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# ARCHITECTURE MUST FOLLOW THE STRATEGY OF MUSIC: SHARING

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The music industry has undergone a revolution that was on the verge of destroying it. In just over ten years, the public has stopped buying CDs and started downloading music. They have gone from possessing something physical that used to be collected and had a certain value to downloading intangible MP3 files that cost almost nothing. And the industry is beginning to adapt to this new situation, which has caused income to be generated from live concerts, subliminal advertising and digital royalties.

Architects are as baffled now as record companies were then. The bursting of the housing and subprime mortgage bubble has created a new scenario. What once had value and was secured by appraisers and banks has evaporated.

People are rethinking the need to own things, be it a home or a CD. The important thing is not to own something, but to enjoy it, and pay for it when you need it. Why store hundreds of CDs, if you can keep them on an iPod? Possession is a luxury only available to collectors and mythomaniacs. Enjoy the music you like and simply delete it when you are no longer interested in it. And this concept is moving into all areas, including architecture. Why do I need to buy a home if my job or my partner may take me to live in another city at any time? Why do I need a three-bedroom apartment if I live alone? If guests come, there are websites that will provide me with a spare room just a few metres from my house where I can put them up. Because the use of community resources is what the Internet offers. And that's more than saving. It's sharing and creating a society that does not waste.

Music is 10 years ahead of architecture; let's take advantage of its experience.

## **SHARING CREATIVITY**

Today not all singers are also songwriters. The traditional pop artists writing songs, touring and promoting their CDs are part of twentieth-century history. Similarly, fewer and fewer architects are able to design and construct buildings. Building engineers, structural engineers, consultants and project managers are involved in the process and make some of the decisions, overseeing the building and limiting the work of the architect.

Singles are now created in songwriting sessions directed by producers, who lay down the basic elements of the song: the rhythms, backing vocals, chords and tempo – and all of this comes from a sampler. The producers have analysed hundreds of past hits and they change the tempo or use special effects to go one step further in the search for a smash-hit. This is the base material used by a topliner, who writes the main melody, the lyrics and the choruses but is always under the orders of the producer. Some songs are commissioned and others are not. Producers create some songs for particular singers and offer others to singers' managers. World-famous singers such as Rihanna, Beyoncé and Pink need a potential hit every month to keep a high profile and give their fans new material. They have to do world tours and interviews, to maintain their celebrity status.

If we seek a parallel with architecture, architects would be the toplineers, the songwriters seeking a melody, designing a new hit, but dependent on the details of functional, energy efficiency and retail consultancy provided by the engineers. Engineers can provide the data to make a building efficient, but they lack the melody and chorus that can leave the audience reeling.

Singers have become actors who perform the songs prepared by their team. Each song is a single distributed as a separate object through the Internet and the media. It therefore has to be catchy enough to stop the listeners from pressing the "skip" button on their MP3 players.

"People on average give a song seven seconds on the radio before they change the channel, and you got to hook them." John Seabrook. "The Song Machine - The hitmakers behind Rihanna" The New Yorker, March 26, 2012.

Now there is no LP format to create a genre, a history or an attitude. The creation of a new hit is based on numbers, quantities and downloads that are keyed into the producers' samplers. The musician's single is the architect's rendering. It is the image that needs to convince a client, an audience or a jury in seven seconds. And designing with a view to attracting the client often turns renderings into marketing strategies. Architects design not only the building, but also the scenery. They seek colours and shapes that are related to the client in order to convince the decision-maker, and to a greater or lesser extent they introduce links and references to the brand or company.

## SHARING BRANDS

In the music industry and in advertising, the insertion of a product, brand or message in song lyrics or in a video clip is called product placement. Songs are created to support products or products are built into songs in a form of symbiosis. The producer contacts a company and offers to associate its product with the lyrics of a song. Marketing managers continually seek new ways to sell products. Since the advent of the remote control, which lets us to change channel during commercial breaks, advertisers have been changing their strategy. Now introduce the products into the series, film or video clip we are watching. For example, Rihanna wears Carrera Vintage sunglasses in the “Rude Boy” video and Britney Spears features all sorts of Sony products in “Hold It Against Me”. This is a simple form of symbiosis. A higher level is found in “Pass the Courvoisier”, the 2002 hit by Busta Rhymes and P. Diddy.

Courvoisier, a French cognac with a very long history (Napoleon is said to have taken it with him to Saint Helena when he was deported), took a bold step in associating the brand with a hip-hop group. The singers danced and drank, showing their social status with a bottle of Courvoisier in their hands. Of course, their fans and hip-hop lovers began to emulate the band, so Courvoisier’s market share within the African-American community reached record heights.

Buildings have more and more screens, more spaces, more surfaces for recommending products and persuading us to buy them. Sometimes buildings are created merely to serve as LED-studded advertising screens. It recently hit the news in Barcelona that an advertising company had offered to build a new stadium for FC Barcelona, whose current stadium had become too small for all the club’s members. In return for building the new 100,000-seater stadium, the advertising company wanted the rights to 50% of the advertising space.

100,000 people with high purchasing power, who are euphoric or depressed depending on the way the game goes, make a very attractive captive audience for advertisers. And the possibility of bombarding them with advertising for 90 minutes at each match is well worth a stadium. Source: EFE. “El Barça estudia construir un nuevo estadio financiado con publicidad”, *El Periodico de Catalunya*, March 15, 2012).

Today musicians, advertisers and architects fight to attract the time and attention of customers. Architecture will therefore use advertising as a way to justify and even guarantee its existence.

## SHARING SPACES

Another feature of music is that people want to share it. People come together on the basis of musical preferences, which often become personality traits. They affect the way we dress and the way we distinguish ourselves from the rest. Now that there is so much music at our disposal, individuals can share endless personal lists through streaming services such as Spotify.

In the not so distant past, one way of expressing your musical tastes was through jukeboxes. You could pay to choose a song, making a statement about your mood and sending a message to the other people in the bar. Today, the jukebox has been updated and there are mobile applications that let you interact with the sound systems of bars. According to consumption, popularity or any other requirement established by the bar manager, you can decide what music is heard by everyone there.

The Jaron Lanier book *You Are Not a Gadget: a Manifiesto* (Knopf Publishing Group, January 2010) mentions a similar application. In one passage Lanier speaks of a party with “songles”, where the music played depends on who is attending. Each participant carries a mobile phone on which they store their musical preferences, and the DJ plays music based on the particular tastes of each guest, divided by a statistical algorithm. Lanier is talking about systems that allow people to interact with public spaces. If we can now express and quantify the musical preferences of a group of people, we will soon be able to do so for the design and occupation of buildings. We will design systems for interacting with the public that define our preferences and moods. Just as people can ask to hear hip hop or a ballad on their mobiles, they will also be able to ask for their living spaces to be reconfigured. Ultimately we will be able to connect to the built environment and express our emotions, just as we share a collective experience through music.

The engine of change has been the Internet, which has disrupted many industries. Music has been a pioneer in this field because it is an easy way to share files and emotions. Sharing is the key to architecture.

Let’s follow the strategy of music by sharing spaces and emotions.