

Architecture or Status Quo

If we challenge the future, we have to learn that 'styles' are abundantly amongst us, that the style belonging to our own period is an all-embracing style. Revolution has become impossible.

Our minds have consciously or unconsciously apprehended this condition and new needs have been numbed. The machinery of society, too much in gear, oscillates between ages of boredom, and a catastrophe.

It is a question of building which is at the root of the mental pacification of today; architecture or status quo.

'Styles' no longer innovate, they are too much in our ken; if they still satisfy us, it is as teddy bears. If we set ourselves against the future, we are forced to the conclusion that the ever-occurring boring little shock of the new is no longer of any interest; it no longer concerns us: all the values have been neutralised; there has been a total ossification in the conception of what Architecture is.

There reigns a great agreement between the Post-Modern state of mind, which is a drug for us, and the stifling accumulation of hot news.

The problem is one of awakening, in which the irrationalities of our life are in question.

Society is filled with a omnipresent somnambulism, caused by oversaturation. Everything lies in that: everything depends on the effort made and the attention paid to these symptoms of mass hypnosis.

Architecture or Status Quo.

Status Quo can be broken.

codes have been overturned. If we challenge the past, we shall learn that "styles" no longer exist for us, that a style belonging to our own period has come about; and there has been a revolution.

Our minds have consciously or unconsciously apprehended these events and new needs have arisen, consciously or unconsciously. The machinery of Society, profoundly out of gear, oscillates between an amelioration, of historical importance, and a catastrophe.

It is a question of building which is at the root of the social unrest of to-day; architecture or revolution.

the "styles" no longer exist, they are outside our ken; if they still trouble us, it is as parasites. If we set ourselves against the past, we are forced to the conclusion that the

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TOWARDS A NEW ARCHITECTURE

old architectural code, with its mass of rules and regulations evolved during four thousand years, is no longer of any interest; it no longer concerns us: all the values have been revised; there has been revolution in the conception of what Architecture is.

There reigns a great disagreement between the modern state of mind, which is an admonition to us, and the stifling accumulation of age-long detritus.

The problem is one of adaptation, in which the realities of our life are in question.

Society is filled with a violent desire for something which it may obtain or may not. Everything lies in that: everything

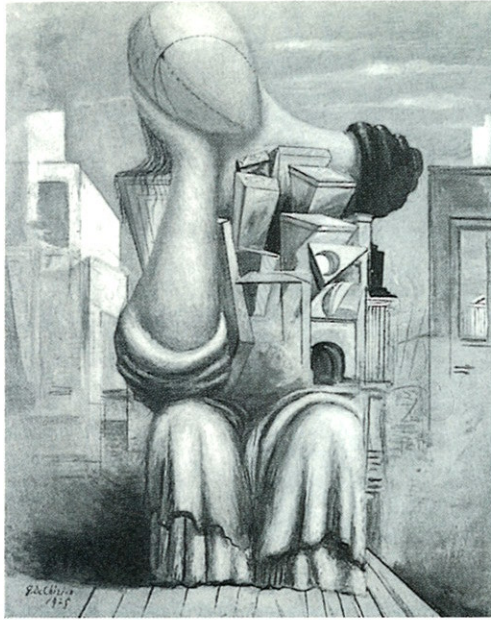
ARCHITECTURE OR REVOLUTION

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depends on the effort made and the attention paid to these alarming symptoms.

Architecture or Revolution.

Revolution can be avoided.



De Chirico, Il filosofo, 1925

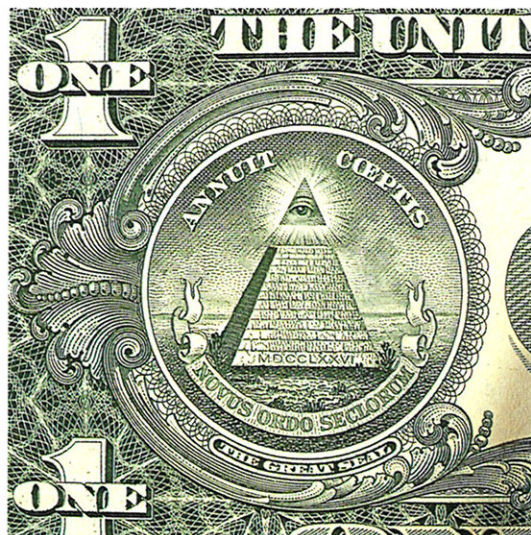


Extension to the State Gallery, Stuttgart, 1977-1984. James Stirling and Michael Wilford

A Never-Ending Metaphor

Anyone seeking insight into a cultural or historical situation will find rich spoils in the accompanying architecture. Architecture gives expression to mentalities, visions, cultural and local identities, economic circumstances, political choices and much else. In the consciousness of many people, architecture is a metaphor for reality: architecture gives concrete form to reflections of the world, contemplations about the world, postulations of an imaginary world and speculations on a world of tomorrow. Moreover, its materiality, durability and functionality invariably return to take the gloss off all those bright imaginings. The scope of architectural metaphor is practically universal. Owing to its anthropological and biological basis, it reappears in every time and every place. All participants in a cultural dialogue avail themselves of its stone, its volumes and its space. Everyone has an opinion about architecture; everyone uses it, and hence it is the most public of all art forms. Presumably it will also continue to be so for a long time yet. While several forms of art have been declared dead at least once in their existence, it is sheer effrontery to do the same to architecture. While there is life, while the brain still needs a body and is not yet entirely transformed into artificial intelligence, an 'end' of architecture would be unthinkable. Architecture is the only art form which cannot, by definition, be pure art.

But this material bottom-line does not diminish the fact that architecture *is* an art form, a vehicle of cultural speculation. As such, the profession can not simply turn a deaf ear to the intermittent pronouncements of the 'death' of architecture. It is precisely its dual character, its constancy as a human need on the one hand and its inconstancy as a cultural medium on the other, that makes it such an excellent host to cultural debate. No wonder philosophers have been so fond of using it as a metaphor to exemplify their arguments. And no wonder it has been one of the most prominent subjects of the discourse on the Post-Modern which has been going on since the seventies. The various crises around which this discussion has centred have all found a ready and cogent illustration in architecture; yet at the same time, they have met an obstinate resistance in it. Architecture is the last guardian of the archaic world of foundations, gravity and eternal values. It is also the last guardian of the Modernist ideal of building for tomorrow; and perhaps the last guardian of free will, which it arouses by offering space for human action. In this respect, architecture can never be totally outmoded. Will bodies become irrelevant? Will places be homogenised out of existence? Will identities vanish? Perhaps – 'all that is solid melts into air', according to Karl Marx. But one thing remains, and that is architecture. And even while knowledge continues to splinter into ever yet finer specialisms, the architect remains, willy-nilly, a *homo universalis*. Architecture, seen as the integral process of commission, plan and execution, is the final generalism; and this could well prove to be its strength in the near future.



Apart from some isolated and often peripheral intellectual circles, the practice of describing the contemporary social and cultural situation in wide-sweeping terms of 'colonialism', 'imperialism' or similar jargon sprung from the vision of a utopian world, has all but vanished. Like practically any future vision couched in positive terms, such utopian worlds are suspect because they lay down the law for the perfect life. A Post-Modern society – fragmented, individualistic, multicultural, pluriform and anonymous, yet prepared to write off masses of humanity – no longer has any use for a metaphysics of universality. All that is now acceptable, it seems, is an appeal to the *relative* validity of an idea or a value. This condition of undecidability in an all-embracing atopia of the Now, lacks an escape route to any *terra incognita* whatsoever. It supports only individual worlds of meanings. Nearly all the philosophical capacity of the Western world is being deployed to map out this fragmentation. *En passant*, we forget that our pluriform culture is a mechanism that reproduces and distributes a uniform civilisation.

From the inside, this situation gives the appearance of a huge emancipation. The experience of individual self-determination has become a real possibility at last, at least for those of us who can afford it. Each of us can compile his own world-image and experience his own micro-history. Briefly, around 1990, in a crescendo of ill-informed triumphalism, this liberal view passed for the essence of paradise on earth – a New World Order, some said, whose further actualisation was merely a matter of time.

Now we are sadder and wiser. The New World Order extends no further than the dollar bill on which the motto *novus ordo seclorum* is printed. Deprived of the reassuring clarity of a colonial, Eurocentric world-view or a Cold War, the world finds itself in a situation where populations go adrift, nationalistic fanaticism and economic buccaneering flourish, religious fundamentalism shows its muscle and frontiers are inexorably closed to the despairing hordes of asylum seekers. Even tormented nature bites back at us without mercy.

But what can we do about it? The world is becoming more and more uniform, yet the resulting 'normality' seems to lack any real ethical depth. We stick decorously to the rules, while those vague, indefinable feelings of dissatisfaction seem to have gone into internal exile. Because the rules are accepted as a matter of course, the only thing people can still believe in is a limited individual self-fulfilment. The resulting Me-culture is the primary means by which the social mechanisms of cultural production are

perpetuated. To win any kind of social standing, the individual is forced to develop a 'unique' profile for himself and thereby claim a niche within the existing structure. The overwhelming **pluralism** of society **is a** consequence of this. We live in an up-to-date version of the **panopticon**, which now provides a multitude of fragmentary glimpses instead of a 360-degree perspective. The festival of forms legitimates and controls the status quo. Pluralism is part and parcel of an inescapable social homogeneity.

At the same time, this situation is marked by a kind of schizophrenia which combines the ultimate in well-informedness with the pinnacle of paralysis. Never before have we been so well aware of what things should *not* be like, but so little able to take the consequences. Never before have we known so much about so much, but been able to change so little of so little. Never before were we so good at communicating, but struck so profoundly speechless. The above-mentioned emancipation is totally inapplicable to the great majority of the world population, which, according to Eduardo Galeano, tends to be selectively forgotten. 'The problem of this world is that the problems of this world are no longer reflected in the lives of those who are in a position to do anything about them', said the German politician Gregor Gysi. We would go a step further: the media give the illusion of reflection, but, for the spectator, annihilate the relationship between experiencing and reacting to the represented reality.

Instead of that relationship, we see private interests invading a public space in which there is barely any communication between those present. The individual shields himself from reality because the obligatory interior monologue encapsulates or excludes other perceptions than his own. And should someone nonetheless feel an urge for change, he is confronted by the façade of legitimacy on which the (pseudo) public sphere is based. Behind this façade, however, there no longer appears to be any supporting structure. There is certainly no obvious forum where the public interest can be debated. There are no people to address any more. 'Instead of private faces in public places, there are only public faces in private places' (W.H. Auden). Naturally this situation has a certain transparency, but one that was never intended. We live in a time in which the engineering of consent plays first fiddle. Dissent exists only as a game of the 'alternative' – the alternative as a life-style, as an indulgence. The Other becomes a partial excuse for the monoculture industry. Critical awareness has become a placebo, instead of a disruptive attribute, an *Anleitung zum Handeln* (El Lissitzky).

From Nie Wieder Krieg to Anything Goes

We would like to propose an Oedipal thought: the proclaimed end of the great ideologies about the true and the false or the beautiful and the ugly, is a conjecture strongly tied to demography. We are referring to the post-war boom babies who, in all parts of Western society, have now made their way up to the social cadre. This generation has now reached the age at which it no longer needs an ideology (as it did around May '68) in order to form an image of the world; it prefers to confine itself to its own life experience. After all, he who is not an idealist when he is twenty, has no heart; he who is still an idealist at forty, is a fool. The first post-war generation is acquainted with human folly at first hand, and this has scooped the utopian momentum out of its thinking; and seeing that the current discourse is largely determined by this post-ideological demographic cohort, the death of ideology tends to be proclaimed as though it were a plain fact. Meanwhile, the baby-boom generation now has more life behind it than in front of it. This must inevitably shape their view of the world.

Another reason for this transformation in the structure of idealism is the nature of the wars that preceded their birth. After Total Wars, a chorus of *nie wieder Krieg* came as no surprise. This cry, and the ineradicable memories of the holocaust and of Hiroshima, have made their mark on all contemporary thought. No longer can an ideal be elevated to absolute status: any ambition of universal validity for a theory, a viewpoint or a vision is suspect as the germ of a new Auschwitz. This state of mind, whether conscious or unconscious, has resulted in a philosophical concern for what was formerly excluded, what was in danger of being overlooked. Instead of stamping things as right or wrong, people prefer to leave the options open. To each his own, they say. Repression and exclusion exceeded a critical point in the past, at the zero point of history, and since then these mechanisms have been permanently tainted – even when their intention is to replace today by a better today. Judgements seem to have become impossibly difficult. People find it more important to restrain the undesirable than to strive for the optimum. They would rather be politically correct than politically active. So anything keeps going.

It all looks very liberal and democratic, but the avoidance of ethical errors can be an alibi for social passivity. And those who live on the wrong side of the affluent society have to bear the consequences. Inclusivism seems to imply pacification, but in fact it is violence. And we do well out of it. Our fear of taking a stand has repercussions that affect the lives of so many people that we have to shut them out of our minds for our own psychological protection.

爽やかな緑の六甲山に祝福されて、おふたりは
新しい一歩を記します。感動、あざやかなサマーウェディング。

Menu
海の幸の五こどり 炭焼塩味 キヤベア添え
コンソメ クラファン
(ムシ) 夏野菜のクリームスープ
スズキのレタス包み エストラゴン風味
アワ(肉)ステーキ ダイオウア
塩野菜
オラダマランジュ
抹茶のアイスクリーム フルーツ添え
コーヒー
パンとバター

料金
35名様 **68万円**
お1人様追加16,500円

期間
1992年7月1日
↓
8月31日

●お二人だけのウェディング
ご対応いたします。
●豪華な料理の準式
及びご披露宴も承ります。
●結婚式の披露宴の両方を
ご対応いたします。



神聖な空気が流れる誓いの空間、
クリスタルチャペル。



披露宴の中心、あたたかみあふれる披露宴会場。





*Summer
Wedding Pack*

Promotion leaflet Rokko Oriental Hotel 1992: "Summer or white wedding pack". Chapel on Mount Rokko Kobe. Hyogo 1985-86 by Tadao Ando



Billboard Barcelona airport: "The art of being local"

Fear of taking a stand? But aren't we going through a period of revival in social involvement, right now in the nineties? Hadn't we all tired of the free-booting eighties, the decade of the bubble economy and the Post-Modern lightness of being? Under either practical or moral pressure, many people take up issues again, such as those surrounding racism, sexism, environmental destruction and AIDS. But these are inevitably reactions to acute threats, rather than visions of a better future. In effect, the pursuit of a moral condition takes second place to the preservation of preconditions. Not life, but survival, has priority. A similar retreat can be seen in politics, where those involved struggle against the effects but stay silent about the causes. It's a bit reminiscent of the kind of philanthropy in which the factory-owner's wife visited the slums bringing charitable aid to her husband's poverty-stricken employees. But we seldom hear a coherent argument – let alone see practical action being taken – about the relationship between all those micro-problems which can loom so gigantically in the mind and the macro-problems that refuse to take root there. Today's intellect seems to be incapable of anything more than a cocooned critical awareness.

For anyone in danger of succumbing to an excess of awareness, there is a way out: the sublime aesthetics of unrepresented authenticity, an experience of reality amid an ocean of simulacra. The sublimity of art is the ideal compensation for a false life. But it says a great deal that the sublime has become an endorsement instead of an observable fact. Once the experience has been named, it loses its innocence and can be

manipulated and faked. The result is that collective hope is replaced by the fetish of individual artistic talent. The work of art – and of architecture as art – becomes a bulwark of elevated feelings in a ruined world, the text an isolated moment of pleasure in an ocean of frustration. Artistic and architectural production safeguards its own existence by shutting itself up in aesthetics. Most practitioners think they can keep their hands clean of real-world necessity by pretending the innocence of an amoral aesthetic urge. People are afraid of art and architecture that takes a social stand. The work may freely contain all kinds of social and political hints, but never become an implementation of them. Art has been neutralised by absorption into freedom of opinion. It now has barely any impact on society, and a critical evaluation of this position is no longer considered relevant.

Art has let itself be caught in the net of dialectics by setting itself up in opposition to reality instead of residing in reality. Aesthetics becomes a component, a legitimation, of power. All that remains is artistic narcissism, in which monographs, one-man shows, artistic recognition are everything. Critical judgement has no place in all this. People rather let themselves be enticed by the most concrete form of involvement there is: *Einfühlung*, empathy.

One vein of contemporary art and architecture reflects a longing for the haptonomy of the object, for the touch of material and for the optical caress, for a rebirth of authenticity. This kind of work aims to offer a touchstone for experience, something to hold onto in a volatile world of simulation and experiential poverty, a pause in the endless flight forwards, a point of rest in the unstoppable mobilisation of the world and of our minds. Another current in art and architecture offers a state of excitement for those less in need of psychological reassurance – an aesthetics fascinated by speed, technology and virtualisation. Here, the spectator's empathy is not held by a thing but by a suggestive, evanescent, even hypnotic atmosphere. Fascism is a high-energy art that has no time for the makeability of society.

This is the new involvement that can make do without ideology. The craving for a physically experienced meaning in the *fin-de-siècle*, and the mature awareness of human fallibility in a post-ideological world both lead to a belief in *Einfühlung*. Everyone can agree with a purely reptilian social critique based on a phenomenological apprehension of the world. This social critique makes a direct connection with the mid-brain, with the undercurrent of our humanity, which eludes every cerebral counter-argument. As critical spirits, what else can we do but heartily wish everyone the pleasure of this most individual of all experiences? And it is just as hard to argue against the fascination of social acceleration. Fascination invariably knocks criticism into a cocked hat.



Archaism tries to retreat. This strategy aspires to modesty and pays its respects to the timelessness of eternal values by means of the autonomous thing.

Hotel in economic capitalist zone of People's Republic of China



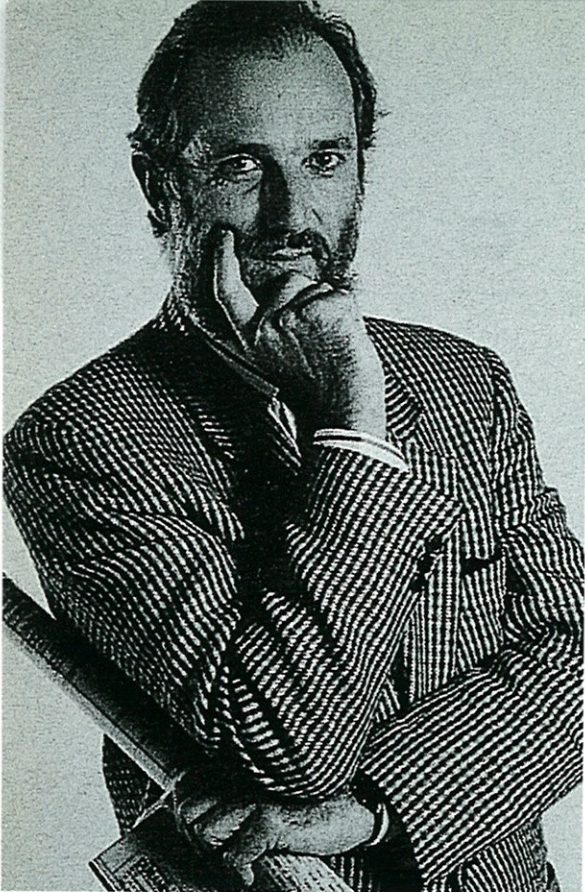
Façadism tries to attract. This strategy aims to show life as it is by means of the autonomous image.

Hong Kong Island



Fascinism tries to draw us on. This strategy aims to give us a foretaste of the near future (at least according to current projections) by means of an autonomous atmosphere.

Periphery of Paris. In the background the shopping mall by Renzo Piano



Architect Renzo Piano

We can conceive of various levels at which architects decide their attitude to and, especially, their position *in* society. Firstly there is the narrative level of the form, the outward appearance, the façade. This is the former *venustas*, one of the few traditional aspects of building still left exclusively to the architect following the industrial division of labour. Secondly, there is the constructive-material level of the skeleton (*firmitas*) and other 'hardware'. This is generally already the work of the civil engineer, who specialises in 'working out' what is required. Finally, there is the programmatic-functional level of the 'life' that is accommodated by the architecture (*utilitas*). This is generally organised spatially by the architect, but falls largely under the responsibility of the investor, the client, the bureaucrat and the user.

It is not easy for an architect to pay due respect to all the dimensions that play a role in his work. The production, the distribution, the networks and many other mechanisms of architectural practice have forced the architect into ever greater specialisation. As a result, it is exceedingly difficult to operate beyond the bounds of one's own vocabulary. The architect is free to manipulate only those variables for which she or he is authorised. All the rest falls outside her or his expert scope, and in any case would exceed the budget. No wonder even the internationally renowned architects in this book are tightly restricted in what they can do, despite their efforts to expand the range of their specialism. If you want to survive, there is not much alternative to doing what the practical world demands of you. And the practical world demands of the architect that he behaves as a manager of the programme and a creative designer of the space. The architect's role thereby becomes marginal: the measure of freedom within one's own domain is coupled to total obedience as regards practically everything that precedes or falls outside it. In concrete terms, this generally means that the architect can seek at most a formal relationship between form

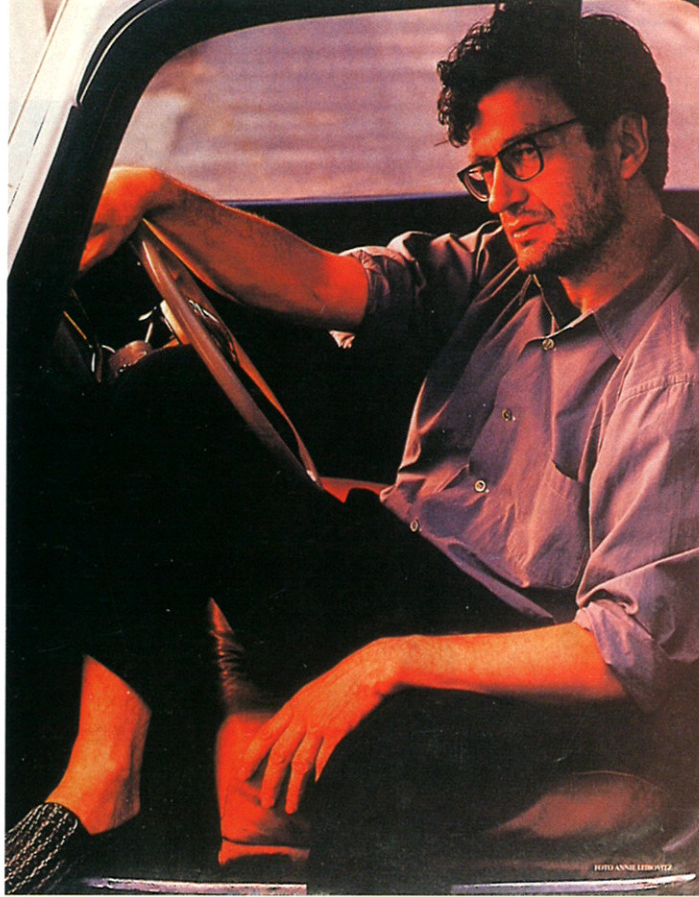
and content, but can never act in structural conflict with the political and social tenor of the commission. In relation to culture at large, he can occupy an innovative and critical position only as far as the form is concerned.

Once it is narrowed down to merely the aesthetic aspect of what used to be its total programme, architecture becomes simulation – a far cry from a public forum in which the acts of power can be subjected to debate. The programme is lost from view. If architecture is able to accord a shape to the function, then it is only in the classic functionalist (i.e. technocratic) mode; thus the political implications of the function no longer have any visual or material point of reference.

Of course, this state of affairs reflects a development that is taking place quite independently of architecture. The more the human body and its acts are robotised and digitalised, the less visible the political identity of an act becomes. It is not the act itself, but how it is done, that matters. For architecture, this implies a strong emphasis on the solution to the exclusion of cultural speculation, i.e. the articulation of a social problem within the solution. Architecture is expected to be purely part of the solution. That much of the notion of the house as a machine to live in has become a reality, after all.

Architecture, as an art form, adopts the time-honoured survival strategy of an artistic discipline: it abandons whatever it shares with other disciplines and concentrates on that which makes it unique. The result is, indeed, a kind of survival. **Thank God, we know the difference between Lincoln Cathedral and a bicycle shed.** Architecture has definitely emancipated itself as Art. But at the same time it has sacrificed its programmatic capacities. Its newly won sublimity is thus at the cost of a significant reduction in its relevance.

Until the end of the world. American Express advertisement: 'Wim Wenders. Member since 1988. Safely venture away from home.'



Wim Wenders. Lid sinds 1988.



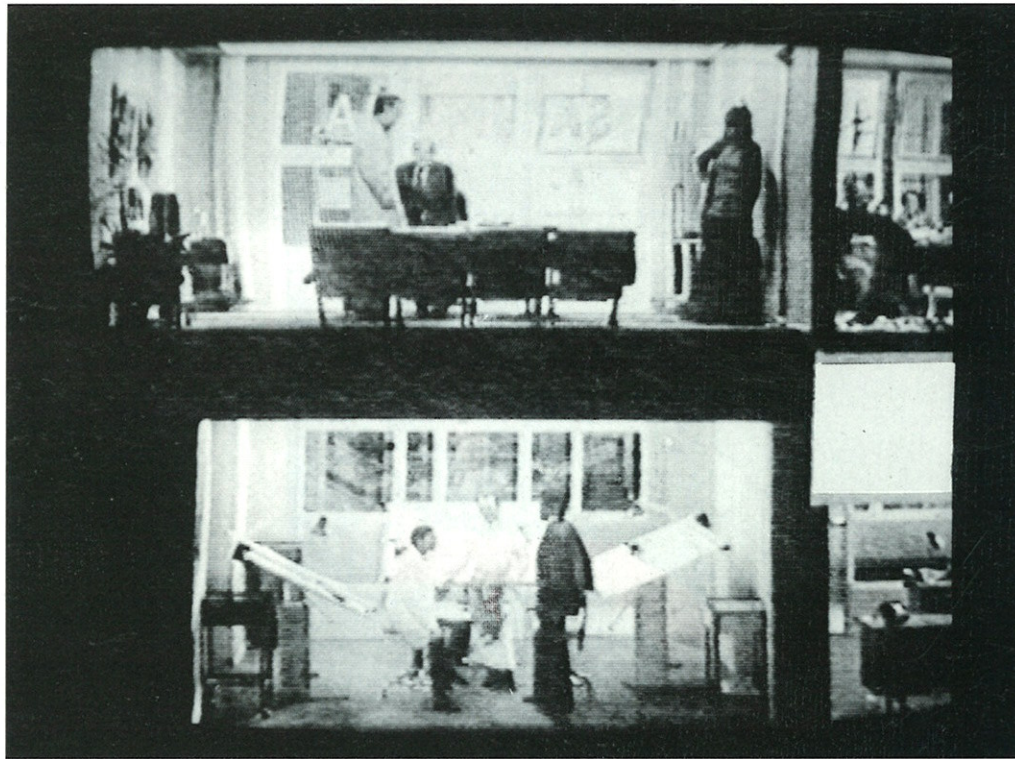
Daar kunt u gerust mee van
Bel: 020 510 510

True, architecture has survived as art. As art, it is free and autonomous. This autonomy has a number of characteristics. Firstly, the freedom only applies within the strict bounds of the discipline. Secondly, the aesthetic aspect is presented as a way out of the violence of the 'everyday world'. This aspect is not so much a rational thing as an attribute of an elevated, poetic domain. Thirdly, the autonomy is characterised by mutual competitiveness which largely centres around being up-to-date and different. Everyone who wishes to take part is obliged to take a distinct stance towards his contemporary surroundings and the status quo. Originality and a unique style are the primary requirements, and these have to be accompanied by intellectual arguments of high quality. Still, this architecture rarely has anything to do with criticisms of current social developments.

Architecture produces objects that no longer actively relate to social reality. It objectivises its own morality in a purely analogous, illustrative way, by 'sticking' discursive ideas onto the architectural object. The result is a huge discrepancy between the complex reality, defined as the 'outside world', and the architectural reality 'inside'. This architecture gives free scope to the most varied functions and interpretations, and is hence able to perpetuate its own impeccable autonomy. It withdraws into a shell of meaning which is conveyed by the material. This meaning is determined not so much by the mutual relationship of the programmatic content to the material, as by the relationship between the different material carriers. The material carrier can, admittedly, have a radical influence on the space, but that influence is not conceived from the standpoint of the spatial organisation itself independently of the material.

The critical architect, having realised that the innovation of a sign *within* the signing system is no longer an acceptable substitute for significant change, would no longer restrict his alternative ideas to the form alone.

It is very important to show explicitly how the form operates separately from the content and thereby keeps the dominant mechanisms of late capitalism in the saddle. This would in turn demonstrate the untenable position of the kind of artist who believes s/he can be socially involved through form alone. Furthermore, it is important to bring form and content into a deliberate relation once more. In this way, we believe, it will be possible to find an alternative that does not distance itself from the constant developments of technology or take refuge in the tactility of the tectonics. This is an approach which could open a new perspective, in which the invisible and visible processes would become transparent without losing their emancipatory momentum in an apolitical, neutral rendition. In practice, this would mean architecture making it its business once more to create a genuine public domain. It would amount to the development of an architecture in which the satisfaction of basic human needs would go along with a critique of the cultural stasis in which we find ourselves. Both the professional community and the user would then be able to evaluate the merits of this alternative approach in built reality. The precondition of this alternative is not so much the discipline's autonomy or a recognisable artistic signature, as the architect's willingness to bring his own professional competence to bear on not only the functional programme, but also the programme of the context and of the location.



Still from *Tout va bien* by Jean-Luc Godard, 1972

Architecture Pro Gramme of Life

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Before s/he makes a single mark on paper, every architect has to deal with a programme formulated by the client. In many cases the client knows next to nothing about architecture. He would like to accommodate all kinds of activities, but is incapable of imagining how it might look. It is the architect's job to dispose of any inappropriate preconceptions the client may have and thus provide insight into the actual implications of the client's idea in terms of square metres and mutual relationships between the various functions. This puzzle is almost invariably solved in a way that functionally accommodates the programme of requirements, while the architect retains a little elbow-room in which he can exert his own interpretation. Obviously, this does not mean that the functional programme and the programme of the architect are mutually independent. However, the programme of requirements is seldom interpreted in such a way that, before being converted into materials and space, a critique of or alternative to the status quo is expressed. The architect rarely penetrates to the functional issues themselves, but usually operates only at the level of clothing the programme in a material shell.

Our view is that the programme of requirements must be scrutinised as a social institution, against the background of the mechanisms on which that institution relies. This is precisely the activity in which the specialism of architecture should be prepared to go beyond its presently prescribed bounds – naturally, in connection with a spatial form. This could hardly be achieved without drawing on other domains of knowledge. All in all, our plea is as follows: firstly, the architect should aim to throw the constraints that affect him open to discussion and insist on the right to exert an influence on the programme; secondly, the architect should seek opportunities to achieve the closest possible relationship between form and programme, taking into account the situation and the scale of the assignment but without deference to the prevailing institutional constraints. And these desiderata should be seen as steps on the way to an alternative that bears a true relation to the public sphere.

This book is an open work that raises more questions than it can answer. An architectural project can be an open work too. A project does not have to be an attempt to solve everything in one go or to have some unequivocal 'meaning'. Rather, it should offer a critical insight into both the use and the thinking behind that use. In this sense architecture could share Hegel's characterisation of philosophy - *'Die Philosophie ist Ihre Zeit in Gedanken erfasst'* (which with a slight but essential modification gives us Mies van der Rohe's dictum 'Architecture is the will of an epoch translated into space'). The difference between architecture and philosophy is that the latter analyses or characterises reality without having to accommodate itself to it. But architecture does not have the option of such independence. With architecture, you inevitably get your hands dirty, and it would be wrong to pretend otherwise; on the contrary, this necessary fact should be recognised as a stimulus for the development of a practical alternative – in advance of theory, perhaps. Architecture's down-to-earth obligations mean that it can never be completely reduced to a (visual) language, which can at most represent reality. The widespread belief that architecture 'is' language is often pushed to the point of claiming that a new reality can be created only through language. Architecture cannot permit itself this luxury because its three-dimensional presence means that the image and reality can never shut one another out. In this sense, architecture is an 'in between'. Architecture houses a real-life programme that obliges it to act with a sense of reality. This involvement with life is the source of its strength, but it imposes constraints. Architecture remains closely tied to the institutional mechanisms with which it has to function, despite its inclination to see itself as an art form. Architecture is characterised by both a capacity to take distance and a need for nearness. This difficult combination of requirements should also be the determinant of its expressiveness.

It is our conviction that when architecture really aims to offer an alternative to the status quo, it has to cross the traditional boundaries of

its field. In doing so, it automatically becomes a critique of the internal logic of Design, and will act in consciousness of its institutional role. An 'open' architecture challenges the public and stimulates critical involvement without ceasing to be architecture. Its author, moreover, will not be a passive producer of someone else's standpoint, but will be highly alert to the dialogue between daily life and the array of beliefs his work perpetuates, satisfies, probes or reinforces. Her or his work exposes the internal contradictions and does not shrink from confrontation. The absence of an original personal or homogeneous style is not an unintentional weakness associated with this position, but an essential principle. In this way, opposing discourses will be taken up into a process of mutual illumination and influence.

An architecture that is open has specific structural attributes that allow, and also channel, new interpretations and shifting perspectives. The relation between form and content is openly presented as a problem with roots in the nature of the programme, the scale and the context. Within this concept, the aesthetic component takes on meaning only when coupled to the practical requirements and the context. The image must add something to the given reality without flinching from baring that reality. **Open architecture** is critical in that it aims to be an ongoing stimulus to criticism. The spectator/user should not be simply orchestrated by the artist/architect, but should be able to contribute to the meaning. A crucial precondition for this is a fluidity of perspectives that offers resistance to an unequivocal reading of the form. The purpose of this systematic ambiguity should not be to lose the surprise which is inherent in every perception in an infinity of fascinating (false) trails. It should be, rather, to provoke a thought process by offering a series of alternatives, and hence to stimulate open use. We believe the real world always allows multiple interpretations that have not yet been swallowed up by the established perception. If we succeed in keeping these alternatives alive, then we can avoid clichés, open up new perspectives and perhaps enter the real world.

