

tant reference to surrealism. It is not, of course, a coded surrealism, tied to historical Surrealism. It is, rather, a reminder of an « autre » kind of reality which has no special labels. A reality represented through modes that interweave quotations from various sources: Alberto Savinio and Giorgio de Chirico, Mario Sironi and a number of members of the Neue Sachlichkeit (for example, Nägele, and Stoecklin, not to mention Radzwill, whose aeroplanes are certainly related to those which leave their trails in Vriesendorp's skies). And then Max Ernst, too, and maybe even the American Peter Blume, seen, if possible, through Sant'Elia and the romantic Austro-German academy.

The reference to the Neue Sachlichkeit will serve perhaps to understand better the sense of the surrealism in these architects who paint. Apart from the surrealist and metaphysical tone of the « absolute » geometries of a man like Boullée, which are the foundations of certain among Aldo Rossi's architectonic trials, one cannot fail to note that within the German New Objectivity (the Neue Sachlichkeit, in fact) there exists a strong component which might be labeled as « magic realism » (7). Which is such because it tends to supply us with the data of a reality that is thoroughly described, but is yet also irremediably de-contextualized and estranged — because it is alienated — from any plausible everydayness. It is somewhat as in Kafka or, in quite a different direction, in Borges, whose fantasies moreover are not extraneous to the impossible « things » created by Massimo Scolari.

Furthermore, if one wishes to go further into this philological excursus, one might go back as far as Claude Lorrain, whose architectures of fantasy are described naturally but delivered to those areas of memory, at once classicist and

protoromantic which — « *per li rami* » — concern the matters dealt with here, even if via not very historicistic paths. Moreover, have not Lorrain's nostalgia and memory, which descend straight from Poussin, some links with Caspar David Friedrich (the major German romantic painter)? — and in the distance, behind Scolari's more or less sidereal spaces, is there not Friedrich's infinity, albeit without the « pantheistic » accents that characterize it? — and if we add up De Chirico, Lorrain and Friedrich, do we not get that remarkable and very little-known « Novecento » painter who responds to the name of Arturo Nathan, and whose trials are culturally not too distant from those of the « architects who paint »?

If anything, one might wonder why it is that in the paintings and drawings done by these architects the architecture is not always absolutely recognizable or plays a pre-eminent role. Now apart from the problems of finding the right setting for a project (Ledoux, for example, fitted his into pleasant landscapes), which indeed cause the architecture, in a certain sense — by interacting with the background — almost to be dispersed, one cannot but notice that this is ultimately a false problem or at any rate an ill-posed one.

In Krier's drawings and in Scolari's watercolours, for example, it can be seen that the very meaning of architecture goes well beyond the idea of a « building ». Scolari's in particular is an « alluded » architecture which emerges by associations and often manifests itself only inasmuch as it is broken down into discreet elements that are associable *ad libitum* and maybe even « against nature ». Then the result will be not so much « architecture » as a sort of handbook in which the architectural lexicon is reshuffled as though it were a pack

of cards, to the point where it becomes unrecognizable but not thereby less architectonic.

In one of those watercolours by Scolari can be seen a kind of strange aeroplane similar to those employed during the First World War. If one then looks at this flying-machine more carefully, one can grasp its real nature, which is not precisely aeronautical. The « aeroplane » is in fact the outcome of a fairly incongruous encounter between cubes (or rather, Geometry) and a trellis which is not so much an *objet trouvé* as a transparent parallelepiped, that is to say, « geometry » once again. And we all know what geometry in architecture and especially in « new architecture », is. So even an « aeroplane » may serve to speak of architecture, provided it is not identified with a house.

If one accepts the existence of a relation between culture and history which is not just empty historicism and stylistic eclecticism, one must realize that the things of art, including those of architecture, are unlikely to have no roots in history, notwithstanding what the avant-garde movements have always attempted to have us believe. And so we shall say that the connective tissue of experiments conducted in different sectors will indeed be furnished by history, a history seen as a great tank or a great library, in which the texts — the realizations — have been and continue to be deposited, which are capable of explaining everything that has to be explained (today it is funny to use terms like spirit, humanity, and so forth, and it is also easy to be misunderstood). The problems — the themes — are the same as ever, because the system of art is one, synchronically enlarged and hence seized as unremittingly diachronic.

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# Architettura disegmata

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## Drawn architecture LINE AND DRAWING

The concept of architecture, as handed down by history, is closely linked with the concept of drawing. Even today, as soon as they start university, architectural students are taught the foundations of drawing as an autonomous discipline, in the correct application of which a large part of the actual design is performed.

The architectural drawing as a linguistic act of analysis and as the organization of a three-dimensional image in projection plans, as an instrument of simulation and of miniaturizing of reality, coincides with all those phases which go to define the architectural design operation as a whole. All the subsequent processes of a technical and constructional nature are simply the consequence of those choices and solutions which the drawing already fully contains. This process extends from the drawing to the building-site. In it

also lies the whole cultural and historical limit of modern architecture. For modern architecture continues to be put forward as a linguistically renewed, figurative moment, but methodologically identical to its most remote traditions which confirm architecture as a fundamentally visual discipline and as a formal system of interpreting functional and aesthetic values. It would be very interesting to analyse the way this presupposition is thwarted today by urban as well as by more generally historical motivations. Even without going into a structural analysis of the crisis in modern architecture, however, which would take us a long way off-course, we may analyse more general themes by observing the matter of drawing.

The architectural drawing as such is tied to the history of the figurative arts. It is through this kind of drawing that architecture undergoes the linguistic influences of other aesthetic activities, in

that drawing is a matrix which also plays an extensive role in painting and sculpture and profoundly conditions their linguistic development. This connexion through line, among all the aesthetic crafts, may be seen as an inevitable link with contemporaneity, but in the case of architecture it gives rise to another phenomenon. The history of architecture proceeds by carrying within it the story of another activity which is not an architectonic one, namely that of drawing, which in fact is an independent discipline. In this respect it is a sort of large fish piloted by a smaller pilot fish.

The history of architectural drawing and its importance, and of how it is the individual instrument of participation by the architect in the discipline, has never been written. In short, architects design as they draw, and in drawing they recognize the phase which best identifies them. Le Corbusier's philosophy cannot be separated from his manner of

drawing. Drawing becomes manual thinking; a corporal participation in the circuit of design analysis. But in this physical participation lies the whole historical limitation I have mentioned. The architectural design fails to become a pure logical activity capable of using more refined tools than the pencil and open to the identification of other qualities which are not mural ones. It is incapable of overcoming the limits of representation and visuality.

From Illuminism onwards the split between theory and professional practice grew steadily wider, and architectural drawing gained an autonomy of its own, as a pure theoretic phase. Hence the tradition of drawn architecture as a contribution to the development of research carried out in the same terms of architectonic language, without necessarily referring to « construction ».

In the past years the gap between theory and practice has become a historical condition, and, above all, the discipline itself and its cultural effect have begun to be reconsidered at length. Drawn architecture has therefore been widely employed as a propositive and analytical tool.

But drawn architecture is not a unitary cultural category by its own right, as many critics oddly maintain. The recent polemic published in « La Repubblica », between Renato De Fusco and Paolo Portoghesi, on the subject of architectural avant-garde trends, was based upon the tacit assumption that these trends were entirely made up of drawn architecture, thereby engaging the two in a subtle dispute as to whether or not this kind of theoretic research serves any purpose; without ever entering into the concrete analysis of what the avant-garde movements have said, how they came into being, and how they differ from others. But whilst De Fusco and Portoghesi took for granted that an identity exists between drawn architecture and utopia and between utopia and a (radical) avant-garde, there are also quite different critical versions which maintain that drawn architecture is a typical feature of exalted rationalism (or « Tendenza » group) situated in a completely opposite theoretic position to the radical one.

I would say instead that there are many different kinds of drawn architecture and that they belong to a large extent to the whole theoretic thought of the Modern Movement. Suffice it to consider Sant'Elia or Mendelsohn. It is certain that the two groups I have just mentioned — « Tendenza » and radical avant-gardes — use it for completely different planning purposes. Among Aldo Rossi's followers, drawing as a self-sufficient design entity stems from the certainty that no direct communication exists between theoretic architectural thought and current historical reality. As the « Tendenza » group sees it, in fact, architecture is founded upon itself, as a tautological science which reaches us through an already defined history. This attitude starts from a whole tradition of thought which passes through Ledoux, Boullée, Loos, Hilberseimer and all Italian rationalism, that is, through the most intransigent Illuminist line from the 18th century to today. It is, in short, the line which unconsciously recognizes the

failure of modernism as being the result of the greater failure of industrial civilization and of its myths of progress, which they refuse to have any part in, by appealing to history.

Architecture and society thus become two realities running parallel. Their rejection of functionalism occurs in the certainty of an autonomous compositive unity of the architectural organism, almost an anti-bourgeois evidence of cultural intransigency.

For the Tendenza group the city, as a discontinuous place, achieves unity in the Monument, which performs a function of synthesis and order by acting with its own expressive force as a pole of meaning for all the surrounding reality. The group fulfils the classic paradox of refusing history in the name of history, mediocrity in the name of monumental unity and moralism in the name of morals.

The use which they make of drawn architecture serves to create an imaginary context for Monuments, deserted stage-sets inhabited only by architecture, which needs no one except itself, a cultural place without consumers, a sort of Olympus of archetypes. In this sense the drawings done by Arduino Cantafora are the most meaningful. His references sweep from the Renaissance to Sironi, from De Chirico to the sad mediocrity of Fascist theatre sets. Cities crowded with deserted Monuments, like Piranesi's Fori Imperiali (another master of drawn architecture, but naturally, of very different quality), where eclecticism plunders history, aligning its masterpieces in a big cemetery-setting.

Of much lesser importance are Massimo Scolari's drawings, which look like exercises in pre-designing. I discern no link in them with Klee, as some believe there is. The use of drawn architecture by the radical groups is utterly different, since the contents of their research are different too. The stage of imagery, ironic or antagonistic, as Renato De Fusco describes it, of the numerous photomontages, is only the more conspicuous appearance of a liberating intent with regard to the moralistic oppression exercised by the teaching forces, and against the hard disciplinary restoration introduced by the Tendenza groups. But beneath this first lucid aspect there exists a theoretic argument of quite a different importance. The actual use of utopia does not serve to imagine « another reality » but to analyse the present. The architectural drawing, as it is used for example in the No-Stop City by Archizoom Associati, does not serve to simulate reality but to analyse it critically, and it is in the search for a language capable of communicating in the best possible way that it becomes utopia. But that utopia is not propositive; it is instrumental for the very reason that it does not aim to imagine a non-existent reality, but rather, to operate upon the present by representing it through a utopia and at a higher level of clarity. Thus the drawing becomes a critical accelerator, a moment of knowledge of reality. By radicalizing to the maximum the contradictions of architecture we set out precisely to overtake the architectural drawing as a design phase. Our drawing became « line », the plan of a

pure diagram for living, available beyond the limit of architectural typologies.

It may be said that the recording and proposition of a new relationship between society and its living structures is the theme of all the work done by the neo-avant-garde trends in architecture. In this respect there is also an attempt to overcome formal representation as a plan for the use of architecture, and more in general, to overcome the actual moment of « design » traditionally defined as the cultural professional activity of a social élite.

The conflict between public creativity and designed structures, between disciplinary architecture and the right to self-determination by the living environment, are themes that embrace the present but which can be represented only with a utopian, that is, experimental, language. However, the whole of the avant-garde in architecture possesses an absolute realism of its own in accepting the conditions of a discontinuous reality and not theorizing about an alternative utopia. In the case of Riccardo Dalisi the actions are always in a scale of one to one and do not refer to further processes of realization. The novelty consists entirely in the discovery that « architectonic action » does not consist solely in making houses, or in general, in creating useful things, but means expressing oneself, communicating and inventing through architectonic instruments, among which not the least important is drawing and the urban image. Once the inventive process is over, nothing else is excluded, but everything is carried out as in a perfectly self-fulfilled act, as sheer creative energy transformed without loss of productive energy.

Thus a new role is identified not only for architectural drawing but for architectural invention itself, as a self-sufficient moment of communication which may be critical or creative and does not necessarily lead to the building site or to the borough technical department. Instead, it acts in a process of reappropriation of a discipline which by definition excludes the user's free participation. It is on the basis of these considerations that I do not share Paolo Portoghesi's view when he says: « Avant-garde and architecture are therefore — if by avant-garde one means the refusal of any compromise with social and productive reality — a contradiction in terms, incompatible phases of the intellectual commitment ».

I do not agree in regarding as vain utopia a period of necessary critical reconsideration and modification of the traditional tools of architecture, even if exercised in an absolutely theoretic and experimental way, and in not applying the same yardstick to the work of someone such as Purini, who, for instance, as a great draughtsman of « interrupted » architecture, repropose on paper his search for an improbable formal perfection. This is much more utopian than any radical stage of the process, precisely due to the continual reproposition of a very architectonic order of things in the world today. And it is also through the use of this unconscious utopia that the dramatic crisis in the social relations of architecture itself is aggravated.

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