

# ARCHITECTURE

## I



Marco Biraghi – GIZMO

### **“That which we are not, that which we do not want”**

“To those who consider the theme of architectural writing [...] we offer the theme of critical writing”  
(Manfredo Tafuri)

The present text starts from the observation that architecture is the “object”, more than any other, about which the language of criticism proves to be shallow and inconsistent.

Behind traditional art criticism, there has always been a visual element to describe, whereas behind contemporary art criticism, a type of operative nature to illustrate. Describing a painting was once as interesting as it is now to illustrate the meaning of an installation or a performance.

Despite today’s increasingly shorter distance between art and architecture, art criticism and architectural criticism are not to be confused but are, indeed, totally different. Therefore, unlike contemporary art criticism, which is sometimes capable of making a work of art be appreciated by explaining it, contemporary architectural criticism is seldom able to explain the reasons for which one likes or dislikes a work of architecture.

The fact is that architecture can never be reduced to its appearance – the forms, the colours, the materials. (In this sense, mere architectural descriptions are mostly useless and boring).

Nor can it be reduced to being a “programme” – the generative system out of which its forms derive. (In this sense, the plain presentation of a programme is

often unsatisfying and just as boring).

Architecture is almost always something serious, concrete and real, even when it is not realised. For this reason, the faults of architectural criticism are greater than the ones of art criticism.

Architectural criticism seldom adds something to the project. Except for the cases (very frequent nowadays) in which the architect pays for it or it is written by his press agent, architectural criticism doesn’t have an alternative but to transcribe the project into technical or literal terms. In both cases, it has to be satisfied with a superficial or marginal role. Today, talking about architecture almost automatically means accepting an ancillary role or reviewing architecture reviews or trying to unveil their inefficiency or smugness. To refuse the arbitrariness or the banality of the critics’ language implicitly means awarding a non-arbitrary or a non-banal role to the “words” of architecture. It also means considering them as something more “necessary” than the puns critics often have to offer. This is the challenge that architectural criticism must face today.

Being confronted with the difficulty of writing something precise and pertinent (i.e. something non-generic and impertinent) on the groups and the projects that are presented, we thought that the best option, the only possible one to avoid arbitrariness and banality

Words  
not to  
be  
said

Generation (in general)  
Next generation (in particular)  
Project creation  
Unconventional  
Group strategy  
Exchange  
“Cold” materials  
Virtual  
Regionalisms  
Underground references  
3D planning  
Volumes  
Refined  
Digital  
Light sources  
Training background  
Warm atmospheres  
Graphic communication  
Integrity  
Territorial entrenchment  
Perfection  
Advanced building technology  
Up-and-coming architects  
East – North – West  
Nature vs. Artifice  
City vs. Country  
No money no details

would be to try and draw a black-on-white side-wall around the territory they occupy and to generate a “system of exclusion”. We listed as many as possible of the words, thoughts, and questions we would accurately avoid using while writing a non-arbitrary or non-banal text on the above mentioned groups and projects. We invited the selected groups to do the same. The result was the effective evocation of a perfectly arbitrary and/or banal text – words, thoughts and questions – or rather, its precise opposite.

Since the following text is formed by a series of exclusions, it is by its own nature unfinished and open. Therefore, it is hoped that the exclusions suggested by the public visiting the exhibition also be included.

“Do not ask us the word which in every way/ our shapeless soul perhaps measures, and in letters of fire/ may declaim it and shine like a crocus/ lost in the centre of a dusty field. // Ah! the man who goes away sure, / to others and to himself a friend,/ and cares not about his shadow which the dog days/ reflect across a plasterless wall!//Ask us not for the formula to open worlds for you,/ only some syllable distorted and dry like a twig./ This alone is what we can tell you today,/ that which we are not, that which we do not want.” (Eugenio Montale)

“Non chiederci la parola che squadri da ogni lato / l’animo nostro informe, e a lettere di fuoco / lo dichiari e risplenda come un croco / perduto in mezzo a un polveroso prato. // Ah l’uomo che se ne va sicuro, / agli altri ed a se stesso amico, / e l’ombra sua non cura che la canicola / stampa sopra uno scalcinato muro! // Non domandarci la formula che mondi possa aprirti, / sì qualche storta sillaba e secca come un ramo. /Codesto solo oggi possiamo dirti, / ciò che non siamo, ciò che non vogliamo.” (Eugenio Montale)

– Marco Biraghi – GIZMO

Sentences  
not to  
be  
formulated

Roofs slightly jutting out from the outlines of the building.

The definition of “street furniture”.

In architecture, the section reveals the non-visible in a specific point of the building (Odile Decq).

The effort to stay young at heart and in practice.

They took part in many architecture competitions.

Important reviews such as “Casabella” and “Parametro” have also recently discovered that architecture has a lot to do with the world of women.

Young Italian architects are also capable of building something.

Emotion in architecture is the “skillful, accurate and magnificent play of volumes seen in light” (Le Corbusier).

Young Italian talents must go abroad to be appreciated.

The clean-cut of the front walls and the delicate sobriety of the façades.

Questions  
not to  
be  
asked

In a society that produces cultural levelling, is it possible to create original work of quality?

Will they be the next Renzo Piano, Vittorio Gregotti and Massimiliano Fuksas?

Is architecture an image? Does architecture have an image?

“Did you know that I’ve swum in Lagos, Milan, Switzerland, Rotterdam, London, LA and Las Vegas this week?” (Rem Koolhaas)

Do indifference, independence, strangeness justify a relationship?

Is architecture a question or an answer?

What would Charles Lutwidge Dodgson think about it?

How many projects have you published this year?

Is the present customer able to go beyond the functional programme of a building?

Have you planned 322 buildings for the Regional Authorities?

How can you design something complete without building it?