

Iconography in russian constructivism

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If, as Reyner Banham demonstrates, the majority of European avant-garde movements in architecture can be interpreted as consciously forming a part of machinist aesthetics, the same can be said regarding the development of constructivism in Russia.

As early as the *Messaggio de Sant Elia*, the machine is accepted naturally as constituting an essential part of the cultural landscape that surrounds man.

In the words of Van Doesburg, The machinist aesthetic idiom is adopted by De Stijl in a spiritual sense; the realm of art is assimilated to the technique involved in the process of creation and in the resulting effect, as proposed by Severini. In this sense, Le Corbusier's complex formula for his living machine comes to mind. At any rate, the concept takes on a certain cultural sensibility. After the Congress of Avant-Garde Artists in Düsseldorf in 1922, it is adopted as the insignia of the Constructivists, to whom the futurists passed on the torch of their mechanist aesthetic.

In order to delve further on the specific configuration of the movement, an analysis is necessary to discover just what machine they are referring to, since the design of machinery has evolved over the period which is referred to by Reyner Banham. The most well-known and internationally acclaimed constructivist works are in general unbuilt proposals of an utopian character, along with a series of "constructions" that are considered to be sculpture or merely a component of a scenic framework.

In all of these cases, a dominant linear character can be perceived. Lines that are formalized by means of wooden studs or metallic elements that render the structure of the construction and of the buildings. Lines of cables that make taut the latter or resist the forces of the wind. Lines that are predominantly straight, some mobile circles, and in some significant instances, a spiral that became the symbol of the revolution.

In order to understand the significance of these lines, we will refer to the technical manifesto of the futurist sculpture of Boccioni, as well as the ambitious composition theory devised by Kandinsky in *Point and line on a plane*, in this case, making a clear reference to constructivist architecture. The dynamic character, the associations made with other types of sensations, the step from the physical to the lyrical dimension and the connection with architectural and natural forces are the aspects that make up the framework that is necessary in order to give meaning to the ideals involved.

The power of the diagonal is prominent in many of the Russian works, as well as acute angles and the spiral. These are all present in relation with gravitational forces, wind and communication through the airwaves. The force of the line itself is

intensified by a progressive increase in its width and by the centrifugal forces that create the spiral that conquers the three dimensions and give special meaning to the composition.

With respect to the most significant scenic constructions, the paradox encountered is that Vitruvius himself considered such machines as the vilest genre of all architecture, precisely due to their auxiliary, provisional and dynamic characteristics, which in turn constitute the supreme values in modern architecture.

On the other hand, the imitation of engineered forms, with the paradigm of the *Eiffel Tower* (the Tatlin monument is referred to as the proletarian Eiffel Tower), is laden with symbolism, creating a pure art form from something that seems to have arisen solely from constructive necessity. This is the reason that these forms do not lose their artistic effectiveness when they are surpassed by more advanced techniques and therefore is in line with the permanent aging process that is inherent to the machine.

There are other elements such as illustrations, clocks, loudspeakers, antennae and elevators that are similarly characterized by a sense of communication and movement, incorporated to buildings as significant elements and thus creating an entire constructivist city.

In this sense, an abstract architecture can be the object of iconographical analysis, since there is always a trace of figuration that can be interpreted by means of the sensorial transposition that every spectator must experience in perceiving the habitual sensorial and cultural world.

The ethics of an idiom: apropos of the english garden

JUAN RAMON GANCEDO ARBIZU

Deprived of Paradise forever, man found it necessary to discover and become acquainted with new types of spaces. He was forced to experiment with new landscapes and came across the artifice of the garden as an abstract exercise in which the natural dream could be materialized at a human scale.

Thus, in any garden, the first and most important notion that is considered is that of nature, although the conclusions reached in this respect are not always a result of a direct comprehension of the term. In other words, the garden must be perceived as a form of nature that originates and is developed as an art form.

The well-known English garden often contains what can be perceived as an intact form of nature. At first glance, it seems to be a product of nature and of causality. It has nothing to do

with the Italian garden or *hortus conclusus*, which consists of a very individualized framework that may acquire the status of *locus aemaenus* because it is conceived as art; and even less so with the French equivalent, which is designed as a form.

Nevertheless, in all of these cases, nature must be perceived and understood as something which is instilled by nature itself, though originating and developed as an art form due to the presence of -even in the case of the Italian and French expressions- style, manipulation, intention, will and a language of communication. The English garden is also an artifice. Contrary to the impression given, it is not derived in a casual manner and in fact, it is thought out and calculated with great precision. It is conceived within the realm of art and, conceptually, the marked differences between it and all preceding natural settings, transcend a mere, formal dissociation.

Therefore, if it is indeed an art form, why does it entail such a radical and localized formal dissociation with preceding modes of natural existence?

The answer lies in the recognition of the garden as art. My opinion, which is in line with many other historians, is that art cannot exist without a language moral and the adoption of any language is the equivalent of acquiring a moral code and thus, a method for living in this world. If the way of life had changed- and during this period, it had changed substantially- then the idiom employed in gardens must have changed accordingly.

Evidently, this formal dissociation cannot be understood without considering the idea of morality of the emerging bourgeois in the late 17th and early 18th centuries in England. Their fervent puritanism required its own set of symbols and thus, the negation of certain forms.

This society found it necessary to fulfil itself and therefore strengthen its puritanical convictions by interpreting its realizations from a purely moral perspective. Both the Italian and French gardens (the latter being at a larger scale) are first and foremost *hortus conclusus*, closed worlds and therefore fiercely individual: an extension of the dwelling and of the private world and a space that is particularly suited to discovering oneself and for reunion with others in order to carry out the deepest and most personal form of recreation and leisure and thus, stimulate and excite the senses. These are places for courteous and pleasant conversation, rest, relaxation, pure delight and, of course, appropriate for prayers and mystical meditation. It is no accident that such spaces also served as ideal contexts for pure idleness, intimate improprieties and for love. The degree of sociability is above all intimate and in no way fosters the communal ideal of existence and actively avoids brushes with the collective due to the fact that it is a setting for pernicious and frivolous activities that may be deemed as contrary to popular aspirations; that is, particularly useless exercises that may or may not be considered as convenient or orthodox by the dominant morality.

It is curious to note that in the construction of the Stowe gardens in Buckinghamshire, which were initially designed to be blatantly French, the first action involved the tearing down of the perimeter wall and replacing it with a ha-ha type of enclosure. With this gesture, there was a break from the notion of the traditional garden as a private domain.

The formal dissociation is therefore a direct and logical consequence of a deeply felt and revolutionary rupture with that which is conventional, as well as the manifestation of a new social system laden with values that have nothing to do with the previous state of affairs.

The English garden is conceived as an open landscape, although the intended effect is that of a jungle and of something that is wild and primary. A society with manners and social graces that are true to an austere and rigid lifestyle found it necessary to foster its principles and values and could not stray excessively from model conduct and forms. Therefore, it had to preestablish itself with a specific order and disposition, which was in no way a casual exercise if we consider that we are in the midst of the age of reason. It is often said of these spaces that nature is free of constrictions and especially from geometrical impositions. This is deceptive because in its conception, the garden responds to principles of reason and makes use of geometry, although there is a definite tendency to transcend the rigidity and limitations of Euclidean elements in establishing the guidelines for composition and therefore an effort to reaffirm itself as an entity.

There is nothing in an English garden that is accidental. Every element has a reason for being. Unfortunately, when typology stems from stereotype, the result is in an affected appearance, arbitrary and chance elements arise and the effect can be more or less fortunate, although in general the final product tends to lack substance. The result is related to a world that is organized, rigorously and methodologically constructed in a rational manner, with preset rules and without the shrillness of *educa* and *civiliza*, nature playing the role that, according to the deepest moral convictions, it ought to play. It is exactly that, a universal landscape.

The restoration of the Palazzo del Te

Considerations of the acclaim of the works of Giulio Romano

MARIANO GONZÁLEZ PRESENCIO

The etymological root of the term "mannerism" is the word *maniera*, which is employed by Vasari in the preface of his *Lives* as one of the five norms that determine a work of art. However, what was considered during Vasari's day as a virtue

was perceived by the critics of the following period as being harmful or noxious to artistic values.

The rehabilitation of 16th century works of art was not initiated until 1920, as was the case with the works of artists such as Dvörák Fiedlander or Hauser. Their artistic vision could be synthesized through a series of conceptions of the genre of mannerism: as anti-classical art, as an expression of the anxiety experienced during the period and the divided personalities of the artists and as an anti-realist, anti-humanist and anti-intellectual art form.

For some critics, Giulio Romano represents the paradigm of the interpretation of mannerism as being art in crisis. As an anti-classical and anti-humanist art form, some critics suggest that the design solutions are laden with rustic motifs, although if the compositions of Giulio Romano are studied more closely, it can be concluded that such rustic treatment did not involve a search for simplicity or rigidity and therefore did not deviate from the sophisticated formal solutions within the realm of classicism by considering these as being artificial or intellectualized. The contrary seems to be true and the use of the rustic device is in itself an artifice and an illusion or a resource that is more sophisticated than the habitual formal mechanisms that fall within the framework of classical orthodoxy and that are deemed appropriate for achieving the desired effect.

Gombrich, in line with the irrefutable classical roots that are present in the works of Giulio Romano, suggests what may be the origin of these perspectives of classical rhetoric and gives examples of the most characteristic authors in this respect.

All of these circumstances seem to indicate that from 1520 on, there is a high degree of maturity, as well as a critical spirit and a loss of innocence regarding purely classical teachings, which made it possible for naturalness and artistic license to become desired qualities that were even worshiped, thus enhancing the repertoire and degree of artistic refinement in the midst of a culturally educated and mature society that had eagerly adopted the legacy of antiquity as their very own, as something that was alive and with the capacity and autonomy that are necessary for transformation.

Giulio remains within the boundaries of classicism; he stretches- without severing- the rope of classical architecture and contributes to the broadening of the artistic repertoire. Of the two basic sources of architectural classicism: archeology and the treatise of Vitruvius, Giulio Romano opts for the artifacts and is consequently able to develop his taste for the most erudite variation and details, while at the same time, offering poetic manifestations that were loyal to the teachings of Vitruvius.

In a letter to Giulio Romano in 1542, Pietro Aretino makes reference to the works of Giulio- both architectural and pictorial- and remarks on the existence of a "spirit made up of both classically modern and modernly classical concepts."

This is a brilliant definition that makes reference to a symmetrical play between opposites in the work of Giulio, but that goes beyond the mere existence of infidelities and artistic license in the sense that it refers to the essence of the unique relationship that is established between the art of Giulio Romano and antiquity, the myth of which is reinterpreted in a critical manner without fully identifying with it.

Therefore, Giulio is allowed a certain degree of license, although, in contrast with Michelangelo, does not insist on reinventing architectural elements, in spite of the high degree of originality in his compositions that is derived from the extrapolation of motifs that are extracted directly from antiquity, with a special predilection for the least common ones, as well as the singular details that can only be found in antiquity. Giulio strives to achieve a "new and extravagant manner."

Aldo Rossi and the city: the commitment of renounce

JOSE LUQUE VALDIVIA

The diffusion of postmodern architecture and its inherent criticism of the Modern Movement has stifled the possibilities that arise from the theoretical reflection carried out by the architectural culture of the 1960's. In this sense, it is of great interest to delve upon the theory established by the Milanese architect Aldo Rossi.

A SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION. The publication of *L'architettura della Città* in 1966 represented a search for a solution to the problems derived from the unfulfilled objectives of the Modern Movement; the resulting essay is a remarkably happy formulation, due to its clear focus on specific problems and the ambitious solutions that it proposes. A study of this early material confirms the virtue of a theory that is applicable to contemporary architecture.

FORMULATION OF URBAN SCIENCE. Rossi's proposal is not a manifestation of a personal desire, but a formal discourse that clearly defines the collective anxiety that had arisen in the *Tendenza*. Within the same theoretical framework, in which we find the teachings of Argan, Rogers, Samonà, Quaroni and Muratori, the attitude of Rossi is characterized by a very precise methodological focus: Rossi directs his attention to the nucleus of structuralism, in the same manner that Saussure confronted the problem of linguistics. The idea is to create an autonomous science for architecture, in which the elements (architectural, in this case) are defined by the relationships established within the system itself (the city). From this perspective, Rossi's discourse

confronts the dissolution of architecture and the resulting misery of Modern Architecture: a false dilemma between the professional and the revolutionary, in which is concealed an identical instrumental conception of architecture that drains away its substance. The discontent derived from this situation leads to extravagant exercises in experimentalism, the irrational, the velleitario or the capricious.

AUTONOMY AND THE NEW RATIONALITY. The investigation of the autonomous urban science proposed by Rossi does not so much foster the isolation of architecture, as the identification and recognition of the architectural dimension within the field of city planning, a task in which the role of the new rationality comes into play in order to be able to clearly focus on the concepts- collective memory, urban analysis and analogy- that are capable of sustaining a projection and in which the subjective components do not overshadow the element of certainty that rationality yields to the city.

THE DARKENING OF THE THEORY. In the *XV Triennale di Milano* in 1973, the solution to the crisis of Modern Architecture put forth by the neorationalist movement appears in its full virtuosity. But it is precisely at this moment when the projected results of Italian neorationalism, together with the cultural atmosphere of postmodernism are intent on darkening the contours and the most original contributions of this discourse. The use of analogy by Rossi seems to identify collective memory with personal memory; the project exercise, which yields similar solutions for both singular buildings and the urban landscape, clearly shows that there is a scalar indifference to the type. The diluting of architecture in the realm of urban planning, a side effect that urban science should have foreseen and impeded, opens the road to the dissolution of urban planning in architecture.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ROSSIAN PROPOSAL. The neorationalist proposal is considered by post critics as yet another example of cultural fragmentation and a demonstration of the impossible- or even unnecessary- character of any general and legitimizing account of reality. Confronted with this biased simplification, it is necessary to affirm that Rossi does not identify plurality and diversity with indifference and relativism; the permanent seems to lie in the typology: an identity which can be expressed in a very personal and intentional manner. However, this peculiar identification of architecture with the construction of the city is reduced to a simple process, in which the ultimate or original causality lacks scope of action. The identification of type with the essence of architecture leads to an architecture that is reduced to its bare essence, which is especially abstract and thus incomplete. In this sense, the degree of compatibility that can be attained between that which is essential and that which is accidental, between the rational and the subjective, becomes particularly difficult.

At any rate, the Rossian discourse reveals the existence within architecture of an inaccessible nucleus that illegitimizes

the ready acceptance of despotically imposed rationality. With the advent of neorationalism, it must be admitted that in the realm of architecture, it is difficult or even impossible- as is the case with language- to find a reasonable explanation for its origins. However, this circumstance should in no way justify the abandonment of investigation in this respect. A suitable comprehension of the constructive process involved in the city should take into account the elements that are acted upon: the social nature of man, his requirements for living and the resulting cultural framework. In forgetting these elements, the Rossian discourse is oriented towards a closed type of rationalism, which is in reality, a paradoxical form of isolation. Until a global understanding of this complex reality, in which necessity, process and the result must coexist, is reached, it will not be possible to unite the rational and subjective components of architecture, and thus attain a flexible rationality that is capable of sustaining the plurality that is constantly updated by personal poetry.

The Northern Wing of the Prado Museum

Project and Composition Analysis Museum

CARLOS MONTES SERRANO

The present essay is dedicated to the study of the project drawings of the architect Juan de Villanueva, to whom the author attributes the sketches or previous draft for the design of the northern wing of the present-day *Prado Museum*.

These sketches are currently conserved in the School of Architecture in Pamplona, as a part of a very valuable collection of drawings by Juan de Villanueva that were donated to this institution by Professor Francisco Iñiguez Almech.

As well as proving the attribution of the drawing, the author has carried out a study of the project process of Villanueva, comparing it with the solution that the architect eventually adopted for the museum in the two proposals that were presented to King Carlos III and to Floridablanca. The study consists of the analysis of several aspects of composition based on the comparison of the sketches of the project that was discarded for implementation in the museum- the present day Academy of San Fernando in Madrid- and the design solution that was adopted.

The analysis of composition is of special interest at this moment due to the fact that several architects that have participated recently in the Competition for the extension to the *Prado Museum* have suggested that the northern wing be modified in order to recuperate its original form as conceived by Juan de Villanueva in the 18th century.

It can be shown, based on the analysis of the northern wing, that the sketch in question is basically the proposal that was presented by Villanueva and then discarded. The solution consists of a hypostyle hall with a square floor plan, stairs, two lateral rooms and access to the main gallery that crosses the entire upper floor of the museum.

Nevertheless, a more in depth study of the dimensions seems to relate these sketches with the northern wing that was actually erected, although the final form was modified to a great extent, passing from a rectangular configuration to a square form that encompasses a solution in rotunda.

Based on this information and by means of thorough research of the modifications made to the proposals- occupation of the site, number of floors, height differences, typology constants, etc.- several conclusions have been reached, which make it possible to form the following hypothesis: these sketches summarize the initial ideas of the architect- within the scope of the northern wing of the museum- that were later implemented in the two alternative design solutions.

It is also of interest to consider the peculiar project method that was employed by Villanueva. It was based on very simple schemes of composition and in the organization of volumes as a sum of individual parts, thus clearly suggesting a neo-Palladian influence derived during that same epoch in England.

The urban project as a strategy

Apropos of a *Convegno*

JOSE MARIA ORDEIG COSINI

Today, it is becoming increasingly important to consider the strategic relationship between long and short term planning. The key issue of the debate is a conscious effort to set the limits for this strategy because the interventions that are necessary are oriented towards the granting of an identity that until recently had never before been considered so vigorously and which has led to exaggerated proposals flaunted under the banner of new ideas of centrality and emblematicism.

The issue is confronted by trying to transcend the generic dialectics that exist between flexibility and control in order to specifically differentiate between the trends that ought to be controlled to a greater degree and that were the object of debate in the Prato *Convegno* in October, 1995, under the title *La Città Confronto con i Processi di Metropolitizzazione*. The conclusion reached is a paradox insofar as the importance attributed to form with respect to function, thus seeming to indicate the need to reconsider current practices in city planning, which are still based on- in spite of the theoretical revision that it has been subjected to- the principles of zoning.

Closing the circle

Around postmodernism, deconstruction, utopia and graphic representation in contemporary british architecture

JUAN MIGUEL OTXOTORENA

The article consists of a series of previous works by the same author, complemented by the intention of suggesting the eventual specificity or singularity of expression and graphic projection in modern British architecture over its recent history and in a conclusive manner, the graphic dimension that exists in the modern tradition of British architecture. The perspective from which this hypothesis is conceived is the significant continuity of some of the most characteristic and representative instances of its development: among others, the correlative disciplinary debate with respect to the advent of the Modern Movement during the 1930's and the most important works in the professional scene during the post war period after World War II, which, as a group can be referred to as Townscape, the experience of New Towns and the brutalist movement; all of which is accompanied by the extraordinary colophon derived from the self-proclaimed postmodernist manifesto or debate. The present article deals with and is conceived from the perspective of the latter part of British architectural history.

The allusion derived thereof may be introduced, for example, by linking the preceding exponents of continuity with the work of a group of the importance and acclaim as Archigram: the product of efforts inspired- along with other radical utopians- by the combination of a machinist aesthetic with what may be referred to as a new constructed functionalism, as far as ideals are concerned, especially in the apogee of urban culture and the specific phenomenon of pop culture. A large number of speculative and critical writings in the late 1960's participated in the technological optimism which is evident in their conception of utopia as a theoretical alternative confronting the fall of the praxis of modernist orthodoxy. In spite of their highly metaphorical and even dream-like condition, their formal proposals often play the role of a basic reference for the inspiration of contemporary architecture: the imprint left is clearly identifiable in the high-tech designs of the 1980's and 90's. These works have established a system of graphic representation based on the drafted format and collage, assuming resources typical of pop art in the quest for greater impact in their proposals. The work of Archigram in its most extreme manifestations- and this is precisely one of its fundamental characteristics, correlative with its critical scope- consists mainly of presentations that are purely graphic in nature. Its relationship

with idioms typical of the comics genre is evident, particularly in the sense that this genre has been subject to a graphic-literary development that is inspired by science-fiction. There seems to be a cross fertilization based precisely on the power of graphical representation.

It is also important to note that there are other contemporary schools that refuse to renounce a certain utopian and futuristic character, such as the tradition based on the language of engineering. Hi-tech design in architecture appears to be accompanied by a graphic representation that is well defined and codified: the simple drafting of planar projections- in some cases with the corresponding conical perspective line drawing- the atmosphere of which is supplied in the form of subtle elements indicative of trees and vegetation- line drawings or dotted lines, usually by means of stencils- and animated by means of the logical incorporation of human silhouettes in search of a scale that is not inherent to such a de-contextualized machinist idiom that is free of references. In this sense, the role of computerized means, which has greatly enhanced the possibilities of a graphic representation that is precise and effective in the production of formal proposals that are often extremely complex- though made up of serial and repeated elements- as well as the employment of highly sophisticated models and three-dimensional visual formats that would otherwise be impossible to attain in a manual manner.

The great debate that has been tacitly declared today between the neoclassical and deconstructionist factions has led to a confrontation that is eminently graphic in nature. The idyllic dreams of a world based on the evocation of a myth from the past- vacillating between bucolic ecology and the maudlin nostalgia of lost tradition within the field of architecture and with respect to the scale and degree of humanity of models for living- detached from the dizzying processes of transformation of the physical medium due to industrialization and technological progress- coinciding with the latest avant-garde experiences in relation to the internal logic of the project discourse, along with the possibilities and methodological limits of manipulating the formal repertoires of abstract architecture, in the form of brilliant graphic exercises.

At any rate, the debate between the two options that these strategies represent has been able to reproduce fifty or sixty years later, the unavoidable confrontation between the new ideas and the old forms of the Modern Movement of the 1930's, based on the peculiar synthesis of the picturesque component of popular pretensions and vernacular roots and the complacent and often grandiloquent historicism which would seem to constitute, within the evolutionary framework of British architecture, its traditional foundation and topical fountainhead. This parallelism clearly displays the degree in which this same debate manifests, and even consumes and specifically

culminates, that which since the beginning of the article was deemed to be the significant graphic dimension of the disciplinary debate in contemporary British architecture.

Transparency and literality

Reflections on the generation of glass spaces in modern architecture

JOSÉ MANUEL POZO

Glass has become one of the most characteristic materials of modern architecture, although when evaluating the way it is employed or its contribution to architectural works, the focus is usually placed on the virtue of transparency.

As well as transparency, glass is spatially enriching due to the reflections that are produced on its surface.

This article is a study of the role of reflection in the composition of several significant recent architectural works, by means of which it is possible to analyze the elements that characterize the different ways of employing reflections as a spatial resource in architecture.

In several works of Mies van der Rohe, it is possible to study the dynamic reflection, which makes use of the values of ambiguity and transparency which arise from movement.

In contrast with dynamic reflection, the use of static reflection is also analyzed. This type of reflection recurs to the literal duplicity of views in order to create fictional spaces; in this case, the reflections are carefully calculated in accordance with geometrical laws of reflection to create credible spaces, although at times these spaces can be somewhat impersonal. The best example of the use of geometric-static reflections is the interior architecture of Loos, while the *Gleisdreieck* building of the *Frankfurt Messe* (O.M. Ungers) constitutes the most extreme application of this principle.

In conclusion, considerations will be made of contemporary works in which a certain synthetic excellence can be perceived with respect to this duality, as is the case with the *Haas House* (H. Hollein) in Vienna and the *Kunsthandwerk Museum* in Frankfurt (R. Meier).

