

I <3 Finnish Architecture: *The Prejudice Project*

I can use emoticons and I <3 Finnish Architecture because it still wears the fedora, often out of place; I <3 Finnish Architecture because it still takes out the corduroy jacket, the Mao-Mao flak jacket of once Marxist-Architects (not always Marxists); I <3 Finnish Architecture because it still hangs off balconies by the fingers testing the braggadocio of artists, actors, filmmakers and architects; I <3 Finnish Architecture because the Marimekko shirts are still suitably lined and graphically-fashioned though the metal buttons have lost their acceptable solidity (and flimsiness is not something one should really accept); I <3 Finnish Architecture because it still smokes the wrong and right cigars and offers lectures on them, it still secretly puts comrades under house arrest for exposing the shadow lines; it still makes new rules that disguise the old, and uses the old rules to get into the Club everyone else has just about left, where the membership has renamed itself 'The Remainder'.

I can use emoticons and I short-cut Finnish Architecture.

'The Remainder' is a novel written by Tom McCarthy. After apparently suffering from an accident ("something falling from the sky"), the protagonist is awarded £8.5 m. in damages. He then spends his time with obsessive detail and planning, reconstructing and re-enacting the senses, scenes, situations and scenarios from his pre-accident memory-loss present past. Memory, identity and history all return to a point that can never return, like those restore points on computers before the upgrade checks and removes previous versions. This is not a re-enactment of the past, or a rehearsal, this is a re-enactment of the abandoned past, retrieved by compulsive detail. Eventually the re-enactment of home, buildings, roads, traffic, houses, life events and smells (cooking onions wafting up through the building) and innumerable other events, a bank heist is planned. This is the reconstruction of just about everything re-imagined in life which then becomes another reality. The guns become real without being real and then become 'really' real. The hired re-enactors of the bank heist are not told that it is real and is about to happen 'for real'. The escape then planned on board a private plane also becomes real, or 'real enough'.

“Reconstructions everywhere, I looked down at the interlocking, hemmed-in fields, and had a version of the whole world’s surface cordoned off, demarcated, broken into grids in which self-duplication patterns endlessly repeated.” *The Remainder* (2005).

I have more or less 7000 characters (without spaces) to <3 Finnish Architecture all over again. This is 8000 with spaces. 8000 (without spaces) would probably be too taxing and test the poor web attention. But I do <3 Finnish Architecture that so often rushes to reconstruct the remainder from its past by by-passing that past. A recent clue to this obsession will be the brief attention given the death of the Last Modernist. Exiled in Vienna, Tuscany and Supru, Lapland, did he not suggest as long ago as 1985, the impending prejudice project?

Simplified and concise, somewhere hanging between the right and the wrong architect, he struggled to remain direct, uncomplicated and relevant. He faced the Mao-Mao Gang in their flak jackets. The challenges pretty much remain the same now even in digital webland; only the jackets and colouring books have changed.

I can join the dots and I still <3 Finnish Architecture.

The Last Modernist would not be surprised to see Finnish Architecture is now a novel, a fiction that can be reconstructed over and over again. It is promoted and run from a cockpit where a man is holding a gun to the pilot’s head, telling the pilot to keep turning back to the airport and then keep turning round. The pilot is confused. He should return to the airport, fuel is running short. The situation becomes even more real after the air traffic control insists this is no longer a re-enactment, this event cannot be reconstructed, reversed or reinvented however much money is made available.

This is the end that will never arrive.

We will give this the following name: the *Prejudice Projeet*.

To introduce the Prejudice Project I use a line from the Trappist monk from Gethsemani Abbey (Louisville, Kentucky) Thomas Merton, who was contemplating the idea of becoming a hermit whilst he was intensely involved in voicing his opposition to the bomb, the Vietnam War and racism in the early to mid 1960s – “I have no program for seeing”. We all wish this at times; to be free of the coded and defaulted systems, reversals, reclamations and structures that guide our inventions, whether in architectural production, architectural teaching or design scholarship. Yet we all usually drag this or that program or agenda into our seeing architecture, into our writing architecture, into our histories and our pedagogical engagements. Passion and commitment fight for self-honesty whilst we struggle against chosen and narrowed policies and inherent strategies, which require space and time-beyond-guile to survive.

We can find, however we angle our passion or engagement, through whatever lens we use, that we are forced to produce more and more cultural meanings, stories, delusions and mysteries until we either confirm what we set out to find, or confirm what we have already learnt. Or, in the case of practicing architects, what may have already been achieved. And we would be foolish to deny how we often use these programs and agendas to invent endlessly those interpretive and operative acts that defy both literary and architectural sense, until they can constitute soliloquies about what we think we should know or feel.

We talk of intersecting and using codes from one discipline to the other. We speak of inflecting them, transposing them, learning how memory is inscribed. We think our architectural productions (in whatever form) need the criticality of such brilliant but narrowing minds.

However, by taking on, collaborating and participating in *The Prejudice Project* we might understand the thrilling imprecision between architecture and the distortions that are invading and insinuating themselves into this so-often alienated intellectual and academic production.

I :-[Finnish Architecture.

Because it still brokers its constructed world and its reconstructions. Because the doors of the cathedral of critical misery are constantly being re-designed with new hinges. Because the new locks, new materials and details are bullied into submission. Because the cathedral is then boarded up for the tourist season in order to prevent vandalism. Because the latest attempt to build an extension to the New Chapel for the Last Modernist will struggle against the Chapel of the Quintessential Modernist. Because the hand drawings are ready after an invited competition and the selected jurors just have to decide on the right or wrong architect. Meanwhile a forklift truck rams into the specially strengthened doors.

The Prejudice Project is this:

Why are you/we using the ideas you/we use? How do you/we speak about them? How do you/we design with them? And how do we turn these into built form, architectural production or thesis, essay, text, poetry and/or novel? In amongst the brilliance of the Mao-Mao flak-jacket wearers and the dreams of the Last Modernist, let us float one more idea that can ride all the internal, potentially brilliant fluff written, presented, delivered and thought about Finnish architecture and its intersections.

I can use emoticons and I<3 Finnish Architecture.

We have lost to some extent the project of criticality in the practice of architecture. The more market conditions drag practices to produce faster and leaner projects, the more it seems we can embed our academy, accreditation strategies and design scholarship in wondrous literary games, new strategies policies and any amount of architectural tropes. I have no program for *The Prejudice Project*, but let's give it a try.

To put this all another way, to use a recent book I have just finished called “I am Zlatan Ibrahimovic”, it might be fair to make the following statement: the goals scored are better than the book. But then literature has nothing to say when faced with such trickery and control. Finnish Architecture is much better than any of the books written about it (including mine).

I 8-) Finnish Architecture!

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