

## Las Vegas - Where does reality reside?

Written by Pedro Meyer

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Why am I so fascinated by this city? Probably because it is the only place where I can make a photograph in which the outcome is an unaltered image which looks like a text book rendition of a layered digital fabrication created on a computer. A picture that is, to use a term very much appreciated by documentary photographers: a strictly "straight image." However this photograph is a deception in that it appears to be like a composite of several ones. Essentially it looks "fake." However, what do you call an image in which the subject matter to begin with is what is fake? So we go back to those basic dilemmas about photography, wherein does the deception lie? In the original or the reproduction? Or is it maybe our interpretation of it all?

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It was 25 years ago that a little known professor, Robert Venturi, dared in to Las Vegas with two dozen of his students from Yale, and stayed at the Stardust. The result of that trip would become his influential 1972 book, *Learning from Las Vegas*, which would introduce the world of high culture to the notion of what in time, became known as Post-Modernist architecture.

Today every big-city downtown has new skyscrapers that attempt to look like old skyscrapers. Almost every suburb has a shopping center decorated with phony arches, fake pediments, and imitation columns. Venturi's manifesto stating that Las Vegas could become a beacon for the architecture of the future, in particular in the United States, transformed such esthetic thinking through out the world. Today we can see such buildings from Mexico City to London aside from major metropolitan cities all over the US landscape.

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Being so close to the building, it's hard to see the details of the structure. The building is a modern, multi-story structure with a glass facade. The structure is a tall, slender, metallic tower. The building is surrounded by construction cranes and scaffolding. The building has a sign that reads "VEEN".



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