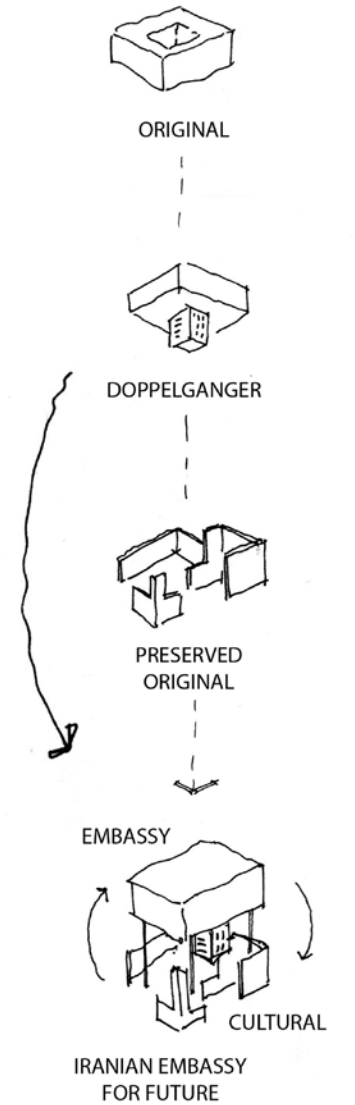


Figure 4.15
Thesis Conceptual Diagram (Author)



Figure 4.16
Glass House, Philip Johnson (1906) (David Russel 2000)



Figure 4.17
Borujerdi House, Ustad Ali Maryam 1857 (Ali Azimi 2015)

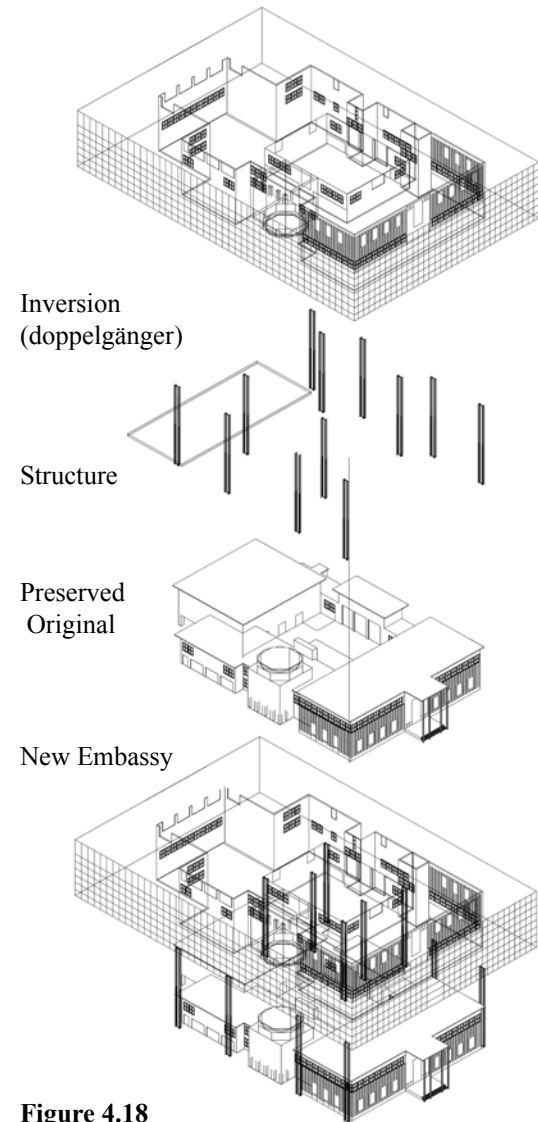


Figure 4.18
Axonometric Drawing
Iranian Embassy for the Future (Author)

I also combined aspects of Iranian architecture with modern Western architecture by coupling the intricate internality of Iranian architecture and modern Western externality with Euclidean geometry and aesthetics as collage of traditional Iranian house with Philip Johnson's (1906-2005) glass house as a modern building. In addition, instead of using mirror, I decided to use the mirror as an effect, and show the new Embassy as a reflected object like *Not to be reproduced* painting and having mirror, reflection, and doppelgänger simultaneously.

Instead of insisting on infinite formal possibilities like Farmanfarmaian, I insisted on infinite interpretive possibilities. I also bend the Embassy like bending the city in *Inception*. By locating the original and copy together, I created a situation as a mirror for reflecting the "other" instead of "I" such as *Broken Red Mirror*. In this project like Rachel Whiteread, I was also playing on the boundaries of the "other" and "I" by creating the new Embassy as the inversion and mold for the old one.

In this thesis the doppelgänger has the element of

"its presence in [the same] time and space place." By following Weizman's point of view to create the creative tension between the "other" and "I", the new Embassy as a copy should barrow the aura of the original from the previous one, the new Embassy as the "other" should threaten "I" individuality while in the same time should be the notion for the immortality of the "I". The new Embassy should be the body for the soul, the previous Embassy.

The new Embassy should be an interpretation for the previous one in order to replace the authorship with intertextuality as Ronald Barthes (1915-1980) wrote "any text is a new tissue of past citations one text was merely a product of other texts, and could only understand through them."⁴² So the new Embassy could only be understood through the previous Embassy. The new Embassy needs the previous Embassy for the truth since as Bakhtin said "Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction."⁴³

“ From his bed he ran straight to **the mirror** that stood on his chest of drawers. Though the sleepy, short-sighted countenance and rather bald head **reflected in the mirror** were of such an insignificant type that at first sight they would certainly not have attracted particular attention in any one, yet the owner of the countenance was satisfied with all that he saw **in the mirror**”

-Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Double*

⁴¹. Weizman, "Architectural Doppelgängers" in AA Files, 22.

⁴². Barthes, Roland "The Death of the Author" in *Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard (Evanston: University Press, 1972), 41.

⁴³ Bakhtin, *The Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 110.

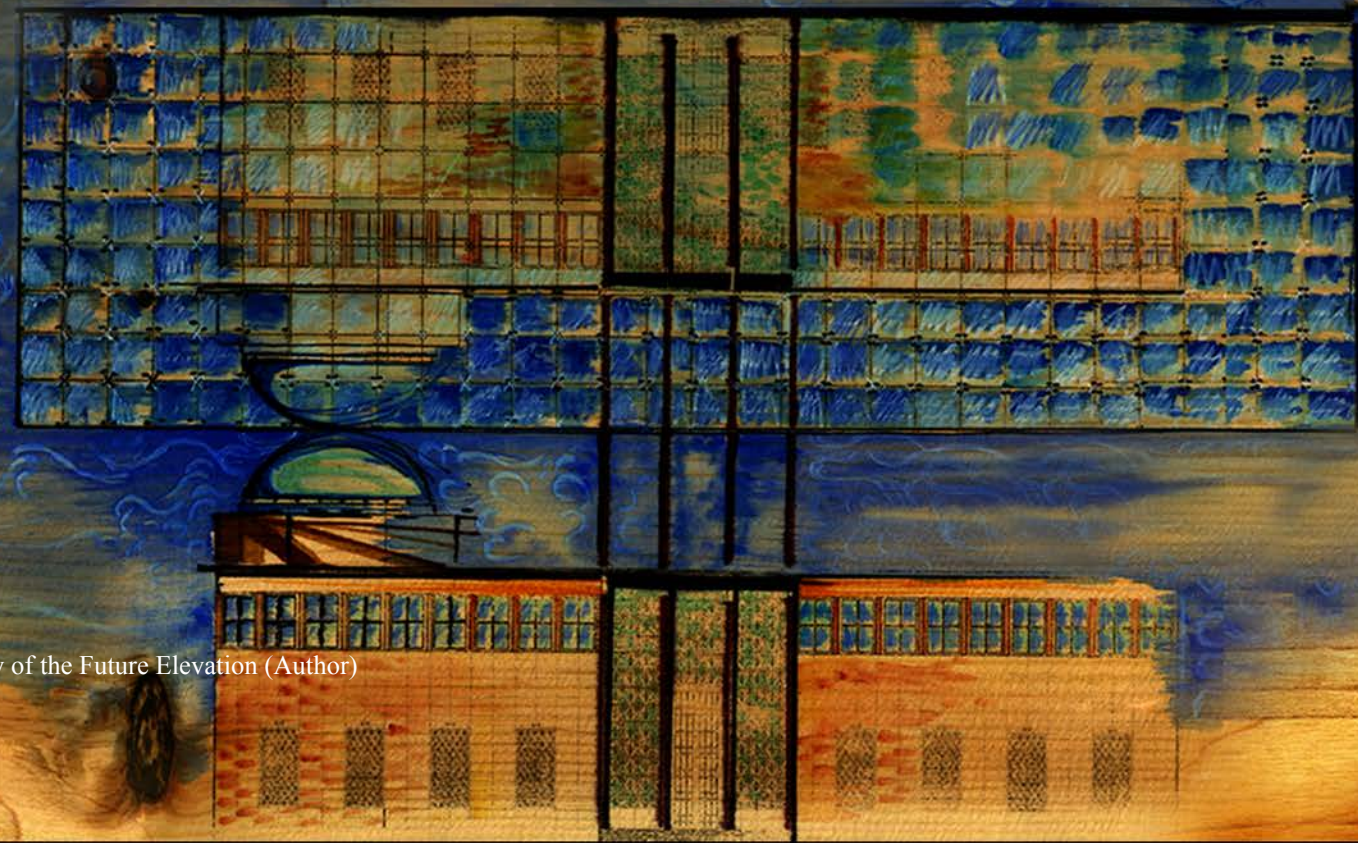


Figure 4.19
Iranian Embassy of the Future Elevation (Author)

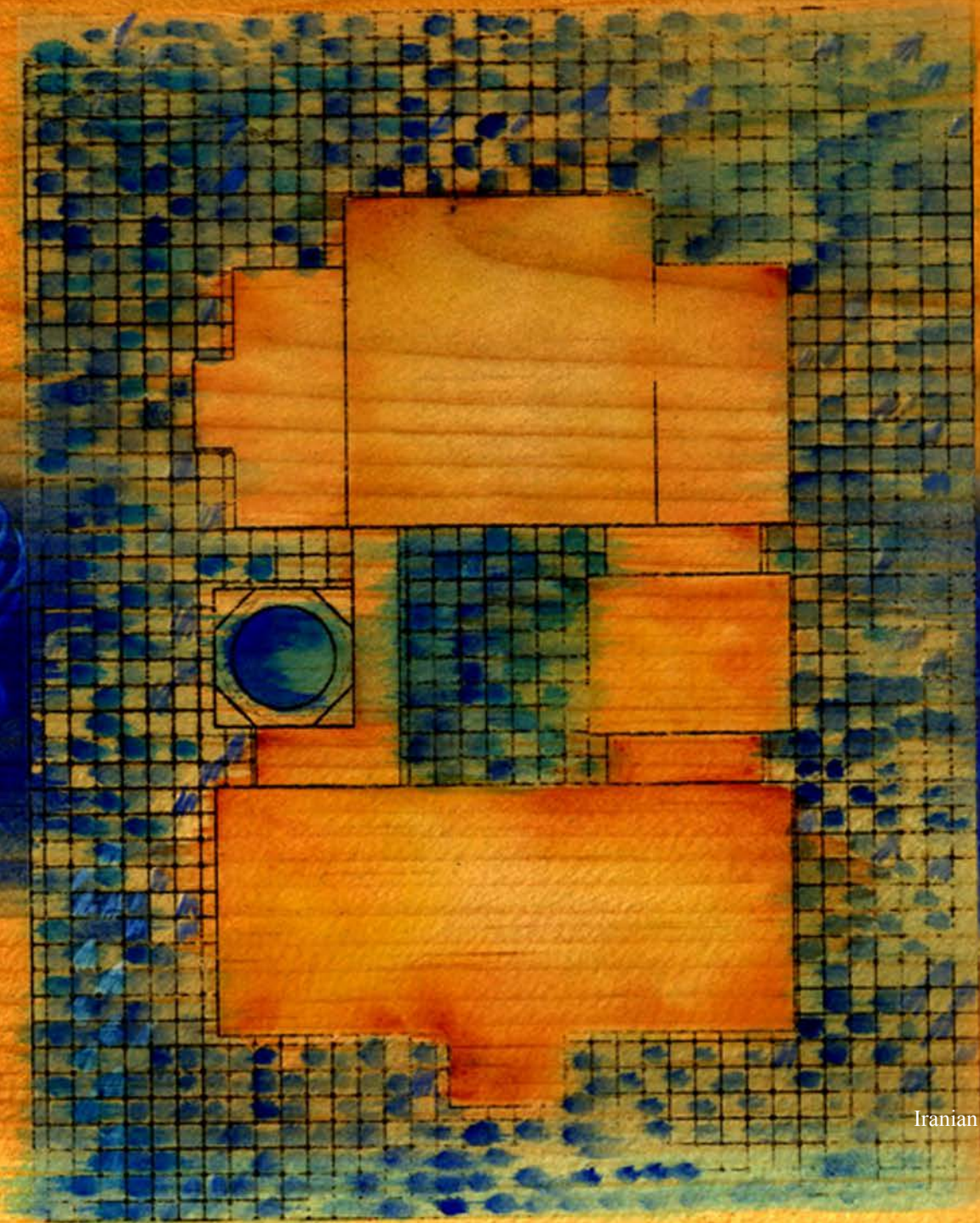


Figure 4.20
Iranian Embassy of the Future Plan (Author)

CHAPTER V

The Polyphonic Embassy

The Iranian Embassy for the Future

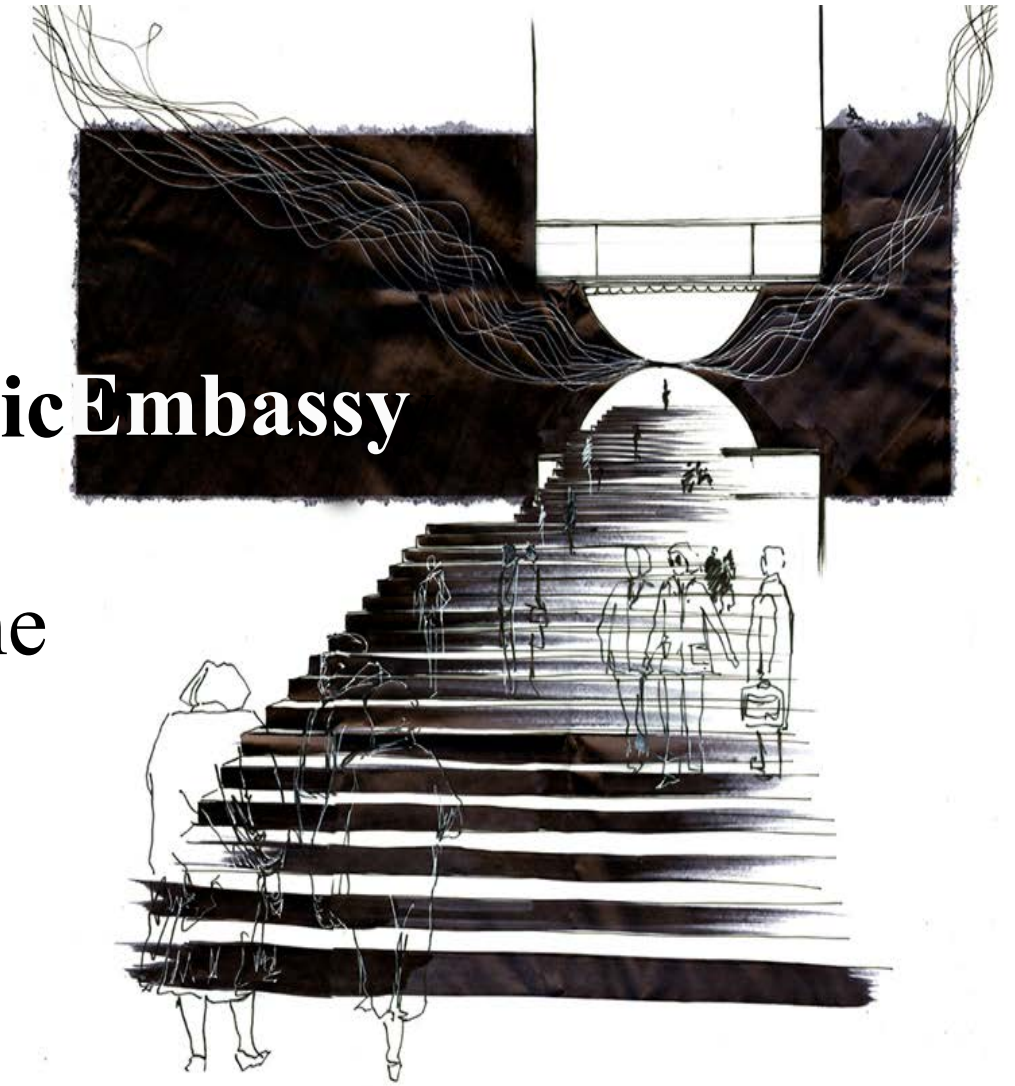


Figure 5.0
Kissing Domes(Author)



Figure 5.1
Thesis Model, Iranian Embassy for the Future (Author)

The Embassy As The Double

“ But you are abstractions, you are shadows, you are nothing. And nothing can come from nothing. You are foreign ideas. You are a mirage. You do not stand on soil but on air. The light shines right under you. . . .”

-Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Double*



Figure 5.2
Thesis Model, Iranian Embassy for the Future (Author)

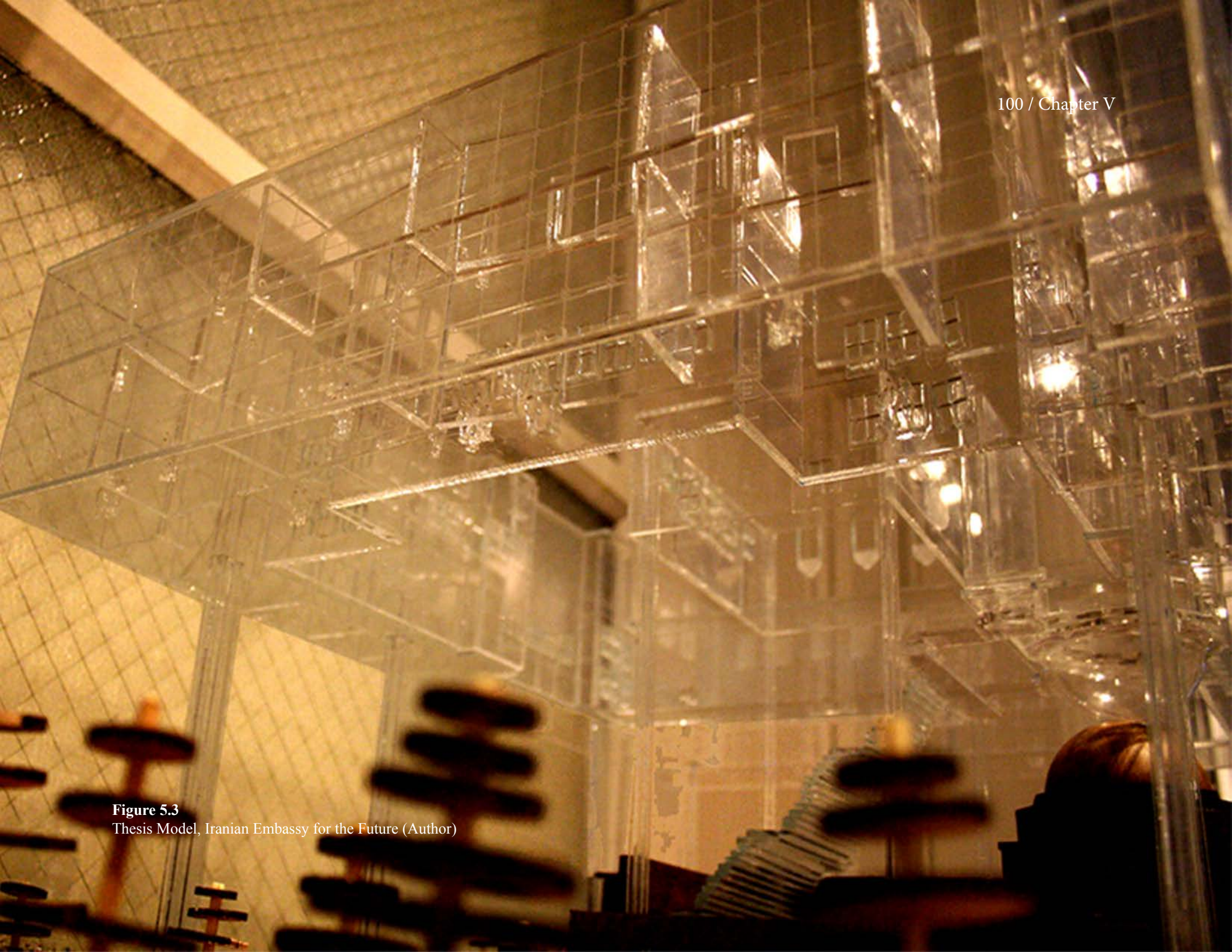


Figure 5.3
Thesis Model, Iranian Embassy for the Future (Author)



Figure 5.4
Thesis Model, Iranian Embassy for the Future (Author)



Figure 5.5
Thesis Model, Iranian Embassy for the Future (Author)



Figure 5.6
The Lovers (1928) René Magritte (1898)

The kissing Domes

The only intersection between the original and the copy is a single moment, a kiss at the top of the original dome, where the copy dome is the spring-point of the inversion of forms. Based on Bakhtin theory, the nature of the life is polyphonic but there are few moments that “I” and “other” could endorse each other completely.

The kissing domes of the polyphonic Embassy celebrate this moment, and develop it as an architectural space to emphasize the importance of culture and people in an embassy and diplomatic relationship.

Bakhtin uses public squares as a metaphor for polyphonism where people from various positions find themselves in familiar contact with one another. These spaces belong to the whole people. Based on the Bakhtin’s theories this unique analogy of polyphonic novels and public spaces is by virtue of their quantitative and qualitative abilities to absorb the diversity of voices, as according to Bakhtin, diversity is the essence of the public spaces and

novels.

He believes that great novels should be much like public spaces “where people from various positions find themselves in familiar contact with one another.”¹ For instance, *Crime and Punishment* is identical to an urban space because conflicting views and characters are provided to develop the novel’s space.²

Writer should be similar to Socrates (470-399 BC) on the market square of Athens, brings together people and ideas. Designers and artists should follow the same path so I decide to design the Kissing Domes and entrance of the Embassy as a public square similar to Foster’s project to use the space as place for events and special occasions.

1. Bakhtin, *The Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 106.

2. See Emerson, Caryl *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

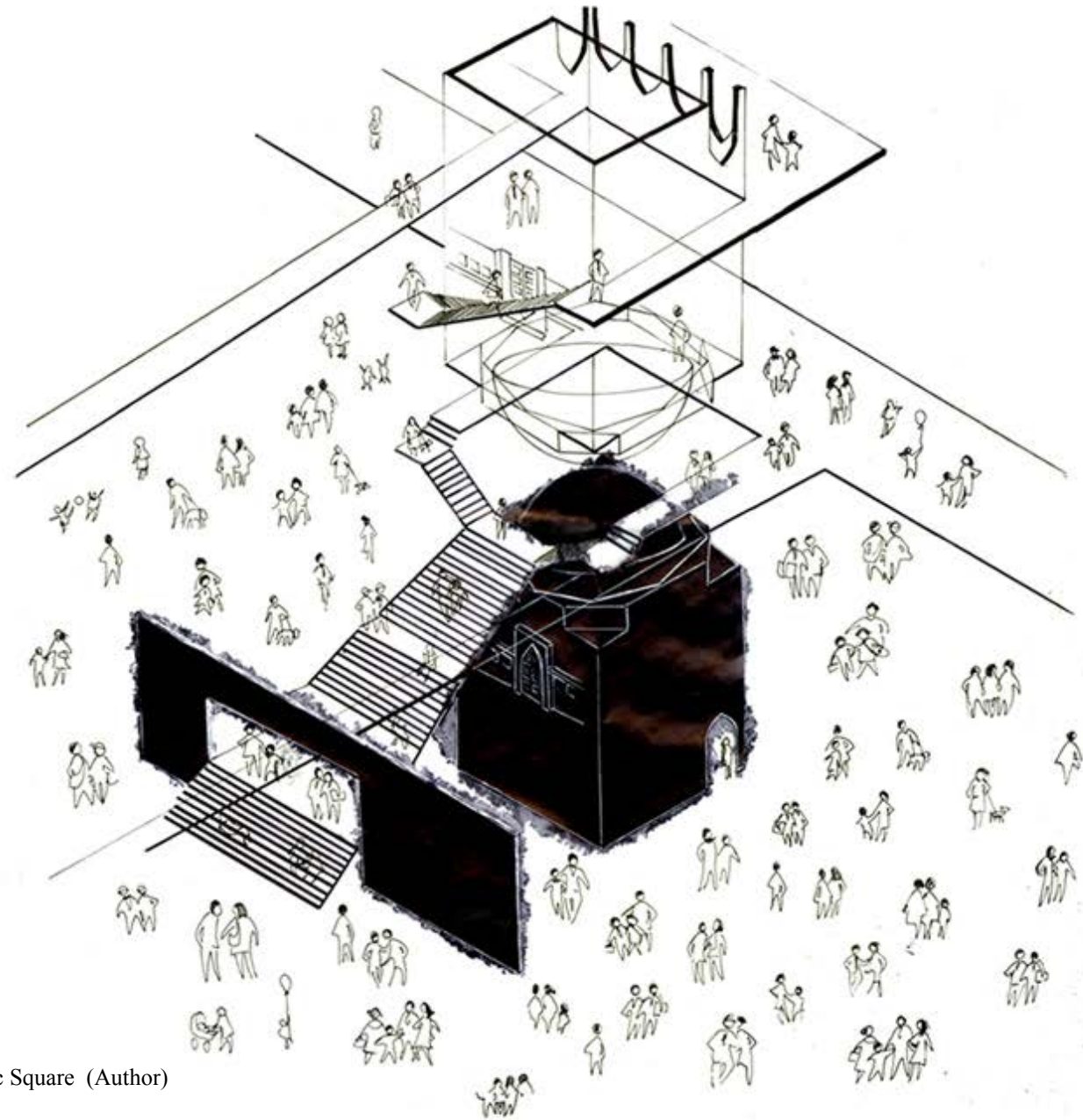


Figure 5.7
Kissing Domes as Public Square (Author)

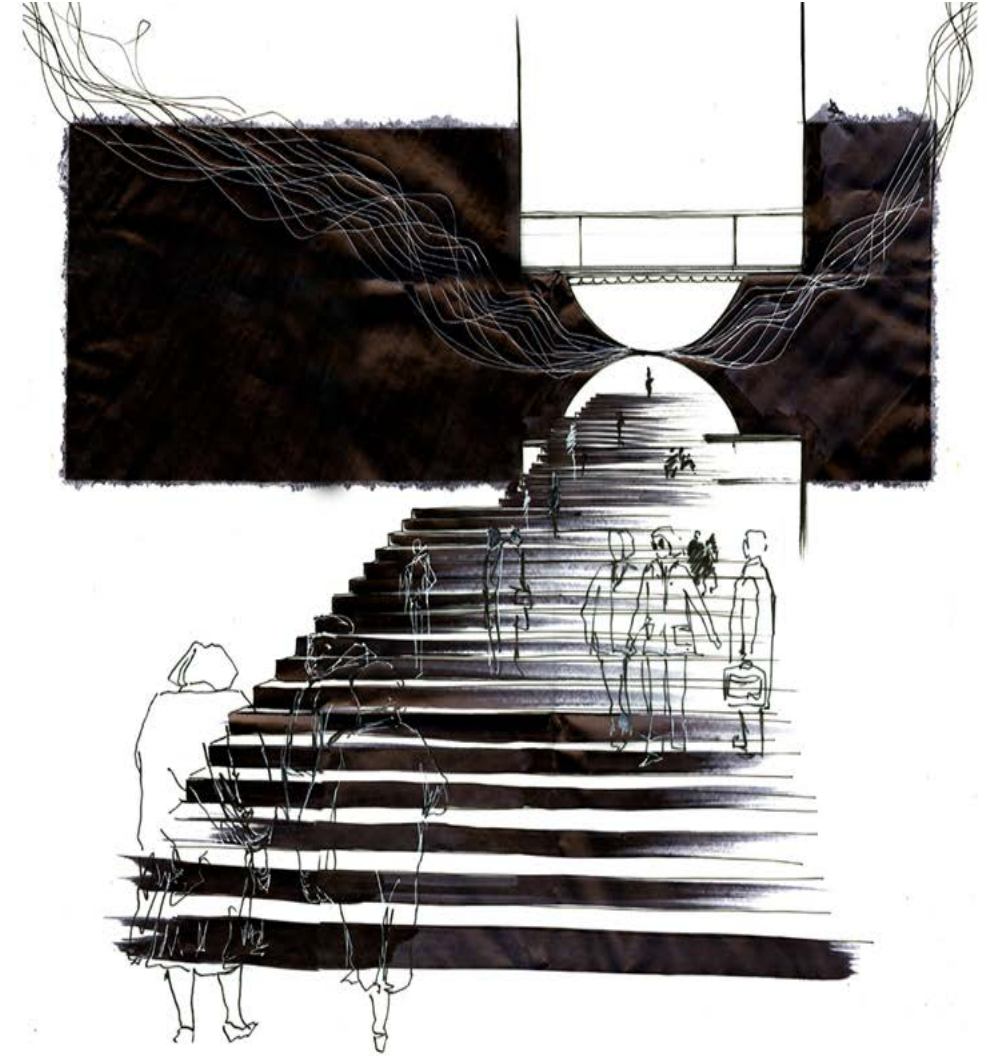


Figure 5.8
Kissing Domes (Author)



Figure 5.9
Thesis Model, Kissing Domes (Author)

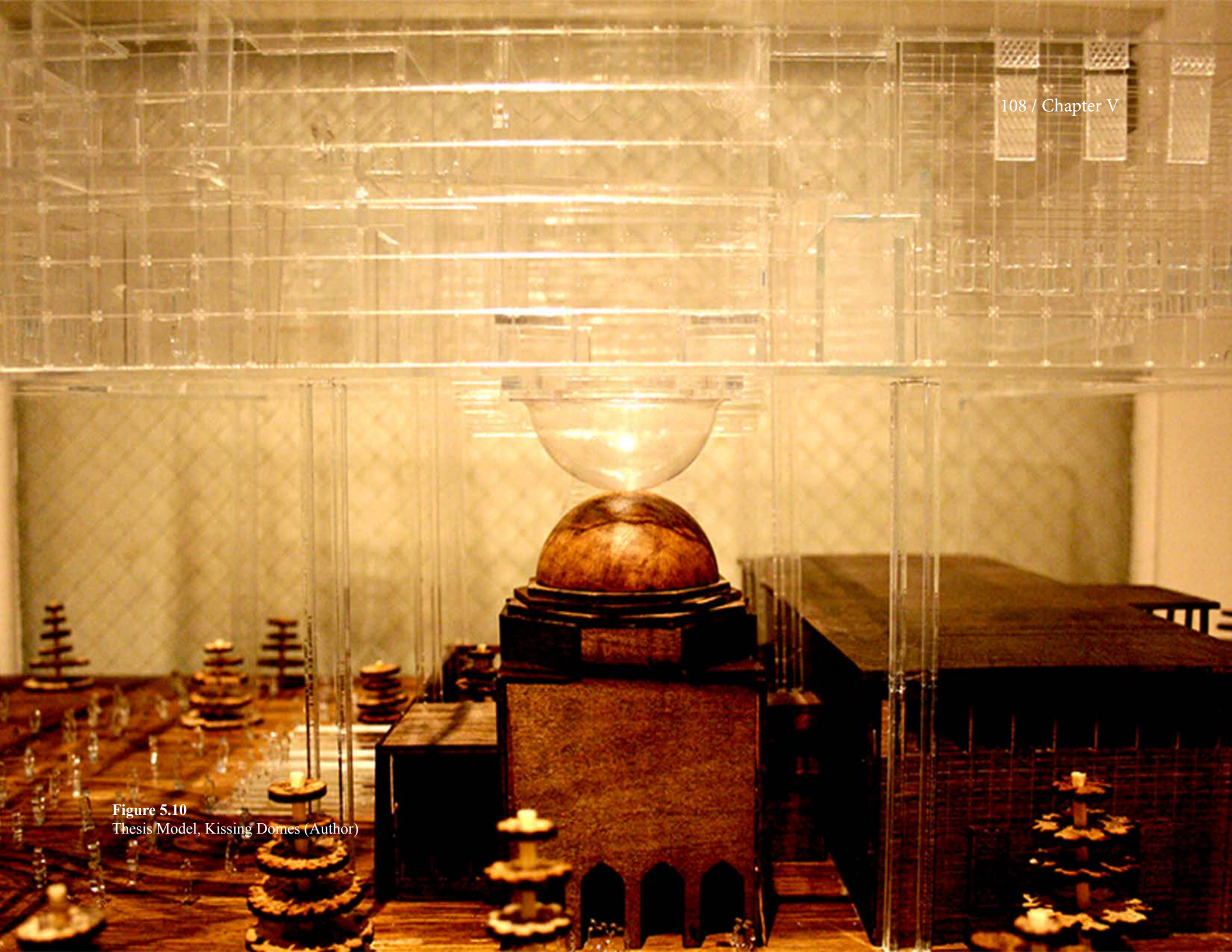


Figure 5.10
Thesis Model, Kissing Domes (Author)



Figure 5.11
Thesis Model, Kissing Domes (Author)

The Polysemic (Polyphonic) Drawings

This thesis project by insisting on various points of views and interpretations as Bakhtinian approach could not just rely on monosemic drawings such as conventional architectural plans, elevations, and sections. The Iranian Embassy for the future requires drawings that provide parallel interoperations for the viewers by considering the controversial and historical context of the original Embassy with polysemic images. “The open interpretation of these images invites the viewer into the stage set of the narrative, crafting a subconscious and emotional response.”³

I exercised this “multi-voiced”, “multi-leveledness” by collecting and representing and collaging heterogeneous materials and architectural visuals simultaneously as the palimpsest of the project history. As an author in a Bakhtinian universe I should relinquish my absolute authority to the materials and viewer.

³. Singeisen ,Scott R “Polysemic & Monosemic, Image As Agent in The Design Process” in Paper - M (Savannah: LULU, 2017) 77.



Figure 5.12
Thesis Boards, Polysemic Drawing (Author)

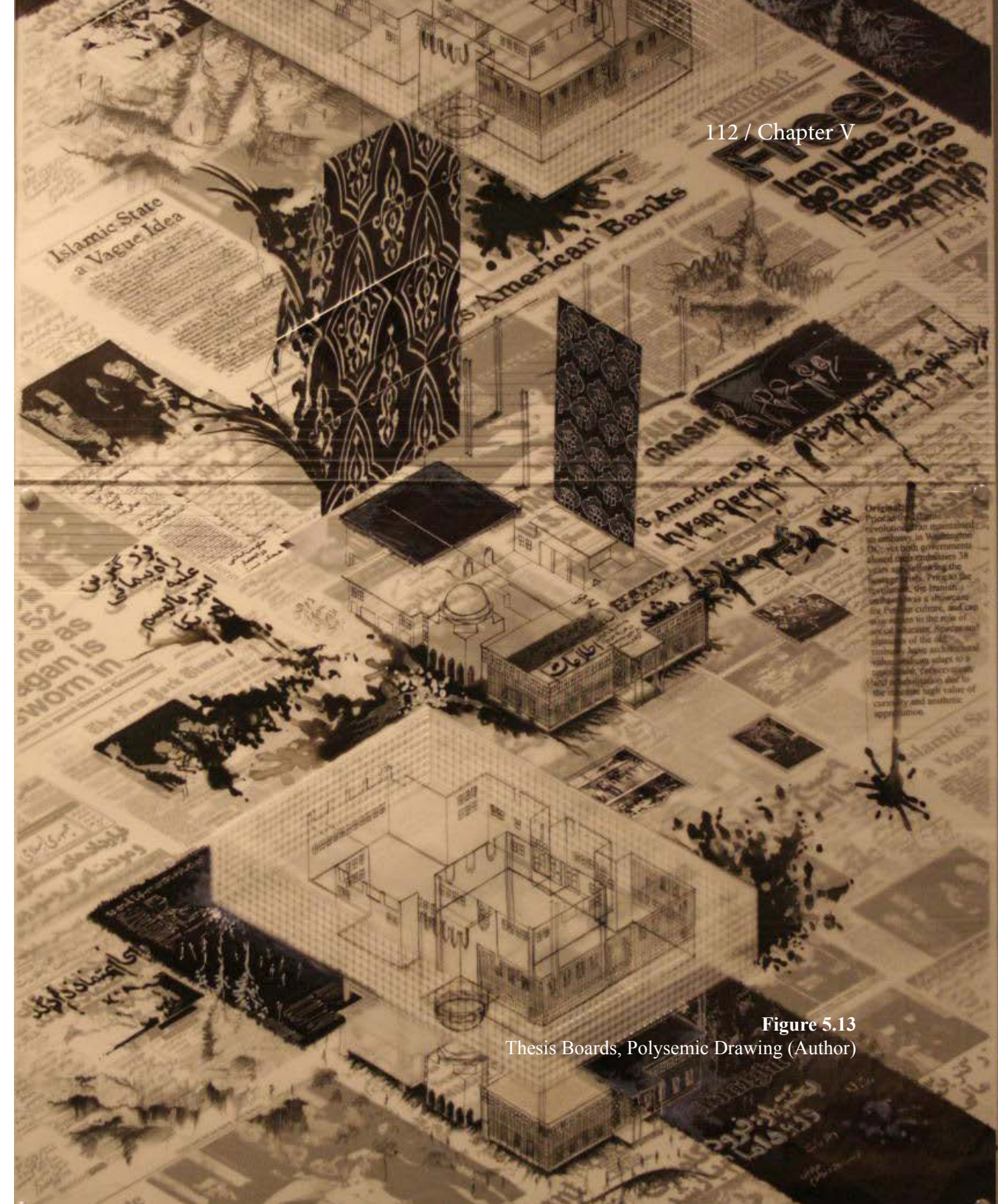


Figure 5.13
Thesis Boards, Polysemic Drawing (Author)

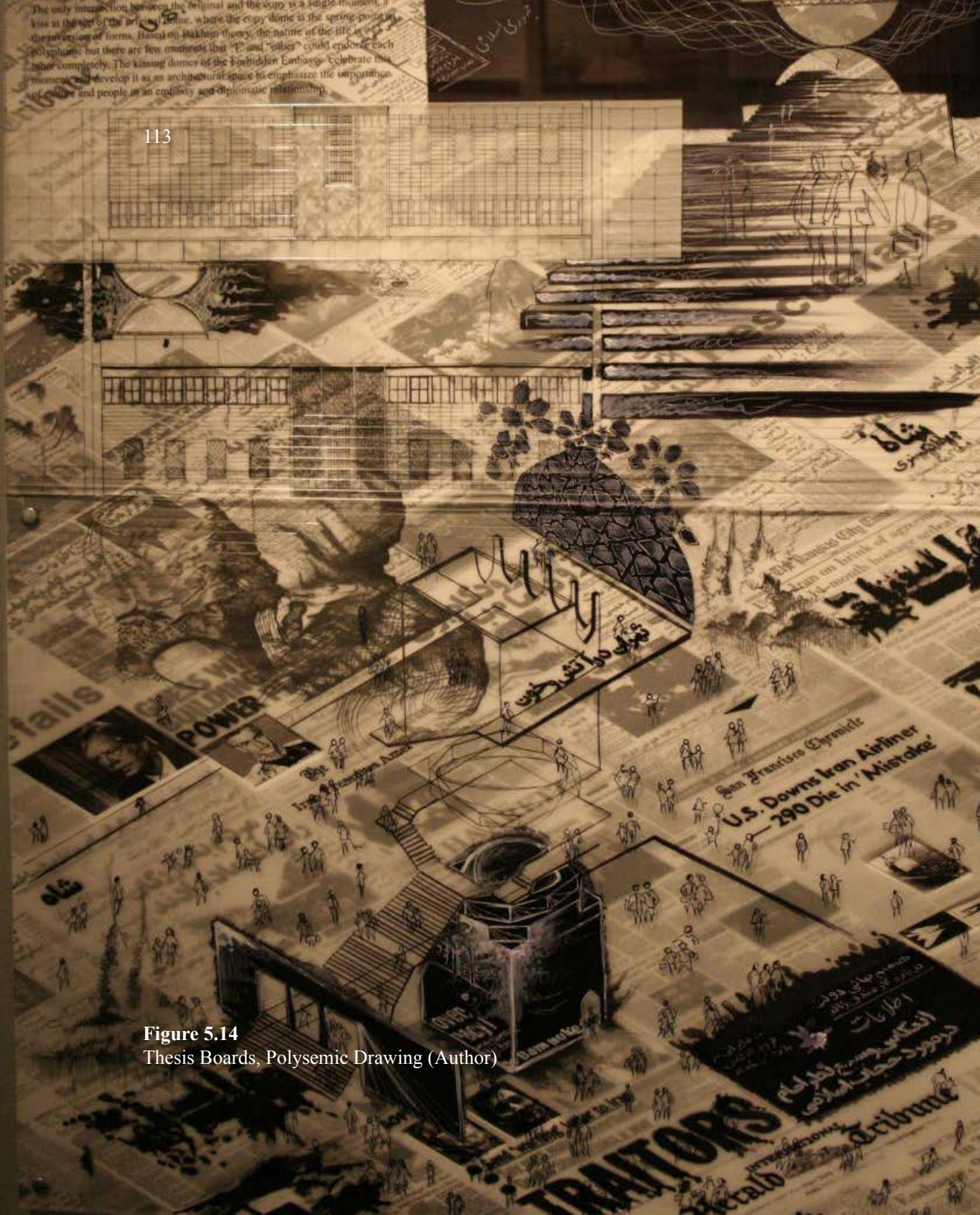


Figure 5.14
Thesis Boards, Polysemic Drawing (Author)

“Or pretend that I am not myself, but somebody else strikingly like me, and look as though nothing were the matter. Simply not I, not I and that’s all ...”

-Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Double*

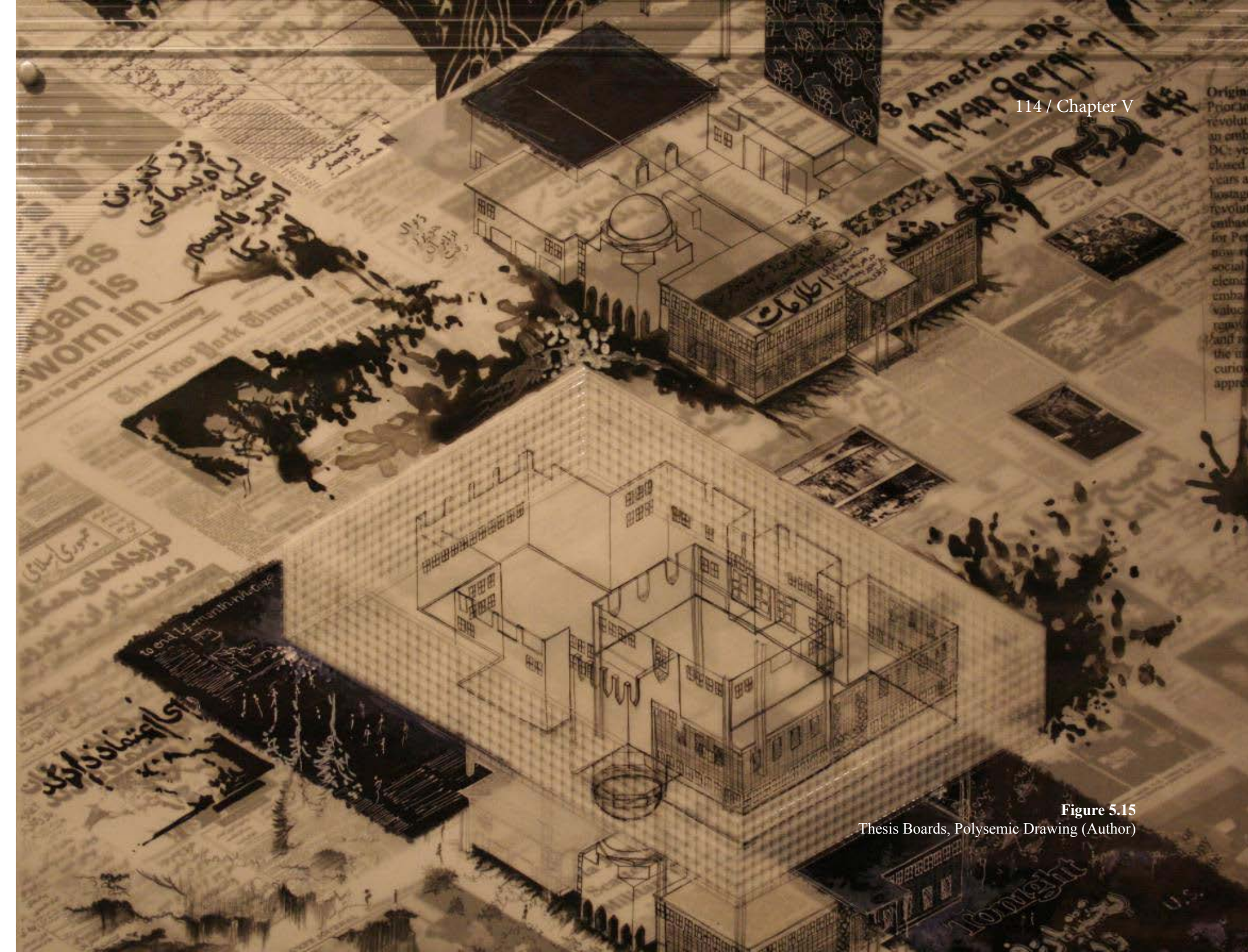


Figure 5.15
Thesis Boards, Polysemic Drawing (Author)

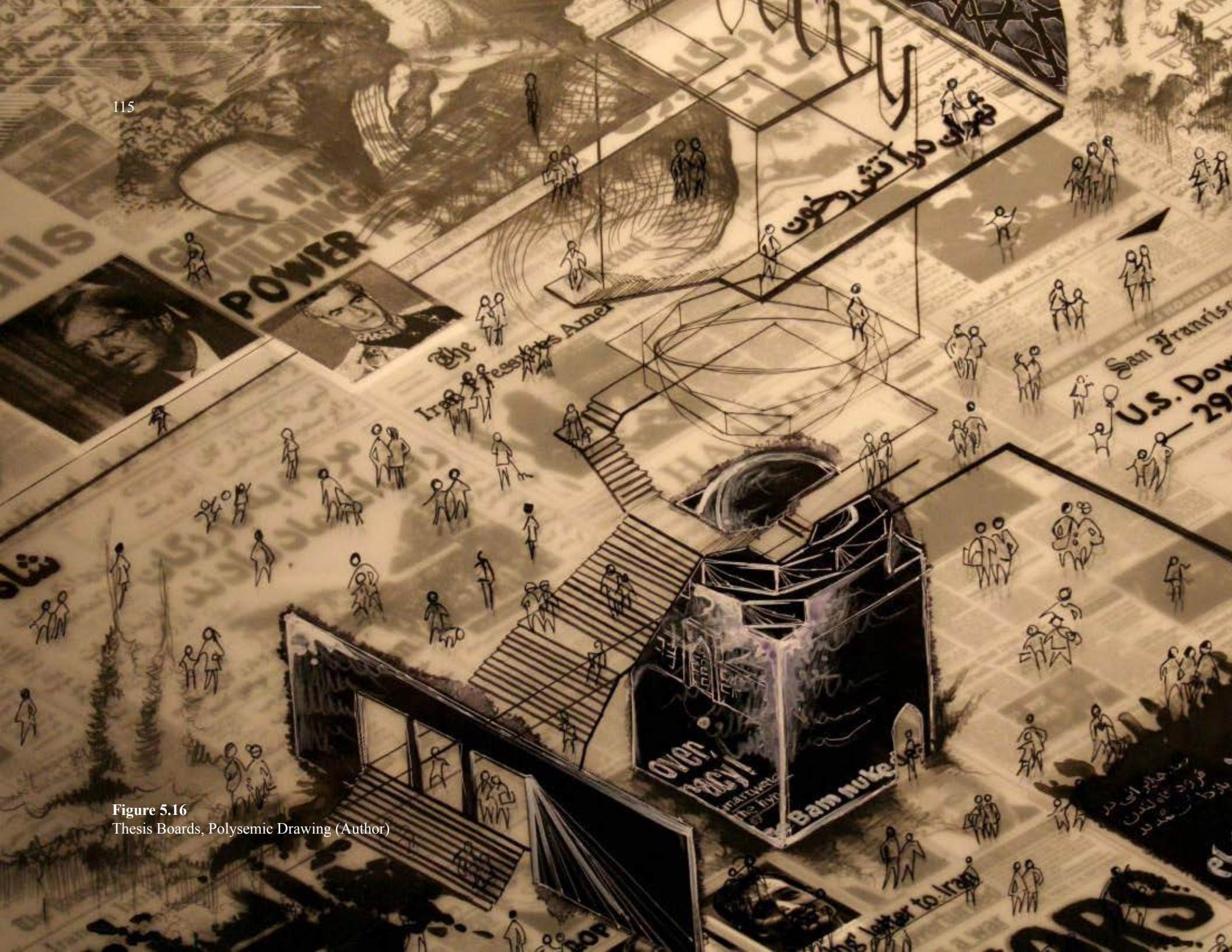


Figure 5.16
Thesis Boards, Polysemic Drawing (Author)

Thesis Conclusion

While architecture is obsessed with design methodologies, typologies, linguistic rules of formalism, functionalism, including parametric design strategies and “theory thus reduced to a self-referential system whose elements must be combined through mathematical logic must pretend that its values, and therefore its meaning, are derived from the system itself.”⁴ However, I do believe that philosophical approach and various thinkers such as Bakhtin could show various points of views towards life as well as architecture.

By following Bakhtin, I decided to weaken and deconstruct the monologic context of Iran and USA’s relation, this occurs only when there is a coming together of two utterances [“I” and “other”, original and copy] equally and directly oriented toward a referential object [Embassy] within the limits of a single context then “I” and “other” cannot exist side by side without intersecting in a polyphonic relationship dialogically, regardless of whether they confirm, mutually supplement, or (conversely)

contradict one another.⁵ In this thesis “I” and “other” are embodied meanings which cannot simply lie side by side like separate two objects. The original Iranian embassy and Iranian Embassy for the Future have inner contact, and this happened due to the Mikhail Bakhtin’s Point of view as a philosophical approach.

4. Pérez-Gómez, Alberto *Timely Meditations Selected Essays on Architecture Vol. 2* (Montreal: Rightangle International, 2016), 272.
5. Bakhtin, *The Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 188-189.

Figure 5.17
Thesis Boards(Author)



THE POLYPHONIC EMBASSY

Thesis Project

Former Iranian Embassy
in Washington DC, Site
Plan Model, Acrylic
over a Mirror

Polyphony is a philosophy toward life inspired by Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novels which includes a diversity of points of view and voices based on the idea of the relationship between the self and others.

Historical Context:

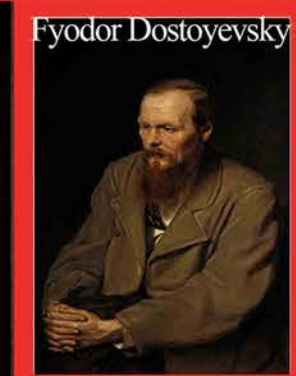
After the Iran hostage crisis in 1979, diplomatic relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America ceased. The hostage crisis was a diplomatic standoff between Iran and the United States where fifty-two American diplomats and citizens were held hostage after a group of radicals occupied the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. While relations remained strained since the incident, in 2015 renewed conversations between the two countries resulted in a nuclear deal between Iran and USA. Additionally, hope in the Iranian social and political atmosphere for a normaliz relationship between Iran and USA was possible; however,

the situation remains fragile.

Philosophical context:

Polyphony (Many-Voiced, Dialogism) a theory by Mikhail Bakhtin could be a theory for illustrating this situation.

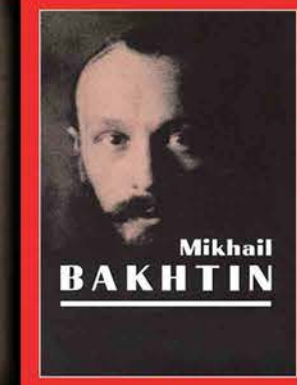
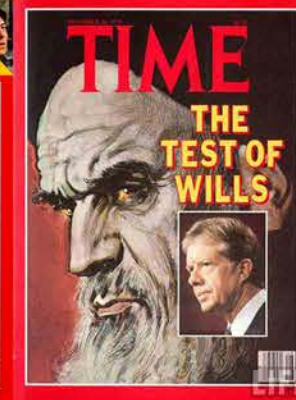
2017 President Donald Trump barred citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries (Iran) from entering the US for at least 90 days by executive order



2013 OBAMA and Rouhani, leaders speak on the phone for the first time in 30 years about negotiations over Iran's nuclear program



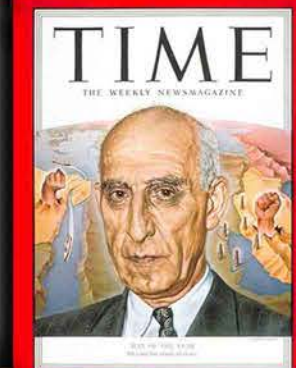
1980-1988 The US supports Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war.



2002- 2012 Ongoing US economic sanctions bring Iran's currency to a record low against the US dollar.



1979-1981 Militants seize US embassy in Tehran taking 52 hostages. The US serves diplomatic relations and imposed



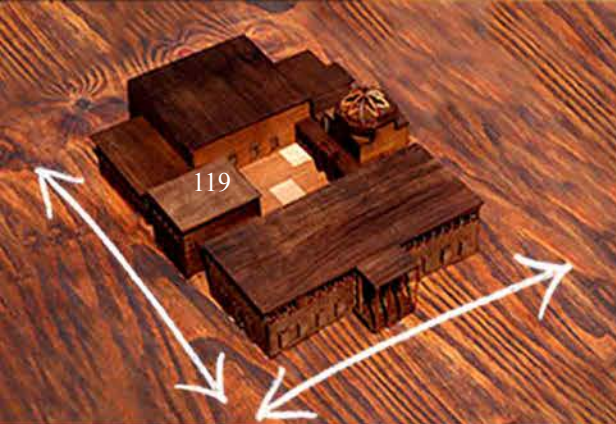
1953 First democratically elected Prime minister Mossadeq ousted by US-UK backed coup. Pro-US Shah Reza Pahlavi

2002 George W. Bush calls Iran a member of the Axis of Evil alongside Iraq and North Korea



1979 Iranian revolution overthrows Shah. Ayatollah Khomeini comes to power



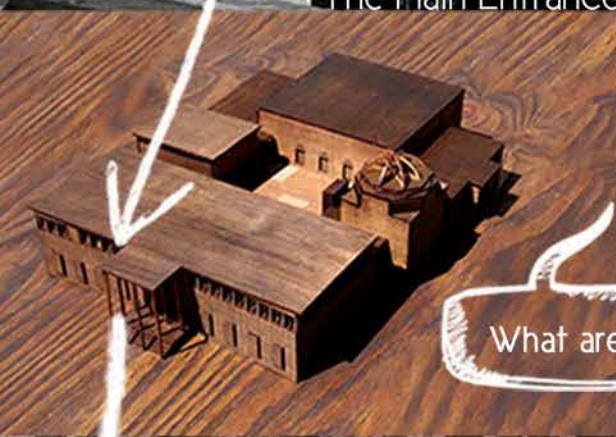


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Original:
Prior to the Islamic revolution, Iran maintained an embassy in Washington DC; yet both governments closed their embassies 38 years ago following the hostage crisis.



The Main Entrance



What are these?



Mosaic Mirrors

The Last Resident Ambassador, Ardeshir Zahedi.



The Central Courtyard

Spaces and elements of the old embassy have architectural value, and can adapt to a renovation, conservation, and rehabilitation due to the inherent high value of curiosity and aesthetic appreciation.



Prior to the revolution, the Iranian embassy was a showcase for Persian culture, and can now return to the role of social



The "Other" & The "I"



René Magritte: Not to be Reproduced (1937)



Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

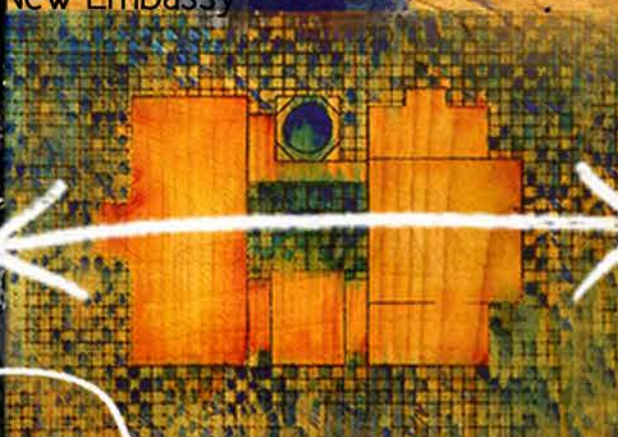


The "I" and the "other" in architecture can be represented as the Architectural Doppelgänger, a position that the idea of originality remains a disciplinary foundation.

Architectural Doppelgänger

Human fear of something unoriginal – or a copy – is similar to the fear of the other. The feeling of unease happens when you experience something commonplace in a way that it is suddenly strange.

Something that is disconcertingly like the self and yet completely separate from it like mirrors, shadows, reflections, twins. Doppelgängers are exotic since they look like the 'self', and yet are threateningly 'other'.



Nice!

%#@!

چی شده!



The Persian Room, with its veritable kaleidoscope of tiny mosaic mirrors executed by an

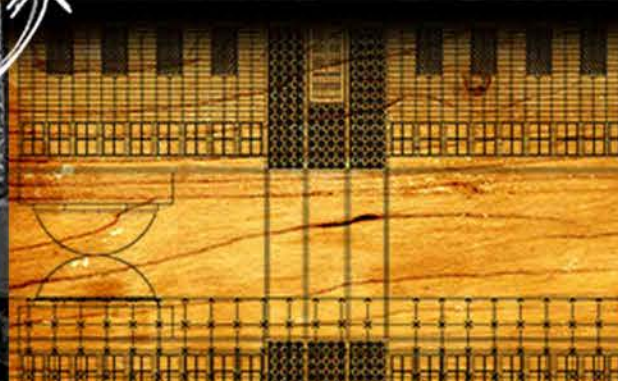
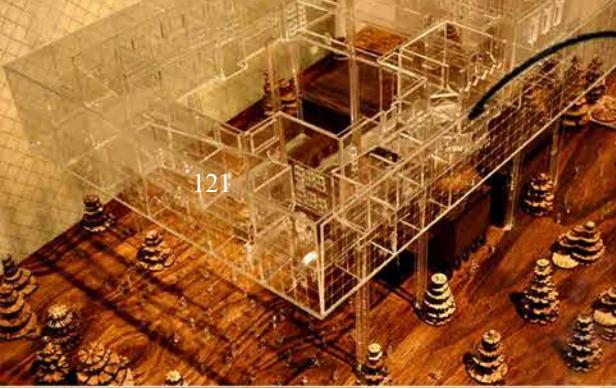
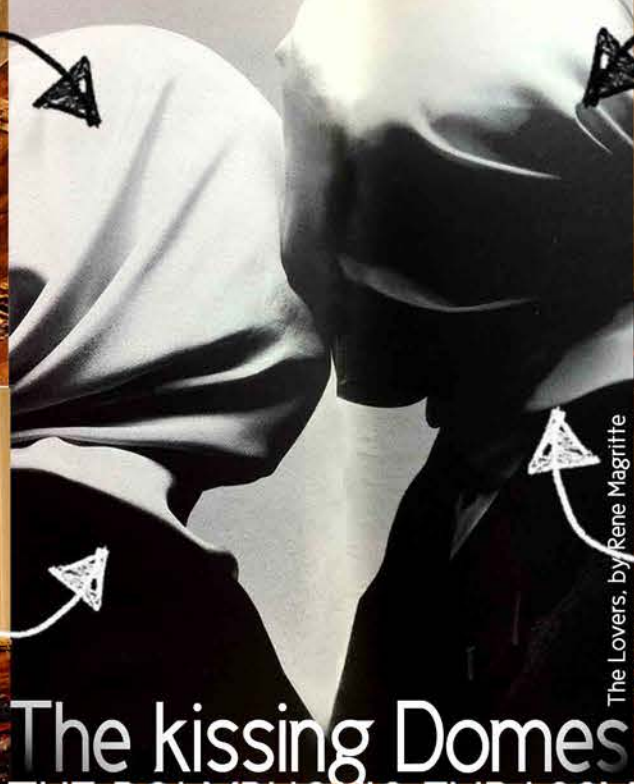


Figure 5.18 Thesis Boards(Author)



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The Lovers, by Rene Magritte

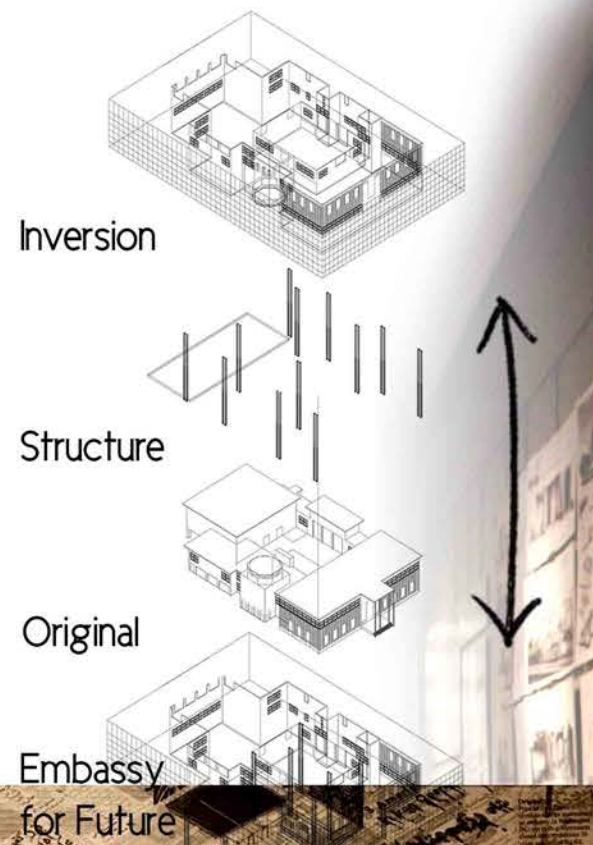
The kissing Domes

THE POLYPHONIC EMBASSY



The only intersection between the original and the copy is a single moment, a kiss at the top of the original dome, where the copy dome is the spring-point of the inversion of forms. Based on Bakhtin theory, the nature of the life is polyphonic but there are few moments that 'I' and 'other' could endorse each other completely.

The kissing domes of the Forbidden Embassy celebrate this moment, and develop it as an architectural space



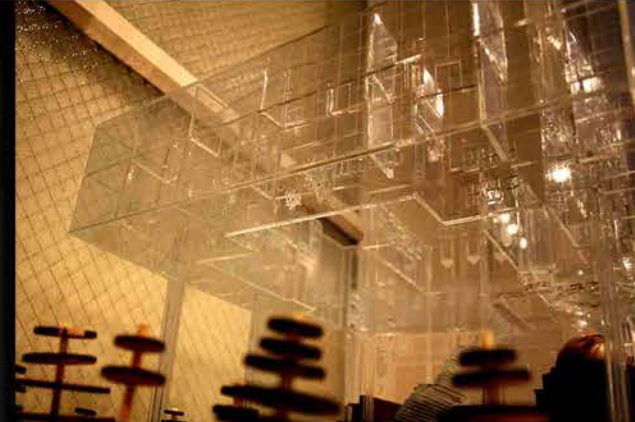
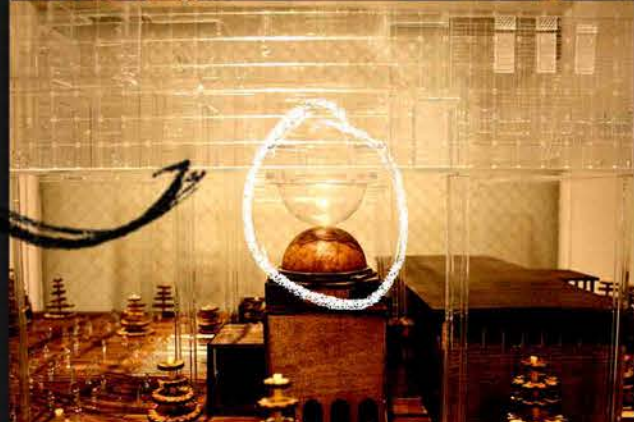
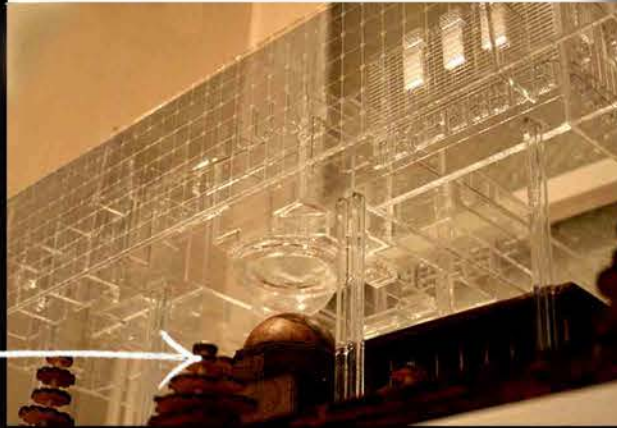
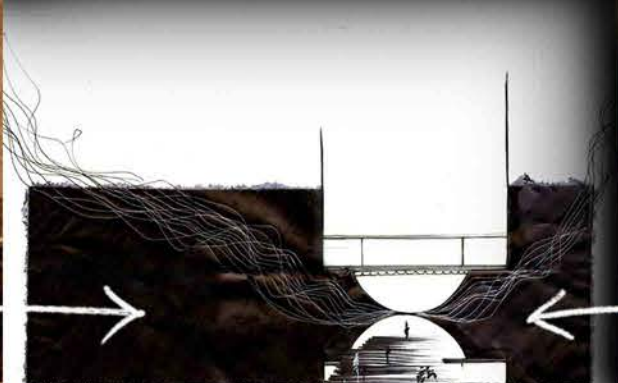
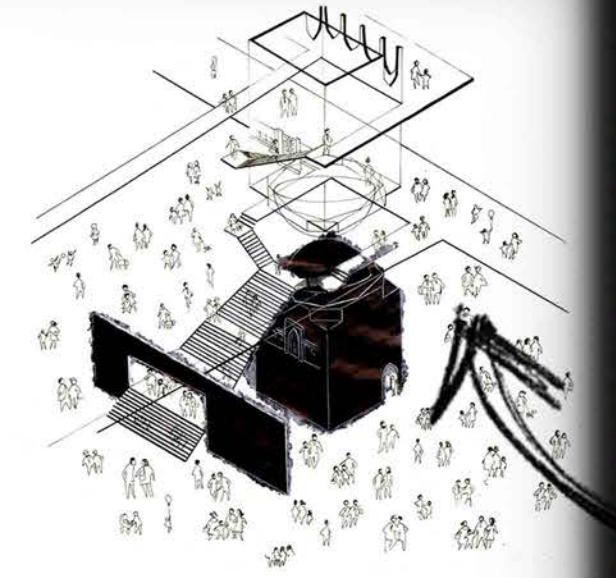
Inversion: The new architectural intervention will act as the doppelgänger of the original - an inverted version - both a mirror of the original and mold for the original; a new embassy that uses the original, while further expanding the original.

to emphasize the importance of culture and people in an embassy and diplomatic relationship.

Iranian Embassy for Future: Do the Original (the 'I' or the 'other'?) and the Copy ('I' or 'other'?) erase the threshold between the 'other' and 'I'. The question becomes which one is the original? Is it the past (the form) or the new (the mold) which creates the original.



Figure 5.19 Thesis Boards(Author)



“ Feeling reconciled with mankind and his destiny, and filled with love at the moment, not only for Olsufy Ivanovitch, not only for the whole part collected there, but even for his noxious twin (who seemed now to be by no means noxious, and not even to be his twin at all, but a person very agreeable in himself and in no way connected with him).”

-Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Double*

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