

According to architects, architecture has reached a limit. For a psychoanalyst, the architect has forgotten his art.

Architecture psychoanalysed

Paul Laurendeau

Disillusion with virtual materials and blob forms can only be temporarily rescued by a new imaginary vision also destined for future destitution. Likewise, concepts of heaviness, lightness, transparency, gravity and weightlessness will be impotent if they are used *a priori*. **Art is not a recipe.**

This essay outlines the uneasy and problematic gap between ideas (the symbolic dimension — language) and the real (the experience of the work itself, or what cannot but not happen). This division arises when built buildings are not as exciting as they were intended to be; when the theory that supports them gets overthrown by experience. Architects do not have the discursive tools to analyze how language paralyzes and short-circuits their action. To overlap language and experience is no easy task in the current architectural context of greater abstraction — design and construction are most often deprived of a discursive relationship because of the inherent problem of transmission.

Universities structure their teaching of art along the divisive avenue of science. In science, to approach reality with a hypothesis produces patterns that are useful at best. In art, reality cannot be reduced to objectivity. **Art is not about verifying a conscious idea.**

A thesis, in a school of architecture, is the selection of a topic in absentia — a premise — developed into an architectural project expected to reflect this premise as proof of learning. This process is nonsense if architecture is to be poetic, expressive of a meaning that can only be interpreted but never imposed. In love, people that build a theory to find the ideal lover will only be met by anguish. People engage and make their own those things that triggers their desire. They build their narrative from experience, from the residues, the signifying fragments of perception.

Why then do we construct theory to drive the making of architecture?

To sublimate sexuality and not have to admit it — *to not say the truth about sexuality, the position where we unconsciously either **have** or **are**, and from where we assume that another will stand where we are not, or for what we do not have, to confirm and sustain one's position as an illusion for what is lacking.*

Establishing a question before making the artwork is a fallacy that often leads to baffling intellectualization. Architects use theory as an insurance policy. They should not attempt to catch meaning before making it.

To assume that the world is a mirror of thought and to then modify the world to equate it with thought is pure psychosis. A psychotic takes seriously what he thinks and entertains a non-dialectical (a frozen) relation with his ideas. Political regimes that work in this way proclaim laws for the masses as an extension of the regime's intentions and

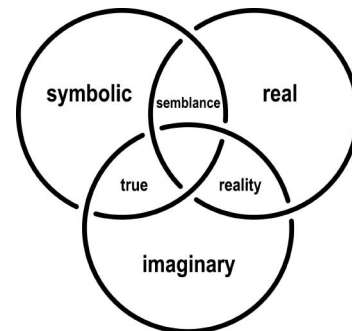
world vision, creating the illusion of a mastering perception. This position is greatly destabilised when reality presents a hole in knowledge that cannot be logically stitched. In history, architecture has at times been structured as such, creating spaces where a sense of orientation is impossible to maintain without a set of instructions. University pavilions built in the 1960's and 70's, as applied theory, are perfect examples: walls get covered with signage to compensate for a lack of spatial meaning. Words at the rescue of buildings!

Centuries ago, scientists positioned god as the cause of their experiments when presenting their work to the sovereign, until they realized that reality worked on its own. In art, no one yet can say that an absence of hypothesis leads to production that cannot be interpreted. Interpretation, the architect has no control over.

Create a building as if it means nothing.
Transfer the burden of interpretation to the other.
See what sense people make out of it.

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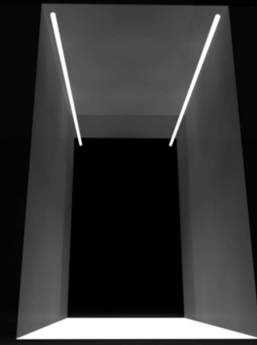
Three realms unite consciousness: the real, the symbolic and the imaginary.



nary. They are not equivalent; they overlap and are held in a Borromean fashion. The Borromean knot is made of three pieces of string tied together without passing through one another. If one is removed or cut, the two others become free.

The *real*, the *symbolic* and the *imaginary* cannot work without one another. They are separate but dependant entities. Ideas (*imaginary*) never quite correspond to experience (*real*). Reality (*symbolic*) lies somewhere between the real and the imaginary. It is perception connoted by an image. A neurosis is when the symbolic and the imaginary would like to operate on their own, disregarding the real which inevitably resurfaces as an imperative that overthrows a dream — a real(ity)

The use of geometry is a way to write the law in the real (i.e. without using words).



check.

Working unilaterally from symbolic to real subordinates perception to thought and leads to a denial of experience in order to preserve a theory unbroken. Any great psychotic, one day, sees the world slip under his feet. To prevent buildings from becoming uneasy intrusions in an otherwise perfect idea, architects should proceed as follows:

'Create a space without thinking and develop the aspects that are prone to symbolization. Start again, and again with what holds your desire, until matter appears united by the laws of the signifier, i.e. poetry.'

CAUTION A model or a drawing is a metonymical object — in other words, a partial representation of another object. The distance between the substitute (the partial object) and the actual building (the representative of the part) is bridged by a mental image. To be as effective as their model, realized buildings must themselves be the model, the metonymy of another object. What this is will not be written.



The metonymy beyond the building

The following operations order space and make it readable (to the unconscious) after the model:

alignment geometry opening proportion
repetition scale specularity symmetry

The occurrence of these properties in nature is highly noticeable and, if organised, becomes unnatural. Organised, these features appear as a *sign* — a sign of culture. They are the ones an architect would use to construct a self-image. Architecture, like human sexuality, is anything but natural, it is purely cultural. Culture is the *real* ordered by the law of the signifier, i.e. *language*. Artistically created, human expressions become metaphorical, reminiscent of something beyond their materiality. Architecture is the art of making geometry habitable, the metonymy of a lost object, impossible to recover.

For an architect, the making of a building holds more meaning and is closer to truth than any theory he formulates. This is why, since he cannot say the truth, he makes a space out of it. ■ | □

Laurendeau sees architecture as a geometrical poem made of space. His work can be described as an integration of broad and grand volumes that create a strong impact. He believes definable forms are essential for a building to be imaginable.

Architecture is a spatial testimony of each society's social structure, a cultural necessity that always finds expression. It is because man talks that he builds for reasons other than his survival. Buildings create places, places he gives names to. In speech, words become reality. What the architect receives as his mission is symbolized by a program, a singular representation of this social structure.

As a member of a school of psychoanalysis, Paul Laurendeau knows that words build partial truth while sustain misunderstanding. When he listens to a client, he never takes things at face value. For him, architecture does not start with words but with forms. It is another language, an imaginary one. Avoiding the initial thought process, he creates volumes, models and drawings until he witnesses the appearance of an object he desires. He does not impose conscious knowledge (an idea) to create form, as according to him, the effects of consciousness are only temporary.

To do without thinking does not exclude the production of knowledge, as knowledge is unconscious. His work is about repetition: making representations and reworking elements that are prone to symbolization. It is about perfecting the form to make it metaphorical of a lost object. Architecture starts to exist with the emergence of the signifier of its function, when socially it is reintegrated in the discourse that caused it.

A possible room for a psychoanalytic session without the two chairs not facing one another (for preliminary interviews that can last for years in some cases) or the divan facing away from the analyst's chair (when transference installs itself). This room is divided in two by a black color and illustrates one kind of geometrical proportion.



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