

Critical Architecture in a Geopolitical World

"A notion of turning back on one's self to ask internally about one's own possibility of being" ... Peter Eisenman

Questioning the "being of" architecture evokes an inquiry about the reasons for the necessity of architecture and about how people perceive it. Throughout his provocative outlook, Eisenman signifies "the being of critical architecture" as situated in the grey zone between being conceptualized as media- representative of ideological/political struggle, and being conceptualized as an iconic structure of symbolism.

Along the article, Eisenman has assessed several international evidences, confirming that the architectural iconography is no more the source of idea of neither social nor political structures. But rather, architecture has been trivialized into "architecture of accommodation", or this architecture that allows to be read by everyone. Such aspect has led to a public confusion regarding both the relevance of architecture itself, as well as its relevance to any kind of architectural thought.

Ending up his article, Eisenman suggests that the possibility of the "re-being" of architecture can only be achieved through the formulation of an architectural discipline that may enable and empower architecture to become again a relevant ideological iconography in our ever thrusting world.

Talking of *architecture being*, I would like to highlight the issue from a wider retrospection. In his "*Architecture and Identity*", Chris Abel relates the being of architecture to the being of the "self". Abel claims that we don't have architecture, but rather, a part of us is architecture. Architecture accordingly, is a way of being, just as science, art and all other cultural forms are ways of being. So, when we come to define the true and deeper functions of architecture, we will not be describing the production of a certain type of artecraft, but explaining one of the original ways in which we know ourselves.

From a broader look on the topic of *architectural transformation*, I would like to propose the term "architecture of familiarization" instead of "architecture of accommodation", and the description of "architecture that is absorbed by consumption" instead of "an architecture that is read by everyone", since "accommodation" and "reading" imply conscious understanding and intentional mental cognition.

As for *architectural thought*, the current disruption has forged the architects to slip into formal practices, or the "cut and paste architecture" –also referred to as "image architecture" and "surface treatment architecture". Reflecting on the case of Egypt, this attitude has transformed the "being of" architecture into merely a formalistic market, and has belittled the role of the architects into marketers for that market. According to Yehia El-Zeiny, in his "*Evolution of Architecture in Egypt*", it is evident that the current period of the strong global exposure has resulted in an architectural disrupt, i.e.; architectural mistrust and misstate, placing architecture on the crossroads in search for the appropriate direction.

Finally, this disrupt of the "*being of*" architecture can be related to a broader disrupt, that is, the transformation of the metaphysical beliefs, shared models and symbolic generalization of local identities into a unified global system theory, that is: *The cultural ideology of consumerism*. Hence, the possibility of "re-being" of architecture – I think- can be only achieved through the reconstruction of local paradigmatic models, aiming at the re-exploration and strengthening of the local embedded cultural ideologies and value systems - the conceptual apparatus of identity architecture.

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