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MY WORK PROBABLY RESEMBLES MY LIFE

MOJA PRACA PRAWDOPODOBNI PRZYPOMINA MOJE ŻYCIE

Esej jest serią punktów, oczywiście niekompletną, do rozważenia albo przynajmniej wzięcia pod uwagę w nadchodzącej przyszłości badań i projektowania. Nie chodzi tu o rozwiązania, jak mogą być rozumiane witruwiańskie kategorie, lecz o otwarcie nauczania architektury na złożoność współczesnej rzeczywistości.

Słowa kluczowe: praktyka architektoniczna, edukacja architektoniczna, projektowanie architektoniczne

This essay is a series of points – obviously incomplete – to reconsider or at least to take into consideration in the future of architectural design and research. It is not the matter of finding a solution, as the Vitruvian categories can be understood, but the matter of opening the architectural education toward (onto) the complexity of contemporary reality.

Keywords: architectural practice, architectural education, architectural design

The title is the part of A. Mendini's description of his work [1]. To complete this quotation we need to add that *it is labyrinthine, an endless search, with continuous comings and goings. I retrace my steps, working on bits and pieces and getting results that are chequered like arlecchino's costume* [1].

It seems to be a good description of what the profession of an architect can be, a character of an architect who's *habitus mentalis* is to search or research; a doubt as a verification tool, as a tool for managing the future through everyday life, through the past. After that, the project and its forming are reached and there are no doubts any more, at least till the construction is finished. And then everything begins again.

The disposable instrumentation is extremely variable, which is the reason of labyrinthine situation described by A. Mendini.

In this labyrinth-chaos (not necessarily chaos, but I would like it to be chaos as well) one must find a way. A path that allows us to go further as well as to go out and to come back again, to go back, to manage with tools and their application.

The words of Vitruvius, the triad that I'm particularly fond of, its repetition by Samonà for the School of Venice (that is where my affect comes from) and this long, precise and beautiful introduction to architectural design by L. Quaroni [2] are all going that way.

It is an occasion for professors gathered in Krakow to deeply reconsider how to make a school, how to

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teach, to think about tools and how to manage them. An invitation to guide a student through the labyrinth, to address our work to life so the work could commence to resemble life and *vice versa* in our historical period, a little unstable, when our research to often becomes the one of a committee: a building speculator or public funds and university grants. What I suggest here is a series of points to reconsider, maybe to re-start from and to negate if necessary, steps on the path of meditation on architectural design. These suggestions are also *farfelues*, using the example of a beautiful book by Rudofsky [3], but definitely different. Obviously, as far as I'm concerned, everything is a mess.

First point

Memory is like a culture: it is what remains when all other things are forgotten [4] and *physicians are doing well for all diseases that cure without treatment* [4]. Memory and medicine, culture and biology seem to be antitheses or at least parts of two different worlds. But why should they? Do things mix and interact in this world defined by a strong tendency towards horizontality i.e. setting in this *semilattice* described by C. Alexander [5]? Can the education of an architect give up an open knowledge? *Des yeux qui ne voient pas...* [6].

Second point

In Harvard this April and earlier in Bologna on January, apart from presenting his work A. Branzi introduced some ideas defined as *advices* on overwriting the Athens Charter. The title of the American congress was *Ecological urbanism / Alternative and sustainable cities of the future*. These *advices* are continuations of Branzi's great and unique project that passed from the *Non-Stop City* to the huge models made of methacrylate, extended endlessly by the mirror simulators. These *advices* are very important and simultaneously become either the most advanced

or the most actual part of Branzi's theoretical research started in the late 60' in Paris at *Institut pour l'environnement*, the continuation of Ulm in France desired by the government of that time and Culture Minister A. Malraux: *We want to describe an urban scenario that would consider a logic of how the city in the third industrial revolution era and globalization works* [7].

A new type of approach and relation with the built world is necessary for the society. Changing the complex quality of the city and built-up areas, of in-habitation and dwelling, are questions we have to consider urgently. How do we live today, how do we dwell nowadays, what does it mean at present to inhabit a place? It is surely different than yesterday, it refers to different kind of logic.

Third point

Environmentalism, again A. Branzi:

There is the environmental problem, but there is also the problem of environmentalism and environmentalists. Post-environmentalism is a culture less monologic, that doesn't promote the government of the scientists, and allies itself with the cultural vanguards (whose daughter it once was and whose orphan is today); a culture that together with the environmental save the mythical and epical roots of cosmic environment [7].

Environment, environmentalism, environmentalists. It seems that most people still find it strange that we all are part of one ecosystem. Energy consumption is rising and rising and the transformation of life modalities is becoming a pressing need. Today it may happen only if we use a multi-logical thinking.

Fourth point

Freedom is something that belongs to one who knows how to earn it; as far as I'm concerned I've noticed that my work is increasing in time.

Everything is fine. Everything is wrong [8].

Verbano Lake, a view towards Ghiffa, photo by Federico de Donatis, 2008
Jezioro Verbano, widok w stronę Giffy, zdjęcie Federico de Donatisa, 2008



Like in *Quand le moderne n'était pas un style mais une cause* – the title that is programmatic on its own – a short excerpt seems necessary: *The characters of architectural revolution of 20' and 30' shared with others the research on use of new materials and new techniques of industrial revolution, together with others they wanted to find some architectural forms that would not contradict with those new materials and those new techniques like the old forms did; together with others they explored geometrically defined space and they opened it to the outside, to the nature, to the light; but only they allowed this overtaking of simple and purely utilitarian functionalism that marked some realizations of this period. The architectural function was more than basic biological needs fulfillment for them, but they considered this function as giving birth to the new society where what Le Corbusier called joies essentielles would be a right, not a privilege* [9].

And why are we back in a pre-modern situation?

Fifth point

Design can't release from politics, from a direct political position. No planning – and therefore no city – can exist without personal engagement. Design is a weapon. *Eating spaghetti together can be danger for the state* [10]; the issue of the territory and its property – i.e. its management; *to build is a private matter* [12]; the BFK triad after H. Bernoulli [11]: *What to do? Build a new anonymous society and call it The New City?* [12].

Sixth point

Ikebana was mostly being developed in Japan between XIVth and XVth century. It is a part of meditation practiced by Samurai in order to find a proper equilibrium and self-control before going to war. It follows an old saying (or an old saying follows it, etc.): *when hands are busy the spirit is free*: it teaches us how to

eliminate all that is superficial by activating – nearly enigmatically – the capacity of the senses. Everything has its origin and is looking at its own cause basing on a triple system: sun, moon, earth.

Ternary composition is also privilege in the arrangement. The long branch corresponds with the heavenly vault, the short – with the earth, the middle one that unites the sanctity and the infernal – with the man.

There were three magic kings (in the contingency of belief). There have always been three gifts for the son of god. Due to classical interpretation it is the triple aspect of Christ: King (the gold), God (the frankincense) and mortal man (the myrrh).

There are also three powers: the royal one, the ecclesial one and the spiritual one. The prostration of three magicians symbolizes of course the Christian gratitude in the relation with primordial traditions.

It is the cognition of the conceptual relations and their historical interaction with the human environment to understand where we are and how to proceed.

It seems like the triad or the triads have always existed in the history of thought. In this case the triad is accepted nearly as a pre-existent element, basic and necessary for foundations of all following thought. But nevertheless even if it is a foundation, it comes after.

The triad works because it is the minimum for the equilibrium: the tripod never totters. It stays still and standing still it communicates the natural idea of solidity. Can you imagine a religion which fixed points is the father, the ghost, the son and the brother-in-law? Or two sons? Perhaps twins? It would be a little bit unstable. An evolutionary system?

Point

Going back to the beginning – only because all things ends on the paper – I understand that if my work resembles my life, this life, in consequences, is

a disconnected one, without any sequence of things. These six points are six non-accidental arguments. They are determined by some past experience that makes me wonder and worry in a certain way. I believe that our situation is very interesting historically but also very delicate. This is what architecture, the one out of the school, actually is: the world without principles where everything and opposite of everything is valid; where architects look at their buildings (and judge them) from the outside and never from the inside toward the outside – one way look. Is it what our society is? We vote for the left today to vote for the right tomorrow. Why is this alternation considered democratic in a positive way? Isn't it a sign of lack of conscious instead? And what about the school? It is all the same! Nobody knows how to draw anymore. It is because nobody judges things properly as they

are: a tool is a tool. To know how to draw is not a tool but knowledge, while today a statement: I know how to use a tool (cad) so I know how to draw a design seems to be valid. But who told you so?

A series of misunderstandings between tool and knowledge is a little bit confusing for the future ruling classes. Here comes the need for school to go back to the theory, to re-start the research and the education with the ikebana, the triads, Christs and Madonnas, environment and environmentalists, politics and memory. It means to search, to look for and – like the detectives in *Quai des Orfèvres* – to investigate.

I believe that it is the school and the research that should be encouraged at school, where the urgent need is. An urgent need for right and solid basis (firmitas), coherently integrated (utilitas) that, let us hope, could give together some positive result which is venustas.

PRZYPISY

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