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GLOBALIZATION AND IDENTITY IN ARCHITECTURE

I. Globalization and Society

1. Architecture is a supreme manifestation of the creative power of man. Its main target is the creation of optimal conditions, under which a personality would fully develop and express itself.

Architecture follows the pattern of the evolution of human society.

The nature and the core values of modern architecture could not be appreciated without a deep understanding of the nature and the core values of the modern age.

Having gone through a number of well-known socio-historical stages of development, the world has entered a new age – the age of

The Global Society

2. Although the political, economic and military aspects of the problem, quite naturally, have a decisive impact on the development of globalization, we are not going to discuss here.

The technological, social, ecological and cultural aspects of globalization are of major importance to architecture and they are the issues discussed in this presentation.

3. High technologies are a key factor for the development of the global society. They have led to radical changes in the system of communication, computer science, energetic, biology, etc. This is an unprecedented success. They are an enormous driving force for the formation of an integrated inter-dependable world.
4. Deep changes have taken place in the social sphere. Urbanization has spread on a worldwide scale and has become a universal phenomenon. The right technologies and urbanization have altered the style and the standard of living of society. Even the most distinctive ethno-cultural communities, such as the Japanese, the Chinese, the Arabic, etc., have been influenced by this process.
5. The role and functions of the national state are changing. The old, isolated state governmental structures are opening and are being integrated into larger megastuctures – the European Union, the Union of the Sovereign States, the North American Union, etc.

Presumably, this process is going to continue in the Arabic world, in Black Africa, etc. A concurring process could also be observed as an opposition to the tendency of megaintegration,

the old nations are being split into minute communities (the Basques, the Flemish, the Montenegrins, etc.) and there is yet another phenomenon to be taken into account – a strong impulse has been given to the development of individualism and the appreciation of the significance of the personality. All this was deeply changed social psychology, the traditions, the existing moral and social values.

6. At the end of the 20th century the ecological problem have greatly aggravated.

As a consequence of the unthinkable rapacious exploitation and covetous wasteful overconsumption of 10 % of the planet's population, humanity has been faced with the danger of extinction, caused by an ecological disaster.

The destroying of forest, the soil, the exterminating of biological variety, the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect – this is our common doom. These problems are of global significance and are globalising the world even more intensely than our celebrated achievements.

7. And, finally, we come to the question of culture. Although culture has a major impact on personal and national identity, it also undergoes an intensive process of globalization.

Blue Jeans, Macdonald's, TV action movies and series dominate and turn the world cultural variety into a mass monoculture. A tendency of globalization is forced onto the standard of living by the distribution of products of the multinational companies: the television, Internet, the car, household electric appliances, etc. All this predetermines the global socio-psychology and style of living in the new age.

II. Identity and Specificity

8. Identity is the most important characteristic of culture and art. It also applies to architecture, as it is a great socially orientated spatial art. There is no major work of architecture, let alone a masterpiece, either in the past, or in the present not to have a distinct identity of its own. The opposite phenomenon would be anonymity, typicality, lack of self-expression, conventionality and fullness, which could be anything but Art, spelled with a capital letter.

Here we come to the basic questions on the problem:

1. What are the essential characteristics and the fundamental substance of a work of architecture?
2. Where are the sources and the roots of this identity to be found?
3. Could the features of an architectural identity and the masterpiece be pre-planned and programmed?

To answer these questions means to reveal the contents and the mechanism of the process of creation by considering its fundamental characteristics.

9. So as not to plunge, into the obscures of mysticism we should stick to reality.

The Parthenon, St. Sofia, the Palace of the Doges, the Notre Dame Cathedral, The Kremlin, Gur Emir, the Sultan Selim Mosque, The Golden Temple in Kyoto, the Temple of the Sky in Peking, the Sagrada Familia – these are all masterpieces of architecture.

The survey, carried out by the International Academy of Architecture ranked a number of 20th century works among the masterpieces of architecture. Some of them are the Pavilion of Miss

Van der Roë in Barcelona, the Ronchian Chapel by Le Corbusier, the House above the Waterfall by F. L. Right, the Sydney Opera House by J. Utzon, the Pompidou Centre by R. Piano and R. Rogers, the Olympic Complex in Tokyo by K. Tange, The Town of Brasilia by O. Niemeyer, etc.

All these works of the Golden Fund of the history of architecture possess a clearly displayed identity and a brilliant architectural image.

It is the expression of the spirit and the nature of their civilization that makes them significant.

At the same time we observe a principal difference between the substantial characteristics of the 20th century works of architecture and the ones of all other centuries.

And while all masterpieces till the 20th century are a result of an accumulation of typology and style, through centuries and generations, the 20th century ones are the personal achievement of the authors themselves. They are so various in their stylistic characteristics and means of expression, that it is hard to consider them as works of a homogeneous architectural style. That is why architectural critics have desperately been trying to find a single common denominator and have given many different names: modernism, rationalism, brutalism, minimalism, neomodernism, etc. And if we add to that a number of eclectic phenomena and names, such as: neoclassicism, postmodernism, deconstructivism, etc., the overall picture will become rather vague.

10. Where does the truth lie?

It lies in the different character of the 20th century civilization as compared with all previous ages. All preceding ages have formed their identity of spirit and culture through many centuries, resulting in a specific pattern or style in the way of life and art. Due to the high speed of development of the informatics in the 20th century and the dynamic changes as a result of it in 20th century and more go in the 21st century every 5 years are and will be 100 years according to the old standards.

Therefore as it is declared in the chart of the IAA "Horizon 200": "The age of the homogeneous great styles and 'isms' in architecture has come to an end and a new approach is implemented in the creation of specific personified and identical intransigent architectural values". Each attempt of imitation of the past or of something already created to form a national or another type of style is a complete failure. None of the masterpieces of the 20th century is a result of such an approach.

11. Does that mean that we disapprove of the national values and approve of the globalism as a basis of the new values in culture? No, that's not true.

We consider globalism to be a monoculture, primitivism, unification and destruction of the cultural heritage and the specific intrinsic characteristics of each nation.

In the old times the ethnic identification was the crucial factor for the formation of the spiritual values and their identity. The buildings used to be constructed under the requirements of strict religious doctrines and aesthetic stereotypes and they represented the views of a given ethnic group or a society rather than the views of the designer.

While in the 21st century it is the individual personality that creates the values and their identity, it is their main source.

The national characteristics are intrinsically woven into the personal perspective of the architect.

The international contests and exhibitions, the designs made for other countries, the constant exchange of information on Internet and all other activities on a global scale intensify this trend.

And there is something even more important to be expressed through art – those are the supreme values of the Universe – harmony, vitality, progress, grandeur, infinity, etc. All of them are embodied in every masterpiece of architecture. That is why in the past the greatest masters of arts created works which crossed the boundaries of their native countries and age and we treat them as our contemporaries nowadays. How could we say that Shakespeare, Goethe, Tolstoy, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, etc. are merely artists of a single national culture. They are authors who have managed to express the cultural values of the whole mankind and the whole Universe – they have conveyed the universal values.

In conclusion we appreciate both the universal and personal values and their artistic identity expressed through their imagery, where the monoculture and primitivism cannot be considered as art.

The specific features of the national spirit could also be found in the works of the contemporary masters: the Mexicans: Luis Baragan, Pedro Ramirez Vasquez, Theodoro Gonzalez de Leon, Abraham Zabludovsky, Augustin Hernandez and other. This also applies to the Japanese masters: Kenzo Tange, Kisho Kikutake, Tadao Ando, etc. It could also be traced in the works of the British, the German, the French, etc. Their works do not represent a national style or an 'ism' but the national filtered through the individual perception of the artist. The Italians are still Italian, the Germans are still German, etc. And never could a Russian be Chinese.

III. The Creative Approach

12. The latter point concerns the methods and devices implemented in the process of preplanning, programming and controlling the work of art.

There have lived many dictators and "great" rulers who have tried to immortalize themselves by demanding a specific style in the design of their quarters. As it is well known, a masterpiece cannot be designed under a recipe or dictates. It could not be forcefully prescribed.

Why is it so?

Because the mechanism of the creation of a work of art is a complex one. There is an old saying: "Art is a gift given by the talent and the inspiration". What does that mean? It means that the process of creation is specific and multilateral. The discovery of the human genome on the 15th of February, 2001 and a number of other discoveries in the field of modern neuro-physiology give us the opportunity to understand more profoundly the process of creation and to find an answer to the contentious issue – is the art a creation of the mind or the intuition?

What are the scientific facts?

The most important factor is that the human organism is a miniature model of the whole Universe and that it is in a constant organic relation with it. The growth of the human embryo not only follows the model of the evolution of the life but all stages of development are stored in the human brain as well.

The first one – the fish brain

The second one – the reptile complex

The third one – the mammal cortex

The fourth one – the neocortex or the brain of Homo Sapiens

All this parts along with the nervous and some other systems and above all with the genetic code, is the Soul of the human being or the basic essence of his character and identity. These are the roots of the universality as well as of the identity of his works of art.

It is worth mentioning that the neocortex (reason, logic, consciousness) is a computer, actually, and it supplies and systemize information which is assessed and processed by the limbs (the subconsciousness) where all the decisions are made. The intuition, the reflexes and instincts or the inherited experience (the wisdom) are in that sublayer, too.

The character, the emotions, the desires, the stimuli, the impulses come from that centre.

13. The process of the art of architecture is on the one hand a rational synthesis of functions, structures and architectural spatial tectonics (the rational basis), while on the other hand – the attainment of supreme harmony – transformation of the matter into intellectual value, creation of harmony and happiness (the intuitive basis).

Thus the art of architecture is a joint program of the consciousness and subconsciousness, of the logic and intuition.

The talent and the inspiration – that is the capability of the individual to create unity and harmony between the two spheres of the material ("earth") and spiritual ("divine") values. That is the core of the creative approach. Inspiration is actually the capability to contact the harmonious energy of the Universe.

The person who has never been in the mental state when his/her hand moves as if by itself on the white sheet of paper and before his/her astounded eyes the contours of his/her unborn work appear, will never be able to realize what intuition and inspiration mean.

And this is the process of the transition of the consciousness from the level of the routine life to the level of the everlasting values of the Universe.

What can be "learned" (rationally) and what does God give?

This is a subjective judgement, but it is said that the Truth, the Beauty and the Happiness are attainable for each innocent soul. They develop the character and this is the clue to the Eternal Universal values and the identity.

As a conclusion we would like to repeat once again: We deny the globalization and the aesthetic imitation or "stylization" in art and architecture and we do recognize the universal values and identity as the most important quality of the great art.

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