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(EDITOR)
INTERROGATING

POP

IN ARCHITECTURE

VENTURI'S REVENGE, OR HOW ARCHITECTURE WENT "POP!"

Pedro Gadanho

Roemer van Toorn recently stated that the relationship between architecture and POP is no longer about being popular but rather about creating the popular. To his proposal I would like to add the idea that architecture has in fact already been absorbed by the popular. Architecture is now a part of the scene, in fact a part of popular culture. That is, architecture is now part of the media scene. Indeed popular culture is more and more identified with what is displayed in mass-media such as MTV, life-style magazines, or daily newspapers. And one cannot deny that popular culture is also more and more entangled with consumer culture.



The burst

Architecture went "POP!" because it entered the vein of POP art, and architecture went "POP!" because its autonomy bubble definitely burst.

Today, the "popular" is what is popularly consumed. As such, even craftsmanship exists only to fulfill an exotic consumption impulse. And because, by now, architecture has spectacularly entered the fields of both mass media and popular consumption, architecture has indeed gone "POP!" But I wouldn't restrain the idea of architecture going "POP!" to its being part of popular culture as we now know it.

The first part of this proposition is easily understandable. As we know, architecture follows in the steps of art with a variable degree of delay. There are rare moments in which architecture seems to nearly catch up with art – such as when Archigram was exploring their own version of POP at the end of the 1960s. And there are moments in which the delay between art and architecture becomes truly tedious – as when minimalism is stripped of its sense and pursued like some sort of ascetic boredom.

So, after exploring the vein of minimalism for what seemed a painful eternity, architecture now decided to go "POP!" once again. After all, with its star-system all over the place and its popularity sky-rocketing, architecture truly couldn't resist going more and more "POP!" As politicians and celebrities know, popularity is addictive. As such, well-known prior priests of the strictest minimalist economy – like, for instance, the very Calvinistic Herzog & de Meuron – are now pursuing the delights of ornament and extravagant science fiction shapes. How much more "POP!" can you go?

This drives me to the conclusion that the opposition I have drawn in some of my previous writings between minimalism and diversity was somewhat wrong. I should have had

the immediate insight that what historically opposed minimalism was, obviously, POP. Both art movements came up at about the same time. And both questioned art's autonomy as represented by the institutionalization of abstract painting. Both proposed that art somehow escaped the privilege of the unique artistic object and its corresponding museum context. But they had different approaches. Minimalist art created objects that focused the viewer's attention on the industrialization of manufacture and on the surrounding spatial

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