From Art to Anthropology and Architecture

Bruno Vayssière

Translator: Simon Pleasance

Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/critiquedart/1809>

DOI: 10.4000/critiquedart.1809

ISBN: 2265-9404

ISSN: 2265-9404

Publisher

Groupeement d'intérêt scientifique (GIS) Archives de la critique d'art

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 September 2003

ISBN: 1246-8258

ISSN: 1246-8258

Electronic reference

Bruno Vayssière, « From Art to Anthropology and Architecture », *Critique d'art* [Online], 22 | Automne 2003, Online since 24 February 2012, connection on 24 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/critiquedart/1809> ; DOI : 10.4000/critiquedart.1809

This text was automatically generated on 24 April 2019.

Archives de la critique d'art

From Art to Anthropology and Architecture

Bruno Vayssière

Translation : Simon Pleasance

REFERENCES

Gilardi, Piero. *Not for Sale : à la recherche de l'art relationnel 1982-2000*, Paris : Les Presses du réel, 2003, (Relectures)

Ibelings, Hans. *Supermodernisme : l'architecture à l'ère de la globalisation*, Paris : Hazan, 2003
Architectures expérimentales 1950-2000 : collection du Frac Centre, Orléans : Ed. HXX, 2003

- 1 Three “avant-garde” books about life, from art to anthropology and architecture. Piero Gilardi’s *Not For Sale* actually only approaches architecture by way of experiments hailing from Italian Arte Povera of the 1960s. After Gerhard Richter in 1999, then Otto Muehl, Marc Décimo and Öyvind Fahlström, what do we glean from this fifth publication of basic texts by Les Presses du réel, billed to be “an opportunity to make a few adjustments” in relation to contemporary art (dixit Xavier Douroux, of Le Consortium in Dijon, the collection editor)? How are we to make a precise reading of P. Gilardi’s naïve excesses in the 1960s and 1970s? All the more so because his writings here were all conceived between 1982 and 2000, with an ever greater fascination for computer and communications technology...
- 2 Let us pass over the anarcho-situationist substructure of the character who still readily admits to being intrigued by the figure of the “punk on a bridge”! Artistic self-determination has been his creed ever since his first “natural carpets” produced in 1964 at the age of 22: these works were meant to alert participants to the danger of the loss of the senses, and then some. So there is nothing surprising about the fact that he is still intrigued by the internationale of self-run centres, from the *UFA Fabrik* (Berlin) to the *Rote Fabrik* (Zurich), by way of the Schradebeck Market (or rather Scharbeck, in Brussels) and the

ICA in London. His “experienced dilettantes” (Umberto Eco) are just one of the ramifications of the “ecologist, pacifist, feminist [movements] at the root of alternative education”, not forgetting the mentally handicapped and their “liberation”, as Italy then knew it.

- 3 In a word, in the first part of his work, from 1982 to 1985, our bard of collective creativity would move from Nicaragua to Palestinian camps by way of Native American reservations and Kenyan villages. All fronts are present, from pollution to the most traditional of Third World causes. Then came the time to settle a few scores with competitors (the anti-panegyric stance of Joseph Beuys, unpublished, but written in 1986 the day after his death, is a little anthology in its own right).
- 4 Basically, Eric Troncy, author of the preface for this harbinger of new universalist consciousnesses and human/technological hybridization, is right: the abandonment of the object in the face of a “micro-emotive” art turned him into a forerunner back in 1966. But, according to the same preface writer, he swiftly became the prisoner of a programme whose simplicity and enormity had as much to do with his life as work as with primitive computer-related illusion... We all believed in new “cellular automata” in the early 1970s.
- 5 Hazan, the famous architectural publisher, is also bringing out paperback collections, in particular with the very latest publication of the theoretical creed of Hans Ibelings titled *Supermodernisme: l'architecture à l'ère de la globalisation*. This slim and very pedagogic volume is a delight to read and has sound reverberations, proceeding as it does from a recent historical analysis once and for all sanctioning a new globalization (especially where airports are concerned) to today's impact of the claimed neutrality of architecture. This latter actually seems rather to opt for increasingly communicational strategies linked with various consumerist experiments, from the vast shopping mall to cities given over entirely to tourism, with Las Vegas still the archetype. Needless to add, most of the arguments were already often largely developed in the 1960s (especially by equivalents of P. Gilardi within neo-Pop architectural criticism) but the sights have been correctly adjusted here for the general third-millennium reader keen to understand what risks happening to us more and more in terms of built environment.
- 6 The huge catalogue of the summer exhibition put on by the Centre Regional Contemporary Art Fund [Frac Centre], titled *Architectures expérimentales 1950-2000*, issues from the “monumental doorstep” of a reference work vital to all researchers curious to understand the genealogy of a certain number of architectural movements hailing, it just so happens, from the earlier “supermodernism”.
- 7 One can find only words of praise for the wonderful foresight shown by Frédéric Migayrou and Marie-Ange Brayer in forming the first collection based on works usually neglected by the official criticism of the 1980s, and then managing to compare and enrich it with ever more contemporary architects and artists, the whole endeavour being a perfectly lucid demonstration of the continuity between the “radicals” of the 1950s—this time the revolution of the “limp” years is anticipated—and the various “present-day deconstructors”—the neologism borrowed from Derrida, today wearing thin and giving way to the “supermodernism” of Hans Ibelings. More than 100 monographs on individual figures and, more often, groups are here preceded by 80 pages of different essays, in addition to those by the two main driving forces behind the Frac Centre saga, the only one to be completely given over not only to architecture but also to a perfectly coherent and almost “hard” line—we shall come back to this—among visionaries, utopists, and up-

and-coming young fans of *morphing* and other current forms that are softer-“limper”-than really connected to megastructures set to conquer the whole planet.

- 8 There is not much point in observing that few projects have actually seen the light of day: the church of St. Bernadette in Nevers, by Claude Parent, is now almost as famous as the chapel at Ronchamp by Le Corbusier. On the other hand, let us look at the very large proportion of maquettes, all the better presented here by full-page colour photographs. M-A. Brayer offers a most thorough analysis of their “projectual” dimension between 1950 and 1980. But because they have now been almost systematically replaced by synthetic images, it is quite clear that the structuralist temptations of yore do not have anything like the same meaning today. This possibly risks diminishing an overly linear demonstration for a half-century of history that has been more disrupted than might appear. Let us add certain “dubious” elements within the collection (but is this not something peculiar to all collections?) and the lack of room, here, for a more exhaustive critical listing of the melting pot that ranges from Michael Graves in the purest Disney kitsch to Vito Acconci, poet of body acting readapted to the public place, and from Daniel Buren to Daniel Libeskind-and all they remotely share in common is their first name... The pleasure of bubbles and grids is definitely not simple: thanks to the Frac, in any event, for this admirable inventory, if anything just a bit too “perfectly” enhanced.