

mente diferentes, tanto a la izquierda como a la derecha. Al noroeste y al noreste, el nivel de entresuelo queda levantado más alto que por el lado sur. Los comensales en los entresuelos más altos tienen la sensación de estar empujados hacia el techo: tienen el privilegio de perspectiva (un truco que aprendí del vestíbulo del Paramount Hotel en Nueva York, diseñado por Philippe Starck). La vista es como si fuera un ángulo dramático de cámara, como por ejemplo en la última escena de Ciudadano Kane.

Este proyecto también requirió control dimensional cuidadoso. El tamaño y el espaciado de los listones en las paredes curvas, la alineación de los sofitos y los bordes, el trabajo fino en acero; el controlar todos estos detalles fue el aspecto más crítico del proceso de construcción. Por ejemplo, el contratista construyó el entresuelo unos 10 cm más profundo, medido desde la pared del lado sur. Los 10 cm fueron suficientes para dañar el sentido de apertura en el espacio principal del centro. Nos complació al desmantelar el marco y reconstruirlo. El techo fue una superficie muy importante de controlar: como bien saben, los techos en la mayoría de los espacios comerciales están fuera de control, cubiertos con rejillas y unidades de aire acondicionado, luces recesadas, rociadores, luces de emergencia y quién sabe qué más. Diseñamos el techo como una serie de bóvedas. Todos los elementos de servicio están contenidos adentro o colgados desde huecos entremedio de las bóvedas. Las lámparas principales son medallones de yeso con aros de madera, hechos a la medida, que cuelgan del techo. Funcionan como fuentes de luz indirecta - un anillo de luces LED brilla hacia arriba sobre las bóvedas del techo. Cierta cantidad de luz también pasa por un reflector para iluminar la superficie inferior entallada del medallón.

El pensamiento de la arquitectura, y por consiguiente el trabajo de la arquitectura que traza sobre el pensamiento, es un vaivén constante de lo específico a lo general, de lo concreto a lo abstracto, de lo definitivo a lo elusivo. Hay diferentes vías para este movimiento de balanceo. Una es la relación entre los medios y los fines: en las lámparas de M&C Gallery, los cierres se necesitan para crear la abstracción del "toque puntual". Otra vía corre entre los hechos y la alusión o la asociación. El tragaluz facetado de la casa en Sea Cliff es el producto de un plano de retroceso de zonificación más el ángulo del sol invernal - una ecuación de dos tipos de hechos completamente diferentes - y también es algo alusivo, la faz truncada de una columna rota. Uno tiene que considerar el diálogo ingenioso entre la precisión y el error. Dado que la arquitectura es un artefacto humano, y por el hecho de que constituye un intento de resolver

fuerzas y requisitos completamente diferentes, y que a fin de cuentas son irreconciliables, siempre es imperfecta. No obstante, la arquitectura, al igual que la vida humana, es una especie de sublimación: la contingencia y el error se transforman en sus opuestos - la intención y la perfección. En una gran obra de arquitectura, las cosas son exactamente como deben ser. Si uno no se siente a gusto con esta forma de pensar, el significado de la arquitectura se restringe a la satisfacción de intenciones y el logro de efectos.

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ARCHITECTS IN TIMES OF CRISIS AND SOME POSSIBLE FUTURE APPROACHES

Matteo Putinati

*Les plus riches cités. Les plus grands
paysages, Jamais ne contenaient l'attrait mystérieux
De ceux que le hasard fait avec les nuages.'*

1. THE PROFESSION

Will the identities, forms, and stances of the architectures of tomorrow pass through architects themselves? Is there a concrete power held by architects and urban planners to decisively influence the design of the city of the future?

In order to understand this, it would be interesting to begin analyzing the percentage of works built worldwide that are the result of projects developed or managed with the support of an architect. Finding this number would not be an easy path, adding up percentages and extrapolating the average of national situations which undoubtedly differ from one another. This operation would produce interesting results for assessing the concrete reach of the interventions planned and carried out by the international group of architects. Whatever the result, and even taking local variables into account, the focus of theoretical thinking and the search for the direction the architectural mainstream will take should be concentrated on studying architects' condition as subjects: their interests, their needs, and the objectives of a professional practice that has perhaps lost a certain amount of responsibility and involvement with society. It is necessary to speak of architects as individuals linked to the same needs and weaknesses as any other citizen, to discover that their intentions and efforts must go up against a widespread conformity present throughout society. Certainly, the situation of the current economic crisis, present in many countries, and which is developing towards unknown stages, re-

quires the role to be taken on by the profession to be more involved with the collectivity. Therefore, in order to speak of the architecture yet to come, it would be necessary to better know the architects as subjects charged with protecting and conceiving of that architecture.

The profession and professionalisms requested have changed very much over the past 20 to 30 years. The number of architects and architecture offices has steadily risen.² The recurring crises have obligated architects to expand the array of professional services, in addition to prompting fortuitous work flexibility.³ The work has become much more complex and should respond to a number of unprecedented questions that do not have, at the present juncture, just one answer. Nowadays, utopias, programmatic letters, or statements of purpose—which traditionally arise from conventions, among other contexts, and which provide the vast majority of professionals with an advisable path or at least a sense of the direction to take when designing—have fallen out of vogue. Indicative of situation is the fact that in recent publications the discourse is being picked up where perhaps it was abruptly set aside in the 1970s. One example of this is *Utopie: Texts and Projects*,⁴ an anthology of texts published over the course of a decade (1967-1977) in the magazine *Utopie*, which received contributions from intellectuals from different ambits and countries, involved in or interested in transformations of the urban environment and the socio-political system. It is therefore always opportune and parallel to a more concrete and well-defined inquiry to express stances and imagine ideal requirements and models which not only indicate possibilities for future paths, but rather which are presented as indicators of present and future needs which can no longer be played down and postponed in the urban and architectural project. This serves as a means of pointing out where it is essential to place the focus design to innovatively tackle the peculiar environmental, social, and economic problems of today. On the contrary, these days, without a conceptual procedure to follow, every architect is left entirely to himself to face their own abilities, knowledge, and learnings, which are nothing other than the reflection of the society in which they live and the institutional training they have received.

At the turn of the last century, Adolf Loos wrote:

"The best form is there already and no one should be afraid of using it, even if the basic idea for it comes from someone else. Enough of our geniuses and their originality. Let us keep on repeating ourselves. Let one building be like another. We won't be published in Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration and we won't be made professors of applied art, but we will have served ourselves, our times, our nation and mankind to the best of our ability."⁵

Contrary to that held by Loos, many of the options that young architects find themselves with at the

beginning of their professional career lead toward the quest for a much-yearned-after and financially rewarding success, all without being backed by a formal or substantial research project, and without providing any contribution whatsoever to the development of a general design theory adapted to the times. Even so, it is good to recall that, just as Alan de Botton maintains in his book *The Architecture of Happiness*, "if humans were at some point adept at creating a masterwork of urban design, it should have come within the grasp of all succeeding generations to contrive an equally successful environment at will."⁶ It is an issue then of definitively and finally breaking with Howard Roark, the model of the intransigent architect presented by Ayn Rand in her 1943 philosophical novel *The Fountainhead*,⁷ the main topic of which was individual freedoms. Thus, an initial insubordination could consist of disassociating oneself with the exclusive, sectarian, and categorical property of the project.

Another aspect to consider is that the labor system requires obtaining a high level of professionalism in very specific and delimited domains, perhaps to levels never before reached. With this configuration, the overall vision of the project ends up being thrown aside along with a more passionate attitude toward the intrinsic social mission of the profession—a mission and responsibility that would be entirely current within the present socio-economic cycle and which should be the basis of the profession. This is due to the fact that designing a built space is an activity that proves to be extremely impactful in people's lives and which proves to be neither efficient nor effective in the long term if these aspects are not taken into consideration.

2. COMMITMENT

In 1732, Italian architect Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli was chosen for the project to expand the Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg, Russia by Empress Anna. In 2003, Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas was called upon to design and build the CCTV television center in Beijing. These are only two of the many possible examples of direct relationships between architects and power. In order to have an impact on the design of the city and at the same time be admitted among the renowned influential figures, architects have always had to reach agreements with the powerful. Just as Deyan Sudjic points out, "out of necessity architects must approach those in power, but the reality of their situation makes it so that this is rarely achieved."⁸ There are indeed architects who have been able to attain direct political power and enact significant changes in their cities, such as for example Jaime Lerner in Curitiba. Moreover, in this intricate approach, the one holding the strongest and clearest intentions is the politician; the architect is subsequently relegated to being steered toward the project chosen by the official, allowing him or herself to be led down

uncertain paths, without necessarily developing any critical thinking. Likewise, the political forces, in many representative democracies throughout the world, have opted to cave to the market economy, or chose that path on their own merely due to it being the simplest, toward a demagogue that openly exerts influence on the architectural and urban realm. That form of government, with a marred aim, subsequently joins up with an architecture that is only able to produce that which has already been seen, that which is popular, or that which is peculiar and exclusive only if it is created within a familiar discourse, producing expected or predetermined effects. This way, there is no way for ruptures with the dominant thinking or pressures that confront the acquired or inherited inertias to take place.

Apparently, architects are accustomed to work alongside public authorities and large private investors, the only players capable of approving and financing interventions that substantially modify the form, use, perceptions, and directions of urban spaces and environments. In order to do this, they have oftentimes been co-opted by economic, financial, and political power in search of representation. Evidently, it is not always a matter of a personal quest for visibility, it has also been a method of intervention apt for garnering attention for investments in places and realities otherwise outside of the market and the national or international economic system and which were in need of a new direction. According to the geographer David Harvey, "the production of geographical difference, building upon those given by history, culture and so-called natural advantages, is internalized within the reproduction of capitalism. Bring a signature architect to town and create something like Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. This helps put that city on the map of attractors for mobile capital."⁹ Contrariwise, instead of being co-opted by these plans and intentions, architects should perhaps play an active role in building solutions. It would be necessary for them to engage and direct political thinking, which at times finds itself far from any urban or architectural logic, and decide to be conscious social actors. Yet, "in order for a social actor to participate in a strategy with the aim of achieving an objective, acquiring the power to act in the social processes, it necessarily means intervening in the set of power relationships that frame any social process and condition the achievement of a concrete objective. The empowerment of social actors cannot be separated from their empowerment against other social actors."¹⁰ So, as a social actor, who does the architect work against? But above all, for whom and next to whom does the architect work? It is fairly simple to understand that the workers' organization defends the interests of its members, just as professional associations do. Maybe those who are involved in the architecture and urbanism circuit should not take charge only of the interests of the corporation or an overall practice, which of-

ten endorses foreign leanings. They should think of also adding to the list of priorities the defense of those expressed by the other collective they form part of, that of the citizens. For instance, in charge of the 2012 Venice Architecture Biennale, David Chipperfield chose *Common Ground* as the edition's title and stated: "I am interested in everything that architects share, from the conditions of the profession to the influences, collaborations, stories, and affinity that define and contextualize our work," and also "to deepen the understanding of the specific contribution made by the project to the definition of the urban areas where the community lives."¹¹

3. TRAINING

Regarding his proposal *The Manufactured Sites*, for the informal areas of the city of Tijuana in Mexico, Teddy Cruz explains that "Manufactured Sites is a transitional architectural system made of PARTS – not an architectural object – that can support and better the unavoidable recycling and improvisational realities of low-income environments. The notion of prefabrication here depends on a triangulation of human and material resources, agencies and institutions. The relationship produced by community based activists in charge of distributing the frame, the community's participation in building their own housing stock, the architect's collaboration in designing and facilitating the process, the municipality's efforts in mediating between the maquiladora industry and the informal sector, and the factory's support in providing the infrastructure, all suggest an expanding concept of mass-production methodologies."¹² Taking this proposal into account, the architect acquires a different role within the planning process: he or she is a collaborator and facilitator of a project shared with other actors holding different points of view. As an alternative, the risk is that each one of these viewpoints will end up separated from the others. Blending these different stances, the architect is called upon to find unprecedented syntheses and new archetypes. Architects cannot work only with planned materials and architectures but rather they are also required to face and support spontaneous materialities and informal processes—processes that have an open, unfinished configuration. In this case, the architect's objective would not be to produce finished, self-referential elements, and probably self-enclosed elements, but rather to lay out trajectories and recommend effective transformations and efficient evolutions to contend with the complexity of the challenges of urban environments and societies that are at the same time on a local scale as well as within a global context.

These intentions require architects and urban planners to possess proper knowledge and continued education and training. Because, otherwise, just as Edoardo Salzano points out, "we are convinced that closing off the attention of urbanists within the na-

row disciplinary-professional framework may push them to be facilitators of processes that escape their comprehension, instead of being critical interpreters of the tendencies at play and suggesters of goals and alternative routes."¹³

Therefore, architects' education and training must face the overlapping of the disciplines involved in the project-making process, thereby stimulating the approaches and the capacity for dialogue. A good practice for achieving this goal would be to incentivize contact with the collectivity, valuing the figure of the architect as a holder of knowledge that produces valuable short-circuits only if they are connected with outside contributions. Because, in a project that does not work, "these discomforts could be seen as the completely unhidden result of a lack of empathy, the work of architects who forgot to pay homage to the subtleties of the human mind, who allowed themselves to be seduced by a simplistic vision of what we can be, instead of paying attention to the labyrinth-like reality of what we are."¹⁴

CONCLUSIONS

In response to the questions posed at the beginning, I believe that architects, urbanists, and planners can successfully become active players in the important processes of creating identities, forms, and substances out of the architectural and urban spaces of the city of the future. Architects could create a convergence of forces that would otherwise remain dispersed and possibly unused. The inertias are forms of resistance that are opposed to modifications to the state, and therefore do not allow things to be seen from different, purposeful viewpoints, thereby allowing one to suppose that such junctures are unavoidable, with no viable alternatives. For architects, challenging the inertias would then be a series of actions to fulfill: personal, professional, and educational actions.

They would have to feel more personally committed to the important social role that the collectivity's organization bestows upon them. They could be more committed and aware, become the messengers of widespread interests, by knowing how to interpret the intentions of the interested parties and by facilitating an architecture belonging to everyone, by engaging in a new type of development.

Professionally, when trying to imagine some potential methods for architects to challenge the inertias of the project system, starting off with a complicated and chaotic situation such as the current state of things, characterized by complex socio-economic transformations, the panacea of a univocal, uniform, and immediate solution would be difficult to activate and achieve. They would be cross-cutting interventions within a variety of ambits, even those not directly linked to the project, those which could straighten out the course of architecture and urban

planning. These actions are forces that could wield an effect on the inertias by halting processes repeated through conformity and triggering other valuable processes of individual and collective progress as well as the exchanging of information. Such operations would serve as punctual forces—urban and social acupuncture¹⁵, so to speak.

Architects' education and training, to break with the inertias, must place people at the center of attention, in addition to reinitiating a discourse of research on the relationship between architecture, society, and its desires. At the same time, it should be geared towards the learning of architects in contact with civil society, encouraging experiences relating to every type of concrete transverse situation.

The critic Deyan Sudjic affirms that "in architecture power belongs above all to whoever has the ideas."¹⁶ So perhaps all that is left to do is to virally spread good ideas and practices for power-sharing.

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LO ARTESANAL / DESIGN THRU MAKING

NATURE: BETWEEN THE FUTURE AND A NEW TECTONIC DIMENSION

Wilfredo Méndez

The concept of that "to come" belongs to the trinity of states of time: past, present, and future of which the latter is the only one over which one can assume. Through personal development, every individual is able to construct a particular conception of the future. The idea of this state of time is, in most instances, adopted from commercial concepts. Thus, nowadays, Hollywood is the architect par excellence of those concepts that constitute the paradigm of the future for society. Therefore, that very idea is commonly associated with a time and space cut off from reality or from present control; an out-of-reach time belonging to a strange, quasi-fantastical space.

It is common for the future to be easily linked to science fiction topics. Nevertheless, theoretic stances regarding the science-fiction-based architecture to come are rarely argued. From an architectural dimension, it would be possible to define futuristic tectonic characteristics founded on the art of science fiction such as biomechanical structures, robotic forms, aerospace constructions, etc.; in short, a group of concepts that we dissociate from the constructive reality and practice of architecture (Fig. 1). Although generally science fiction is associated in an absolute fashion with an unreal state, this dimension certainly allows for exploring innovative