ANARCHITECTURE

Architects are always looking for a "new" architecture, not just some whimsical expression of their egos, but a new form which will somehow exact the essence of a new age.

The modern movement did this in the 20's by fusing the industrial revolution with architecture: "The House as a Machine." They adapted metaphors such as a ship, car and airplane to their buildings. They felt that mass-produced images like these would be a proper response to their times. Ignoring the failures of their 2nd and 3rd generation followers, even the originators of Modern architecture failed to create an architecture which was participatory and representative of the people of their times.

I am not trying to condemn the whole of Modern architecture, as many do these days by simply searching for another style or another revolutionary decoration. I am not recommending any prescriptions or preaching solutions like "humanist" architects, Fourier and Morris. I am suggesting Anarchitecture (anarchy and architecture), where emphasis is placed on freedom of expression, collective processes and choice, rather than on material images, hierarchical forms and "The Ideal Architecture".

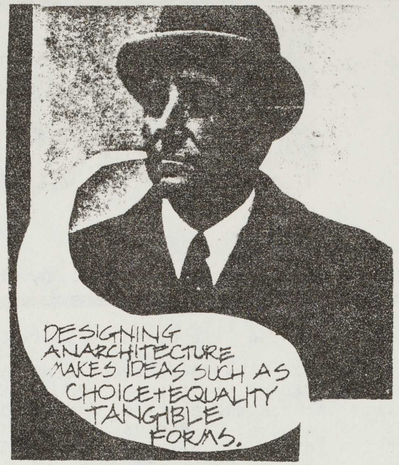
The idea of many people being involved in the architectural process is enough to make Anarchitecture politically as well as professionally questionable. After all, if people become more involved with the spaces in which they live, work and play, they may begin to question the rigid systems which, so far, they have accepted passively.

Immediate types of Anarchitecture can include direct actions, such as the Provos and Kraakers in Amsterdam. These people entered abandoned (government owned) houses, cleaned them up and painted them white, so that squatters in need of shelter could easily recognize them. After this occupation, the squatters themselves fixed up the houses to suit their own needs. Locally, the Community for Creative Non-Violence tried a similar action on one house in Washington, D.C.. It seems their main mistake was to sink $70,000 into this one house, after local officials gave their word not to harass them. Shortly thereafter, the building was reclaimed, condemned and demolished by guess who....

This mistake can also be interpreted as a failure to see architecture as a tool of service as well as a symbolic edifice. Anarchitecture must always make this point clear. If seen mainly as "a symbol", the building gets tied to one message, one pre-digested image demanding no input or participation from a user. Its importance as a symbol gets distorted. As "a tool", it can serve a variety of needs from changing times, and yet through each change, can freshly re-assert its objectives. This way, the building works as a part of a community's services and is not treated only as a commodity.

One social aspect of Anarchitecture goes on the assumption that buildings themselves cannot change society. The type of a building (a factory as opposed to a house, a store as opposed to a library), and the number of any particular type within an area will change the characteristic of a neighborhood, and directly affect a community's ability to sustain itself. But the building must be able to sustain the changing groups' needs.

Designing Anarchitecture makes ideas such as freedom and equality tangible forms. Expressions of collectiveness and choice can be made real, instead of the prevalent consumer images and power symbols in architecture. This formal aspect of Anarchitecture can be used to inform people as well as humiliate and diffuse the oppressive conditions we tolerate everywhere.

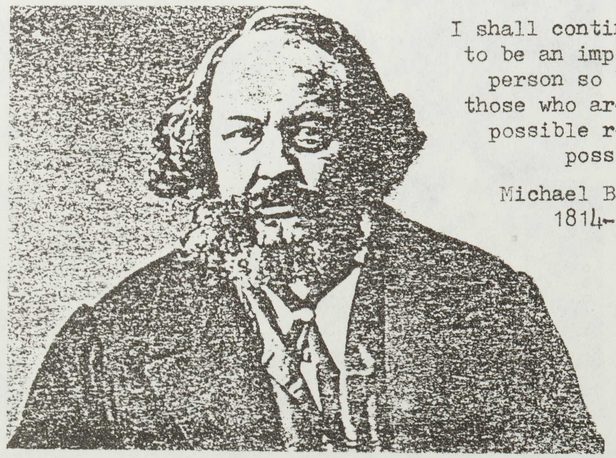


Some Italian Rationalists (Massimo Scolari, Carlo Aymonino...) are doing just this. Aldo Rossi used images of a prison to design a government building. It makes a nice joke, but not if you live nearby. This degree of architectural irony has great potential for backfiring. It is too stern and severe with sarcasm; the sense of humor and political content is too intellectualized, not visually clear enough to be understood by most people, let alone most architects. In this country, the Post-Modern hoo-hahs (Tigerman, Stern, even the likes of Venturi) have a great sense of humor, but there is no spirit or backbone of socio-political intent in their work.

On a more positive note, Lucien Kroll and ARAU (Atelier of Urban Research and Action) have moved thought on participatory architecture greatly forward. Mr. Kroll was commissioned to design a university dormitory in Brussels; he devised the project so that the students and others could design and build it themselves, offering advice and a stable organizing framework when called upon. This drove the administration insane, but the building stands, and satisfies all needs of its inhabitants and neighbors.

So, how do we make it work? If you can come up with some ideas on Anarchitecture, be it anti-speculative condo graffiti, project ideas, non-hierarchical designs or the like, drop me a line at this publication's address. Maybe we can make a little sense out of this architectural rambling.

UMBERTO GIACOBAZZI



I shall continue
to be an impossible
person so long as
those who are now
possible remain
possible

Michael Bakunin
1814-1876

Madmen Need More Good Men

with overly nervous Park Police (who were nice enough to have the army escort us the last 200 meters) the day was going well.

Passing our time by founding, on the spot where we stood, the newly liberated territory of Anarchia, and discussing plans for 1984 Olympics which we will hold on our (and your) new land (see future Emancipations for exact times and dates), we wondered if the day was to end in a whimper. But as the marchers arrived and the speakers proceeded to speak, seriousness once again descended on our affinity group. Quickly meeting, we decided to slip off to the parade route in twos and threes. Our plan to stand in defiance and fly our Black Banner seems minuscule now. Yet in the crowd of Reaganoids and armed police it was quite enough for the now 8 of us who had managed to regroup. What was to transpire could not have been planned . . . as no act of true human emotion and solidarity can be.

Since I was bearing the flag it became defacto that I would continue to fly it, for there was no time to draw straws or ask for volunteers. Besides, I felt a strange sort of honor; it was like the foolish patriotism I had sensed as a Rebublican in my younger days. I knew that we'd just as soon drag this flag most of the time; yet at this instant it was no longer black cloth, it was ideals. It was something different to us all yet we all held it in common. My emotions solidified into resolve.

Scouts went out looking for the perfect place and found a good one. As the crowd started up we knew it was time and moved into place. Unfurling the flag I was surrounded by the group for protection. All at once the flag blew, Reagan passed, the crowd suggested Russia, and the police arrived.

As they pulled the pole, I turned and tightened my grip, so they decided to make the flag and me a set and proceded to drag me off. Attempting to appeal to their sense of private property I offered up the pole in exchange for me and the cloth. But this was to no avail and as they pulled me off they frisked my coat and pack. Angrily I replied with my "right" to privacy which worked, yet I still didn't know where I was going and my captors were offering me no information.

It was then, only seconds after Reagan passed, that I realized that in pulling me through the crowd they had succeeded in separating me from the group. Visions of the arrest I had always avoided popped into my head. Yet I wasn't going to make it all too easy for them.

I yelled out, "Oh group!" in a half joking manner as to not arouse the flat-foots too much. And wouldn't you know, it worked. Surrounded by familiar faces I could hear the sound of clicking as our photographer captured the moment.

From there on it was all downhill. The pleas of non-violence and swearing of witnesses dissuaded them. The one even stopped trying to get the flag away by breaking my fingers. We did lose the flag. But its ideals were transfered into us all.

I will never forget the Anarchy of that minute. I will never forget seeing mutual aid destroy authority. And I will always carry the love we created that minute, forward. Thank you all.

Scott M. Rodell