



SUNSET MEDIA MONOLITH

Design c. TWA and Render c. Kilograph

The history of the billboard in American culture tracks with the larger cultural and technological history of media distribution and visual sensibilities. In the early 20th century, the billboard began as a large sign or three-dimensional icon, often calling attention to immediate building functions or domestic products. With the explosion of car culture and the film industry at mid-century, the billboard was transformed into something non-local, something representing filmic worlds, in wide-screen formats. Sunset

Boulevard has played a distinct role in the evolution of the billboard, particularly in the 60's and 70's, with edgy content, protruding elements, and promotional appearances by stars. The two-dimensionality of the billboard began to move towards two-and-a-half-dimensionality— simultaneously existing as sign and object. It is insightful of the City of West Hollywood to recognize the cultural capital contained in the billboard culture of Sunset Strip, and seek to build on its legacy in a contemporary way. Our proposal

aims to do that by bringing back the iconic object-billboard and programming it with an unprecedented breadth of commercial, cultural, and social media content.

Our design is a vertically-oriented, three-dimensional Media Monolith, in contrast to the ubiquitous flat, horizontal billboards of the Strip. In particular, it avoids the "sign-on-a-stick" billboard typology in favor of something architectural and spatial. It operates on the level of deep urban

archetypes, such as ancient bell-towers and obelisks, which are associated with civic space and community. It calls for civic engagement and allows for diverse voices to be heard. It expresses the contemporary transition from an era of centrally-controlled media empires to a time of great diversity in marketing approaches and stakeholders. It speaks to a world where commercial and cultural content can be hybridized, and media is no longer a just a way of advertising but a way of life.

On its outer shell, the Media Monolith provides for a combination of commercial media, feed from spontaneous cultural events such as the recent Elton John and Lady Gaga appearance at Tower Records, and video art interventions by multi-media artists curated by our partner the Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA). This diverse range of content will be composed and programmed by our motion-picture content designer Imaginary Forces. The outer shell features a mix of high-resolution LED technology, video projections, and theatrical lighting, all of which will be integrated into a custom-patterned perforated metal skin. Approximately 75% of the total surface area will be reserved for non-commercial content.

In its interior, the Media Monolith contains nested figures that become surfaces for 'dark media' and other interactive features. Dark media— content that is hidden beneath the everyday, visible web— may include trending superstar face mashups, unstructured social media, and glitchy data streams, programmed to appear at certain intervals in the evening or during special events. Other content will include interactive features accessible to passing pedestrians with handheld devices, in order to engage the public imagination.

CIVIC SPACE AND COMMUNITY

