



Claudio Sgarbi

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His major fields of theoretical research concern the image and the role of the architect in the postindustrial society, the relation between neurosciences and architecture, the building technologies and the relevance of architectural history in our contemporary debate.

The Education of the Architects *L'educazione degli architetti*

A wide spectrum of tools, instruments, devices, apparatus, machines, prostheses, systems and technologies are available for every architect in the “western civilized world”. Some of the items in the spectrum are archaic like pencils while other are brand new like 3d printers or quantum computing. The bodies of the architects are transforming too. Many consolidated habits are changing very quickly: we do not draw as much as we were used to do in the recent past, we copy/paste more than writing, we think in a strange way, we travel a lot in different directions, we are exposed to a vertiginous amount of information, we are obsessed by our own waste we cannot avoid to produce and we do a lot of things in a state of permanent anxiety as if everything around us was in a state of threatening scarcity. While our cholesterol and our blood pressure are carefully checked no one has found the way to evaluate the equilibrium of our thoughts. To ponder upon the education of an architect in the midst of the ever-changing globalizing systems seems disorienting. How can we find the ratio of simultaneous unpredictable turbulences? Yet, how many radical and drastic changes have already taken place in history and prehistory? How many civilizations, languages, cultures and architectures have been completely subverted or erased from the face of the earth and from the memory of history, all in the blink of an eye! We like to tell ourselves that never before have so many changes occurred in such a short period of time. Climate change is one of our most pervasive commonplaces; weather is the favourite argument when people have nothing else to say.

There is even a fundamental doubt which might be risen tout court: is it correct to educate architects or is it better to leave them “brut”, instead of contaminating them with so many ideas and images – also considering the fact that more than 200 years of constant contaminations and education processes have not produced any particularly paradigmatic result, and, instead, many irreversible disasters – why not leave them raw like frogs?

One of the major problems of education is due to the fact that it is inflicted as a punishment. Unfortunately this is one of the outcomes of mass culture and mandatory school systems. A culture which must be imposed on the uneducated spirits in order to create the conditions for equal opportunities is now showing its viral and nefarious consequences. This is one of the most counterproductive actions perpetrated by our western culture: to eliminate ignorance we have created a system where culture is forcefully dispensed to every person in every possible corner of the world even violently and in most cases against their will. I remember a heroic prisoner, inside of the most civilized contemporary public institute of confinement, who was shocked to notice that punishment was inflicted upon him with love. The universities (and schools) of architecture represent the same subverted realm: the optimum is offered with grievance as if it was a punishment.

The major obstacle in the education is represented by the standardization of the universities. The institutes (for health, education, rehabilitation, punishment, assistance, credit and administration) have had an offspring, a beginning, a history and they could have all come to an end. If a moment of lucidity is still an option we should imagine not so much the end of the institutions but, using an agricultural metaphor, their fallow-time. Let the crops wait before being ploughed again and again. We can organize a flash-mob in this sense: a fallow-time flash-mob for the universities of architecture.

What can we devote this fallow time to?

There are two principles upon which the education of an architect should be based: liberty and ethics. The ethic of liberty is conceived in continuity with the ethic of responsibility.

The universities of architecture are the melting pots in which we should exercise the space of liberty. Are we vaguely aware of the meaning and the sense of this word today? How can we be trained in this sense? How is it possible to educate an architect to cultivate the ethics of liberty?

This requires the coalescence of a great participation and passion for an idea together with the complete availability toward its consumption, capitulation and reformulation. Total commitment and open renunciation are contradictory only in the case of the architect not being properly educated to imagine the public space. In a public space there is always someone who cares about something and someone else who must be ready to renounce to something else.

There are so many spices of spaces that only the fragility of their possible ephemeral identification can survive. Their essence is our approximation.

To be an architect means to know the principles upon which a certain kind of making is based. The peculiarity of this kind of making is that of bringing forth that which can always be different from what it is. The "public" is made with the many, plus the different without a definite what. Public spaces have their own architectures, they are pervasive and their location is unpredictable. Public and community have a different meaning. All the components of a community have a gift to share; they come with a gift that requires reciprocity. The public might be totally indifferent toward this reciprocity.

The constant practice of imagination is the aim of the education of an architect. Imagination is not only accomplished with built objects. Imagination is a task and is a result of assiduous training. It should be trained not only as poetic but also as praxis. Whatever thing I do or propose could immediately be fused – confused with the imagination of others. So the real essence of my proposals are their incompleteness: the latency of their accomplishment and their approximation. The aim of the architecture of public space is the non-finito. This does not mean at all that every architect must always be educated to be "weak" or forcefully unprecise. Even a very stable dwelling principle must be measured next to its modification. A lot of contemporary architecture is even too beautiful, in the sense that it is too complete, it does not invite me to manipulate it. Architects should be educated to consider this as the plague, at least during this fallow-time's experimental moment. Not in the sense that they should not be educated to finish a detail or a construction very well, but in the sense that they should always have praise for the ephemerality of this achievement. Its continuity should be guaranteed by its re-proposition: it should be done so well that I might be able to convince people in the future to re-propose, re-construct, re-enact it in the same way. In this sense architecture is a kind of rhetoric: *ars bene faciendi* (the art of making well) and convincing other people to do things, eventually as well, but hopefully better. Public regulations are so intricate that it is very complex for a community to have access to the independent manipulation of public space. When architects design a public space in our western civilized globalized era it should be clear that their actions are filling just a small gap in the possible existence of the idea of the public. It should be clear that we are completely unable to hold any truth. A temporary passionate indication of a possible way of making sense is the best contribution we can offer.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO THIS ISSUE

The word “public” and the word “education” share a common sense. Usually an educate person knows how to behave in public.

The title of this issue of “*IN_BO. Ricerche e progetti per il territorio, la città e l'architettura*” is pretentious but its contents are simply honest. They demonstrate different attempts made by very different teachers and students to fathom the territory of public space from different directions.

The Israeli group guided by Nilli Harag and Talia Trainin investigate the boundary that exists between the intimately private and the overtly public. Where and how does the personal imagination meet with the others? Which kind of significance can we identify in the shift from individuality to heterogeneity and how deeply rooted is the image of the self in the realm of society?

The Canadian group guided by Claudio Sgarbi (with the contribute of the local administrator Milena Naldi and the architect Marco Ferrari) faces the challenge to redesign a public space with an overwhelming burden of historical deposits (literal and metaphorical debris) and a very uncertain future partially due to the permanence of an uncomfortable past. Which kind of memory shall we take into consideration in a public realm?

The Chinese group guided by Hendrik Tieben faces the complex task of involving the public in the definition of the qualities of their common spaces. Participation, negotiation, the opportunities for the social body, the right of re-appropriation in the process of making sense in the design of the city, are fundamental in our time of comfortable passivity.

The Australian group, guided by Mirko Guaralda introduces the designers in the complex realm of the sensuous experience of the users navigating in the public space, trying to debunk the role that the visual domain has acquired in our western civilized world, in favour of a possible interaction of the senses.

The American group, guided by Margaret Crawford dwell upon the notion of public diversity trying to explore the differences in the meaning and the use of this concept, introducing the notion of multiple publics, civic societies and inviting the designers to share an open arena for inclusive and democratic design processes.

The Italian group guided by Giulio Giovannoni works with the notion of pattern and form of dwelling spaces, the role they have played in the definition of the historical city and the completely new challenge created in our era of disintegration. A proliferation of ordinary spaces in a disembodied realm of complex fragments poses profound questions to the notion of public spaces.

A note at the end by Luigi Bartolomei contains a report on a symposium on the role of phenomenology in the education of the architect and the teaching of Marco Frascari who has always been involved in the definition of the role of the body in the interpretation of space: “we make architecture and architecture makes us”.

This selection is not casual but it was not planned in advance. It is an encompassing meeting of complementary differences. We believe that the idea of persona, the duration of memory, the fragmentation of form, the experience of the senses, the notion of community, the plurality of identities and the image of the body, constitute a basic set of notions in the maieutic education of the public space.

