

Architecture Theory _ seminar class

October 6, 2016

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For group discussion at mml on Thursday 6 [same work to be blogged for following meeting on October 13]

A long time ago... people used simply to drop things from time to time. But nowadays we have physicists to inform us of the laws of gravity by which objects fall; philosophers to doubt whether there are really any discrete objects to be dropped at all; sociologists to explain how all this dropping is really the consequence of urban pressures; psychologists to suggest that we are really all trying to drop our parents; poets to write about how all this dropping is symbolic of death; and critics to argue that it is a sign of the poet's castration anxiety. Now dropping can never be the same again. We can never return to the happy garden where we simply walked around dropping things all day without a care in the world. What has happened, rather, is that the practice has now been forced to take itself as its own object of enquiry. Theory is just human activity bending back upon itself, constrained into a new kind of self-reflexivity. And in absorbing this self-reflexivity, the activity itself will be transformed.

—Terry Eagleton, *The Significance of Theory*

Sources:

- Invisible Cities _ Italo Calvino 1972
- Koyaanisqatsi _ Life out of Balance, 1982 / by Godfrey Reggio

- Rem Koolhaas _ Recent talks by R. Koolhaas calling on the world to be More open to challenges again: “Challenge vs. Comfort” and “The Future of the Way We live”

Based on class discussions and calling for intellectual curiosity, intelligent perseverance, and ability to questioning:

1. Formulate at least three points of analysis in relationship to your [architectural] interpretation of the film “Koyaanisqatsi” that touch your individual way of understanding spaces. Were you aware of those topics? Explain how.
2. Are those interpretations, those inquiries related to your individual architecture searches? How? Why?
3. Are those interpretations influencing your individual architecture thesis question[s]? How should they be considered in the current architecture discussions? Bring to the discussion examples of that influence.
4. As a reference search for an article, a piece of architecture, a design position that take into account the topics you are listing/observing.

[part of the] topics visited:

gathering / flexibility / synergy / digitalizing / convenient individualism / responsibility / professionalism / architects’ role in today society

Thursday October 13.

We will continue the group discussion started at mml in the first part of the class.

Read the article [attached]: “Generation No Mistakes,” by Wolf D Prix Coop Himmelb(l)au founder. To be discussed in the second part of the class.

Good Morning, Architecture!

Clay houses, leather pants and “Dirndls”, and now, on top of it all, Udo Jürgens.
All the best to the “*Generation No Mistakes*”.

Architecture today resembles a country under siege. Under siege from spineless opportunists, from uninspired pragmatism, dangerous politics and oppressing mediocrity. An architect today must decide if he wants to join the resistance movement, if he wants to pose as a spy, if he should convert and change sides or even become a traitor.

We should actually rejoice for the architectural discourse is again focusing in on actual topics. School buildings for Africa, homes for homeless people, new concepts for schools in Europe and for hospitals in the U.S.A.

Why then do so many new classrooms look like they were designed by IKEA, why do the homes for the homeless resemble carefully renovated Biedermeier jewels and why do the rooms in these new hospitals look like an anteroom of a suburban gynecologist?

Please tell me, is it not true that new topics require a new form, don't changes demand symbols, don't revolutions herald new icons?

In a recent article in the German weekly Die Zeit we read about the current generation of forty year olds as shying away from any risk and thus labeled “Generation Zero Mistakes”. Have we really all become homely and obedient citizens devoid of any sense of humor? Should architecture today really look like the way the music of Supergaul sounds: stupid?

Many friends, architects, critics, writers and columnists mourn the migration of architecture from the art section of the papers to the real estate pages.

Yet, is this not our own fault, since we have been looking at and evaluating architecture less from a cultural vantage point but more in terms of hypocritical modesty, frugality, efficiency, economy, ecology and sustainability? Are such criteria not best represented in the real estate pages of a paper?

And aside from that, I want to state that architecture must not be a product.

Wolf D. Prix // 24/09/2014