

## 5 Consequences of Picturing

### 5.1 *Picturing is not Building*

This finding suggests that architects' renderings are very effective methods of communication – respondents tended to see what the architects wanted them to see. The problem with this finding, however, is that although there is a small gap between design intention and reception of the renderings, we cannot yet know the dimensions of the gap that may show up between the graphic rendering and the built world itself. *Picturing how we want to live and actually materializing that world is not the same thing.* This observation requires that we consider the likely consequences of each type of rendering upon the social and material process of building before we can assess how successful these types of rendering might be in catalyzing a future material reality.

### 5.2 *Consequences of Convention*

The conventional rendering (Pelli) pictured a generally happy world familiar to decision makers. In our view this strategy had significant advantage for the developer – the Museum Board of Directors in this case – because it minimized resistance to development, and thus economic risk, by masking some conditions and consequences of building. For example, neither technological means, nor their environmental/social impacts were present in the picture. Observers had to assume that other experts would solve such problems or that they were non-architectural. Out-of-sight is out-of-mind. The other two renderings edited reality no less severely, but the Behnisch rendering did, as we will see, did illustrate technological means through which that design would mediate reality.

The conventional renderings presented non-expert decision makers with only visual or programmatic choices, none of which required them to take much risk or exercise much vision. In the world pictured by Pelli, life could go on pretty much as before, but within a more commodious space. The major advantage to this strategy is that it won the competition. The disadvantage, however, was that participants did not see or take advantage of the opportunity to reconsider the institutional agreements that bound them together and materialize those agreements in a manner that might continue to open up new ways of living.

### 5.3 *Consequences of Abstraction*

The critical rendering (Hadid) pictured the opposite of a conventional world – one that stripped away allusions to the familiar to reveal the sometimes terrifying and

sublime conditions of urban life. This artful strategy increased resistance to development because it asked people to accept a new way of living not on the basis of their own experience, but on the basis of the architect's cultural and technological authority. Decision makers had to be willing to accept the risk that what the architect-artist would actually build on their behalf would satisfy their long term needs and desires; they were not.

This strategy is, for both the architect and institution a high-risk high-gain proposition. For the architect the risk is, as in the Hartford case, to be rejected as too radical. Had Hadid managed to attract the Museum as a "patron" she would have gained a more or less free hand in the production of her masterpiece. The advantage to the museum, and to the city, in accepting the role of patron of the arts is that they might have gained a remarkable building that would attract, in the manner of Frank Gehry's Bilbao Museum, huge crowds of new museum-goers.

Before moving to the third type of rendering, we should note that the first and second types – the conventional and the critical – are a dialectic pair. Our observation is that architects Pelli and Hadid both sought the same end by opposite means, which is to quickly gain approval and get on with building. Where Pelli appealed to colorful popular taste, Hadid appealed to a darker, more abstract or elite taste. If the source of their authority differed, both architects relied upon their renderings to satisfy the aesthetic desires of their client so as to close public talk and thus avoid what has been edited out of the picture. This is an outcome that alternately delays and suppresses dissatisfaction but does get buildings built.

#### *5.4 Consequences of Explanation*

In contrast to the conventional and critical renderings, the explanatory rendering pictured something more akin to an open-ended process than an artifact. Where Pelli and Hadid idealized the site context through stylized rendering techniques, Behnisch placed his building proposal in the messy context of a photograph. Where Pelli and Hadid sought to mobilize populist or elite tastes, Behnisch appealed to intelligence. And rather than seeking to close down conversation by satisfying aesthetic desires, the Behnisch illustrations sought to open up new conversations about topics unfamiliar to decision makers. These renderings are certainly concrete in the sense that they portray volumes of space and rather conventionally drawn floor plans, but for every element of certainty represented there are elements in the composition that ask decision makers to consider alternative possibilities or that explain unconventional technologies. In this sense the Behnisch renderings are challenging in a manner different from the Hadid pictures. In addition to challenging the aesthetic norms of decision makers these pictures challenge them to take responsibility for the non-visual consequences of building. If there was risk to decision makers associated with this design it was that the world pictured could not simply be purchased. Rather, it required their time, their literacy, and participation in public talk to be realized.