

Order Is the Ultimate Purpose

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INTRODUCTION

Order and time are potential adversaries. Architecture has a central position for both ordering our physical environment and for communicating through time. Alberto Perez-Gomez opened his book *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science* with the statement that "the creation of order in a mutable and finite world is the ultimate purpose of man's thought and actions."¹ All fields of inquiry search for order; however, once created, order is not permanent, and efforts to maintain or undermine it are endless.

Order is difficult to define. Order is itself an origin: primordial order pulled from chaos. Architects have ceaselessly spoken of order in relation to the art and discipline of architecture. Speculations that order is biologic, instinctive, that a sense of order exists or that order finds its roots in emotions such as fear have all been advanced and defended. "Order is" for Louis Kahn.

"...every human construction — whether mental or material... exists to contain chaos. Thus children's fairy tales as well as adult's legends, cosmological myths, and indeed philosophical systems are shelters built by the mind in which human beings can rest... Likewise, the material landscapes of houses, fields, and cities contain chaos. Every dwelling is a fortress built to defend its human occupants... it is a constant reminder of human vulnerability."²

The Nazi Movement in Germany, under Adolf Hitler's rule, produced the most extensive architectural, urban and regional plans of the 20th century. The New Order that Nazi architecture would assist in creating should have been permanent. Mastering time was essential to assure order. The National-Socialists would bring new order to the present, but also the future and, when necessary, the past. Being totalitarian, the Nazi move-

ment was more than political. It encompassed and sought to control all social, cultural, economic, artistic as well as political aspects of German life. The Nazi movement possessed the power to exercise George Orwell's dictum that "who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past." The Third Reich's obsession with the creation of order and the control of time through the built environment can be thought of as an extreme case, a limit-case, of what architecture has often aspired to. More recently, because of the atrocities committed by the Nazis, all projects in the reunited capital of Berlin have had a special burden of reconsidering architecture's capacity and will for expression in the present and through time.

THE NATIONAL-SOCIALIST PROJECTS

The Nazis used architecture and urbanism in an attempt to establish, within a surprisingly short period of time, a new physical order. The monuments of the National-Socialists were not only meant to communicate political and social ideas; they were, more importantly, meant to be an expression of the Reich of a thousand years.

Though the National-Socialist architectural plans were extremely ambitious, few major buildings were actually constructed. The House of German Art in Munich was one of several buildings designed by the architect Paul Ludwig Troost. It was begun in 1933 and opened in 1937. Albert Speer's major built works include the Zeppelin Field in Nuremberg, completed in 1935, the German Pavilion for the Universal Exposition in Paris in 1937, and the New Chancellery in Berlin, which opened in 1939. Speer's most creative work was perhaps his "Cathedral of Light" that was staged for a party rally in Nuremberg on September 11, 1937. Speer surrounded the rally field with vertical shafts of light from 130 giant projectors directed upwards into the night sky. It is,

however, Hitler's and Speer's plan for the center of Berlin with its monumental axes and squares, and a formidable Great Hall and Triumphal Arch, that is most symbolic of National-Socialist urbanistic and architectural aspirations. The accumulation of planned monuments in Berlin would have made the new Reich capital itself a monument. Though several buildings such as the Reichsbank, the Aviation Ministry and the Nazi Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda have survived, the majority of the projects from this vast urban and architectural plan exists today only in drawings and photos of models.

THE ROLE OF ARCHITECTURE

The Nazi movement placed great importance on architecture and the re-structuration of the capital in order to communicate their socio-political aspirations. Hitler had himself hoped to become an artist and architect, and he maintained a conviction that art exercises a great influence on the masses and that art holds a prime position in culture because it pertains to sentiment, which, for him, was intrinsically superior to intelligence. The artist would become a soldier of a new culture. Creators should be united under the direction of the government to produce a communal creative attitude. The State should protect and direct art, which would be for the edification of the people rather than for the satisfaction of the artist.

When Hitler came to power, a troubled German society searched for an end to chaos. An ordered architecture postulated an ordered world and Hitler offered this order. Hitler saw himself as the representative of the German people. For that reason, the buildings that would surround him and his successors had a mission to represent all of Germany and to speak of the posterity of the Reich.

You see, I myself would find a simple little house in Berlin quite sufficient. I have enough power and prestige; I don't need such luxury to sustain me. But believe me, those who come after me will find such ostentation an urgent necessity. Many of them will be able to hold on only by such means. You would hardly believe what power a small mind acquires over the people around him when he is able to show himself in such imposing circumstances. Such rooms, with a great historical past, raise even a petty successor to historical rank. You see, that is why we must complete this construction in my lifetime—so that I shall have lived there and my spirit will have conferred tradition upon the build-

ing. If I live in it only a few years, that will be good enough.³

The monuments planned by the Nazis should unite the masses and in the future should limit the risk of social change. They were to maintain particular events and facts present forever in the conscience of future generations. Monumental structures should not only express unity and power, but should also generate it.

Such visible demonstrations of the higher qualities of a people will, as the experience of history proves, remain for thousands of years as an unquestionable testimony not only to the greatness of a people, but also to their moral right to exist.⁴

But architecture was not left alone to cultivate and transmit a message. In order to reduce the risk that art and architecture would somehow be misinterpreted, propaganda and the education of the masses reinforced it. Propaganda served to rally support for projects and as a compliment to architecture in order to insure proper interpretation. The reunion of masses was also considered to be an efficient means of propaganda, and large manifestations, a human architecture, were meant to establish order. Hitler was among the first to take advantage of airplane travel in order to visit several locations per day and address many crowds. Hitler's arrivals were theatrical and his plane reportedly would appear with the apparition of the sun from behind the clouds.

Hitler was obsessed by the image of the Reich that would be projected into the future. Just as commemorative monuments were conceived before the events, it is not surprising that the ruin was also foreseen before the construction of the monument. To build for eternity does not exclude the inevitable effects of time, and this is one of the reasons why steel, glass and concrete, were seldom used in the Reich's monumental projects. These materials were considered unacceptable for ruins that would be noble of the Reich of a thousand years. The ruins should incite regret when confronted with decline and the sentiment that the ancient should have been conserved.

Hitler also realized that in order to communicate with future generations, he must control the past:

Why do we call the whole world's attention to the fact that we have no past? It isn't enough that the Romans were erecting great buildings when our forefathers were still living in mud huts; now Himmler is starting to dig up these mud villages and enthusing over every potsherd and stone axe he

finds. All we prove by that is that we were still throwing stone hatchets and crouching around open fires when Greece and Rome had already reached the highest stage of culture. We really should do our best to keep quiet about this past.⁵

THE MODERN CULT OF MONUMENTS

Though the National-Socialists constructed schools and housing and freeways, it was the monumental constructions that were to represent the will of the movement. More importantly, they were to communicate and express that will to future generations. Party rallies, propaganda and media of various types would communicate in the present, but architecture would speak for posterity.

The Austrian art historian, Alois Riegl wrote *The Modern Cult of Monuments*, in 1903.⁶ His interrogations into the role of monuments and their relation to memory continue to have pertinence today, a century later. Monuments for Riegl were not to be understood only as a work that is left to posterity in order to conserve the memory of a person or an important act. The monument is itself memory: an archive.

Riegl's text begins with a reminder that a monument, in the original sense of the term, designates a work erected with the precise intention of maintaining particular events and occurrences of mankind forever present in the conscious of future generations. A distinction is made between a "desired" monument, one having a precise intention at its conception, and an "un-desired" monument, which is an object that is elevated to a level of monument. In choosing and preserving monuments, Riegl questions what memory will be conserved and for whom. During his own period he felt that it was less the monument that was important, but rather the idea of conservation.

Riegl identifies several different categories or "cults" of monuments. Ancient monuments would include ruins, for example, where decay and the effects of time are valued and the original signification or use of the monument is no longer considered. Historical monuments are often "un-desired" monuments and are valued for their age, and contrary to the ancient monument, degradation should be arrested. The commemorative monument should never belong to the past. It should always remain present in the conscious of successive generations. Monuments may also be valued for their actuality. They may be valued for their utilitarian quality since "the physical existence is the condition of all psychic existence."⁷ Monuments es-

teemed for their quality of "newness" would be part of a larger group of monuments valued for an "art" quality. For Riegl the "masses have always been thrilled by that which is new. They prefer seeing a creative power in the works of man rather than the destructive effects of nature."⁸ In relation to newness, "relative-art" is based on the fact that the works of past generations can be appreciated not only as an evidence of human creation prevailing over nature, but also for the specificity of their conception and their form. Since there is no absolute or objective value of art, older works of art may sometimes correspond with a contemporary desire for art. Ironically, Speer's ephemeral "Cathedral of Light" is, perhaps, his design that most corresponds to contemporary tastes.

DESTRUCTION

The affirmation and communication of the National-Socialist project through architecture did not only take place through the construction of monuments, but also through their destruction. Edification and destruction have been a constant throughout history and the memory of a prior order provided by past architecture may be welcomed or may be suppressed:

"... The destruction of buildings in periods of revolution and of social or economic upheaval also constitutes a manifestation of the collective will, a conscious or unconscious entity which functions as a historical force that at times runs counter to architecture's aspiration to permanence."⁹

All of the reasons imaginable for which we want to protect monuments are exactly the same as those for which we want to destroy monuments.

Constructing a new order necessitated the destruction of others. Non-Nazi German art was deemed degenerate and was ridiculed and destroyed. Monuments and art works of occupied countries were stolen or destroyed. The city of Paris, considered by Hitler to be the most beautiful city in the world, risked destruction in order to eliminate competition for the new Reich capital "Germania."

Destruction was also spectacle. Albert Speer described the air raids on Berlin as an "unforgettable sight" where the "apocalypse provided a magnificent spectacle."¹⁰ It was supposed that destroying the work of art or architecture would also destroy what it symbolized. The destruction of a building, however, does not entail loss of memory, which now is often perpetuated through other media such as photos and films. Ironical-

ly, the Chancellery was one of few built projects planned by Hitler and designed by Speer, and its destiny was to serve as a quarry for the Russians for the construction of their war monument in the Treptow area of Berlin.

MOVEMENT

In his book *Le Désordre*, the French sociologist Georges Balandier explores order and chaos in light of “movement.” Order and disorder for Balandier are like the two sides of a same coin: indissociable. Traditionally, disorder is understood in terms of disfunction. A certain place is made for disorder even if it remains suspect. Since it cannot be eliminated, disorder must be dealt with constructively. An upset of order, however, is not necessarily its loss, and can reinforce order or reconstitute it under a new guise. Order is made with disorder just as sacrifice makes life with death. From a current perspective, perfect order cannot be achieved, movement allows a perpetual restoration of equilibrium, and disorder can be utilized in a constructive way.¹¹

It is clear that the National Socialists hoped to create a new order; however, the question remains if a direct representation of Nazi social and political aspirations exist in the Fuhrer’s plans for Berlin? The National-Socialists, themselves, were convinced that their works would embody and communicate their ideology in the present and in the future. Most creators would like to believe that ideas, a message or an essence could be transmitted through a work of art or architecture. A gap remains between the word and the work and Heinrich Wölfflin’s question of “what characteristics of an age are at all capable of being expressed in visual form” lacks a clear response.

Still, the National-Socialists, and Hitler himself, must have been distrustful of “movement” in relation to the message that their architectural projects would transmit through time. As unrealized projects, they were only one part of an enormous wager to constitute a new order.

There are two possibilities for me: To win through with all my plans, or to fail. If I win, I shall be one of the greatest men in history. If I fail, I shall be condemned, despised and damned.¹²

21ST CENTURY BERLIN

Riegl’s analysis of the monument remains useful in order to better understand the works and intentions of

the National-Socialists. It remains surprisingly useful in order to analyze post World War II projects in Berlin and more specifically the numerous projects that have been built there since the fall of the Wall in 1989. Berlin at the beginning of the 21st century can be thought of as a laboratory for architecture, urbanism and the monument. If the National-Socialists hoped to use architecture to transmit a clear message, contemporary architects have struggled with how a message, and perhaps values, might be transmitted through recent projects in Berlin. Architecture continues to be seen as having the potential to communicate and perhaps even as functioning as an antidote to previous orders.

The Berlin Wall, a pragmatic “object” that became a monument—an un-desired monument—was the antithesis of a commemorative monument.

The destruction of the Wall reforms all past landscapes. The wall was the culmination of 200 years of German culture. No other structure succeeded in slowing the passage of time. No other structure succeeded in destroying the passage of space. It was an absolute architecture, and it was the absolute contradiction of architecture—the purest monument to the divided soul of Western man. A machine that drove a passage through history, it divided a city, a nation and a culture... Reality will forever rest on the memory of this eternal division. Such essential order, once split, can never be fully restored. There will remain forever a flaw, a chronic weakness in the foundation of all constructions in this place.¹³

This assessment was written in 1990. By November of 1991 the Wall had all but disappeared and much of it was crushed and used to build roads. Its presence was unbearable. Conservation, like destruction, can be seen as a violent act. In the place of the Wall, constructions such as those of the Potsdamerplatz are appearing that would re-establish “life as normal.” Riegl points out that art responds primarily to its own memory of forms.

With the regeneration of Berlin many urban enthusiasts are talking happily about the beauty of the old European center, particularly Paris, but it is hard to proclaim the decade of democracy and human rights after the change in East Europe and at the same time plead for planning methods that are relics of autocratic constitutions.¹⁴

In 1884 the construction of the Reichstag was completed. In 1933, a fire instigated by Hitler ravaged the building and destroyed the dome. In 1945 the Soviet flag flew above the defeated Reichstag. During the

1950's the building's demolition was considered, but in the 1960's it was renovated. Today the building has been reinvested with its utilitarian quality. It has been reconstructed by the architect Norman Foster and houses the Bundestag. The Reichstag building was too symbolic to be simply restored or to remain in a state of "ruin." The building should guarantee a continuity and a rupture: a transformation that would provide links to a reorganized past and a desired future. The transparent dome should symbolize an accessible government and make "democracy visible."

The Topography of Terror is the site of the Nazi internal control apparatus that included the headquarters for the Gestapo and the SS. Though the buildings in the area were targeted by Allied bombs in the final days of the war, they survived surprisingly well. During the 1950's several buildings were destroyed by the West Germans and at a certain point an expressway was planned that would cut through the middle of the site. By the 1980's a memorial and green space were suggested for the site. In 1993 Peter Zumthor won the competition for a building that would enclose the remains of the buildings that had been used by the National Socialists. Zumthor's approach would be to communicate by remaining silent:

The design was to be pure structure, speaking no language but that of its own materials, composition and function...Nothing is covered, plastered or concealed—there is no way to disguise structural sins.¹⁵

Recent building in Berlin has oscillated between a will to make architecture speak and a fear that it actually might be able to do so. If the Topography of Terror somewhat exemplifies the latter situation, the Jewish Museum most definitely exemplifies an architecture that wishes to speak. The form of Daniel Libeskind's building has been compared to an unfolded Star of David or an unfolded Swastika, and even if the building "thrills the masses" with its qualities of "newness," it looks to time-honored qualities of the discipline of architecture in order to communicate. The Jewish Museum aspires to communicate in a way that is unharmed by Victor Hugo's printing press or even more recent media types. The exceedingly didactic approach recalls strategies used by the Nazis for the 1937 "Degenerate Art" exhibition in Munich or by the West Germans for the "Art Under the Third Reich" exhibition in Frankfurt approximately thirty years later. The goal of both exhibitions was to present a clear and singular idea and obtain a predetermined result. Reportedly, neither exhibition attained the desired effect. The Jewish Museum presently seems to have imposed a

clearer order. Libeskind's project also seems to disprove Lewis Mumford's statement that "the notion of a modern monument is veritably a contradiction in terms. If it is a monument it is not modern, and if it is modern it cannot be a monument."¹⁶ Following Riegl's analysis, Libeskind's building has the "precise intention of forever maintaining present in the conscious of future generations particular events and occurrences of mankind." Contrary to its dynamic forms, it is a static architecture that attempts to create an archive from the outset.

TIME OUT OF ORDER

Architecture can generally be thought of as a gauge of duration; however, the National-Socialists, in their search for order, seemed to negate time:

We can, in effect, consider that totalitarianism results from a will so total to master time, that time itself comes to be denied.¹⁷

Georges Balandier has found that the new, the ephemeral, the rapid succession of information and the necessity to make frequent adaptations gives contemporary man the impression that he is living only in the present; yet, for Berlin the present has become a living catalogue of the possible treatments of a city in ruins. O.M. Ungers' suggested that the reconstruction of the capital was the occasion to realize certain "paper" monuments, or "retroactive architecture," such as Mies' glass skyscraper and Loos' Chicago Tribune.¹⁸

So in this new and ideal history of Berlin we shall have along side the monuments preserved and restored in the western sector over the course of recent decades, the Castle (reconstructed), the Neue Wache (modified), the Reichstag (modified), and perhaps even Mies van der Rohe's skyscraper (built for the first time). But we should not have the wall, the statues of Lenin, such as the one in the former Leninplatz, or the Palace of the Republic built in 1972 on Marx Engels Platz. The desire to remember and the desire to forget are indissolubly mixed.¹⁹

The ruins from the war incite two opposed and often contradictory reactions: either we keep them as they are as a testimony of human wickedness, or we reconstruct the previous state to better signify the victory over bad. As Mies' Barcelona Pavilion has shown us, "it is surprising to see that a reconstructed monument not only fulfils its old functions but also retakes its place in History regardless of the renewal of its substance." This was also the hope for a reconstructed Castle, the

Prussian king's palace in Berlin, destroyed during the war.

Re-inhabiting Nazi buildings in Berlin has been problematic because of their strong symbolism and because inevitably they are thought of as a "Pandora's box" that contains the evil of the National-Socialist past. The Nazis aspired to no less. Throughout history, however, existing buildings, such as the cathedral in Cordoba, have been reinvested with new ideologies. All recent projects in Berlin have had to address the legacy of the Nazi period. Monuments and memorials are conceived to counter the aspirations and deeds of the Nazis. They also participate in a larger endeavor concerning memory as outlined by Alois Riegl.

Albert Speer made an interesting comment that would give architecture not only the power to mark time but also the power to determine the immediate future:

Had I been able to think the matter out consistently, I ought to have argued further that my designs for Hitler were following the pattern of the Late Empire and forecasting the end of the regime; that therefore, Hitler's downfall could be deduced from these very designs.²⁰

CONCLUSION

Questions concerning the monument, order and time have recently been thrust into public debate because of the spectacular destruction of the World Trade Center towers in New York. Even if they were generally considered "monuments to capitalism," the destroyed buildings possessed the status of monument primarily because of their height and position on the skyline. They were not conceived as a commemorative monument; they were neither ancient nor historical, and their "artistic" value was not unanimous. They were, for the most part, "un-desired" monuments that took on staggering monumental qualities because of their destruction. Their replacement contributes to on-going interrogations concerning the status of the monument and questions of what memory will be conserved, or created, and for whom. It is surprising how closely current proposals conform to the possible responses for the reconstruction of a ruin as outlined by Riegl a century ago. Alternatives include: identical reconstruction, preservation of surviving symbolic fragments that should represent an irrevocable loss, complete removal in order to present an empty contemplative space, as well as complete removal followed by the construction of new buildings that follow a contemporary set of architectural rules. Not only was identical reconstruc-

tion proposed, but also, like Ungers suggestion for Berlin, New York could acquire "retroactive architecture" by building Antoni Gaudi's 1908 project for a hotel. Any new project should also provide links between a reorganized past and a desired future even if the interpretation of what it will symbolize remains open: "that we have not been defeated or that we have learned nothing from the attack."²¹ Memory is in constant movement; however, part of any new project will most certainly have the "precise intention of maintaining particular events and occurrences of mankind forever present in the conscious of future generations."

The effect produced by a work of architecture is difficult to measure. Likewise, its effect on subsequent generations is difficult to anticipate. If it is certain that architecture maintains a capacity to create order and to communicate through time, it is more difficult to be sure what it is capable of saying. Following Wolfflin's question of "what characteristics of an age are at all capable of being expressed in visual form" is the statement that "we respond to shapes much as we respond to music: by dancing inwardly." If this is true, in our minds, we may be stepping on the toes of our partners.

NOTES

- ¹ Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985): p. 3.
- ² Yi-Fu Tuan, *Landscape of Fear* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979): p. 6.
- ³ Adolf Hitler Quoted. Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1970): p. 157.
- ⁴ Adolf Hitler quoted. Barbara Miller Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany 1918-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968): p. 188.
- ⁵ Adolf Hitler quoted, Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*: pp. 94-95.
- ⁶ Alois Riegl, *Le Culte Moderne des Monuments*, Jacques Boulet, Transl. (Paris: In Extenso, 1984).
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 59. *L'existence physique est la condition de toute existence psychique...*
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 62. *La foule s'est depuis toujours réjouie de ce qui se donnait pour neuf. Elle préfère voir dans les oeuvres la puissance créatrice de l'homme plutôt que l'effet destructeur de la nature.*
- ⁹ Joan Ockman, "The Most Interesting Form of Lie," *Oppositions* 23 (September 1981): p. 41.
- ¹⁰ Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*: p. 288.
- ¹¹ Georges Balandier, *Le Désordre* (Paris: Fayard, 1988).
- ¹² Adolf Hitler quoted. Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, p. 101.
- ¹³ Alan Balfour, *Berlin: The Politics of Order: 1737 — 1989* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990): p. 253.
- ¹⁴ Michael Monninger, "Growing Together Again," *Architectural Design: Berlin Tomorrow* (London: Academy Editions, 1991): p. 19.
- ¹⁵ *Architecture and Urbanism Extra Edition Peter Zumthor* (February 1998): p. 196.

¹⁶ Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1938): p. 438.

¹⁷ Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *Ordres et Désordres* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982): p. 83. *On peut en effet considérer que le totalitarisme résulte d'une volonté tellement totale du temps que celui-ci en vient à être nié.*

¹⁸ OM Ungers, "Urban Islands in a Metropolitan Sea," *Architectural Design: Berlin Tomorrow* (London: Academy Editions, 1991): pp. 93-95.

¹⁹ Mirko Zarpini, "Berlin the Capital," *Lotus 80* (1994): p. 77.

²⁰ Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*: p. 160.

²¹ Peter Marcuse, "The Architectural Competition for the World Trade Center Site," *Metropolis*, (January 2003): p.18.