

# A Feigned Translucence

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Situated at the intersection of two nations, embedded in a mountainside and televised across the US, Sun Bowl Stadium in El Paso, Texas demonstrates the role of architecture in the political economy of representation. The hills that compose the stadium and its televisual image are part building, landscape, and media apparatus. A Feigned Translucence builds on this hybridity to challenge the discrepancy in social, political, and economic agency the US/Mexico border creates as well as the imaginations of sovereignty and capital circulation embedded in who/what is (in)visible from the stadium, to whom it is visible, and to what end. In the existing economy of representation, the selective invisibility of the border from the American side allows for the materializing, normalizing, and concealing of exploitative power structures that deny Mexican citizens both acknowledgement and agency while images of their countryside are captured from across the border and transformed into capital. However, this selective invisibility also provides the opportunity for those who might subvert this economy or representation to camouflage themselves. Utilizing such an opportunity in the legal apparatus of the special economic zone, (SEZ), A Feigned Translucence amplifies/augments

the Sun Bowl's unique spatial conditions and weekly television broadcasts, transforming it into a tool for countering the transmission of visual capital from Mexico to America with the free movement of Mexican citizens, immigrants, and workers. For this new image economy to function, where the border is not visible from within the stadium or on television it is functionally non-existent, but where it is visible it cannot betray its subverted nature. Interpreting the pseudo-laws of the SEZ within this image economy, so long as the connections between the US and Mexico are unseen, those crossing effectively enter the US legally. In order to conceal these new border crossings, the existing stadium and hills are analyzed and excavated using camera viewsheds. This results in a new topography of visibility; a tool with which to control the architecture and behavior of paths between the SEZ and Mexico; determining when they tunnel or skirt the landscape. Sight lines are projected from these pathways, ensuring their total concealment by further landscape manipulations. This process is enabled by computational tools for revealing hidden spaces in images which also extend the play of visibility into a strategy capable of being deployed elsewhere; a way to see the world as hollow and

subversively occupiable. Using an image of the stadium from a television broadcast and the new topography of visibility, a model of the stadium and landscape is constructed. From a specific angle the model appears as the flat two dimensional image, but from other angles reveals the space behind. Effectively merging building and landscape, this creates a hollow scenographic architecture. Paradoxically, realizing this hollow architecture requires constructing large landforms. The build-up of landforms over time is intended to be coordinated with erosion control programs in the Rio Grande valley and staged to limit experiential and environmental impact. In these landforms, the image economy of television, international border politics, and environmental rehabilitation come together to create a performative architecture that acknowledges its embeddedness within global and local power relations. Taking the stadium/landscape's need to operate as an image literally A Feigned Translucence transforms them into tools of political empowerment.

