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FUTURE OF ARCHITECTURE

All the signs show that in the future, architecture will move towards an increasingly significant technical sophistication in the search of material comfort.

One could ask whether this manner of improving conditions of human beings in built spaces is the only way which is offered to us. Because it seems to me that another possibility is taking shape. A tendency which would invest in man, his emotions, a search for a greater sensory comfort, and in a finer adaptation of space to its psychological and emotional needs.

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FUTURE OF ARCHITECTURE

All the signs show that in the future, architecture will move toward an increasingly significant technical sophistication to the search of material comfort: automatic heating, energy saving, house automation (i.e. computerized management of consumption), equipment integrated into walls, glass containing liquid crystals that modify the transparency when an electrical current passes through it , vocal commands for lighting, "intelligent" entrance doors (containing information such as voice recognition, etc...), etc...

This tendency, the work of technicians, will increase. The goal was to make our lives easier, physically less limited by facilitating our movements.

The gates of the supermarket open automatically as we pass through our arms loaded with food are a daily example: technology to the service of man.

One could ask whether this manner of improving condition of human beings in built spaces is the only one possible and imaginable, and if it is the only way which opens itself to us.

Because it seems to me that another possibility is taking shape. A tendency which would invest in man, his emotions, a search for a greater sensory comfort, and in a finer adaptation of space to its psychological and emotional needs. The open fire for example, illustrates this second tendency of architecture: it does not facilitate our life, it makes dust, it needs to be supervised, but on the other hand it improves our existence, makes our live richer, touching us deeply, inspiring dreams and emotions. The fireplace is not functionally justified today, and yet one regards it as a necessary complement to central heating. .

If the first technical tendency could be described as "functional", we will characterize the second as "emotional". If the applications of "technical" architecture are many and largely present in publications, the prospects for the second tendency (currently less popular) seem me personally much richer and more creative. It is this point of view of, this assumption, which I would like to

share here for a moment because the program is simple and at the same time extraordinarily rich and promising. Indeed, there is only one place to look: in man himself. This is the force of this concept, and the tools at the disposal of the architects are numerous in order to give man richer sensory spaces, and to give a new setting to living places.

If we do not present the formal plastic aspects of this projected architecture, it is because it will be intimately connected to its creator's sensibility. Nevertheless, it seems to me that these creations will all result from the same field of research and investigation: using perceptions as a frame of reference and to examine new relationships with the elements, for ex:

- to rethink water differently, to establish a more conscious contact with it, a relationship other than the one we know known in our bathrooms. To be able to seize it, play with it, to let ourselves be carried by water, to use it in all its forms, jets, vapor, condensations, etc...
- to think of heating as a thermal landscape, with walls which warm up or cool down, with varying temperature walls and floors, to use heat to generate of "sunny" or "shady" environments;
- to use acoustics to colour each space differently;
- to use odors to give an olfactory signature to certain spaces;
- to link the quality of views when drawing windows or openings;
- to think of walls luminous surfaces holding information, reflected colours, creating moods;
- to think of sleep in function of our imagination instead of linked only to furniture, to be able to sleep where we like, to promote our inner nomad;
- to think of the sun as a reflection on the wall, the movement, shadows, the rendering of light, the nuances of white surfaces and its influence on colours perception;
- to think of the presence of the wind, to make inflatable walls, to turn coloured elements, to express it in our interiors;
- to think that components of space: air, water, heat, wind, light, sound and odor as principal stimulating elements in our states of mind;
- to think of dull or bright sounds, the "tune" of a room reflected sound, etc....

As I said, the fields of investigations are numerous and more vast than one could imagine at first sight. Thus, the data, such as the psychological role of light on our behavior have been studied very little upon now. Just as we do not know a lot about the emotional aspect of tactile perception of the ground, or walls, or the comfort related to the colours of spaces, or the effects of the harmonious spatial proportions on our state of mind, or of the relationship between the "size" and sound qualities of spaces on our moods. From time to time, romanesque literature gives us precious indications about the phenomenology of architecture (or the experience of architecture as it is really lived), just like the ethnology, anthropology, or history bring a mass of information on people's behavior within a space.

A new branch of knowledge that groups these observations, along with customs, habits and proverbs... will be born. Science founding a common base for data in any form dealing with the interaction of man with the environment. Each one of us has bits of this knowledge, preserved in a corner of our brain. We know that this information is significant, but currently do not know how to classify it. We feel that there is an undefined link between the sunniness of a space and our moods, between claustrophobia and underground spaces, between the noise in certain spaces and the stress levels we feel there, etc... just like we also feel well that the layout of the shops in ancient Greece is close to what one observes today in the Souks of North Africa; that the criteria sought in Rome for a plaza to "function", are similar to those used in contemporary town planning; that the architectural solutions for numerous spatial problems of the past are similar today; etc... But this data was never clearly shown or collected. It is a knowledge which is most useful for architects. Because we consider architecture, not as a visual object but as the surroundings of life in which the individual is fully implicated, we regard these factors as significant.

To develop quality specifications in parallel to traditional technical specifications is one of the major aims of the architect of tomorrow, to qualify the colours rendered on walls, the gradations of bright or opaline light, sound quality in spaces, tactile qualities of textures, thermal ambiance, etc...

The two major tendencies of future architecture, seemingly contradictory, prove in fact to be complementary. The trend to give us more sophisticated technology also wants it to be less present. As much as possible is hidden from view, under the plaster, in the floor, thinner circuits, infrared information transmission, and vocal commands are invisible.

We are left with naked space. What does do in a smooth cube, clean and colourless, where temperature, humidity and ventilation are constantly controlled?

For this space to liberate us instead of imprisoning us, it needs to be ambitious, to have a theme, to shelter, to stimulate, to move, to embrace. This is where our second architectural tendency, the one we have briefly touched upon here, starts.

In the final analysis, the sentence of Le Corbusier "the engineer deals with the technique and the architect deals with man". still the best definition of our rôle.