

Philosophy of Architecture Creativity

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Abstract

Abstract calls for creative activity and enthusiastic striving to shape the future without cognition of contemporary reality turns out to be fruitless and harmful dreaming. However good the impulses guiding some critics, or the disregard of architects for reality in creative work and thought, means that architecture itself is akin to illusory visions and vague allegories lacking vital social significance. However, architecture is founded on the purposeful generalization of life's processes and phenomena and represents typical and universal features of human life through depiction of man's changing relations with the actual world. Contrary to the narrowly selective approach of some nonrealistic trends, realism in the variety of forms and means of architectural expression is its essential feature. This variety of forms is the result of close contact with reality. The main thing to remember is that definitions are often only approximations and that the key to realism is in understanding the dialectics of its development.

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Introduction

As an admirer of non-communicative art may argue, the contemporary architect does not initiate reality but creates it anew. This is exactly where unique qualities of an architect as a creator come fully to the fore. The notion of creating a new reality is embodied in various trends of contemporary architecture, including different concepts of mythological art, which is considered by its theorists to be the major avenue of development of contemporary architecture. For Cassirer, myth is inseparable from symbolic forms of perception reality. For other critics myth is the way to penetrate the transcendental essence of the world, while others see in the myth the embodiment of the creative activity of man, his historical initiative. Garaudy thinks that there exist useless and harmful myths as well as intelligent contemporary myths which open up the creative principle in us. However, any look into the future acquires real sense only when founded on the basic and leading tendencies of contemporary life.

Our admiration of works of architecture is similarly very far from co-creation. In order to appreciate them aesthetically it is unnecessary, even impossible to reproduce a creative work of an architect in our imagination or to study the basics of construction techniques underpinning all architectural work. It is well known that the full appreciation of art

requires a certain understanding of its specifics. This, however, does not mean that art consumers have to be artists or sculptors. The creation and perception of artistic values are not identical processes. The co-creation theory cannot explain the variability of perception and influence of literary works.

The design of an architect is most often considered to be in unity. This is the origin of the widespread point of view which claims the decisive significance of works of architecture. It is claimed that design is responsible of its perception. However, the history of architecture demonstrates a frequent lack of convergence between the architect's intentions and the impact of his works on his contemporaries and later generations. The hope is that his design would be perceived as the reflection of major truths and would favorably influence society; for any work of architecture as a creation of the human mind interacts with many social processes and spiritual phenomena. In this respect, the fate of his design and its effect on the viewer are independent of the architect's will.

The real qualities of works of architecture, such as character, and the depth of artistic generalization, come to the fore. However, in different periods, even these actual qualities are variously interpreted by different groups of architecture consumers. Where then is the objective criterion for an understanding of architecture? That criterion is manifestly the correlation between the inner qualities of a work of architecture and its artistic generalization, on the one hand, and on the spiritual experience of the day and the future, on the other.

Social Purpose and Aesthetic Meaning

The social purpose and aesthetic meaning of works of architecture lies primarily in the creation of artistic generalizations which play an important role in the spiritual life of man. The work thus revised and supplemented becomes an object of aesthetic perception and enjoyment only in this new, fuller and more concrete form. To reveal specific links between structure and function appears to be important here as well. It is especially important in the sphere of artistic creativity because great architecture transcends the boundaries of time and thrives in different historical periods. That is why its function is presented one-sidedly and incorrectly. It is reduced to the pure aesthetic perception and to artistic contemplation.

The theory of strata

In the analysis of the social and aesthetic functions of literary works, researchers often cite the theory of strata advanced by a Polish scholar, Roman Ingarden. However this theory is not directly related to the history of art and literature. Ingarden primarily limits himself to the exterior description of various strata of artistic structure. When characterizing the process of appreciation of a literary work Ingarden notes that in one

moment we deal with the sequence of alternating phases (parts of the works) while in the second moment with the multitude of simultaneously existing heterogeneous components or strata.

In Ingarden's opinion the multilayered work of art emerges as a result of the various qualities of its shaping elements. It is easy to see that the multilayered-ness of artistic works, so understood, can little explain their historical persistence or the source of the variability of social and aesthetic interpretation. Even if strata are taken to mean strata of imagery semantics, the interaction between such strata is somewhat vague as is their gradual emergence. When applied to the historic functioning of literary works the notion of strata presupposes their splitting into separate parts while in fact at times they remain intact during various periods of their existence.

In the works of the advocates of global semiotics, the artistic structure is identified with aesthetic signs. According to the views of many semiotics, artistic structure is a sign, and the specificity of an aesthetic sign is inseparable from the structural particulars of a work of architecture. The viewing of an artistic structure as an aesthetic sign is attributed to the changes in significance of artistic phenomena primarily to subjective factors.

Socio-aesthetic function

The socio-aesthetic functions of architectural works, in an historical context, reveal the correlation of various values. Here it is necessary to elucidate the effective role of separate elements of artistic structure and their interaction in the creative system. The complete representation of people, their activities, feelings, and desires, as well as real life phenomena is an integral part of artistic creativity. This completeness, which should not be mixed up with the completeness of a work of architecture itself, finds its expression in the sensual and imaginative embodiment of the unity of diverse aspects of human existence and psychology.

This completeness exists in close relation with the specific feature of great architects, to analyze and synthesize creatively different and often heterogeneous life processes. This is caused by their desire to understand the world in its diversity, man in his complexity, to find connections between outwardly dissimilar phenomena and to see differences between phenomena which at first glance seem similar, even identical.

Both single architectural images and the system of images in general are revealed through contradictions which are responsible for their inner dynamics. The definitive role in the structure of a work of architecture belongs to the conflict reflecting real life collisions in a specific but indirect form. Conflict reveals the clash of opposing spiritual and material principles.

Since the characters of people, images of nature, and domestic environment concentrate in themselves the real world features and human spiritual life, a work of architecture includes, as its integral part, a structure of images. For a work of architecture as a system of systems, the distinctiveness of the generalization of reality and human psychology in each given image, with its ideas and emotions, is particularly significant. The fusion of characteristic generic qualities and individual peculiarities is significant in determining the place of an image in artistic creation.

An individual image interacts by its qualitative stability and emotional impact, with other components of a work of architecture. On the other hand, the features and structure of any important architecture image greatly influence the structural qualities. An architectural work is not an ornament or a secondary element but an organic quality of its structure and of its imaginative generalizations. The process of aesthetic assimilation of the world and the embodiment of the results of imaginative cognition of reality would be impossible without a specific emotional attitude of intonation.

The general representation of the creatively assimilated material and the arrangement of images in a work of architecture are important for the success of a design, as great architects often wrote about their difficult search for the correct shape. This is natural since the architect depicts various phenomena of life and expresses his different attitudes toward them.

A work of architecture is created not only in order to objectivize the imaginative assimilation of reality but also in order to influence the beholder or the client. At the same time each component of a work of architecture which takes part in the realization of cognitive and ideological purposes of architecture fulfills an expressive function. Expressive aspects of a work of art help in turn to reveal more clearly its imaginative components and content.

It is important to stress that the difference in interpretations of architectural designs does not signify that only one of these interpretations is correct. The mere fact that an important work of architecture reflects various life tendencies and reveals their characteristic features points to the possibility of different, and at the same time relatively correct, interpretations.

Moreover, one has to take into account that significant works of architecture are related not only to real, immediate life, but also to other more abstract phenomena. These correlations result in the diversity and breadth of artistic generalizations which, in various forms, are reflected in the spiritual world of architects.

The variation in perception of a significant work of architecture in different historical periods depends largely on its content and even absorption of new phenomena by means of artistic generalizations. Even when a work of architecture has just appeared it can become the object of clashes between conflicting spiritual needs of consumers. Though differences of opinion are sometimes quite pronounced, this does not exclude considerable popularity for a design. The formation of the function and significance of some components of a great architectural work takes place in close interconnection. A new interpretation of the conflict produces an impact on the perception of individual images.

Similarly, the manifestation of new aspects of artistic generalization influences the evaluation of the conflict of a design and its content. The relationship between a great work of architecture and evolving historical reality is complex. Frequently the work of the talented architect does not find a lively and strong response in his lifetime, even when his works are known to the public. One can cite examples of the dissonance between a talent and his times. However, the greater the role of variables in a work of architecture, the more rapid is its ageing and the aesthetic neutralization of its major components.

Here, it is important to emphasize that the diversity of interpretations of great works of architecture is not the result of the pure subjectivity of their spontaneous contemplation or their generic incompleteness but is caused by their inner breadth and the depth of links between works of architecture and the developing social world, the creative activities of man, and his feelings and desires.

Formalists and structural theorists often present very detailed descriptions of individual elements of literary works, vocabulary, and syntactical form, rhythm and so on. One can compile a lot of different lists of various features of a work of architecture. Nevertheless, this would not bring one any closer to understanding its social and aesthetic essence.

Medieval and Renaissance Architecture Creativity

Obviously, impressive and original works of architecture represent significant creative discoveries about the society, the inner world of man, his feelings and desires. By their nature design imaginations cannot be aesthetic signs, they do not substitute real objects and processes, but reflect them, and not so much in their exterior features as their internal qualities and tendencies. Creative architects of various movements reflect and generalize processes of life and the spiritual world of people through their own devices.

The great discoveries of Renaissance architecture are widely recognized. The Renaissance artists saw and depicted man and his life in a way fundamentally different from the vision of the medieval architect. The medieval cult of pure spirituality and the

belief in the preordained course of things and life in heaven as the purpose of living were transformed in the Renaissance into poetization of the earthly creativity of man. In Renaissance architecture, man appeared in a diversity of feelings, inspired by great goals and full of fervid optimism. However, the greatest strength of Renaissance architects lies in their refusal to be constrained by tradition and their desire to pave the way for new approaches. This was prompted by their search to rethink and re-evaluate what had come before and to reveal their attitude toward the world.

The masters of the Renaissance expressed an understanding of life, man and human relations which differed radically from the medieval world view. The semiotic nature of the hero-prototypes was a basis for great artistic generalizations; however, it in turn influenced these generalizations in its own particular way. Such phenomena can be observed in other epochs as well.

In the Middle Ages, the sign and canonical principles played a major role. An allegorical and symbolic understanding of architecture suffuses the artistic thought of the Middle Ages. This, of course, does not mean that medieval architecture lacked its own significant artistic generalizations and aesthetic values. Recognition of these values again points to the problem of correlating aesthetic signs and creative discoveries. Moreover, one should not forget another important circumstance; canons in their natural form served an important social and aesthetic function. The system of canons itself can be a useful factor of architecture facilitating the apprehension of reality. The striving for the establishment of canons corresponds to the human desire for the economy of creativity, and for systemization of cognition, which makes cognition easier through generalization. Canon is a sign, a signal for certain feelings and notions.

It would be hard to agree with the statement that the system of canons itself is an effective means of artistic understanding of life. The system of canons primarily denotes the phenomena of reality without substantive creative analysis and synthesis. However it has been proven that aesthetic signs interacting with other means of creative assimilation of the world can serve the aim of the creative generalization. Obviously, canons and other aesthetic signs are able to produce an intense emotional impact.

Semiotic Architecture

Sometimes the opinion is expressed that the semiotic nature of architecture is identical to conventionality. All that is conventional is a sign; what is not conventional is not a sign. It is hard to agree with this idea because architecture is conventional in its nature, in the sense that it conveys the essential in human life by its own specific means and it creates the world of images in which its own specific connections and correlations are apparent.

The natural conventionality of architecture is not an obstacle to its embodiment of truth. Moreover, it is that quality of architecture which allows it to convincingly generalize events and intellectual process with depth and breadth. A superficial lack of verisimilitude in art often serves for a vivid depiction of society, individual personalities, and emotions if one were to analyze only the basic features of a given branch of architecture.

Architecture uses conventional aesthetic forms which characterize the departure from the imaginative apprehension of the world and the creation of real aesthetic values. The identification of semiotics and conventionality in architecture is completely unjustified because, in this, signs have to be viewed as aesthetic signs, also.

Advocates of global semiotic theories of architecture avoid the very notion of architecture image while gradually introducing such terms as sign, code, and symbol. Other critics tend to view the synthetic architectural image as a variety of sign. The architect creates signs which embody the signs without risking destructions.

The characteristic of architectural generalization consists in the penetration into the essence of phenomena and the depiction of their distinctive features. Representativeness is a quality of an aesthetic sign; the richness of inner content is a quality of a synthetic image. Therefore the statements “an image”, a single sign of generalization, includes clearly opposing notions.

The perception of an image as representative of a broad layer of human experience presupposes a clearly delineated circle of phenomena which denote and represent a given image. Without the clear definition of an object and its components, the function of representativeness becomes meaningless. However, this imparts a significant coefficient of static into the understanding of image, which is closely connected to representativeness.

A synthetic architectural image cannot be limited by static coordinates. It not only generalizes a specific combination of features of a particular group of people or phenomena, but reveals the social tendency often characterizing the features of the processes; considerably different from those which served as a basis for the image creation.

Obviously the indirect reflection of reality in its various forms as adopted by contemporary progressive architecture is one of the means of artistic generalization of life. Therefore, the development and elaboration of forms of aesthetic assimilation of reality is claimed to be the most important feature of contemporary architecture.

According to global semiotics everything in works of architecture have a conventional character. Aesthetic phenomena acquire objective meaning not because of their connection with reality but due to their communicative function and to spontaneous social convention. On the other hand the extreme epistemologists often tend to view both the structure of individual works of architecture, and the development of architecture as a whole, primarily as a cognition of reality. According to them, each component of a creative work as well as the stages of historical development of architectural culture is merely a link in the complex process of cognition of the world, and should be viewed solely from this angle.

Architecture and Reality

The relationship between architecture and reality indubitably underlies the former's diversity of life. At the same time, it is wrong to assume that the communicative function of architecture does not determine anything in its content and its expressive means, or that the socio-communicative significance of art is a simple derivative of its architectural cognitive role.

In their recognition of the historical and geographical limitations the conventionality of all devices of the aesthetic assimilation of reality, the advocating of global semiotics are close to the proponents of socio-cultural relativism. Lately and especially abroad, a number of architectural designs have appeared on the problem of space and time in architecture. Time and space appear in different spheres of architecture. Considerable differences can be easily observed between architecture, painting, music and literature. The imaginative depiction of space and time changes according to the creative idea of the architect, the system of ideas and images which he embodies in his work. The understanding of space and time also changes with the historical development of human society.

Nevertheless, this does not eliminate connections between architectural space and time on the one hand and real time and space on the other. These connections emerge in the process of reflection upon the phenomena of the objective world. This reflection can convey a given share of truth and its correlation with many different artistic truths. The subjective perception of reality frequently substitutes illusions, and even falsities, for the real.

If one were to regard the development of architecture on a broad scale, then it is impossible to understand the artistic space and time in isolation from the cognition of the real world. Some critics and architects argue that perspective depiction in the architecture of the Renaissance was not the discovery of the objective principles of human perception

of the world. Perspective, in their view, is only one out of the multitude of possible, past and present devices for the construction of space in architecture design, and painting.

Classicists are known to defend the principle of unity of place and time in the depiction of events and characters while rejecting the objective character of time. The representatives of the modernist trend view it as something completely subjective, characterizing only the inner world of the individual. This makes various interpretations of time links, not only possible but absolutely necessary.

Conclusion

Even when an architect does not touch upon the problems of his time, rejects his time completely, or denies its connection with architecture, time is still apparent in the character and features of architectural design. The mediated reflections of historical time perception, as well as its direct reflection, are manifested in various forms including presentation of its main features and conflicts.

One cannot deny the architectural value of works of architecture which appeared when historicism had not yet emerged as a specific creative principle. However, historicism as a means of perception and reflection of human life in buildings represents a great architectural achievement. It allows one to see changes in the world, and the links between such changes and the place and the significance of certain phenomena in the course of social life.

In relation to the problem of architectural space, historicism facilitated the study of architecture, and its assimilated features of the historical time. The lifetime of aesthetic conventions varies widely. Sometimes they are as ephemeral as fashion, but they can also last for a long period of time until becoming intricately interwoven with the former style, like that of post-modernism, and sooner or later, the same will happen to digital architecture!