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UNA CITTÀ A MISURA DI UOMO



MANIFESTO FOR AN ARCHITECTURE ON THE HUMAN SCALE

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*Appears as the Conclusion of the book *Twelve Lectures on Architecture — Algorithmic Sustainable Design*, Umbau-Verlag, Solingen, Germany, 2010.*

We are the true avant-garde: a group of architects, urbanists, and sociologists ready to create a new city on the human scale, and to reconstruct the suburbs and inhuman urban peripheries in order to generate living urban fabric. We have the rules to do this, developed out of science and mathematics. Although we have published them freely in articles, books, videos, and on the world-wide web, these rules are unknown and are ignored by the “big name” architects put in charge of constructing and upgrading our cities today. As those individuals are only playing for power, they do not care about scientific developments, unless it is to misuse scientific terms like “fractals” and “chaos” in dishonest and erroneous ways to promote their monstrous projects.

During the past few decades, society has lost a fundamental right: the freedom to choose the character of our living environment, which is a coup d'état against democracy itself. Everywhere, buildings and monstrous structures are imposed upon us, with their alien and inhuman surfaces, while human-scale urban fabric is destroyed and replaced by alien structures, giant parking lots, and freeways that cut through the city center. Social experiments are implemented on a massive scale, treating people as if they were toys. At the same time, all of this has been presented as some marvelous “progress”, often with a political mask of presumed liberation. In the final analysis, it is only a vast propaganda.

The fundamental essence of life resides in the production of information. Every living

being is a complex system of information, one part of it residing in the genetic material, and in human beings, another part stored as a body of knowledge. This stored “memory” is deposited in our cultural, technical, scientific and artistic knowledge, etc. Architecture is also a storehouse of information discovered and developed through the centuries by every culture. The *International Style* lost all of this knowledge, and today the self-proclaimed architectural avant-gardes continue to despise inherited information. My group of friends and collaborators has developed and re-discovered laws for an architecture on the human scale, which we have published openly on the Internet. The movements of contemporary architecture, by contrast, practice mystification, claiming that it is necessary to choose a famous architect in order to design any “important” building. They claim that such fashionable high-profile architects have secret knowledge that allows them to produce an innovative design. Mystification destroys open information for all, as it destroys freedom of choice.

Contemporary science is the most democratic system in existence, allowing a free criticism of its results. It is not founded solely on the authority of any particular individual, but represents a combination of the collective work of generations of people. I am member of the “open-source” movement and of peer-to-peer urbanism, and the notion that a so-called “expert” from the avant-garde somehow possesses secret and hidden knowledge about design strikes me as fundamentally anti-democratic. Useful information must be verifiable; that is, open to all who wish to verify it and apply it, and not kept hidden like a pseudo-religious secret that has become dogma. This is the way that scientific knowledge advances itself and rejects obscurantism. Today’s avant-garde is none other than an obscurantist movement. Why all of this steel, glass, and concrete in fashionable buildings yet not a trace of harmonious ornament? Why all these empty, twisted, and unbalanced forms? No scientific explanation is ever offered, because none exists. We are given only ideological propaganda.

It was my group of friends who developed fundamental new results to plan urban fabric: concepts like fractal loading; the network city; universal scaling and hierarchy; generative codes; archetypes; urban coherence; form languages; city microsurgery, and so on. The self-proclaimed avant-garde ignores all of this. And then, the famous architects don’t care at all for the majority of construction activity on the earth: the self-building of favelas, the problem of social housing, the urban periphery, the growing shantytowns of the world, the frightening consumption of agricultural areas by urban sprawl. Far away from obscenely expensive fashionable buildings, humanity constructs in order to survive. Only when they see the opportunity to make a profit, the “name” architects propose paranoiac projects without understanding anything about the needs of humans as individuals. The “name” architects never take the time to learn about human biology and sociology. We, by contrast, work constantly on these problems. We are developing techniques of participative design and planning that will enable us to save the urban peripheries, and to restructure informal housing in order to generate a truly human environment.

In every country we can find several traditions of sustainable building and planning tied to the human scale. There is no exception: every country and every people have developed more than one architectural tradition with the measure of the human being, because that is human nature. The architecture of the human scale is an extension of our biology. My friends and I have shown that evolved architectural rules have the same source as do physical and biological rules. It was only with industrialization that we lost

this fundamental link between biology and Architecture. Today we have forgotten all of this in a fatal amnesia. Design languages and traditions have been rejected by the modernist movement — the *International Style* — to the point where we are no longer able to recognize the existing architectural wealth around the world.

One must search again within modest architectural traditions, in the architecture forgotten by the glossy magazines, looking not only at vernacular and historical architectures but also to self-building: the architecture of the favelas all over the world. Outside the fashionable world where a style is imposed because it is “approved by the international intelligentsia”, human beings build according to their body and their heart. They make the best they can do with available materials to construct a living environment in which to live and be with their family.

It is astonishing how all the architectonic traditions of the entire world have been buried by today’s avant-garde, even if those traditions are still practiced in front of our very eyes! The negative propaganda is so effective that it does not allow architects (nor the majority of the population) to perceive and to value their own building culture. People do not see this because someone from the elite has proclaimed their architectural tradition to be a sign of “decadence”, a “retrograde” practice, and to therefore stand as an impediment to the hyper-technological development promised by the class of global consumerist elites. A monumental swindle!