CARTHA

III   Building Identity - Rejection

Editorial
CARTHA

1 See the upcoming issue «CON-CILIATION»

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 Barranca Museum in Guadalajara, México speaks to us of

the swift rejection of established long-term plans caused by shifts in the political panorama; Dennis Lagemman 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.

Léon Krier
Interview CARTHA

Léon Krier is a unique voice in today's architectural discourse through his commitment to developing a relevant and pragmatic theory of architecture based on his own experience and observations of architectural practice and opposed to the easy, abstract theorizing so common in contemporary architectural writing.

In your opinion What are the defining traces of contemporary society's identity? Either in a global or local context.

Dependance on fossil and nuclear fuels. most building materials, building forms and building processes and all urban and architectural designs are defined and dominated by them and so are their life span and their regular destruction through use, redevelopment and war action. Traditional architecture whether vernacular building or classical architecture is characterized by the use of local building materials. Only very seldom and only for extremely important buildings are building materials carted from distant quarries or forests. It is local building materials which mark the different architectural identities of the basque country or that of Tuscany or Bali. Synthetic building materials instead are products of analagous standarized industrial, fossil fuel dependant processes around the world. The products and their

tectonic performances are the same around the globe, largely unifying architectural character and eliminating local identities defined by soil, climat and altitude.

It is tragic that more and more intelligent minds should at once be spellbound by that undecipherable, and easily manipulated, spirit of the age (zeitgeist) and so indifferent to the spirit of place (genius loci), the conditions of nature, of local climate, topography, soil, customs, all of them phenomena objectively apprehensible in their physical and chemical qualities.

How do you position yourself towards these traces?

Like it is the case for most human beings and societies also most of my private and public activities are defined by these energy sources. The practicing of traditional architectures and urbanism is rendered very difficult and sometimes impossible because building and town planning legislations, building culture generally, are part and parcel of an industrial ideology and mind set. Modernism and suburbanism rule supreme in state and government offices and academia.

My work demonstrates in theory and in practice

how traditional architecture and urbanism are practiced and justified in a hostile institutional, academic and professional climate.

Is Architecture relevant to the building of the identity of a society? In which way? or Why not?

Traditional architectures and urbanism as shaped by soil, altitude and climate are instrumental in shaping the identity of societies worldwide. Traditional architectures around the world have over centuries evolved a great variety of building languages. unlike spoken languages, the elements constituting the traditional building vocabulary need no translation in order to be understood across borders and ages. They have universal validity, are part of technology before and beyond (transcending) mere historical deployments and meanings. Modern traditional builders or designers are naturally polyglot, can within no time decipher and master local idioma and realize structures in harmony with local traditions, culture, climate, soil, altitude. This cultural and technical versatility singularly contrasts with the dumb and blind modernist monoglottism, or rather illiteracy, imposing the same building types and mannerism acrross the planet, irrespective of culture, climate or geography. To build traditionally today is not ignoring the demands of modern life, on the contrary it is confronting the urgency to adapt to our planet means. It also answers one of the most deep aspirations of humankind, in these transient times even more relevant, "to belong", by building and preserving a world of beautiful landscapes and splendid towns which imprint on our hearts for ever, places we can be proud to come from, to inherit and to pass on to future generations. To practice it, often against overwhelming peer prejudice, bureaucratic chicane and reigning fashionable fads, demands a challenging intellectual and professional determination.

The generalized use of fossil energies. the mechanization of human productions and relations and the use of synthetic building materials and air conditioning have temporarily led to ignoring the fundamental conditions on nature. The dominant modernist building typology and sub-urbanism, (the skyscraper, the landscaper, the suburban home and their massive proliferation in geographically segregated mono-functional zones) can only be sustained and serviced in conditions of cheap fossil energies. Very little legacy of that collective malpractice will survive the inevitable global consequences of oil scarcity and eventual depletion. The increasing human cost of oil-wars announce the end of the fossil fuel age and therefore that of the reign of modernism and suburbanism.

But i say that, given the present evolutionary stage of the human species, even if there were no limitations for any foreseeable future nor any political problems for the provision of fossil fuels, we should still go back to traditional forms of settlement, of agriculture, of industry, of production, of crafts, to those forms which were and remain the ones fitted to human scale, to our measurements and gregarious nature. We now discover when too many of our built environs have lost it, that human scale is an unrenounceable attribute of civilization not an obsolete luxury. No amount of connectivity, social media and virtual reality can be a permanent substitute for physical contact in social interactions and its corollary of succesful mix-use open public spaces..

Are you conscious of your role, as an architect, in the building of an architectural and social identity?

I am interested in architectural and urban forms of the pre-fossil-fuel ages not as irretrievable history but as a technologically, socially and artistically unrenounce-

able experience, as resources for the future. I am not an architectural historian and i have little use of that profession and discipline. I am, to be explicit, not practicing historical designs but traditional architectural and urban designs for modern societies around the globe.

The traditional greek-roman-christian city is the universal model of the city for the open modern and democratic societies. It is the polycentric city of indepundant communities. Modernist zoning techniques instead result in territorial vertical of horizontal sprawl. They legislate the anti-city realize the atomized societies.In that sense the architect has the choice to participate in building or in destroying the modern democratic society.

The mission of planners and architects should be to look after the local culture and patrimony and work within the local parameters to preserve, rebuild and enhance their idiosyncrasy with new construction respectful or its context. There are plenty of new traditional urban and architectural projects under construction around europe and the americas. They are, like the Prince of Wales Poundbury project, entirely undertaken by private and individual initiative. Val d'Europe, Plessis-Robinson, Brandevoort, Lomas de Marbella club, Pont Royal-en-Provence, Knokke-Heulebrug, seaside, Windsor and Alys beach in florida, Paseo Cayala in Guatemala. In contrast contemporary modernist developments, however large or "advanced" like the apple, facebook, google, masdar mega-compounds are, without exception, of a suburban nature, horizontal or vertical mono-thematic sprawl –in general, regarding the latest talk about "smart cities", incorporating the ever evolving newest technologies of connectivity, it should not be confused what is just a matter of infrastructure with urban fabric form and town planning.

We are the first generation to have reacted against the cataclysmic modernist devastation of the world by building an operative critique backed by a general theory for a human-scale architecture and urbanism. This model of new traditional architecture and urbanism is being applied worldwide. I had the lucky misfortune to grow up in cities which had been spared the war-destructions, yet already suffered the tragic consequences of modernist redevelopment policies. As i grew up i witnessed how the traditional European city was being deconstructed as social, physical economic structure, as an ethical and aesthetic space. It is that model which is common to all European nations. It had allowed the open mixed modern society to emerge and flourish. It is that city model, inherited from Athens and Rome, which modern societies worldwide desire, but are everywhere admonished by modernist propaganda, that they can no longer have, except for holidays and entertainment.

We would like to focus now on a specific Identity Building process: Rejection. It is based on the notion of non-identification with the characteristics -formal, conceptual, emotional- of something, leading to its rejection. Throughout your career, you have had a clear stance regarding your own notion of how to make Architecture. How do you relate to the process of Rejection in your take on other approaches towards architecture? For instance, Modernism, Futurism or High-Tech architecture? Do you completely reject them or do you see relevance in some of their characteristics, within their context?

Modern traditional architecture and urbanism are not motivated by a feeling of rejection but by the urgency of reconstruction. Reconstruction because modernism has deconstructed architecture and urbanism

physically and mentally. I am about to publish the 9th volume of Le Corbusier's oeuvre complete called "Le Corbusier after Le Corbusier- LC translated, corrected, completed" proving that if there is a quality in his work, that quality can be achieved by traditional architectural means, techniques, materials, construction processes. The interesting forms of architectural modernism, futurism, high-tech, were without exception, pioneered by industrial production, storage and transportation building design, by driving and flying vehicles design, by machine, weapons and tool design. They are characterized by an aesthetic which is not place-bound, but purpose- and function-bound. The forms of oil-rigs, the monumentality of grain stores, the beauty of cooling towers and the aerodynamic elegance of an aeroplanes don't deliver the typological or formal repertoire to the making of human scale places, buildings or cities.

What is commonly called high- tech is uniquely related to fossil-fuel energies and its synthetic materials. I am suggesting that architects and planners become primordially concerned not with the "historicity" of traditional architecture and urbanism, but with their technology, with the techniques of building settlements in a specific geographic location and condition and hence with local architectural and urban cultures.

The other common belief is that progress, human progress, is necessarily linked to high-technological progress. Technology is the logos of technique. Technology is neither "high" nor "low." What superficially looks like "high" may be "low" in ecological terms. I advocate to respect, study and use traditional ideas where and when they are relevant for us the living, essential for our well-being. They are repositories not merely of humanity, but of humaneness and ecology.

New urbanism and modern traditional architecture are to this day the only coherent theory of environmental design based on extremely long-term sustainability, founded on millennial experience. The many architects who practice it, do so despite their architectural education and generally against overwhelming academic prejudice but sustained by wide public support and market demand.

Mr Krier is a world-renowned architect, urban planner and architectural theorist pioneer in promoting the technological, ecological and social rationality and modernity of traditional urbanism and architecture; he is considered the "Godfather" of the "New Urbanism" movement. Following a stint at the University of Stuttgart, he started his career in 1968 working with James Stirling and serving as a professor at the Architectural Association and the Royal College of Arts in London. Since then he has combined with his writings and teaching an international architecture & urban planning practice, which include projects in Mexico, Guatemala, USA, England, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Romania, Cyprus, Italy and Spain. As a professor he has taught at Princeton University, the University of Virginia, Yale University, and has guest lectured at numerous institutions. Starting from 1987, Mr Krier is H. R. H. the Prince of Wales' advisor, and responsible for the master-planning and architectural coordination of Poundbury, the Duchy of Cornwall's urban development in Dorset, U.K. and , since 2003 the Cayala development in Guatemala with Estudio Urbano. In addition, he has worked as industrial designer for Giorgetti since 1990. Among his numerous publications deserves special mention "The Architecture of Community-2009." a summary of his theories and practice.

Decolonizing Design

Nicholas Gamso

In Fall of 2017, New York City witnessed simultaneous protests over space, identity, and knowledge. One concerned the preservation of a Manhattan skyscraper, the other a museum campus and its controversial centerpiece. Together, the protests underscored a link between preservation and expropriation — a connection vital to the legitimacy of design discourse but suppressed in the critical literature.

1.

In November, the Norwegian architecture group Snøhetta released an ambitious plan to renovate the façade and atrium of Philip Johnson's iconic Manhattan office tower, 550 Madison Avenue.

The next week, a group of architects and preservationists assembled in front of the building—husked in a scaffold and ready for construction—to protest.

Most of the protesters were white men. As a friend wryly observed to me, the protesters looked gratified to have found a controversy to call their own. They held signs reading "Hands off my Johnson" and "PoMo Power," reflecting the jocular corporate culture long associated with the building. Since its construction in the early 1980s and through its iterations as the AT&T and SONY headquarters, Johnson's tower has embodied the dream of postmodern globality. It stands as a monument to free trade, telecommunications, and over-scaled real estate speculation. Its form — a vaulted fascist atrium at its base, a massive Chippendale finial on top — demonstrates what Rem Koolhaas called the "delirium" of neoliberal urban aesthetics.

Such a display of proprietary chauvinism is highly resonant with contemporary cultural politics. The protests occurred against the backdrop of nationwide debates over US Civil War monuments. Many of those who called for the preservation of Confederate statues had cloaked their nativism in talk of continuity, legacy, and tradition. They, too, were happy to court controversy. Some appealed to the notion of an objective historical record, a wish for authenticity amidst the constant reconstruction of historical and political imaginaries. Such arguments were made by even liberal faculty at Yale with regard to the status of the slave owner John Calhoun—and not without some wincing. In every case, hesitation was allayed by fidelity to dominant traditions and territorial identities.

A statement on the Johnson protest from British architect Norman Foster modeled this compromised logic. "I was never sympathetic to the short lived postmodern movement — and this building in particular," Foster wrote on an Instagram post promoting the demonstration. "However it is an important part of our heritage and should be respected as such."

What matters is heritage — tradition borne of genealogy. In the context of architecture, talk of heritage licenses a few to design the lives many, often in a mode of discreet cultural supremacism. Johnson's work is an exemplary case, his curatorial practices since the 1930s animated by a puerile fascination with modernist power. Its links to race science and fascism were never an issue for the architect, and seldom for his public. A disdain for moral purpose is indeed a part of 550 Madison, at once a glittering showpiece and a banal artifact of its time — a "graceless disguise," in the words of Michael Sorkin, "for the same old building."

The building's importance never had to do with its form, but all the things it nevertheless signified: corporate zeal and a cherished place (preordained by Johnson's own status) in a narrow taxonomy of belonging. The protests affirmed this last point. Organizers filed a petition to have the façade of 550 Madison designated a landmark. They wished for the building to stand in perpetuity, even as the rest of the city churns with displacement, disintegration, and renewal. The petition proved unsuccessful, however, as endless urban development — the very force that drove the construction of the building in the first pace — continues apace.

Renovations have begun.

2.

The furor over 550 Madison followed shortly after demonstrations at the American Museum of Natural History. There protestors voiced a longstanding compliant: while the museum purports a mission to "discover, interpret, and disseminate" objects and ideas, its principal ideology is a mode of white masculinity. Upon inspection, as Donna Haraway remarked succinctly in 1984, the museum's collection discloses the "commerce of power and knowledge in white and male supremacist monopoly capitalism."

The field of Natural History itself derives from colonial expeditions and expropriation programs. Naturalists like the famed taxidermist Carl Akeley — who designed the museum's African Hall — were ruthless game hunters, collectors, and exploiters of local custom and labor. Many also subscribed to colonial racial taxonomies; the museum hosted a global eugenics conference in 1921.

In its architecture (largely designed by Calvert Vaux and Jacob Wrey Mould) and visual displays, the museum has showcased modernist attitudes about nature, many of which draw explicitly on the contrived opposition between savagery and enlightened subjectivity. Every New York City elementary school student is well acquainted the museum, which holds out the world's treasures as the province of American inheritance.

As the chief benefactor of the museum, the populist US President Teddy Roosevelt sought to preserve objects and territories against what he saw as the onslaught of modern society. The messianic complex that resulted appears everywhere in the museum, and particularly in the imposing statue of Roosevelt outside the museum's Western arch, overlooking Central Park. On the morning of October 26, 2017, protestors doused the base of the statue in red paint. In a statement, they said that the action symbolized the museum's bloody origins.

Expropriation and enslavement are exalted dramatically by the statue. Roosevelt sits astride a stallion, flanked on his right by an indigenous man in a headdress, a gown knotted above his shoulder, and on his left by an enslaved man, his leg in shackles, naked but for a cloth. The statue represents the myth of Manifest Destiny and thus stands as a tribute to white supremacism in the world. It implies that whiteness is at the heart not only of American nationalism, but of the claims to nature that give dimension to American expansion.

Conservationism can be a way of maintaining these claims. Roosevelt after all issued several orders to protect vast federal lands, seeking not only to maintain what he called, in words inscribed on the walls of the AMNH's Great Hall, the "hidden spirit of wilderness," but to ensure that "assets" of the natural world be "increased and not impaired in value." Sustained expropriation of resources for the security of national interest was the cornerstone of Roosevelt's imperial adventures. He sought to extend American statecraft and harness the world's resources for its use.

This attitude still prevails at the museum. Earlier in 2018, the AMNH encountered additional protests due to its 23-year relationship with David Koch, the fossil fuel oligarch; before Koch resigned from the museum's board of trustees, protestors made note of how little attention was paid to the topics of carbon emissions and climate change—signs of still more negative propaganda masquerading as empiricism.

Many protestors have called to "Decolonize" the AMNH, objecting to the museum's racist legacy through a resonant short-hand metaphor. They demanded that the statue of Roosevelt be dismantled and that indigenous curators be appointed to the museum's staff. While the protests had occurred each year to coincide with related Columbus Day actions, 2017's were (like the Johnson protests) charged with feelings that were aroused during the previous Summer by calls to preserve Civil War monuments. The intensity of protests prompted Mayor Bill De Blasio to assemble a committee to review the Roosevelt statue, along with several others, treating the city to a rare excavation of imperial history in the urban present.

Ultimately, the commission ruled to let the statue stand.

3.
The Johnson building and the AMNH were built on lands that until relatively recently were inhabited by indigenous peoples. In such spaces, talk of cultural preservation signals naïve white narcissism and disciplinary myopia. Yet it does afford critical attention.

Discourse, such talk shows us, is not benign. Authoritative language and related signifiers give objects weight, protect them from the maelstrom of development that constitutes modernity. But denial is also important. For it conceals the processes by which culture comes into being. The groundwork of extraction and privation must be naturalized, suppressed, or ignored so that sanctioned forms of culture may take shape.

Modernity is rife with this form of denialism, whether it licenses the idea of a corporate architectural heritage worth saving or produces democratic knowledge through junk science and boys' adventurism. Architecture, the museum—these are sites of consolidated knowledge/power, motors of signification, which shape the world in real ways. Their guardians have a choice—to pursue real justice or founder in a shelter of tradition.

Nicholas Gamso is a 2018-2019 Creative Cities fellow at Stanford University.

Barranca

Erica Overmeer

Erica Overmeer atudied at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam. Worked at Herzog & de Meuron in Basel and at Walter Keller / Scal Verlag in Zürich. Since the 90's she has been devoting herself to her own photographic projects. In 2012 her work was featured at the German pavilion at the Venice Biennale. In 2016 she co-founded Index Architecture, an international research platform on print publishing in architecture.

Ledoux and the (Double-)Rejection of Architectonic Language
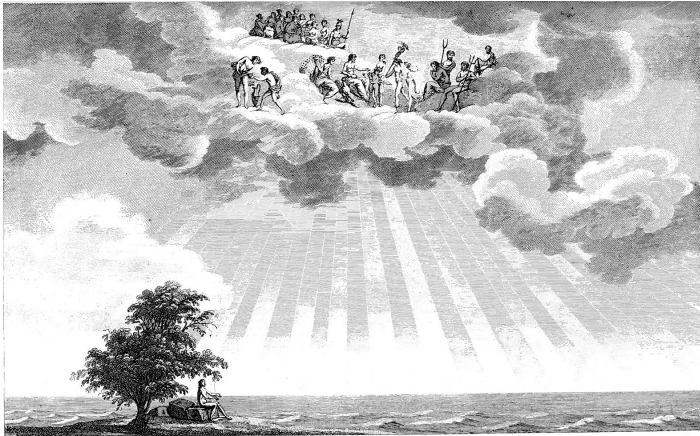
Dennis Lagemann

Figure 1 *L'abri du Pauvre*

1 Ledoux, 1981, p.135, Lagemann, D. (trans.) J'entends le professeur, circonscrit dans le cinq ordres, crier aprés l'abus: il ouvre son perplexe rudiment, en retourne toutes les feuilles; il ne voit rien dans ces points donnés qui justifie l'écart. Les regles de la grammariere sont violées, tout est perdu; des colonnes angulaires; a-t-on jamais rien vu d'aussie ridicule? Le point de doctrine attaqué, défend ses remparts: il a beau afficher ses manifestes insignifiants; il tonne par-tout; les éclats de son tonnerre frappent les murs rétifs du Gymnase, et tombent sans endommager.

2 Ledoux, 1981, p. 43.

I can hear the Professor, surrounded by the five orders, yelling at the abuse: Opening up his fuzzy basic concepts, he is leafing through the pages. But within the given parameters he cannot find anything to justify this aberrance. The rules of grammar are violated, everything is lost; angular columns; Did we ever see something so ridiculous? The doctrine`s position is under attack, defending its ramparts: He may well show his dispensable manifestos; his voice like thunder; but his bursts strike the unwavering walls of the Gymnasium, and fall off without damage.[1]

First Rejection (Of Classical Orders)

The aforementioned citation is taken from the French Revolution architect Claude Nicolas Ledoux. Convinced that architecture and society are closely linked, he rejected the Baroque identity conveyed by the classical orders as a fossilized representation of a desolate situation. His copperplate *L'abri du Pauvre* [Figure 1] displayed his view of the feudal regime: the pauper is left alone. Sitting under a tree, he has around him all the material available that could be turned into a comforting house. But, as an analogy to the precarious situation of the Third Estate just before the French Revolution, all that the peasant can do without the tools, knowledge of techniques, and a functional social system is to watch the gods feast in the heavens. Ledoux makes a claim that the aristocracy was more concerned about the ceremonial space of the court at Versailles than about organizing the state.

In the beginning of his career, Ledoux was involved in hydraulic engineering,[2] and as he learned that the bed of a river can willfully be shaped through stone, he was likewise persuaded that society can be shaped by Architecture.[3] Bored by the superficiality and sheer beauty of Rococo, he stated that people will be barbarous or educated, depending on how they chafe at the stone surrounding them.[4] And although the pre-Revolution "Building Architect" Ledoux, whose patrons were primary sponsors of the feudal system, has to be distinguished from the post-Revolution and Guillotine-wary "Paper Architect" Ledoux, his intentions to improve social conditions throughout his working life appear to be plausible. When Ledoux was working for the Duke of Montesquiou, he passionately spoke against housing peasants in sheds with thatched roofs and instead provided two storey houses with proper ventilation.[5] At the same time, his designs show an intention to use architecture to railguard actions and morality, even against those who wielded authority.[6]
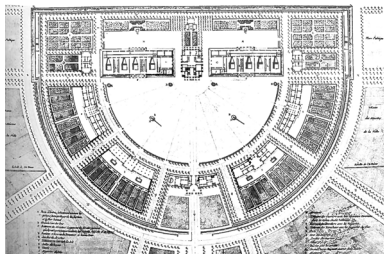
Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

3 Ledoux, 1981, p. 224.
4 Ibid: p. 3.
5 Gallet, 1983, p. 128.
6 For example: In his Théâtre de Besançon, he opened up the loges for the Aristocrats in a way that the ordinary people could see what is happening in there. Apparently it was his intention to put a stop to the common habit among the high-borns to enjoy their mistresses during a stage play being carried out. (A.N.)
7 University of Innsbruck/ Peter Volgger: architecturaltheory.eu.
8 Kaufmann, 1955, p. 130 and 251.
9 Ledoux, 1981, p. 135.
10 Ibid: p. 115.

Second Rejection (From Signification to Design)

In doing away with the classical orders, Ledoux also rejected the traditional meaning of architectonic objects. To Ledoux, the temple motif was not solely reserved for sacral buildings, neither was the triumphal arch necessarily a public monument. These symbolic structures were requisites for the staging of spatial sequences.[7] According to Emil Kaufmann, the term "Architecture Parlante" first appears in 1852 in an essay about the work of Ledoux, entitled "Études d'architecture en France."[8] Kaufmann states that for Ledoux, it was not the isolated samples of architectural motifs that bore symbolic content, but the syntactical combination of these motifs. Likewise, this "Speaking Architecture" did not gain meaning through reference to external content. It was the sequential setup of his "Systéme Symbolique"[9] that would objectively speak for itself when a subject is looking at or moving through his designs. To create this kind of architectural language, Ledoux primarily used three different communicative categories.

In his early career, he designed the Café Militaire [Figure 2], using naturalistic emblems to display the actual utilization of the space. Secondly, he used texture to produce an intuitively smooth or rough, homely or commanding character [Figure 3]. Thirdly, and especially in his later work, he increasingly turned away from ornament, using fundamental geometric forms as basic elements of expression, associating the cube with justice and the circular hole with vigilance.[10]

Continuing his project of creating a better society through architecture, Ledoux used the commission to design the saltworks of Arc-et-Senans as an opportunity to design an ideal space of labor. In the circular layout of the proposal, worker accommodations were arrayed around the circle's center, occupied by the Director`s house as the source of absolute authority. The Director, however, did not reside like a lord. His house was enveloped in a cloak of fumes, oozing out of the Boiling Houses, where he was on duty to serve the community by upholding the discipline of production. Accordingly, the center of the Director`s house was a communal space of worship. In the facade's pediment was a circular hole, watchfully overlooking the scene, indicating the Director`s vigilance and control over the facility. Ledoux's arrangements were an attempt at social engineering, designing the saltworks as an automaton for the consolidation of morals and productivity [Figures 3 & 4]. The architecture of the Saline assigned a position within the community of the saltworks to each of its members [Figure 5]. Every worker had a room for himself and his family. Four families always shared a kitchen and were grouped according to their assignment within the saltworks: the salt-cookers, to keep the fires burning, the salt-workers to process the crystallized salt, the boiler-makers to forge and maintain the kettles and even the janitor and the guards. Each of them resided the same distance from the facility center next to their working places. Each inhabitant had a garden as compensation for low wages, as well as to keep the worker and his family engaged after working hours. By rejecting the convention that only the administrative buildings were deserving of architectural articulation, Ledoux was constructing a new moral identity of community and social control through the architectonics of the saltworks.

Third Rejection (Vive la Révolution)

This attitude of Ledoux—that the architect was a social engineer—may have contributed to his fall from favor. In 1784, Louis XVI commissioned a wall around Paris. Taxes had to be paid to the Ferme Générale on goods being brought into the city. But because the city was open to the periphery, tax collection was almost impossible to control. So controversially, the wall was not directed against a threat from the outside but was in fact built to control the city's own population. When Ledoux
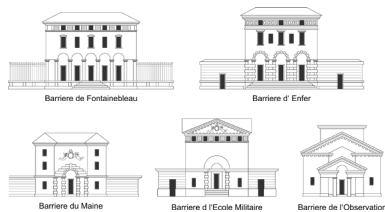
Figure 6

Figure 7

11 Vidler, 1941, p. 106.
12 Ledoux, 1981, p. 118.
13 Gallet, 1983, p. 114.

was charged with the design for the gates, he found justification in believing that the wall was built to enforce the law, which would consequently uphold the morality of the city. He conceived the toll gates as showpieces for Paris and claimed to place "glorious trophies of victory at the closed gates."[11] Accordingly, he chose to refer to the front buildings of the Acropolis in Athens, calling the gate houses "Propylées" instead of "Barriéres", as they were termed officially.

On the one hand, these gate houses became a masterful application of a volumetric grammar, producing fifty-four variations of the Barriéres. Because the design of the buildings followed a strict syntax and morphology, passersby could visually understand the transformational sequences between the gates [Figure 6]. At the same time, these designs were a consequent implementation of his architectonic language, representing the sublimity and justice of law and order. For those who were able to decode Ledoux's language, the "Barriére de Passy" represented a cube of justice; its two inscribed half spheres of wisdom created circular outlines on the building's facade, speaking of vigilance.

In his self-reflection he wrote: "I will urbanize a population of eight hundred-thousand people to grant them independence."[12] Again, just as he conceived the saltworks, he imposed a new identity, attempting to construct a community through the use of architecture. Yet this time, he may have overestimated the civic influence of his architecture. To the people of Paris, this new identity of the "esprit publique"[13] did not feel like independence. Before the wall was completed, the French Revolution began. Now rejection was no longer on the side of Ledoux, whose attempt was to replace the singular symbolic statements of the Baroque with a syntactical system of architectonic expression for the Age of Reason, but on the side of the people of Paris. They rejected the so-called "language" of Ledoux's

architecture and reframed the societal meaning of these gates: oppression and control by a tyrannical regime. As a counter-reaction, the people burned down Barriére de Passy during the riots of the Revolution [Figure 7].

Epilogue

Ultimately, Ledoux's rejection of the classical orders was still obedient to the established system of power, and so he lost the credibility that would have been necessary for the people to accept the identity imposed by his works. From the emerging Republican point of view, he had been part of the Ancien Régime. Moreover, his Architecture Parlante was interpreted more as a display of function than an actual embodiment of a functionality, and despite his rhetoric and good intentions, his gesture of social engineering was perceived to be just as tyrannical as aristocratic oppression. Ledoux rejected the symbolism of classical orders, but his effort to educate people through architecture, to reshape identity from the Baroque to the Enlightenment, was ultimately rejected by the people who, painful as the French Revolution was, chose instead their own path of emancipation.

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Rejection of the Archive
Katia Zapata

Nuñez , Roberto. La Alameda

Mainstream architecture narratives in Mexico have traditionally been Mexico City centric, completely overlooking the north of the country. Historical tension between the north's entrepreneurial elites and the central government as well as physical distance has kept the north separated from the rest of the country developing an identity that is different from what is thought to be as "Mexican". If you look up the phrase "Mexican architect" you will find be flooded by images of the works of Luis Barragan. The materials and colour palette in his works translate into an image of modern Mexico that can easily be understood in New York or Paris. This collective imaginary of what Mexican architecture is or should be is fueled by the more recent work of the most prominent contemporary Mexican architects, whose usage of lattice, exuberant gardens, and wood corresponds to their central Mexico context, where most of them are based. This postcard image does not really fit with the reality of Northern Mexican architecture. Northern Mexico conjures up images of narcos, hot, desolate landscapes, and cheap manufacturing facilities or maquiladoras; images that are an awkward kind of Mexican, or at least not as enticing as pyramids, charming, colonial towns, sunny beaches, or Luis Barragan.

Stuck in the middle between the industrialized "modern" United States and the "romantic" Mexico, norteño architecture has always been considered less legitimate than its nationalist counterparts, however it is impossible and unjust to subject it to these comparisons. It is simply not possible to compare the cultural baggage of a city such as Tenochtitlan with the northern city of Torreon which is only 100 years old.

The impact of been considered less culturally significant has been profoundly negative to the architecture of Northern Mexico. Historical buildings have been completely destroyed or modified beyond recognition as the absence of a local tradition of architecture criticism or preservation give the locals the impression that there is nothing worth preserving. It is common for locals to dismiss whatever little is left with the phrase "Aquí no hay nada" which translates to "There is nothing here". This idea is enforced by the National Anthropology and History Institution, INAH, who does not consider anything built after the 19th century as heritage sites. This is detrimental to the memory and identity of cities that mostly developed during the 20th century as they are immediately considered not worthy of protection or preservation.

Gomez Nora I. Rio Santa Catarina. Cuando el Rio Suena

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Encouraged by its economic strength, Monterrey's answer to this apparent nothingness has been to build. Being the third largest city in size and the second largest economy of the country, there is no shortage of construction sites in Monterrey, however the architecture of the city seems to be one that is desperate to assert its economic power and place in the contemporary world. In the attempts to redeem itself, Monterrey has destroyed entire blocks of historic neighborhoods to build its 400,000 m2 Macroplaza in its town center, built a massive bridge that looks like one designed by Santiago Calatrava, built sports facilities and markets on the Santa Catarina river only to have them destroyed by a hurricane every two years, commissioned projects to Norman Foster and Zaha Hadid, and most recently launched a proposal to build a bridge that would mean the near destruction of one of its most notorious and historic neighborhoods, Colonia Independencia. In its search for an identity and a narrative, Monterrey is still not sure if it wants to be a quaint town in the center of Mexico, San Antonio, or Houston. This is a story that repeats itself across Northern Mexico. A three-hour drive from Monterrey, in Torreon, there is not one, but three replicas of the Eiffel Tower and eight- lane, palm adorned boulevards that echo those in Los Angeles.

The narrative of Monterrey has so far been based on a process of selections and exclusions of memory. The stories that are being told are those of investment capital, developers, and government officials. They are written in the city's monuments, public spaces, and buildings. However, there is no place for everyone in a single story. In this narrative of progress there is no room for those that exhibit the system's flaws or the violence of everyday life. There is no place for the poor, the middle class, children, the elderly, the homeless, pedestrians; basically no one else.

As we walk through the city it is possible to find the urban ruins, territories, and spaces that tell us the unofficial stories. One of these spaces is La Alameda, where we can recognize an image of Monterrey that is defined not by its elites or institutions, but by its inhabitants. Every morning in one corner you can see the long line of men waiting for the pick-up trucks that will take them to the different construction sites of the city while in the opposite corner are the buses coming from rural Mexico. Between them, there are Central American migrants, students, human rights defenders, street vendors, junkies, sex workers, the homeless, and simple passers-by taking refuge from the sun. Space is regulated by nothing more than people's spatial negotiations. It is a symbol of tolerance that is governed by the customs of the people who use it. The Alameda is the sanctuary of the city, a place where Monterrey has reconciled itself with its territory, recognizing it as an inclusive, multicultural, multifaceted space. From the Alameda we can continue the construction of Monterrey as a mosaic city in which millions of stories are interwoven. How can we, as architects, give a voice to these other stories?

Crossing the city is probably the biggest of the city's urban ruins, the Santa Catarina river. On the second of July of 2010, Hurricane Alex hit the ground in Monterrey. It left a scar across the city by destroying a series of sport facilities that had been built on the usually dry river. Hurricane Alex reminded us that the river is not a public space meant for entertainment, or at least not entertainment in the shape of a soccer field. Hurricane Alex eliminated all attempts to make the river a "public space" and therefore all attempts to domesticate the river. Now empty, the Santa Catarina river took a step back as a central character in the story of Monterrey and became part of the backdrop of the city. In its emptiness, the river developed a vocation much more that just being part of the landscape. It became a refuge

Canseco, German. Tragedia en Casino Royale. Revista Proceso 2017

for the most vulnerable beings of the city, the homeless, immigrants, and the natural elements. In its invisibility it became a place where nature could take over. The river has become a forest with a biodiversity that is noticeable in the many willows and poplars and the herons that fly over them. The river became a symbol of a space where diversity and vulnerability meet. The best thing that could have happened to the river is that for the last 10 years Monterrey forgot it existed. With a deficit of green, public spaces and its poor air quality, Monterrey cannot afford to deny the environmental services that this space now offers the city.

The so-called ruins in the landscape of Northern Mexico are difficult to appreciate aesthetically or culturally because they are still very much part of our present. Not enough time has passed in order to remove any pain associated with the trauma in order to delegate the events that occurred in response the infamous drug war had on the city to the nameless force of "history". The impact that the violence had on Monterrey's dynamics became evident as aspirations for the redevelopment of the city center got paused giving way to a narrative of isolation and security concerns. Ten years after the initial escalation of violence, Monterrey's city center is coming back to life with developers eager to build new high-rises in the area, however there are scars left throughout the city that act as constant reminders of the city's violent past. One of the most notorious are the ruins of the former Casino Royale, a casino that got burnt down by organized crime in 2011. A monument to its 52 victims made out of fake greenery and blue, Venetian glass-mosaic was erected on the traffic island in its front, but the true memorial lies in the still untouched, scorched ruins of the actual building.

In Northern Mexico, our ruins are not pyramids, our wounds and scars remain open. The exploration of memory to achieve a true understanding of the territory cannot be done without the notion of establishing a relationship with historical trauma, scars and all. If Louis Kahn once said, "The significance of the ruin is not the age but the silence between the walls" in relation to his decision build beside instead of on top of the ruins of the Hurva synagogue giving each building its place in history, then how can we revisit our memory to articulate a new past that allows us to reconcile and love our present?

If the National Anthropology and History Institution, that is, if the official archives bypass the stories of Northern Mexican architecture, then norteño architects are left to their own devices to create a narrative of their own. Without the constraints of proper classification, obsolete 20th century urban infrastructure and the ruins left by the recent violence become heritage sites. The absence of the archive is therefore an opportunity to merge a revised past with the identity of the present to define the narrative of the future. The cities of Northern Mexico became cities due to industrialization and commerce, therefore for norteño architecture abandoned industrial infrastructure is just as vernacular and historically significant as brick and adobe. The rejection of the archive is the opportunity to constantly revisit our past, shift conversations, and reshape our identity.

Architecture that involves recent ruins is emotional and disruptive. It is confrontational and political because it inadvertently makes a statement of what the future of the community should be. If we consider that there is no progress or evolution without disruption then these temporary states of chaos and the ruins they generate are opportunities to move forward, the destruction is therefore not a sign of death but part of a cycle of evolution. In this temperamental present Northern Mexican architects have the opportunity to build an autonomous architectural culture that can define who we are but above all who we want to be.

Covachita is an architecture studio based in Monterrey, Mexico. In a city where industriousness is considered a virtue and practicality a source of pride, it is not surprising that the moving forces of the city are the infrastructures that control and regulate its landscapes. These initial surroundings have led Covachita to start a dialogue with the city that focuses not on grand, ideal projects, but on the everyday behavior of its citizens and the ways we can modify the language of the city by reprogramming what is already available. Covachita has designed public spaces, cultural centers, community centers, exhibitions, and masterplans for local and state governments as well as private residences and workspaces. These projects share the genetic code of being foremost a critique of the contemporary city using negotiation and dialogue with all actors as the backbone of their actions.

Katia Zapata is the Research and Publications Director of Covachita and the executive director and cofounder of Carnem magazine. Katia is responsible for overseeing the everyday operations of the publication from relations with contributors to managing a team of translators, editors, and graphic designers. Katia oversaw the creation of Colegio de Arquitectos de Nuevo León (CANL) new publication, Arquitectura y Seres Urbanos, now on its third issue, as co-editor and content strategist. She is cofounder, along with Pablo Landa and Roberto Nunez of the independent research project and workshop Division del Norte, which seeks to document and revalue the often overlooked architecture of Northern Mexico. Katia is the head organizer of the Division del Norte dialogues, a series of workshops, interviews and discussions on the the role of architectural memory in creation of city identity. Katia has a BA in International Business from Tecnológico de Monterrey and the University of Central Lancashire in the UK. She has additional studies in Public Policy from Tecnológico de Monterrey's Graduate School of Public Administration and Policy.