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ALIQUOTS OF BEAUTY [1]

ALIKWOTY PIĘKNA [2]

Dawno, dawno temu piękno w architekturze i piękno w muzyce miało ze sobą wiele wspólnego. Obecnie, gdy wszystkie definicje są otwarte, architektura i muzyka zdają się znów być w punkcie wyjścia. Podobnie nasz tekst – zebrany zestaw determinantów piękna wspólnych dla obydwu dziedzin – nie aspiruje do bycia syntezą tematu.

Credo sempre che, nella vita come in architettura, se cercavamo una cosa non cercavamo solo quella; per questo in ogni ricerca vi è sempre un grado di imprevedibilità, come un senso di fastidio nel concludere [3].

Aldo Rossi

Beauty is something changeable, unpredictable and unattainable in categories of architectural design. It doesn't necessarily mean that there is no beauty in contemporary architecture. Beauty is doing just fine despite – or maybe thanks to – imperfection of architecture. It originates from circumstances, impulses and contexts as well as elements of knowledge and thoughts.

Beauty appears to one who is searching for it. Beauty is an individually determined illumination. It is not immediate, it takes time to perceive and appreciate it. Sometimes one can find beauty just around the corner, but it is not the matter of distance, it is the new experience which allows us to reach something previously unknown. It is an upgrade on sensual/perceptual level.

Beauty is something that escapes definition and its rigid rules as well as traditional criteria. It is im-

possible to fix its limits, to define its use, to establish law which could control and evaluate it. Beauty is immeasurable. It is a dynamic that is constantly in variable progress.

Pythagoras believed that foundations of beauty are placed in absolute harmony related to mathematics. According to his doctrine everything could be defined, predicted and measured in rhythmic patterns and cycles. This concept marked extremely strong influence on Plato and then on s. Augustine and s. Thomas [4]. For ages Number, Order and Proportions determined beauty [5]. Perfect beauty, the image of a perfect world, gave architecture and music the power over the man and society.

Meanwhile beauty is not necessarily common value. As far as we are concerned, only dead doctrines long to sustain the authority of perfect solutions. Nothing more delusive in our relative world...

Space, where everything is possible, space that is not entirely occupied, space open for intervention, margins of meanings – it is where beauty arises. This is the space abandoned by the old definitions of beauty; it is ready for improvement of the architecture that is full of life and unpredictable results. It is – in

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a way – the Third Space, like the Third Landscape of Gilles Clément [6].

Third landscape is a term coined by Gilles Clément for the purpose of landscape planning and landscape analyses. It determines the space that is no longer the natural one, but that is still not *sensu stricte* occupied by men; it is space of transition *between the light and the darkness*, margin of other definable spaces.

Beauty can be achieved by action and not by perfection of particular action:

I liked the errors made on the construction site, the little deformations, the changes which became remedial in some unexpected way. Deed they amazed me because they began to seem the life of the structure. As a matter of fact, I believe that any original order is open to practical changes, and that it allows for all the failures of human weakness.

Professor Sabbioni, whom I particularly admired, discouraged me from making architecture, saying that my drawings looked like those of a bricklayer or a rural contractor who threw a stone to indicate approximately where a window was to be placed. This observation, which made my friends laugh, filled me with joy [7].

Beauty is architecture which seeks and finds its observers. It appears when architecture does not hold us hostage. Even if spaces are stronger than people, nevertheless the life will occur.

I have always claimed that places are stronger than people, the fixed scene is stronger than the transitory succession of events. This is my theoretical basis not of my architecture, but of architecture itself. In substance, it is one possibility of living. I linked this idea to the theater: people are like actors; when the footlights go up, they become involved in an event with which they are probably unfamiliar, and ultimately they will always be so [8].

If we consider architecture a scene, where human life is played, fixed stages of this theatre should take into consideration diversity and variability of what happens within its walls.

Every midsummer evening has its companionship and its solitude, and the architect or the playwright must grasp the broad outlines of a scene quickly, because he knows that the characters and even their feelings may change, or that in any case the representation will be different in time [9].

Beauty is powered by very particular combination of contexts, pretexts, circumstances, comparisons, coincidences and contradictions. You can't achieve it by mechanism, only by interaction.

To consider one technique superior to, or more appropriate than another is a sign of the madness of contemporary architecture and of the Enlightenment mentality which the architectural schools have transmitted wholesale to the Modern Movement in architecture [10].

Beauty is a very special condition which must be verified each time it is used as an inspiration and a tool of access to some – higher cognitional level. Beauty is an increase of one's own perceptive potentials and consciousness of one's own activities.

Beauty is stimulation, it is not contemplation: the contemplation is self-sufficient and stable, it is satisfaction in a certain way. Beauty is coincidence and, at last, it is beginning, not an end.

Therefore beauty is supposed to be a suggestion, a feedback, a reflection, something finally delicate and unstable...

Is beauty a rare thing [11]?

PRZYPISY

[1] *Aliquote* – tone element generating the sound timbre.

[2] *Alikwoty* – tony towarzyszące dźwiękowi zasadniczemu, zwane niekiedy tonami harmonicznymi, decydujące o barwie dźwięku.

[3] *I have always believed that, in life as well as in architecture, we never search for one specific thing at a time. In every search we do, there is always certain level of things that can't be foreseen, alike there is a feeling of distress whenever we finish something.*

[4] See: Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *Dzieje sześciu pojęć*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2004, p. 233; Italian edition: *Storia di sei idee*, Aesthetica Edizioni, Palermo 1997, English edition: *A History of Six Ideas: an Essay in Aesthetics*, Kluwer Academic Pub, 1980.

[5] See: *Storia della bellezza* (Umberto Eco ed.), Bompiani, Milano 2004, Polish edition: *Historia piękna*, Rebis, Poznań

2005, English edition: *On Beauty: a History of Western Idea*, Secker&Warburg, 2004.

[6] The title of his manifesto is related to *The Third State*, pamphlet by Seyès of 1789: *What is the Third State? – Anything. What it has achieved so far? – Nothing. What it would like to be? – Something.* Gilles Clément, *Manifesto del Terzo paesaggio*, Quodlibet, 2005.

[7] A. Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, MIT Press, Cambridge 1981 (1984) p. 39, Italian edition: *Autobiografia scientifica*, Pratiche Editrice, Milano 1999.

[8] A. Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, *opus citatum*, p. 50.

[9] *Ibidem*, p. 72.

[11] *Ibidem*, p. 74.

[12] Listening to *Beauty is a rare thing* by Ornette Coleman (1959) may be an answer.