

Timeless Space Beyond Conception and Perception

The architectural outcome of the seventies characterizes itself by a lack of perseverance in re-establishing the lost architectural values. The contemporary architects are tempted to amputate historical forms in order to turn them into new projects. As a kind of handy man fixing an architecture describing its history, the architect contributes to the history of architecture.

The “papier-mâché” fronts of the Biennale at Venezia are extolled to a treaty; the future architectural devices will have to comply with the implicit laws: a derived form-language and a “patchwork-architecture” are extolled by a jet set to an international universalism. These new ideas are fashion and some architectural magazines are eager to publish them because they’re more interested in the outlook than in the content.

Does this mean that architecture ended its evolution with Kahn? What are we to do with the heritage of the Egyptians, of Alberti, Brunelleschi, Ledoux, Schinkel and so many others?

Notions such as “constants” and “values” are wiped out of the architectural album, while actual concepts such as participation, monuments care, semiology, ecology, dentro-extension, ... disguise or excuse the lack of architecture. The narrowing – such as the unilateral participation between owner and designer – shows clearly the temporary character of the construction. The building will take part in its direct environment.

On the other hand, architecture as a temporal sign of timelessness has always refused its environment by means of a purposive form creating a spatial world of *timelessness*. It is timeless because of its reverting – conscious or unconscious – to constant values such as geometry, structure, form, space,... in which these values participate in the same dialogue. These constants values are the basic components for architectural creation.

Timelessness contains a myth too. Architecture – as a myth – stripped of all its technology and reduced to her basis, or better to her *geometrical purity*, always falls down on the same basic principles. History itself shows us a range of timeless architecture such as the Pyramids, the villas of Palladio, the Cenotaph by Boullée, etc. A historical analysis proves that constant values as “timelessness” and “geometry” are to be understood as a *synthesis* between the avant-garde of the past and the maniera moderna of the future.

Hiromi Fujii’s work involves this kind of synthesis. The independent, self-supporting manifestation of the building doesn’t require an immediate interpretation of the outlook but demands a search for the inner values.

Because of this, Fujii’s devices refuse to be part and parcel of their environment. His designs are the expression of an evolving way of thinking. They are a conceptual theme in movement. We can easily recognize an evolution starting in 1968 and characterizing by a substantial extension geometrical space evolving from a static to a dynamic element.

His earlier works (±1971) are rather static, a simple grid – a two-dimensional scheme is projected onto a three-dimensional space but remains a two dimensional pattern reducing the height to the oneness of the given measure. The third dimension is not explored yet. The spatial output reduces itself to a series of cubes. Despite this

reduction, the two-dimensional scheme remains a strong starting point: the square as an entity or derived into 4 or 9 units.

At the same time, he introduces a grid carrying the plan and which is horizontally and vertically extended submitting the inner and outer surfaces. The floors and the walls to a larger unit. Environment and object are both entity and sub-division.

The Suzuki and Miyajima Residences are the first tangible results of Fujii's search for the creation of non-interfered architecture. Because of their outlook their obvious solidity and the use of materials, they could be erected everywhere. The inner structure of these residences shows a square as its basic pattern. This square is built up by cubic volumes showing incisions.

From 1974 on his planes and volumes are simplified, whereas the cubic foundation volumes develop from a series of cubic volumes into a piling up of cubic volumes (cf. the Todoroki Residence). With the project similar-connotation-junction Fujii realizes a new transition from the series of basic volumes into a series of space structures. With the Todoroki Residence, these structures are elaborated into piled up space structures.

Beside the linking and piling up of space structures, the idea of enclosing the 'scaling-up-space' is introduced. Because of this, an obvious conceptual viewpoint emerges in which the construction concept is completely detached from an organizational aim. It doesn't make any difference whether we're dealing with an office building – Marutake Building – or with a house – Todoroki Residence – the three-dimensional build-up of the cubic space remains the same whereas the functional content will differ.

From 1978 on Fujii uses the square and the cube, up till then understood as conceptual farthest points, as the very starting points of a new series of projects: T-projects. Backed up by the historic perspective of Palladio, Borromini, Rietveld, Gruppo Sette, ... his work gains a new dimension. The outlook is altered leaving this static condition and gaining a fourth dimension – time – through which they become dynamic.

Front and plan unbend; the front – an architectural theme – imposes itself as a prescenery, a thematic front with no functional connection with the plan. The Stoneborough Haus by Paul Engelman and Ludwig Wittgenstein illustrates this theme of the simplified front scheme. The plan remains a square or a square-composition whereas the walls start moving. Outer-walls move inside and inner-walls become fronts. The image of the house – perception – is elaborated up to its limits on the transition-line between basic concept and illusion. The content – conception – reverses from a functional into a functionless object.

Architectural metamorphology, means much more than formal transformation. Fujii's work proves a metamorphology of the content, keeping up the architectural elements as constant values.

This metamorphology of the content coupled, with a prejudiced manifestation characterize Fujii's designs. The synthetic qualities of the process prove a timeless space reaching far beyond accustomed conception and perception.

Christian Kieckens, 1981