

THE REVOLUTION WILL BE TELEVISED

<< The revolution will put you in the driver's seat. >>

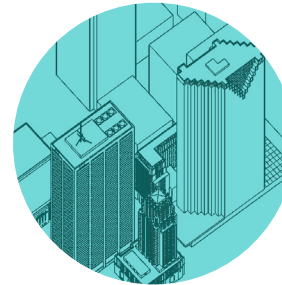
Gil Scott-Heron, 1974



SETTING THE STAGE FOR DISSENT IN DOWNTOWN TORONTO

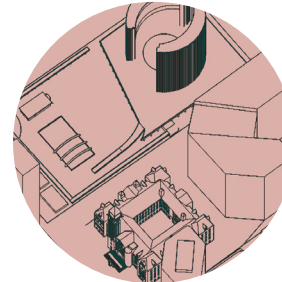
1 FINANCIAL CENTRE

Canada's five most powerful banks have placed an architectural stake on Toronto's Bay Street – a physical manifestation of their economic and financial might. Serving as the city's business nerve centre, the district relies heavily on technological networks as well as on physical transport networks for their daily operations. Here, physical and virtual systems interlink as the district's street grid becomes crucial to Bay Street's economic vibrancy. Interrupting these physical links could have grave consequences for the city's economic and political power structures.



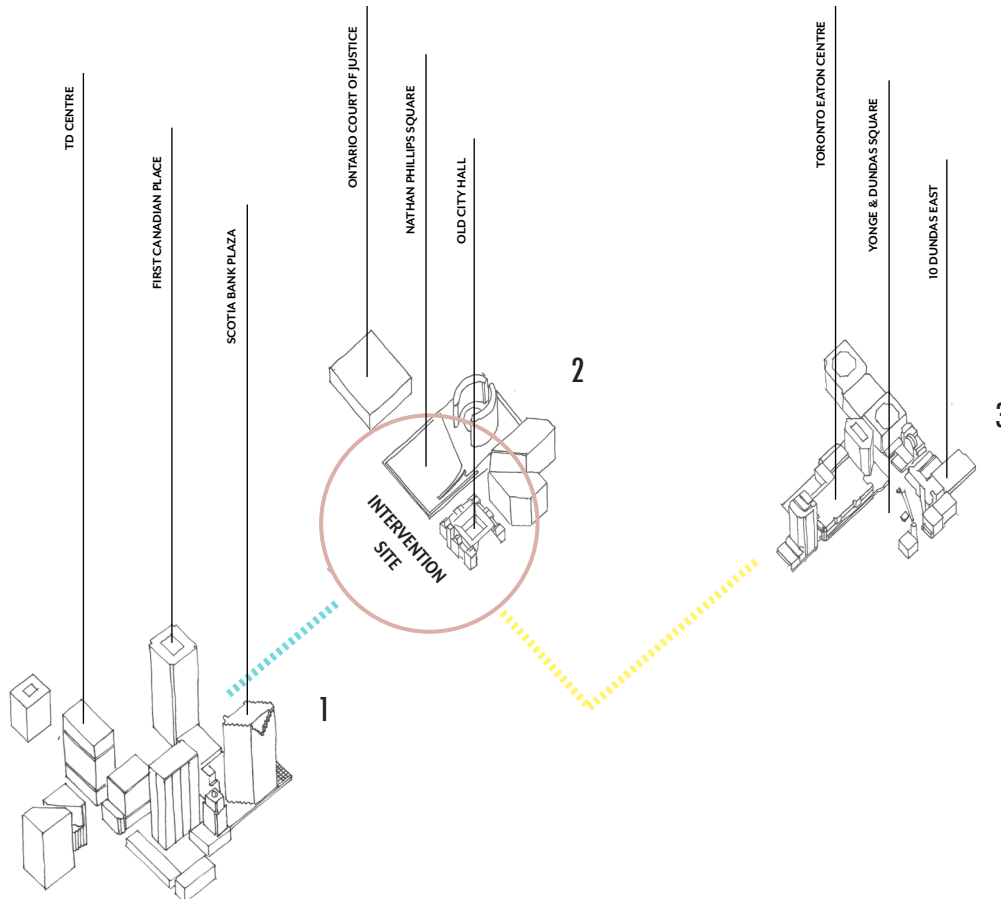
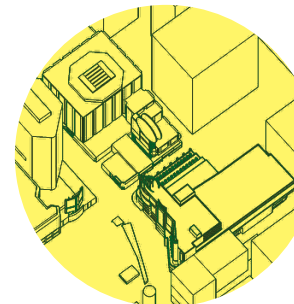
2 CIVIC CENTRE

Initially, civic power in Toronto crowned a ceremonial axis with direct access to the Bay Street financial centre. While the old city hall still remains, its prestige and traditional grandeur has been supplanted by the architectural modernism of the new city hall – a barren concrete structure built on the remains of downtown Toronto's immigrant quarter. Nathan Phillips Square, the supposed space of public congregation for Torontonians, has been trivialized by frivolous tourism and looming commercial interest. The square must be pushed into the limelight so that its political significance may be reclaimed by the citizenry.

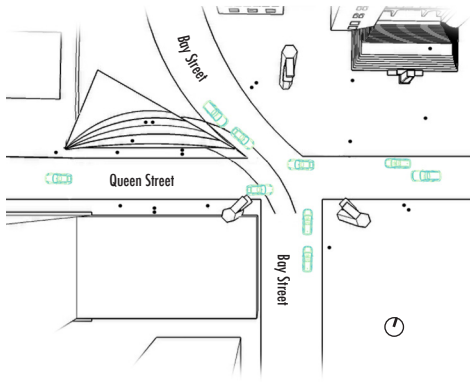


3 COMMERCIAL CENTRE

Toronto's first new public square? Such was the supposed aim of the plaza built two decades ago where Yonge and Dundas streets meet. Today, dizzying advertisements can be found flashing from dozens of screens towering over the occupants of the space. In a manner reminiscent of New York's Time Square, screens blanket the surrounding buildings and muddle the area's architecture. Media saturation and commercial happenings of the Eaton Centre – Toronto's largest downtown mall – draws citizens away from their rightful patrimony of public space. What if a more substantive broadcast could return Torontonians to public view?

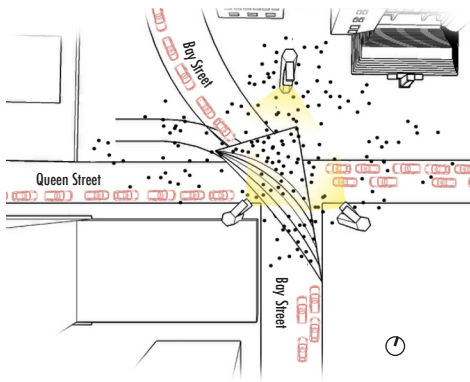


SPECIFICATIONS



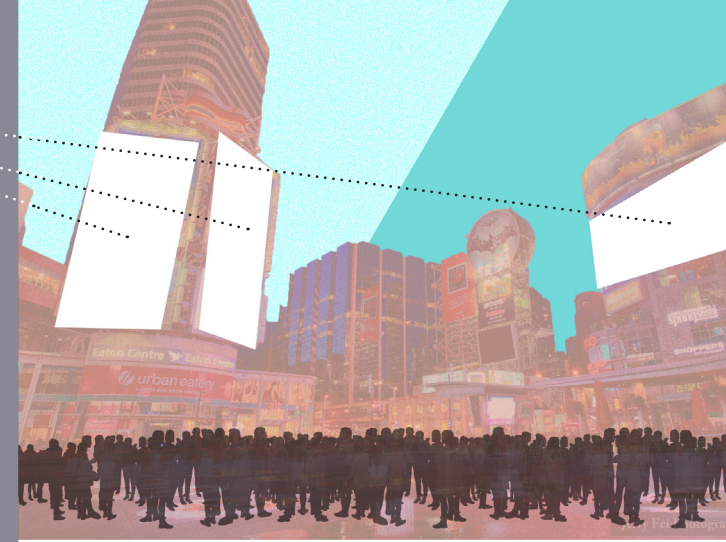
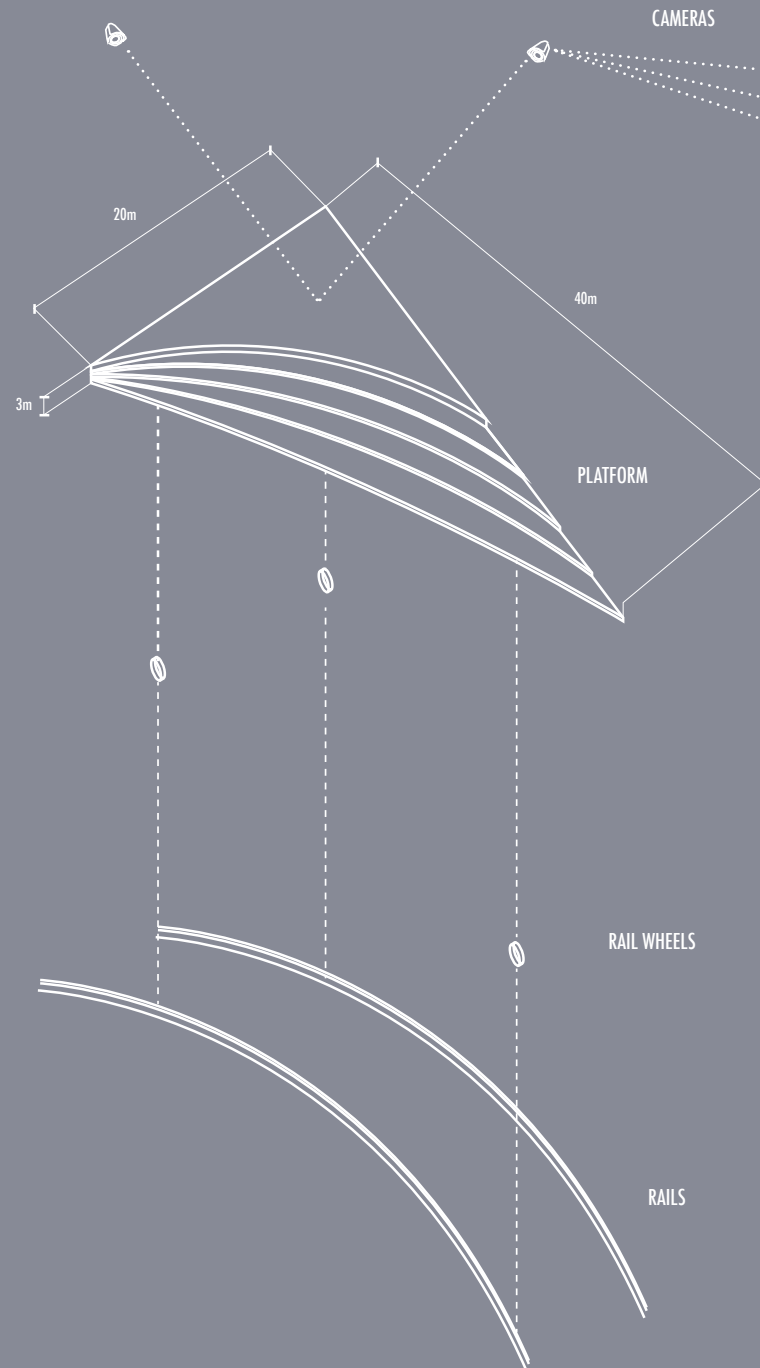
1

Standing inactive at the southeast corner of Nathan Phillips Square, the stage will occupy the former south-bound turnoff of Bay Street. Given the weight of the structure, collective action is required to push it off of the square and into the street. The tracks beneath the device will guide it to its final position, bringing Toronto's physical and digital networks to a standstill and forcing the political eye onto a public space that can no longer be by-passed.



2

Once locked into place at the centre of the Queen Street and Bay Street intersection, the structure becomes a stage for recreational and dissenting performance. Three cameras mounted on lampposts positioned around the intersection are activated and transmit the unedited events to the monitors of the Yonge and Dundas Square, replacing their usual advertisements. The citizens can then unseat corporate powers from the visual control of the cityscape and lead the performance of the 'spectacle' live.



Yonge and Dundas Square

BROADCASTING DISCORD

The curvature of the structure's longest side will provide a pedestrian rest space that will feature a direct view of Queen Street and Bay Street - the city's mechanical arteries of production. Guy Debord identifies the society of production "as an immense accumulation of spectacles [and as] a social relationship between people that is mediated by images". The structure's steps will thus serve as the seating area from which the spectacle of the society can be observed.

The rear end of the triangular stage will provide a surface from which it can be pushed and will subsequently lead its pointed angle to become lodged into the middle of Bay Street, its sharp edge perforating the barrier between spectacle and audience member.

Once positioned at Toronto's political and economic crossroads, the steps will then ascend to the stage at the top of which users can perform in the full view of the old and new town hall structures. These last political institutions will themselves become the audience to the city's performers.

The space will be encouraged as a tool of dissent as well as one of culture as it will have the adequate electrical and technological infrastructure to house public events. Don Mitchell observes that a right to the city must tend towards spontaneous recreational use in what Henri Lefebvre calls *La Fête* - collective play for its own sake. Thus, the multimedia connectivity of the structure, the lighting provided by the camera posts and the broadcast capabilities of the site will render it a desirable venue for musical and cultural events as well.

Though the symbol of the city hall was initially meant to signify a place of public service and deliberation, its nature as a designed space fetters it to its intended - and consequently "acceptable" - uses. Resisting the designations of specified use, the function of the stage will be determined by the people.

This unnamed piece of guerrilla architecture is an emblem of free use whose asymmetrical shape has the potential to disrupt the ordered lines of the city's physical fabric while taking command of its digital tools of political and economic production.