

I wanted to revisit Italian Futurism in an effort to reappropriate values I think are essential to the modern anarchical conscience of society but were misplaced by Facism.



You really messed up this giraffe.



Giraffe. I love it.



So, quite simply, it's a giraffe.



Oh yeah! A rocket ship!
So...it's not a rocket ship?
This just makes sense.



READING OR NOT
TWO PERSPECTIVES
ON READING AND ITS
PLACE IN SCHOOL
THROUGH THE EYES
OF A WRITTEN
WORD CONSUMPTION
MACHINE AND A
RELATIVELY LAZY GUY

SEEKING OUT THEORIES

As students in a competitive education system, we are routinely bombarded by links to professional and student architectural works and portfolios. Websites like Tumblr, Pinterest, and ISSUU, make design inspiration readily accessible to anyone with an internet connection. As a student there is nothing more tempting than seeing an attractive form online and saying "I want that in my project!" What these internet services often fail to communicate are the underlying theories and thought processes that go into publication-worthy architectures. The internet makes it easy to forget that ideas make buildings. Theories are systems of ideas. Viewing architectures is viewing theories at work, and in that understanding, requires the active designer to have at his or her disposal the appropriate theoretical knowledge base.

Some people distrust theories as artificial grids imposed upon reality - yet without them, all we have is a world of disconnected facts and raw data. Theory is what allows us to relate facts to each other, and in doing so, generates knowledge. Whether we like it or not, without being able to generalize, we don't really have any knowledge of anything.

Of course there are very real dangers to theory. When one says "I am a 'theory-name-here-ist'", what happens is that theory controls every aspect of data interpretation and might cause one to miss important information (Maslow's famous adage: 'when all you have is a hammer, everything starts to look like a nail'). The pages of history are littered with stories of theories gone awry, people whose theories began to control them, rather than the other way around. Architecture is especially victim to this phenomenon.

So are old architectural theories worth study? It is true they don't entirely help us to understand contemporary issues, yet I believe that they are still useful, provided we reject the idea that they are exclusive. The historical trend in architectural theory is to use theories from other disciplines, primarily philosophy. This raises important questions. Can we apply one overarching theory to architecture, music and religion? We all agree architecture has the elements of scientific and anthropological disciplines, yet is it right to approach architecture as we might approach an earthquake or ancestral bone?

SO ARE OLD ARCHITECTURAL THEORIES WORTH STUDY?

I would advise design students to be critical of these theories, and try to mentally reposition them as interpretations. An analogy is not a complete theory; similarities do not constitute explanations. An all-encompassing theory, spread out over disciplines, can initially feel liberating, but ends up being limiting. I would argue that it is the ability to oscillate between these larger systems of thought, or better yet, to use them as vantage points from which to

view a unique set of problems, that is the most useful for a designer. Theories are tools. A discipline as elusive as architecture (how many times were you asked to define what architecture is this week?) demands a multiplicity of architectural vantage points, theories and interpretations to cast light upon its features.

I recently participated in the 2014 ISU/Roma Tre workshop, where teams of students were given two and a half days to design a museum and café renovation strategy for an abandoned slaughterhouse building in Rome. Our team was able to identify desirable spatial qualities for the required programs that didn't match the functionally bleak context. Our team looked to examples of structuralism in architecture and urban planning to see how a generation of architects before us responded to the lack of humanity found in rigid rationalism. What we discovered were architectural ideas about culture, form, and circulation that influenced our decision to design an open structure of canopies to accommodate free movement and interpretation, in a way that coalesced with the surroundings. Structuralism gave us a language with which to talk about architecture that responded to a contemporary challenge.

As students at a state university we have innumerable free resources at our disposal to acquire new and used theories and tools. Parks Library is a treasure trove of architectural thought, and a great place to improve an existing tool box. Take advantage of this resource! In my short experience as a design student the most successful projects are those supplemented by diligent personal research that often

starts 'on the side', before emerging front and center. It is true the internet provides us with exciting new opportunities for fast question seeking, but only through consistent and deliberate study can we organize those questions in professionally and personally meaningful ways.

With every theoretical revelation a slew of new unanswered questions arise. Sometimes this perpetual chase towards a truth or solution is intoxicating, other times it is exhausting. This is the nature of learning. We all have personal interests. We all have an individual constellation of unanswered questions that keeps us striving for knowledge and moving in all different directions. The important thing is that we stay moving, that we actively seek out answers, and take joy in the discoveries that orient our trajectories.

By Matthew Darmour-Paul