

Editorial

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¹ See the upcoming issue «CONCILIATION»

REJECTION

The dismissing or refusing of a proposal, idea, etc. *According to the Oxford Dictionary (online)*

The notion of the “New” implicitly relates to a notion of the “Old”. At the core of how these two concepts respond to each other lies the following: one is different from the other. Though the new does not necessarily replace the old ¹, the notion of improvement it carries within might lead to the rejection of the old. When the British forces took the port of Basra in southern Iraq -eventually making their way up to Baghdad- at the beginning of the XX century, they brought with them an approach to city making that was dramatically new to the Iraqi context. From 1918 on, the British Department of Public Works (PWD), headed by Major J. M. Wilson, began to draft ambitious plans to “improve” the city of Baghdad, envisioning an adjacent “New Baghdad” that completely disregarded the pre-existing city and its cultural context, drawing only tokenizing connections to a clearly foreign idealization of an ancient Mesopotamian culture. In an effort to make Baghdad an attractive destination for both native British and Indian British, the PWD planned a new city over the preexisting one, using

an iron-grid urban morphology and other British urban strategies which had proved successful in previous colonies. A similar approach was used in Basra where the planners went so far as to, in the new plan, name some streets and squares with familiar names as Piccadilly Circus, Oxford Street or Jaipur Road. This blatant disregard for the Iraqi context resulted in an uninformed rejection of the existing built environment, as well as of the cultural and social contexts, aimed at reshaping Iraq in the image of the British empire but ended up fueling the friction between the different factions of Iraq, a friction which is still to be resolved.

The approach taken by the British during their Mandate in Iraq was a tactic of control: using erasure as a form of Rejection to colonize an architectural identity and unravel a built environment, but is not the only possible approach to Rejection: the interview with Leon Krier where he shares with us his views on the role rejection played in his specific approach to the modern movement and architectural in general, Nicholas Gamso, who writes about the importance of politics in the architectural and urban discourse, Erica Overmeer, whose photograph of Herzog and de Meuron’s unfinished Baranca Museum in Guadalajara, México speaks to us of

the swift rejection of established long-term plans caused by shifts in the political panorama; Dennis Lageman problematizes rejection as a space of resistance and potential emancipation during the French Revolution; and Covachita's view on the contemporary ruins of north México and their role on defining the architectural identity of the place.

We see Rejection as a key process in architecture. Through this set of contributions, we intend to propose specific stances that problematize Rejection as a source of agency and power, potentially destructive but also redemptive.