

AN INQUIRY ON ABSOLUTE ARCHITECTURE: THE CASE STUDY OF
ARTER IN İSTANBUL

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ABSTRACT

AN INQUIRY ON ABSOLUTE ARCHITECTURE: THE CASE STUDY OF ARTER IN İSTANBUL

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The notion of form has always had a prominent role in the discipline of architecture both for the theoretical discussions and the practice of building. Reconfiguring the physical conditions of architecture, the idea of form can enable possibilities for creating a relationship between the object of architecture and the city. This research unfolds the theories on architectural form and offers an analysis of the Arter building in İstanbul in the light of these theories. The “revolutionary” architecture around the 18th and 19th centuries by Étienne-Louis Boullée and Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, the autonomous architecture in the 20th century by Peter Eisenman and Michael Hays, the architectural pragmatism that has emerged with the millennium by Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting, and the absolute architecture of Pier Vittorio Aureli illustrate some of these different theories that centralize the discussion of form in architectural production. This thesis argues that Aureli’s theory of *absolute architecture* builds a coherent relationship between the intrinsic forces of architecture and its wider urban context. The aim of the thesis is to discuss the potentials of architectural form to offer political, physical, and social engagement with the city.

Keywords: Absolute Architecture, Form, Project, Autonomy, Pragmatism.

ÖZ

BİR MUTLAK MİMARLIK SORGUSU: İSTANBUL'DA ARTER ÖRNEĞİ

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Form kavramının mimarlık disiplini içerisinde hem teorik tartışmalar için hem de mimarlığın pratiđi için her zaman öne çıkan bir rolü olmuştur. Mimarının fiziksel koşullarını belirleyen form, aynı zamanda kent ile mimarlık arasında ilişkiler oluşturmanın da önünü açabilmektedir. Bu çalışma mimari form odaklı teorileri ortaya çıkarmakta ve İstanbul'daki Arter yapısının bu bağlamda analizini sunmaktadır. 18. ve 19. yüzyıllarda Étienne-Louis Boullée ve Claude-Nicolas Ledoux'nun “devrimci” mimarlık tanımı, 20. yüzyılda Peter Eisenman ve Michael Hays'in özerk mimarlık kavramı, milenyum ile birlikte Robert Somol ve Sarah Whiting'in sunduđu faydacı mimarlık anlayışı, ve Pier Vittorio Aureli'nin mutlak mimarlık fikri formu mimarlık tartışmasının odađına yerleştiren teorileri örnelemektedir. Bu çalışma Aureli'nin *mutlak mimarlık* tartışmasını mimarının içsel dinamikleriyle onun daha geniş çerçevesi olan kentsel bağlam arasında bağ oluşturan bir teori olarak ele almaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı mimari formun kent ile politik, fiziksel ve sosyal bir bağlilik oluşturma potansiyellerini tartışmaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mutlak Mimarlık, Form, Proje, Özerklik, Faydacılık.

To Doğa.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The idea of form in architecture introduces the very physical qualities of the discipline which can create relationships with the current conditions around. As an outcome of the discipline, it provides the discipline with a series of physical configurations; therefore, form becomes an essential part of the design considering the interrelations of architecture and its environment. It is a representation of architecture's approach towards the city. Moreover, form becomes a direct attempt for participating in the very context around the design. Via the use of form, the architecture enables the possibility of interacting with its environment. As a physical outcome of the discipline, form becomes one of the most powerful instruments of architecture in the process of creating a unified spatial context with the city. It is a critical approach of architecture to engage with the urban conditions, thus, to create a holistic understanding both formally and socially. Consequently, the ways of generating forms become a crucial discussion within the discipline. For architecture, form is one of the main features of the design that reflects the idea behind the project and reconfigures the relationship between the building and the surrounding context. As it is the very physical condition that the building proposes, form becomes the very attempt for participating within the formal qualities of the city, thus generate new possibilities for creating an interconnection with architecture. Without such an understanding of form, architecture becomes disengaged from the physical conditions of the city. The following chapters of this study will introduce different ideas on architectural forms, and their effect on both the disciplinary discussions and the urban environment. Although these ideas define form through their own perspective, it is crucial to understand the possibilities that architectural form can develop for the discipline. These theories on form generate the very possibility for an architecture that engages physically and socially with the city.

If we were to come across a mound in the woods, six foot long by three foot wide, with the soil piled up in a pyramid, a somber mood would come over us and a voice inside us would say, “There is someone buried here.” *That is architecture.*¹

The passage above interprets the idea of form in Loos’ perspective, which refers to the importance of architectural form in relation to its surrounding context. The mound that Loos emphasizes represents the essential features of architecture and its formal qualities. From the passage, the very beginning of the first sentence points out the criticality of the relationship between the artifact and the environment. “The mound in the woods” clearly refers to an extraordinariness, and before analyzing its dimensions it already reminds the viewer of an unusual feature for its context. This is the form of an architectural artifact that is both separated from and related with the surrounding context; the “mound” is built by similar materials that are available outside of it but also differ in shape and size, or mass and volume. The dimensions that Loos interprets reflect the overall size of a body, thus it becomes easier to deduce that the mound is a grave for one. This is after the first encounter with the form and elaborating the analysis on the artifact, which reveals new information about the mound, such as its size and material. Within the passage, what Loos recalls as “architecture” is the very notion that is retrieved from the mound itself at first: the form and its relationship with the environment. Hence, the form of an artifact becomes a critical feature of its architecture and the precursor of an urban engagement.

¹ Loos’s article was originally titled “Architektur”, and it was published in a daily Viennese newspaper *Neue Freie Presse*. Even though there is not any translation of Loos’s full article, the similar section could be found in various sources. For the translation above, see Ross Wolfe, “Someone is Buried Here: Adolf Loos on Architecture and Death,” *The Charnel House: From Bauhaus to Beinhaus* (blog), March 2017, <https://thecharnelhouse.org/2014/03/17/someone-is-buried-here-adolf-loos-on-architecture-and-death/#comments>.

Loos' analogy illustrates an architecture that is existing purely because of its formal qualities, thus become a part of the forest while preserving its form. Hence, the effects of architecture on urban development are critically connected with the formal configurations of the designs. Within the current landscape of architecture in the 21st century, there are many ways for producing a form-focused design approach, either centralizing on form as a notion that provides separation from or interrelation with the urbanity. These two approaches created an opposition within the discipline in the past, even though they are both focused on form as a critical aspect of design. Nevertheless, it is still a crucial requirement for the discipline to develop a universal understanding of form, concentrating on it as a primal notion within architecture rather than being an instrument for the discipline. The way that architectural form connects with the city presents a possibility for a different type of interrelation in-between. As Loos emphasized, architecture realizes itself via its form; therefore, the formal configurations carry great importance within the process. The ideal status of architecture, for Loos, is dependent on generating a form that both reflects to and separates from the surrounding aspects of it. Such an idea of architecture focuses on its form as a priority and provides new possibilities, as a step towards the city. Within the cities, architecture performs through the formal features of design, participates in the physical environment of the urbanity. Hence, architecture becomes a part of the city that provides such qualities both for itself and for the urban environment.

This interpretation of the city suggests that the actual realization of the urbanity is dependent on the architectural forms within that environment. In the 15th century, Leon Battista Alberti defined the city as a large house and correspondingly the house as a small city, which translated the relationship in-between as of the parts to its whole.² Peter Trummer argues that when Alberti conveyed such a definition, he implied that a city is actually a single object that consists of an “aggregation of

² Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988).

buildings” within.³ According to Trummer, this new “object-oriented ontology” requires a rereading of the formal configurations of the city.⁴ In order to comprehend the idea of a city as an object, Trummer categorizes cities regarding their formal definitions. “The city as a circle” illustrates the figure-ground diagram of Rome by Giambattista Nolli as a relationship of masses and voids within the urbanity.⁵ “The city as a grid” matches with Ildefons Cerda’s plan for Barcelona as it provides a mesh that has no boundary.⁶ With Cerda’s plan, the city starts to convey the idea of equality by its repetitive architectural forms throughout the territory. While “The city as archipelago” rejects the abstract figure-ground relationship, Trummer suggests that the architectural slabs are interpreted as floating figures within the urbanity that are liberated from the ground.⁷ And finally, with “The city as a solid”, Trummer refers to Archizoom’s project of No-Stop City as the emergence of the city-object.⁸ The clear separation of the urban parts such as the various zones for living, working, and parking is based on quantitative measurements within the forms of the city.

At this point, Trummer argues that when the idea of the city is understood as an object, the architecture within each form of the city becomes aggregated in order to define the city as a whole.⁹ Thereby, he asserts that the city becomes an aggregated object, and architecture stands as the only aspect that are left of the urbanity. In such a city the traditional figure-ground relationship becomes impossible to read because

³ Peter Trummer, “The City as an Object: Thoughts on the Form of the City,” *Log*, no. 27 (Winter/Spring 2013): 51.

⁴ Trummer, “The City as an Object,” 51.

⁵ Trummer, “The City as an Object,” 54.

⁶ Trummer, “The City as an Object,” 54.

⁷ Trummer, “The City as an Object,” 55.

⁸ Trummer, “The City as an Object,” 55.

⁹ Trummer, “The City as an Object,” 56.

the architectural forms that define these qualities transform into the very urbanity. “When the architectural object becomes both figure and ground, the city becomes an aggregated object, an object unified by buildings performing as ground and figures.”¹⁰ The architectural forms in Trummer’s study show that the notion of form is a unifying aspect of the city, which is actually defined by the physical conditions that are created by architecture. Therefore, it is critical to note that the idea of architectural form does not only relate with the site or the urban proximity around the design but affects the whole city. In Alberti’s emphasis, when the city becomes a small house, the rooms are the architectural acts within that urban environment. As a result, the rooms or the architecture must evaluate the city and address its conditions through the use of forms.

As Trummer asserted in his study, it is clear that the use of architectural forms does not only affect the site of the building, but also the structure of the city. Even though Trummer focuses on the formal conditions of the city, there are also social and cultural aspects that participate in the urbanity. Cynthia Davidson produced a project that is devoted to the city of Detroit, named “The Architectural Imagination” at the Biennale Architettura 2016.¹¹ As Davidson remarks, the project is focused on producing new ideas and architectural forms that will eventually become alienated artifacts of the city.¹² As she claims, the intention behind the Biennale exhibition was not to create concrete solutions for the city but to challenge the status quo and enhance it.¹³ The forms that are suggested for “The Architectural Imagination” also become a metaphor for the city via igniting discussions of relationships in-between. “It is quite another to produce a form that can be read as inclusive, as a permeable

¹⁰ Trummer, “The City as an Object,” 57.

¹¹ Cynthia Davidson, “The Architectural Imagination,” *Log*, no. 37 (Spring/Summer 2016): 22-31.

¹² Davidson, “The Architectural Imagination,” 30.

¹³ Davidson, “The Architectural Imagination,” 30.

layer through which anyone can pass.”¹⁴ In fact, by enabling such an architecture to be generated within the context of urbanity that is invoking and provocative, the city becomes a platform that is open for contradictory challenges. Architectural form transforms itself into an enforcer of such potential, thus the city into the whole that provides a playground.

1.1 Aim and Structure of the Thesis

This research unfolds the theories on architectural form and offers an analysis of the Arter building in İstanbul in light of these theories. The aim of the thesis is to discuss the potentials of architectural forms to offer political, physical, and social engagement with the city. The “revolutionary” architecture around the 18th and 19th centuries by Boullée and Ledoux, the autonomous architecture in the 20th century by Eisenman and Hays, and the architectural pragmatism that is emerged with the millennium by Somol and Whiting illustrate these different theories with disciplinary discussions in the thesis. In order to fully comprehend the notion of form being one of the main concerns of architectural production, these theories present a series of cases that focus on the formal configurations and their effects on both the architecture and the city. Throughout the analysis of these studies, the formal relationship between architecture and urbanity also becomes a critical discussion. Considering architectural forms as essential parts of the design, they become the generators of an opportunity for such a relationship. This thesis focuses on the ways that form is used as an individual aspect of the discipline that is separate from architectural ambitions such as the program and function. As a result, with a self-building form, it becomes possible to create ways of connection in-between architecture and its environment, as Loos emphasizes. This study will not focus on the methods of design that are needed for generating forms, such as the techniques

¹⁴ Davidson, “The Architectural Imagination,” 31.

of drawing or applying spatial configurations in relation with the program, but on the main approaches that are needed for the form to become an urban connector. After evaluating the theories that are centralized on form, these ideas will be interpreted with a case that presents the current conditions of the discipline over the analysis of the building of Arter in İstanbul. As an example of contemporary architecture of the 21st century, the forms within the Arter building are investigated for their possibility of reconnecting architecture with the city. This is critical for understanding the processes that lead to the realization of form in today's architectural conditions.

Throughout this study, the idea of form in architecture will be analyzed regarding the theories that instrumentalize form as a focus of the processes that result in architectural products. The second chapter of this study will start with investigating the idea of form within the primal theories of architecture. As the pre-Renaissance thought considers form as one of the most important features of architecture, which enables opportunities to configure its mass and volume in accordance with the environment; it also suggested an architecture that is mostly focused on the intrinsic features of the discipline, which lead to an autonomous understanding. Autonomy, in that period, was seen as enabling the possibilities for architecture to generate its own formal qualities that are radical for the current conditions. At the time, architectural thought claimed form as an essential aspect of design, which primarily leads to developing autonomous interrelations for formal qualities such as symmetry and repetition. Through the late 19th century, in light of Emil Kaufmann's studies, the modernist understanding is considered it to be a secondary aspect of design, mostly argued that the program and the function of architecture should be placed as a priority. Throughout the chapter, the works of Étienne-Louis Boullée and Claude-Nicolas Ledoux will be analyzed regarding the autonomy of form and architecture within the discipline. This chapter investigates the idea of form within the theories that generally consider it as an essential aspect of the design, thus constituted the discipline around the formal qualities of architecture.

As a continual discussion on form, the second chapter progresses towards evaluating more recent theories. In general, with the mid-20th century, the form is started to be considered as the absolute focus of the discipline again. Nevertheless, this time these arguments started to be concentrated on the theoretical studies that generated intrinsic investigations for the creation of form. At the time, autonomous architecture is started to be a critical part of the theoretical discussions, which questioned both the disciplinary and formal understandings of architecture. The notion of form became a core aspect in Peter Eisenman's theories, who primarily focused on the formal autonomy of architecture rather than disciplinary autonomy. Autonomy, in Eisenman's studies, is evaluated as the architectural *resistance* against the outer forces that surround the design, such as the physical conditions of the urbanity and the cultural notions that it develops. Regarding Eisenman's ideas on architecture and form, Michael K. Hays suggests another position for architecture called semi-autonomy. The way that Hays separates his theory from the autonomy of Eisenman is by reconfiguring the interrelation between architecture and the city. The semi-autonomous architecture that Hays presents does not neglect the urbanity but accepts it as a considerable value for the form of the design. In the second chapter, comprehending the autonomous theory in architecture provides a basis for understanding today's contemporary architecture and reflects a possibility for the use of form in the discipline.

As an alternative for the autonomous architecture, the second chapter concludes while analyzing the millennial theory of architectural pragmatism. Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting became the pioneers of this new approach for re-establishing the rules of the form-creation process in architecture. The pragmatist architecture of Somol and Whiting regrets the void that autonomous theory created between the forms of architecture and forms of the city. As a response, their approach was to redevelop an interrelationship in-between, thus generate a form that is highly dependent on the urban conditions. The notion of *absorption* plays a critical role in architectural pragmatism, which enables the forms of architecture to be in a continual relationship with the forms of the city. With this understanding, Somol and Whiting redispose

the ways of formal creation in architecture thus aim to reconnect the form of the design directly with the urbanity. The methods used in the architectural pragmatism became a challenge of the autonomous architecture by redistributing the focus of form to the outer forces of urbanity that affect the design. As the pragmatist theory became a response for the autonomous architecture, it also generated problems within the form-building processes of the discipline. Although autonomy and pragmatism are not the only theories that were focused on the form within the last century, they are crucial for this study to understand the previous relationships between architecture and form. They became the two contradictory yet complementary positions within the discipline, thus they affected the idea of form and the interrelation between architecture and the city. Consequently, the theories behind the *resistant* form of the autonomy and the *absorbent* form of the pragmatism will be examined throughout the following chapters. Since the difference between these theories' focuses plays a crucial role for the past centuries, their effect on the discipline and the city will be evaluated as a critical notion for this research.

In the third chapter, Towards an Absolute Architecture, another possibility is discussed as an alternative for previous focuses on either autonomous or pragmatist approaches on the creation of form. Against these contrasting ideas on integrating the formal qualities of architecture with the processes of design, there is still the possibility for another architectural understanding that interrelates form with the environmental and social conditions of the city. After evaluating the autonomous and pragmatist theories, this research will investigate Pier Vittorio Aureli's theory of *absolute architecture* that builds a coherent relationship between the intrinsic forces of architecture and the external context of urbanity. The difference of Aureli's theory from earlier studies is the concentration on the idea of a form that is in a reciprocal relationship with the city. Even though previous theories considered form as a part of an architecture that aims at interconnecting with the urban context, Aureli presents the notion of *absoluteness* in order to define a formal quality between architecture and the city. Hence, concentrating the focus of architecture without eliminating its relationship with the urban context requires the rearrangement of its principles of

form. That is an architecture embodied a series of formal qualities regarding the existing urban conditions, thus aiming to create a connection between the form of the design and the city. In fact, after developing its well-defined form, such an absolute architecture can start to celebrate urbanity by providing ways of engagement in-between. Hence, it becomes possible to suggest a formal separateness from the urban environment yet still configure accordingly with the very forces of the urbanity. This study examines such an architecture that enables the reconnection with the city via the *absoluteness* of form, which supports the social, cultural, and political aspects of the city. Understanding form as the essential part of the discipline results in an absolute architecture that enhances its relationship with the city. Moreover, it is because absolute architecture has control over its form that it becomes a key part of the whole process of engaging with the surrounding urban context.

In the fourth chapter, after analyzing these approaches of form-building processes within the discipline, the case study is introduced and analyzed in light of the previously discussed theories of autonomy, pragmatism, and absolute architecture. At this point, it is critical to evaluate a specific architectural example and to examine how these theories reflect on the practice field. To understand the contemporary architectural landscape of today, the Arter building from İstanbul is selected as a case study for this research. The project is analyzed considering its formal qualities and their effects on the city, while also concentrating on the design principles that realized it. The reason for distinguishing Arter from other contemporary architectures in the city is primarily the way that the project positions itself within the very urban context and generates new possibilities for developing interrelations with the city, as Aureli proposed with the idea of *absoluteness*. While the building presents both autonomous and pragmatist approaches of its form, formal qualities within the design enable certain methods of engagement with the urban fabric. Within this study, these formal features of Arter will be categorized and analyzed accordingly with their effect on the context of the city. The idea of form plays a crucial role in the case study, as it illustrates the main architectural element that is possible to generate an engagement between architecture and the city. As a result,

Arter's approach towards the city becomes a critical example for the architectural production in Turkey, and the building represents the conditions of the national architecture and its interpretation with the contemporary ideas. The project becomes a crucial example of the idea of absolute architecture with its focus on the relationship between architectural form and the city. Lastly, the final chapter concludes with evaluating the possibility for *absoluteness* in architecture as Aureli proposed, thus investigate ways of developing new formal configurations for the discipline.

CHAPTER 2

A BRIEF HISTORIOGRAPHY OF FORM IN ARCHITECTURE

Throughout time, architecture had different definitions that systematized its processes. Architectural theoretician and educator Stephen Parcell illustrates these histories of architecture gaining the ability to question its own principles in his book *Four Historical Definitions of Architecture*. Within a Western-oriented perspective, the book starts from ancient Greece, in which Parcell gathers 4 terms that have been in use for the categorization of arts and crafts through history. With this chronological study, Parcell is able to trace the development of architecture in relation to the social, cultural, and political context of the eras. He argues that long before it became a self-acknowledging discipline, architecture had to pass through four crucial stages which defined it a *techne*, *mechanical art*, *disegno*, and *fine art*.¹⁵ These terms are essential for understanding the development of architecture and finally realizing itself as a discipline. Firstly, according to Parcell, architecture was simply a collaboration of all systematic knowledge —*techné*— that was being used for building an artifact in ancient Greece.¹⁶ Secondly, it transformed into an instrument for creating shelter and mechanical tools in medieval Western Europe. Then, with the breakthrough of the Renaissance, architecture evolved into an act of thinking and designing in Italy, either as craftsmanship or artistry. And finally, in 18th century Western Europe, it gained a final acceptance as one of the *fine-arts*,

¹⁵ Stephen Parcell, *Four Historical Definitions of Architecture* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012): 8-20.

¹⁶ Parcell, *Four Historical*, 21.

where theoretical and practical discussions were made, concerning about the concepts of the discipline.¹⁷

The dialectic debate of architecture's material source for creating forms originates all the way back to the monumental works of ancient Greece. There was no such separation as craftsmanship and artisanship for Greeks, there was only *techné*. According to Parcell, the term included every participant and profession in the community; prophets, healers, legislators, builders, minstrels, carpenters, blacksmiths, metal workers, potters, acrobats, cooks, navigators, and horse trainers.¹⁸ The distinction between these roles was made for what that profession produces, or the very material it uses.¹⁹ The term was used to define the specific knowledge to use specific materials to produce a specific product, such as the *techné* for building boats using techniques that are specialized for processing wood. As a result, *techné* was a well-defined system for production, thus it became a collaboration of processes that could be thought to someone else. For architecture, this means various *techné* were required, each with a different set of techniques and produced different end-products. There was not even a term for *architecture* in existence, thus it was not possible to discuss its social, natural, economic complexities as a whole experiment. Therefore, architecture in ancient Greece was not defined as a disciplinary unity as it is acknowledged today.

¹⁷ Parcell, *Four Historical*, 8.

¹⁸ Parcell, *Four Historical*, 22.

¹⁹ For example, the *techné* for building houses and boats were totally different—even though they both use wooden material, they required different knowledge. The relation between *techné* and the use of materials was essential in ancient Greece. To illustrate, the word used for “matter” or “material” in the ancient Greek was “hulé”, meaning simply “wood”. The word represents the interrelation between the natural and the man-made, the artificial. The transformation of wood from a tree to a house is what architects acknowledge in their profession. But the real challenge was not processing the material back then, it was the imagination that saw a tree and idealized a house. This leap of imagination is interpreted with the myth of Prometheus in Meagher's article, assumed as a pivot in the history of architecture. For more; Robert Meagher, “Techné” *Perspecta* 24 (1988): 160-161.

In late classical Greece, the separation of crafts shifted from being categorized as *techne* to being separated either as a *liberal* or *mechanical* art. As Parcell argues, “the late classical Greeks regarded certain crafts more highly than others” by favoring intellectual activities that have not been included in physical labor.²⁰ Therefore, they ranked many of their crafts on a range between *free* and *banaisic* (a term that Parcell uses meaning mechanical, functional, and vulgar). With the seven liberal arts of Greece—that are grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music theory—the separation becomes clearer about the position of architecture.²¹ In the 9th century, Johannes Scotus Eriugena was the first philosopher to introduce the term *mechanical art* and classify architecture as such rather than a liberal one.²² Parcell writes, “He differentiated the two categories by saying that the liberal arts come from divine sources and are ‘understood naturally in the soul’ whereas the mechanical arts arise from some imitation of human devising.”²³ The differentiation of architecture from other liberal arts may be understood as the early step towards the autonomy of architecture as a separate discipline. This shift was supported by the separation of roles within architecture; the designer and the builder and the different end products they produce. With these categorizations, architecture started to be separated from other arts and create its own methods of design thus it started to become an autonomous discipline.

Italian painter, historian, and architect Giorgio Vasari was the first one to introduce the term *arti del disegno*, the arts of design, in his study about the lives of Italian

²⁰ Parcell, *Four Historical*, 40.

²¹ Parcell, *Four Historical*, 29-36.

²² Stephen G. Nichols, “The Light of the Word: Narrative, Image, and Truth” *New Literary History* 11, no. 3 (Spring 1980): 536-541.

²³ Parcell, *Four Historical*, 54.

architects, painters, and sculptors.²⁴ Vasari emphasized *disegno* as both the processes of “drawing” and “design”, which he sees as the common foundation for architecture, painting, and sculpture.²⁵ Parcell, on the other hand, analyses the different meanings of *disegno* in Renaissance Italy in order to comprehend the term entirely and relate it with the development of architecture. He admits that the first meaning was referring simply to the act of drawing; and the second use of the term integrated the artist, the drawing, and the product altogether.²⁶ It presents the role of the artist, the architect, to prepare a design for a product by using drawing as a tool. In Renaissance Italy, drawing was used for studying nature and forms, in order to recognize natural laws. “Here, the role of drawing is not productive but imitative. Instead of ‘pushing’ a design toward production, it ‘pulls’ a design out of nature.”²⁷ Therefore, as Parcell demonstrates, *disegno* presents a different role for the artist; as a mediator between nature and product, god and people, as they saw it, and the imitator of creations.²⁸ These developments in Renaissance Italy started the realization of the design process as a part of the architecture, that is not separated but integrated within the architectural concerns and discussions. This presents a shift in thought which saved architecture from being either *techne* or *mechanical art*. Eventually, architecture started to focus on its very processes of creating, its intrinsic values of design, and the notion of form; therefore, gained the ability to transform the urban environment. In 18th century Europe, many artistries were affected by these realizations of the design processes as parts of a holistic creation. Therefore, the five diverse

²⁴ For more information about Vasari’s book *Lives of the Artists*, see; Christopher Wood, “1550-1600” in *A History of Art History*, (Pinceton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019): 60-77.

²⁵ Fredrika H. Jacobs, “Vasari’s Vision of the History of Painting: Frescoes in the Casa Vasari, Florence” *The Art Bulletin* 66, no. 3 (September 1984): 405.

²⁶ Parcell, *Four Historical*, 106.

²⁷ Parcell, *Four Historical*, 107.

²⁸ Parcell, *Four Historical*, 107-108.

professions (painting, sculpture, poetry, music, and architecture) started to be referred to as *fine arts*. Originally, the French term *les beaux-arts* goes back to the 17th century, meaning both beautiful and ethical in its Latin etymology. Parcell mentions that the term did not translate to English as “beautiful arts”, but as “fine arts” after years of different interpretations, referring to the “purity, delicacy, subtlety, polish, taste, and discrimination” of a beholder.²⁹ Among these professions, the position of architecture was not certain within these five fine arts in 18th century Europe.³⁰ While Joseph Addison distinguished it from the other because it is as present as nature, not a representation such as painting and sculpture,³¹ Charles Batteux categorized these arts according to their end —use or pleasure— while placing architecture where it could support both functions.³² By distinguishing its own rules and concepts, architecture found its own discipline with its self-reflecting principles; therefore, finally preserved the values it asserted as a unity of design and practice. Architects’ habit of imitating nature was transformed into the imitation of itself: the first steps towards a revolution.

²⁹ Parcell, *Four Historical*, 179-180.

³⁰ Charles D. Gambrill, “Architecture as a Fine Art” *The Crayon* 8, no. 3 (March 1861): 60

³¹ Between the late 17th century and the first quarter of the 18th century, Joseph Addison was an acknowledged figure for poetry, essays, playwriting, and politics in England. Addison and his long lasted friend Richard Steele together published *The Spectator* magazine from 1711 to 1712, adding up to total of 555 issues. At the times the changes in wealth and work patterns started the shift of leisure accessibility from the 17th century upper class to the 18th century middle class, Addison focused on his theories on the “good taste” and “arbitrary beauty”. He combines the sensuality with the geometrical forms, thus defining an architecture as the present and the natural. Parcell, *Four Historical*, 185-189.

³² Charles Batteux was a French philosopher and a writer on aesthetics in 18th century. He developed a theory with John Locke upon Voltaire’s idea of sensualism, arguing that the fine arts are for producing “beautiful” or “fine” end-products. The most important idea that he proposes is that his studies is the fine arts always imitate the nature to “please” the beholder. He sees the only way to achieve this ideal perfection through nature, and the genius combination of its elements. “Let’s choose the most charming parts of nature, to make an delicate whole, more excellent then nature, but never ending to be natural.” For more, see; Anna Toscano, “Charles Batteux: Les Quatre Poetiques,” *Rivista di Estetica* 39 (1991): 47-78.

This transformation of architecture released new discussions and structured new frameworks that led the discipline into a collection of holistic self-examinations and criticisms. On the one hand, this new character of architecture was open to criticisms about its revolutionary ways of design approaches. On the other hand, architecture freed from the previous design processes of being limited to the traditional material-oriented thoughts and developed into generating its own principles via formal tools. This liberation from ancient thinking resulted in architecture's ability to create its own values, within the field it proclaims, and the framework that it defines as a theory. The issue of form gained its own separated value out of stylistic traditions, thus created the opportunity to develop new formal systems and interrelations between architectural elements. Especially with the Renaissance and then the French Revolution, the shift from Baroque tradition to a new era affected architectural form as well as other disciplines. This change towards a free-standing system connected those disciplines to each other while raising new theoretical questions. The problem of relating with the city became one of the core discussions of architecture, focusing on the formal and programmatic integrations in-between.³³ Finally, architecture developed into a disciplinary unity consisting of its own values, discussions, and theories that enabled the interaction with the city.

2.1 Towards the Discipline

The ability and intention of architecture to criticize its own formal principles date to 18th century Europe, where the discipline finally started to achieve its collateral unity with the other fine arts such as painting and sculpture. With the precedencies it acquired while being realized as a fine-art, architecture started to focus on its traditional use of forms. At the same time, the disengagement from the Baroque style supported this process of questioning. Consequently, architecture started to develop

³³ Anthony Vidler, "Researching Revolutionary Architecture" *Journal of Architectural Education* 44, no. 4 (August 1991): 206-207.

new ways for formal creation and combination of masses. The questioning against religious authorities started the revolution in many fields (art, politics, religion, etc.), and this urge to change led to many new understandings and interpretations in Europe, inducing architecture to clarify its generic formal principles thus transform into an autonomous process of creation. It is possible to track the discussion of autonomous architecture through the *Perspecta* journal, which is published at Yale University between 1952 and 2013.³⁴ In the 33rd issue of *Perspecta* titled “Mining Autonomy”, the focus was on the problematics of autonomy, its origins in architectural theory, and opportunities that it brings along the new formal reorganizations of architecture. Within the very issue, well-known architectural historian, critic, and professor Anthony Vidler argued that the very birth of autonomy was revealed by Kaufmann via his studies on Ledoux’s architecture.³⁵ Moreover, he admits that Ledoux’s ideas on architectural form and organization of spaces could be seen as the hybrid ideas of Rousseau’s ideal individual freedom and Kantian *autonomy*.³⁶ The transformation of architecture into an autonomous discipline was illuminated by historian of art and architecture Emil Kaufmann in his studies on the shift in architecture between the 18th and 19th centuries. Kaufmann developed a unique analysis of the pioneer architects via his articles and books he published in the mid-20th century. As a modernist critic and historian, he developed distinctive perspectives upon the architects of the era and analyzed their concerns in the context

³⁴ *Perspecta* is published over sixty years for the journal, thus it became one of the most influential sources of arguments upon architectural discussions. The journal presents a wide collection of articles and essays written by well-known historians, architects, and theoreticians of the era, while focusing on the present discussions of its time; therefore, became one of the essential published sources for architectural milieu. Over 700 pages of text includes influential authors for the time such as Colin Rowe, Roland Barthes, K. Michael Hays, Bernard Tschumi, John Hejduk, and Mark Wigley. For more information about the journal, see; Robert A. M. Stern, Caroline Picard, and Alan Pattus, eds., *Re-Reading Perspecta: The First Fifty Years of the Yale Architectural Journal* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005)

³⁵ Anthony Vidler, “The Ledoux Effect: Emik Kaufmann and the Claims of Kantian Autonomy,” *Perspecta* 33, (2002): 16-29.

³⁶ Vidler, “The Ledoux Effect,” 18.

of their own environment. While referring to those three architects — Étienne-Louis Boullée, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, and Jean-Jacques Lequeu—as *revolutionaries*, he tried to seek the essential changes in architectural form.³⁷ It is understood by Kaufmann’s texts that his reason for choosing them was not only because they happened to be living in-between 18th and 19th century France and took part in the revolution; but because they all proposed new understandings upon the discipline which opened radical arguments to be discussed for centuries. Kaufmann’s studies about these architects generated a panoramic view of the changing landscape of architectural theory while evaluating a distinct analysis of the works of these revolutionary architects. In fact, their vision introduced the possibility of an architecture that has the formal variety and the separateness between architectural elements such as material, decoration, mass, and function within a single form, as an antecedent of the autonomy within the discipline.

Étienne-Louis Boullée was born in Paris in 1728 and became one of the most influential architects of his time. When he started attending Jacques-François Blondel’s classes in the academy, he began questioning stylistic features of architecture that are composed as parts of architectural products.³⁸ Blondel’s

³⁷ While Kaufmann focuses his analysis on these three architects, this thesis emphasizes only on Boullée’s and Ledoux’s studies because of their approaches on formal configurations of architecture. According to Kaufmann, Lequeu’s works can be distinguished into three phases: his youth when he followed the main currents of the discipline; then the late Baroque and the new fashion of Neo-Classicism; and lastly the Romantic interest for the medieval architecture. Hence, Lequeu’s designs did not separate itself from the present conditions of the urbanity, thus celebrated them although he used radical forms in order to define the projects’ overall volumes. For more, see Emil Kaufmann, “Three Revolutionary Architects: Boullée, Ledoux, and Lequeu” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 42, no. 3 (1952): 538-558.

³⁸ Blondel was an architect and a tutor in the academia, therefore he was one of the main figures that provided the very source of influence for the “revolutionary” architects. Kaufmann examines Blondel’s vision of architecture as it was focused on the relationship between the past and the present, and their stylistic outcomes such as Baroque, Rococo, and Classical architecture. In the volumes of *Cours d’Architecture*, Blondel declared that it does not make sense to create buildings in the manner of the ancients; rather, studying their work teaches one how to think, and design, but not in the same way that they did. Blondel’s idea of “narrative” influenced others, especially Boullée, which he interpreted as “character” in his texts. For more, see Robin Middleton, “Jacques François

influence on Boullée's architectural approach and principles plays a crucial part in his future designs.³⁹ In fact, the essential notion of *character* in Boullée's projects is developed upon these studies with Blondel. In the introduction of his book *Architecture: Essay on Art*, Boullée starts with a critical discussion on the difference of opinions between Charles Perrault and François Blondel, about whether architecture should be an independent creation of the mind or should originate its fundamental principles on nature. While he defines his position as closer to his tutor, he mentions that the goal of an architect should be to criticize every architectural approach, even his own, in order to prove that architecture is more suitable for connecting with nature than every other art. After the natural justification of his architectural goals and methods, Boullée presents the main formal tools that he uses in projects: proportion, symmetry, and variety. He emphasizes the relationship between these notions in this sentence: "Once I had observed that the shape of a regular volume is determined by regularity, symmetry and variety, then I understood that proportion is the combination of these properties."⁴⁰ As Boullée recalls here,

Blondel and the 'Cours d'Architecture,'" *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 18, no. 4 (December, 1959): 148.

³⁹ Other than his interest in design and architecture, Boullée was an active member of the academy, and he was concerned with its problems about education, technique, internal organization, and such. As a total result of all these features; in his famous book *Architecture: Essay on Art* he develops criticisms upon the essential discussions of the era while also explaining his own projects and understandings about architecture. Actually, *Architecture* is only a part of the long notes he took in his lifetime, *Papiers de Boullée*, which is kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. In these folios, and the book, he argues about his own interpretations about the main arguments in the era, and illuminates his point of view towards the designs he proposed. *Architecture*, when seen in this perspective, is a personal work that he wrote for himself, a study of self-criticism, and an explanatory guide of analysis for his projects focusing on the natural order and harmony between architectural features and formal tools. Boullée distinguishes architecture from other disciplines after the use of physical features. Such as the nature itself, architecture too is much more than a collaboration of all five senses. The common feature is the sense of spatiality, the surroundings, and their effects on the emotions. For more, see Robin Middleton, "Boullée and the Exotic" *AA Files*, no. 19 (Spring 1990): 43; and, Étienne-Louis Boullée, "Architecture: Essay on Art" in *Boullée & Visionary Architecture*, ed. Helen Rosenau, trans. Sheila de Vallée (London: Academy Editions, 1976): 85. Retrieved from https://monoskop.org/File:Boullée_Etienne-Louis_Architecture_Essay_on_Art.pdf [Access date 15 January 2020]

⁴⁰ Boullée, "Architecture," 86.

these methods and tools support his perspective on the form itself, but moreover, their intensity and interrelations in between also support the order, the harmony, the whole. At this point, it can be interpreted that Boullée's attention on the whole and the unity of a design derives from his studies about classical architecture, which is transferred into his projects as monumentality. While he cares for the unity of the project, his designs also feature powerful architectural elements that support the formal order of these monuments. The real objective of such an architecture is derived from its intrinsic features. And to accomplish that, according to Boullée, the main goal of an architect should be to play with masses, their forms, and spatial recombination that produce new ways for affecting the senses of the visitor. Moreover, the essential aspect of architecture for developing this formal quality is the *character* that exists as an outcome of the arrangement of architectural features:

As in nature, the art of giving an impression of grandeur in architecture lies in the disposition of the volumes that form the whole in such a way that there is a great deal of play among them, that their masses have a noble, majestic movement and that they have the fullest possible development. The arrangement should be such that we can absorb at a glance the multiplicity of the separate elements that constitute the whole. The play of light on this arrangement of volumes should produce the most widespread, striking and varied effects that are all multiplied to the maximum. In a large ensemble, the secondary components must be skillfully combined to give the greatest possible opulence to the whole; and it is the auspicious distribution of this opulence that produces splendour and magnificence.⁴¹

By introducing the notion of *character*, Boullée's discussions direct towards the sensory aspects of architecture. On the one hand, while he interprets the importance of the use of materials and volume to create a characteristic form; on the other hand, he uses the light sources to illuminate the character according to the atmosphere he

⁴¹ Boullée, "Architecture," 89.

seeks. In *Architecture: Essay on Art*, he analyzes the various volumes of light and their effects in nature; then applies those impressions to his projects in order to create appropriate shadows using natural light sources in both day and night. The separation of these notions from each other —and from the whole— lead to the categorization of architectural elements and geometrical shapes, and their uses. Boullée also admits that the continuation and repetition of architectural features are essential for developing a monumental design.⁴² These methods are echoing in many of his designs that all have different characters but also reflect his concerns about form perfectly. His design for the Metropolitan Church presents this play of forms in every aspect. Moreover, the project realizes this separation of shapes and masses, in which the dome is towering high above the whole building, distinguishing itself explicitly from the four porticoes. The character that Boullée dedicates upon the dome of the Metropolitan Church is clear that it is completely separated from the unity of the building; therefore, it is not even visible on the plan section. In this process, the dome becomes a separate part of the building, distinguishing its massive form from the overall character of the church. The uncertainty of whether the building carries the dome, or the dome is segregating from the building is what Boullée achieved through his analysis of architectural forms and design tools.

⁴² Boullée, “Architecture,” 86-87.

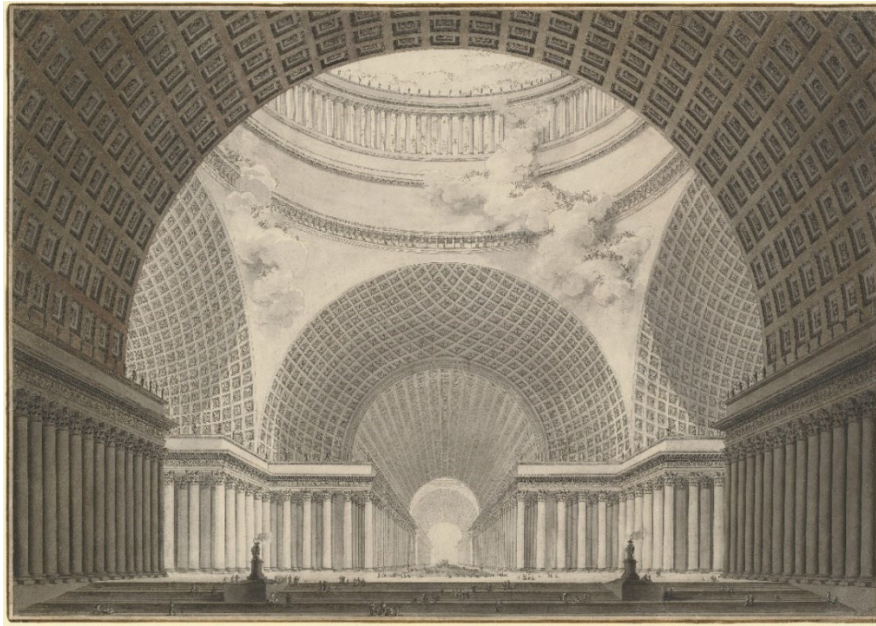


Figure 1 - Étienne-Louis Boullée, Metropolitan Church.

After analyzing the differences and effects between the masses of different shapes, he develops a unique categorization that helps him to generate the monumentality he pursues. While searching for the extreme purity and balance within the forms and masses of the whole, Boullée develops a new way of vision towards each of these shapes separately, especially on the sphere. He claims that the geometrical ideality of the sphere is unique because its center is at equal distance from any point at its surface, therefore it presents the same perspective from every viewpoint.⁴³ This incorruptible nature of the sphere is interpreted as the magnificence of beauty in Boullée's notes, as well as in his designs. One of his most important projects is the Cenotaph of Newton, where he tries to design a memorial attributed to the scientist with a great passion for his studies about nature and physics.

⁴³ Boullée, "Architecture," 86.

O Newton! With the range of your intelligence and the sublime nature of your Genius, you have defined the shape of the earth; I have conceived the idea of enveloping you with your discovery. That is as it were to envelop you in your own self. How can I find outside you anything worthy of you? It was these ideas that made me want to make the sepulcher in the shape of the earth.⁴⁴

It is seen in this section that his admiration for Newton's works led him to design such a building, where the sphere is used as a symbolic mass both affecting the interior and exterior. From the outside, the building seems to be carrying a massive dome; whereas from the inside, it becomes an almost perfect sphere that symbolizes the unity of Newton's laws of physics and nature as a whole entity.⁴⁵ Boullée clearly admits that the only decoration inside the memorial is the natural light sources he placed on the sphere, in order to mimic the stars at night. And he explains the use of the sphere as it is used to force visitors' eyes to collect at the tomb, at the center of gravity within the building.⁴⁶ Boullée experimented on these formal tools in his designs while at the same time developing new projects, which mostly had not been realized.

Kaufmann wrote about Boullée's architecture, "the results of such experiments in form are neither to be judged by any aesthetic canons of mature style, not to be approached with any expectation of practical utility or even possibility"⁴⁷. What is important in Boullée's projects is that he was mainly focused on producing a variety of designs as much as possible, while using elementary forms and simple patterns. He did not follow the mainstream design principles of the era, such as Baroque and

⁴⁴ Boullée, "Architecture," 107.

⁴⁵ Kathleen James-Chakraborty, "Neoclassicism, the Gothic Revival, and the Civic Realm" in *Architecture Since 1400* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014): 244-245.

⁴⁶ Boullée, "Architecture," 107.

⁴⁷ Emil Kaufmann, "Étienne-Louis Boullée," *The Art Bulletin* 21, no. 3 (September 1939): 215.

Neo-Classicism, and he was not affected by functionalism. Kaufmann writes, “Interested chiefly in purely artistic problems, he concentrated on monumental projects, where practical concerns could not hamper his ideas.”⁴⁸ And on this process, he was only concerned with the sense that is created by the architecture of permanent stonework, rather than the temporal human activity. His projects represent this ultimate goal for architecture; to be able to generate autonomous designs by using masses and their recombination, according to the needs of the program or the building.

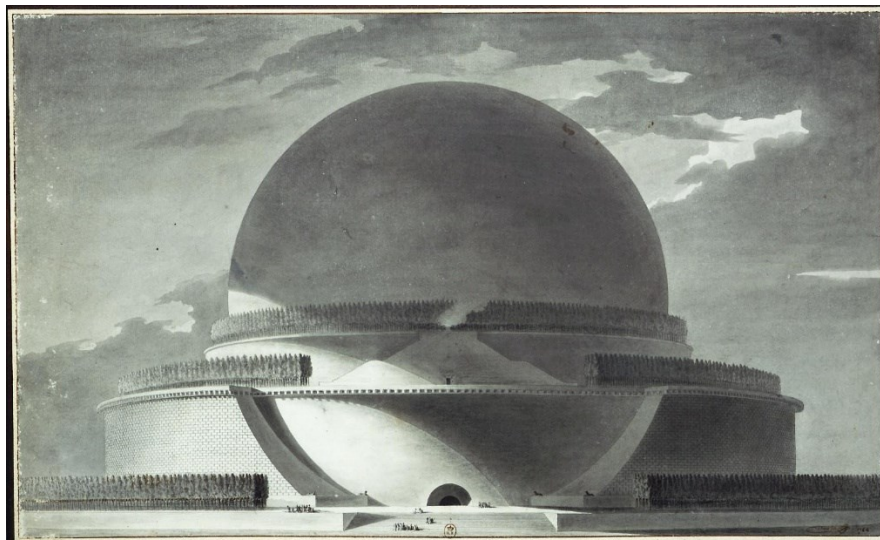


Figure 2 - Étienne-Louis Boullée, Newton Cenotaph.

In Kaufmann’s analysis, the second *revolutionary* architect is Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, whose projects and especially design tools play a crucial role in order to understand architectural production in the late 18th century.⁴⁹ Ledoux’s studies,

⁴⁸ Kaufmann, “Étienne-Louis Boullée,” 219.

⁴⁹ Ledoux was born at Dormans-sur-Marne as a child of a merchant family in 1736, studied in Paris with a scholarship and then devoted himself to the art of engraving. He gained recognition with decoration and restoration projects that he designed in Paris, thus became a well-known architect in

especially his book *L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des mœurs et de la législation* (Architecture Considered from the Point of View of Art, Manners, and Legislation) illuminate intentions of architects not only for the sake of architecture but also for the community that it belongs.⁵⁰ Without limiting himself to the formal creativeness of architecture, he focused deeply on the social and political problems of the period. His ambition to remodel these problematic aspects of the city with a holistic understanding led him to highlight the topics such as religion, society, and economy. Ledoux privileged himself the ability and right to recreate every corner of living, therefore his designs extended from small shelters to massive cities. Furthermore, as Kaufmann interprets, “He wanted the creative mind to depend upon its own thinking, and exhorted the artist to dare in order to overcome the past.”⁵¹ Ledoux’s unique perspective towards architecture was collaborated with a collection of the ideas of the past and his own evaluation of each problem. He grounded his ideas for the projects upon the combination of these two sources, which distinguishes Ledoux from his colleagues. His designs clearly admit the decline of Baroque, the

the country. Through the end of the century he worked with many prosperous families and people of the regime that he created many projects that were realized—in contrast to Boullée’s designs. Ledoux’s political standing point caused him trouble after the Revolution in 1789, therefore he could not receive the payments for his works he had done in king’s service, moreover. This critical circumstance led him to concentrate on the publication of his achievements as a book, covering his projects from 1768 to the Revolution. The book was titled *L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des mœurs et de la législation*, which included designs for extraordinary—and modern, in the manner of 18th century architecture—buildings and cities. *L'Architecture* consists of 240 folios, which are motly written in times when Ledoux was put in prison after the Revolution, and introduces the modern French architecture to the New World. Although Ledoux had published the first edition of the book in 1804, two years before his death, his works had not been acknowledged widely until the reprinting of the second edition by Daniel Ramée in 1847. In the first edition that Ledoux presented the projects as if they were in a chronological catalogue, accompanied by many texts that illustrate his perspective upon architecture. In the second edition, in order to restore Ledoux to his rightful place, Ramée replaced the original text with his own commentaries and added many more illustrations and unrealized projects. For more, see the second note in Anthony Vidler, “The Theatre of Production: Claude-Nicolas Ledoux and the Architecture of Social Reform,” *AA Files*, no. 1 (Winter 1981-82): 54-63.

⁵⁰ Vidler, “The Theatre of Production,” 57.

⁵¹ Kaufmann, “Three Revolutionary Architects,” 479.

symptoms of classicism, and the two of the characteristics of Boullée's works: the leaning towards grandeur and the introduction of simple geometrical forms. It is seen that the new spatial solutions that varied in Ledoux's projects are presented as the interpretation of masses, as crossings of volume, or as contrasting sizes and elements. Kaufmann refers to Ledoux as the *inaugurator* of architecture, as he played the most influential and effective role on the shift from Baroque unity of elements to a separate system of forms and architectural elements. He analyzes Ledoux's importance of the period with the interpretation of the basic idea of the interrelation of new forms and new systems:

In the relationship between forms and system, each epoch establishes its own basic ideas of disposition and interrelation of parts. Either older forms are remodeled until they are perfectly adjusted to the new system of arrangement; or new forms proffered by new constructional methods are adopted if they accord with the new system; or natural forms are reinterpreted in keeping with the changed ideal of general disposition. The search for new form is, therefore, a necessary consequence of the desire for a new system. Forms themselves are secondary factors; the system is the primary consideration.⁵²

As an example for this investigation of a new architectural system, Ledoux proposed the project for the Theatre of Besançon. He presented the intersection of masses and added a portico on the front, whereas the interior of the building was reorganized in order to alter the experience inside.⁵³ The semi-circular form of the audience hall, the seats accompanying the balconies, and the orchestra removed from its place between the stage and audience were the essential changes that the theatre required

⁵² Emil Kaufmann, "Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Inaugurator of a New Architectural System," *Journal of the American Society of Architectural Historians* 3, no. 3 (July 1943): 17.

⁵³ Simon Tidworth, "Musical Theatre of Besançon", *European Theatre Architecture* (blog), Arts and Theatre Institute, access date 14.05.2020, <https://www.theatre-architecture.eu/en/db/?theatreId=1019>.

both aesthetically and practically.⁵⁴ The idea of visitors' experience was crucial for the architect, that it led him to design an engraving showing the mirrored interior of the building through an eyeball. The radical act of reorganization that Ledoux presented with the project in Besançon presents the essential characteristics of an architect in his perspective; the will to alter the experience of architecture through revolutionary designs. The idea of intersecting various masses also transforms into the intersecting of inside and outside of a building, not by creating unity via architectural elements but through reorganizing those forms and developing characteristics for each.

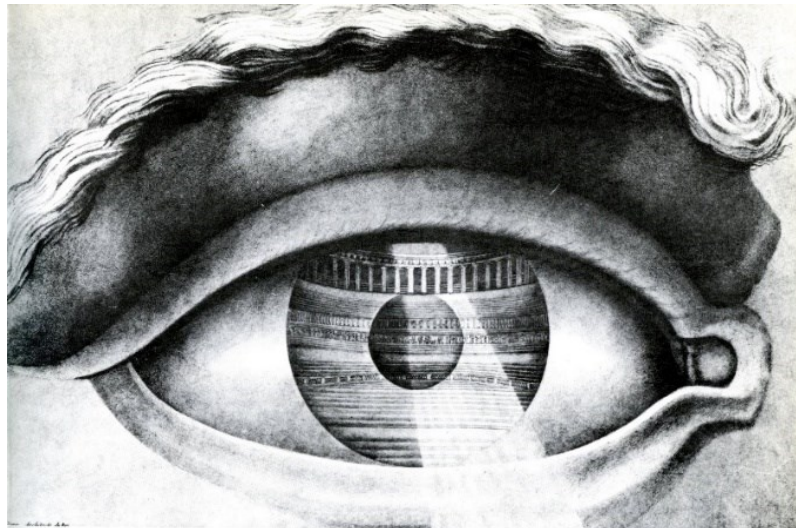


Figure 3 - Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, the design for the Theatre of Besançon depicting "the eye" as a central feature of its form.

Ledoux's ideas of interpreting architectural parts led him to focus on the interrelation between those elements; the decomposition and the recombination of them. First, he started to play among geometrical shapes, which led him to analyze architectural

⁵⁴ Vidler, "Researching Revolutionary Architecture", 208-209.

elements and then advance through the decomposing of the whole body. He found the opportunity for investigating these interrelations of architectural parts when he was asked to design tollhouses around Paris in 1784 as the gates opening to the city.⁵⁵ Ledoux presented his full potential of creativeness on this work, without restricting his work to any schematic system, rather shaping each tollhouse with a unique formal combination of masses that transfers critical ideas through the form. His progress towards a new systematic emphasis for architectural form could be seen within the creativity that developed each *barriér* in a unique perspective. The variety of architectural compositions he proposed via *barriérs* —also commonly known as *tollhouses*— claims an architecture that is further away from the traditional ideas such as unity and harmony, but rather focusing on the interpretation of parts and masses. While Ledoux was working on the *barriérs*, he also planned several inns to be built on certain roads of the capital, representing the geometries of modern architecture in the sense of the 19th century. The geometrical shapes carrying the main masses, different elevations within the buildings, and the very little impact of Baroque unity and centralization led to the disintegration of the old scheme; therefore, becoming a manifest. This new concept of an organization led the architect to extend his vision from the architectural scale to the urban, creating many possibilities for him to realize the essential goal of architecture, which is remodeling the community.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Helen Rosenau, “Claude Nicolas Ledoux” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 88, no. 520 (July 1946): 163.

⁵⁶ The projects for *barriérs* was thought by French people as the symbols of the oppression under monarchy, thus caused Ledoux’s imprisonment after the Revolution. It was in his times in prison that Ledoux expanded the design for Chaux into a proposal for the Ideal City, which was published in 1804 under the title *L’Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l’art, des mœurs et de la législation*. For more: Tony Schuman, “Utopia Spurned: Ricardo Bofill and the French Ideal City Tradition” *Journal of Architectural Education* 40, no. 1 (1986): 20-29.

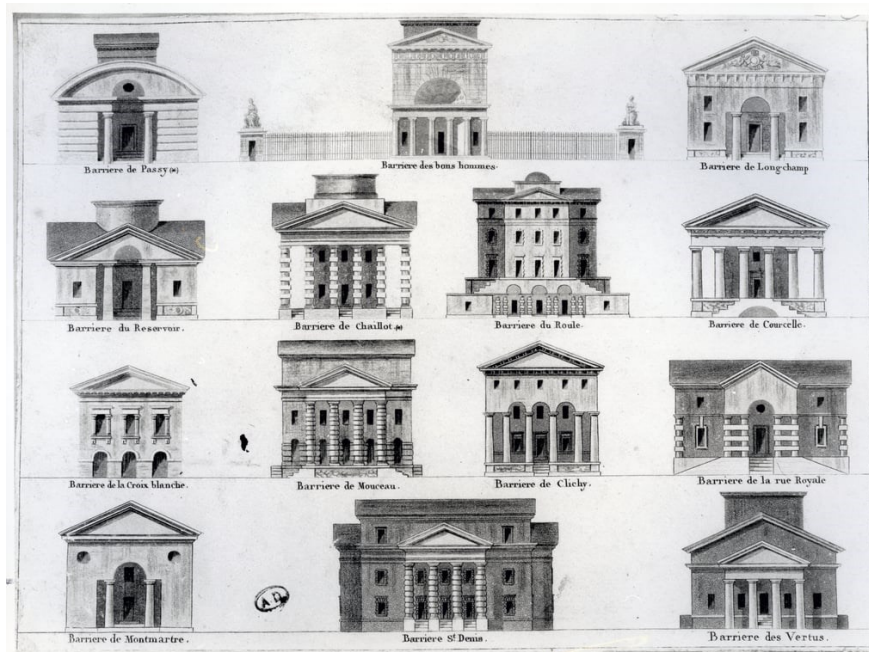


Figure 4 - Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, A section from the series of drawings illustrating a variety of his *barrières*.

In Vidler’s journal article in the issue of *Perspecta* 33 titled “The Ledoux Effect: Emil Kaufmann and the Claims of Kantian Autonomy”, he focuses on the very first appearance of the autonomy discussions in architectural theory.⁵⁷ Vidler emphasizes that the emergence of an “architecture of isolation” in the *Ideal City* and the *Church of Chaux*, Ledoux projects an architecture of individual consciousness.⁵⁸ This

⁵⁷ About architects’ perspective towards history, Vidler writes that between Renaissance and the mid-19th century the traditional methods were replaced by the historical revival of antiquity, thus history was the main source for architecture. This shift of understanding history as both precedent and innovation provided architects with a new responsibility; to achieve history. The very first appearance of the professional *architectural historian*, as Vidler evaluates, highlighted the development of academic art history within the architectural history. Until the emergence of the “modern” in 19th century, the new architectural historian “allied with an emerging sense of “abstraction” and “form” guided by new structural imperatives, gave architects the sense of a break so complete with the “historical styles” that of history itself become suspect”. Anthony Vidler, *Histories of the Immediate Present* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008): 3-4.

⁵⁸ Vidler, “The Ledoux Effect,” 16.

principle of isolation is visible in the project for the Church, with its flattened and low dome, horizontal lines, the difference between its altars —one for festivals and marriages on the upper level, and one for burials and memorial services below in the crypt— and their individual entrances and exits. Vidler presents the general concept of autonomy in Kaufmann’s studies were essentially focusing on large —separation of the organization of buildings regarding their quasi-functional identification— and small-scale formal moves.⁵⁹ In Ledoux’s project for the Church of Chaux, the combination of single and free-standing mass, the separation of functional elements, and the differences between levels construed a new kind of Neo-Classical harmony. In opposition to the Medieval “reserve of unworldliness” and Baroque “spiritual harmony”, this new perspective concentrated on the individual self-absorption and contemplation.⁶⁰ After all, the revolution that the Church represented was not signified by the use of painting, sculpture, or symbols within the buildings, rather by the means of architecture that are freed from the historical and traditional aspects of design.

Kaufmann also traces the revolutionary architects to the architecture of Modernism developed between 1900 and 1929, and he creates analogies within the designs of these two periods. The essential similarity between them is the ambitious search for a new way of designing and a new approach for thinking. For instance, the idea of *plan as a generator* is a common notion in both Ledoux’s and Le Corbusier’s architecture in geometrical and spatial arrangements. According to Vidler, the connection between two architects was reflected in Ledoux’s own words as “the appreciable feeling of a plan as stemming from the subject, the site, and the needs of the buildings, of the destructive effect of details on surfaces”, and as “forms

⁵⁹ Vidler, “The Ledoux Effect,” 20.

⁶⁰ Vidler, “The Ledoux Effect,” 21.

described with a single stroke of the compass”.⁶¹ On the other hand, Kaufmann also refers to a variety of similarities in between Walter Gropius’s own expressions in the first volume of the Bauhaus books. He admits that Gropius’s architecture contains a multiplicity starting with the same essential type obtained by the alternate juxtaposition and superimposition of repetitive three-dimensional cells. The common admiration for the straight line and the return to the fundamental shapes such as the sphere, the cube, and the cylinder in modern architecture in the 20th century were the critical design elements. The possibilities that these methods provide with architectural parts transformed the main understanding of architecture to be separated from their only focus of functional arrangement. Consequently, this new vision started developing a new set of rules and hierarchies in-between elements, resulting in an era for experiencing the radical shifts in architecture.

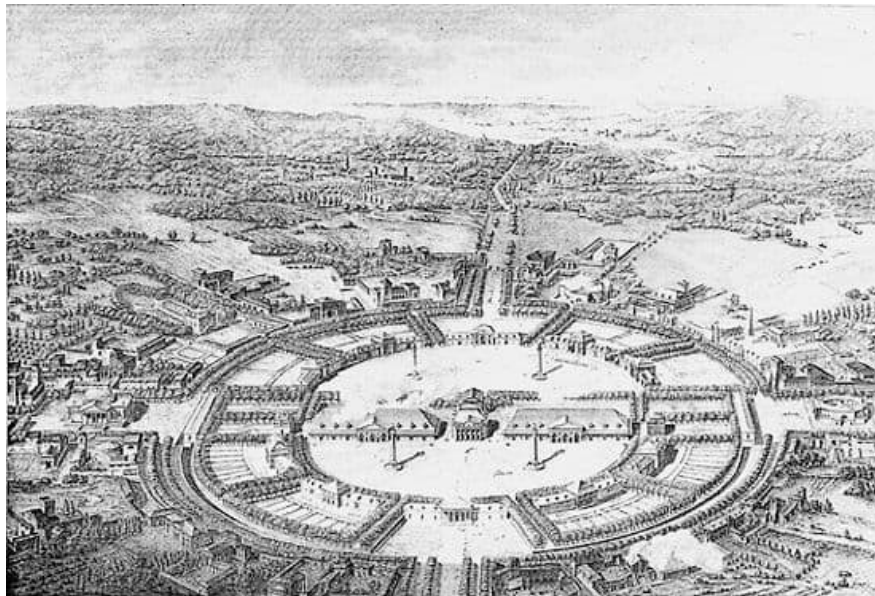


Figure 5 - Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, The plan of the Ideal City and the Church of Chaux at the center.

⁶² Belgin Turan, “Is ‘Rational’ Knowledge of Architecture Possible,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 51, no. 3 (1998), 159.

One of these developments of architecture was orthodox modernism, in which architects started to discuss functionalism as one of the main principles. With the emergence of Neo-Rationalist ideas within the theory, architects started to pursue new systematics for architecture. This was the search for a system of rules that are generated from initial assumptions through observations, classification, and historical research; not necessarily for the architectural product itself. Aldo Rossi was one of the pioneers of thought in the theory of Neo-Rationalism. He published the influential book *The Architecture of the City* in 1966, where he emphasized this new idea of architecture as it is a collective artifact, and it enables the modification and criticism of architectural productions in an “autonomous” way. Autonomy, for Rossi, consists of self-criticisms, which consists of a series of re-evaluations for every process that generates a design, and results in the realization of architecture. He is focused on the theoretical aspect of the autonomous architecture, called *disciplinary autonomy*, which concentrates on the theoretical progression via being self-critical in its internal values and systems of production. Architectural Historian Belgin Turan refers to the goal of Neo-Rationalism as to “redefine the discipline of architecture as an autonomous field with its own ‘disinterested’ history, i.e., as a continuum based on its own ‘rational’, eternal principles, possible to decipher from architecture’s positioning in ‘the city’.”⁶² Moreover, according to Turan, Rossi developed an approach for transforming architectural production into a *science* via the analysis of various architectures within the city.⁶³ Thus, architecture started to transform into a system of intrinsic evaluations, which provided new formal questionings for the discipline.

⁶² Belgin Turan, “Is ‘Rational’ Knowledge of Architecture Possible,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 51, no. 3 (1998), 159.

⁶³ Turan, “Is ‘Rational’ Knowledge of Architecture Possible,” 163.

2.2 Towards Formal Autonomy

More recently, the discussion of autonomy is narrated by the younger generation, but also with a slight change in particular. As an important figure in the scene of contemporary architectural theory, Peter Eisenman's studies present a wide variety of perspectives towards the issue of autonomy. He maintained this critical character in all his studies, especially ones concerning the relationship between architectural form and its relation with the urban environment. In his search for an architectural system of relations in-between its elements, he oriented towards the *syntactic* features of the architecture. In his early studies, Eisenman is concentrated on the grammar of architecture as a pendulum that oscillates between the perceptual and the conceptual, swinging in-between specific forms and formal universal ideas.⁶⁴

Eisenman clearly positions himself against the popularization of post-modernist thought in the late-20th century, especially regarding the search for an overall goal for architecture as it questions the formal and functional uses in the discipline. In one of his articles, he presents three *fictions* —or *simulations*— that affect the architecture of the late 20th century; they are *representation*, *reason*, and *history* — in opposition to meaningful, true, and timeless.⁶⁵ “Each of the fictions had an underlying purpose: representation was to embody the idea of meaning; reason was to codify the idea of truth; history was to recover the idea of the timeless from the idea of change.”⁶⁶ Throughout the article, Eisenman searches for the origins of these *fictions*, and he resolves that their roots depend back to the times before Renaissance. Moreover, according to this investigation, *representation* was used for carrying a

⁶⁴ Deborah Fausch, “The Oppositions of Postmodern Tectonics,” *ANY: Architecture New York* 14, Tectonics Unbound: Kernform and Kunstform Revisited (1996), 54.

⁶⁵ Peter Eisenman, “The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning, the End of the End,” *Perspecta* 21 (1984): 154-173.

⁶⁶ Eisenman, “The End of the Classical,” 155.

message from the past to the present, *reason* was an echoing of a self-evident universe of values, and *history* was the mirroring of simple “being” non-dialectical and timeless.⁶⁷ The following section of Eisenman explains why he thought these *simulations* occurred in the architecture as core aspects, and how an alternative architecture could be possible:

Once the traditional values of classical architecture are understood as not meaningful, true, and timeless, it must be concluded that these classical values were always simulations (and are not merely seen to be in light of a present rupture of history or the preset disillusionment with the zeitgeist). [...] The result, then, of seeing classicism and modernism as part of a single historical continuity is the understanding that there are no longer any self-evident values in representation, reason, or history to confer legitimacy on the object. This loss of self-evident value allows the timeless to be cut free from the meaningful and the truthful. It permits the view that there is no one truth (a timeless truth), or one meaning (a timeless meaning), but merely the timeless. When the possibility is raised that the timeless can be cut adrift from the timeful (history), so too can the timeless be cut away from universality to produce a timelessness which is not universal. This separation makes it unimportant whether origins are natural or divine or functional; thus, it is no longer necessary to produce a classic—that is, a timeless—architecture by recourse to the classical values inherent in *representation*, *reason*, and *history*.⁶⁸

Eisenman clearly believes that architecture has the potential to redefine its formal qualities according to its own values thus resist these three *simulations*. As it is presented in the passage, without the limitations that direct architecture to create analogies with these *fictional* notions, architects could inspect the opportunities in a more efficient way. In fact, Eisenman develops an autonomous idea of architecture that is reduced from the extrinsic features opposing Rossi’s disciplinary autonomy.

⁶⁷ Eisenman, “The End of the Classical,” 156-162.

⁶⁸ Eisenman, “The End of the Classical,” 164.

By this approach, Eisenman presents a formal autonomy that is also self-criticizing and self-controlling but concentrated on the formal aspects of architecture.

The architecture of formal autonomy is the total criticism of structural and spatial elements of architecture, examining how they may be reused and how these elements may be recombined. The possibilities of architectural practice play an essential role in autonomy; therefore, it focuses on generating new critical emphases within the architecture itself. Eisenman claims that “Any internally generated forms that are part of a critical system in one sense could be considered autonomous, independent of social or market forces, while still offering a critique of these forces”.⁶⁹ According to him, architectural practice shifts into *disciplinary autonomy* rather than *formal autonomy*.⁷⁰ The difference between these two notions is that formal autonomy aspires only the new values which are generated within the self-realization of formal qualities; whereas disciplinary autonomy focuses on the criticism of every type of systematic relations and integrations architecture has. While disciplinary autonomy requires a complete system of theories for every step of architectural production, formal autonomy is more experimental therefore more practice-based. The formal autonomy questions the discipline via formal analysis starting from the interrelation between constructional elements, the spatial configurations of designed spaces, and their dimensions. Eisenman emphasizes that formal autonomy is not an architecture that is focused on forms only; rather it is the very system of formal configurations between architectural elements, signs, their interrelation, and recombination.

Furthermore, Eisenman proposes that the need for criticality is essential in architecture. He deliberately positions criticality at the core of architectural projects, as criticality is the fundamental element in the foreground. The process of criticality

⁶⁹ Peter Eisenman, “Foreword: [Bracket]ing History,” in *Histories of the Immediate Present: Inventing Architectural Modernism*, ed. Anthony Vidler (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008): viii.

⁷⁰ Peter Eisenman, “Autonomy and the Will to the Critical,” *Assemblage*, no. 41 (April, 2000): 91.

begins with “the *becoming unmotivated* of the sign, the potential reduction of the culturally sedimented meaning of signs, so that the message itself becomes the interference”.⁷¹ He clarifies the significance of architecture from other arts —as he previously did by referring to the three fictions of architecture. By admitting that, unlike any other art, the single element or feature in architecture contains the message that does not represent anything but itself, constituting a singularity of architecture. Singularity, for Eisenman, is a method for distinguishing a unique instance from an origin, which might be seen in the dominant modes of legitimation in autonomous architecture. The search for the ever new and the original initiated the loss of continuity in history as an origin value, concentrating on the question of singularity, and in particular on architecture’s condition of the sign.⁷² Indeed, the autonomy that Eisenman mentions here is rather focused on cutting the sign off from its preceding importance in function and meaning and develop its own self-referential status via the architectural formal elements. The critical position of autonomous architecture comes from this resistance and “unmotivation” from previous modes of legitimation and their constant repetitions, forming an “autonomy from which there can be no copy”.⁷³ This results in an architecture that is autonomous not because it separated its form from the existing urban conditions, according to Eisenman, but because they have never been connected from the beginning.

On his search for a self-referential and resistant aspect within architecture, Eisenman develops further analyses on the architecture of modernism and its antecedents. In the search for an autonomous origin between different architectural thoughts, Eisenman establishes a series of combinations between the present discussions of his

⁷¹ Eisenman, “Autonomy and the Will to the Critical,” 90.

⁷² Eisenman, “Autonomy and the Will to the Critical,” 90.

⁷³ Eisenman, “Autonomy and the Will to the Critical,” 91.

period and of the years that exacerbated modernism. At this point, Eisenman argues that Le Corbusier's Maison Dom-ino model reflects such intrinsic features that became an icon and a structural paradigm of modernism with its extreme clarity on its canonical spatial diagram.⁷⁴ His profound analysis on the Dom-ino extends far to the spatial reconfiguration of architectural elements, investigation of their organization, and the effects they provide to the whole form. Eisenman admits that with the lack of generic architectural features such as windows, doors, and walls; Le Corbusier achieved a way for visualizing the core aspects of architecture, which makes architecture as it is. Dom-ino is nothing but a sign for itself, which is a totality of intentional architecture of unity. Moreover, he rightfully asks in his article that, how could these architectural elements gather and emerge together to define the design as a modernist one, rather than classical.⁷⁵ If what is necessary to generate such architecture is three floor plans and six columns, then do they always form an architecture by using variations of these elements? If not, how could one distinguish between those that do and those that do not?

⁷⁴ Peter Eisenman, "Aspects of Modernism: Maison Dom-ino and the Self-Referential Sign," *Log*, no. 30 (Winter, 2014), 142.

⁷⁵ Eisenman, "Aspects of Modernism," 144-145.

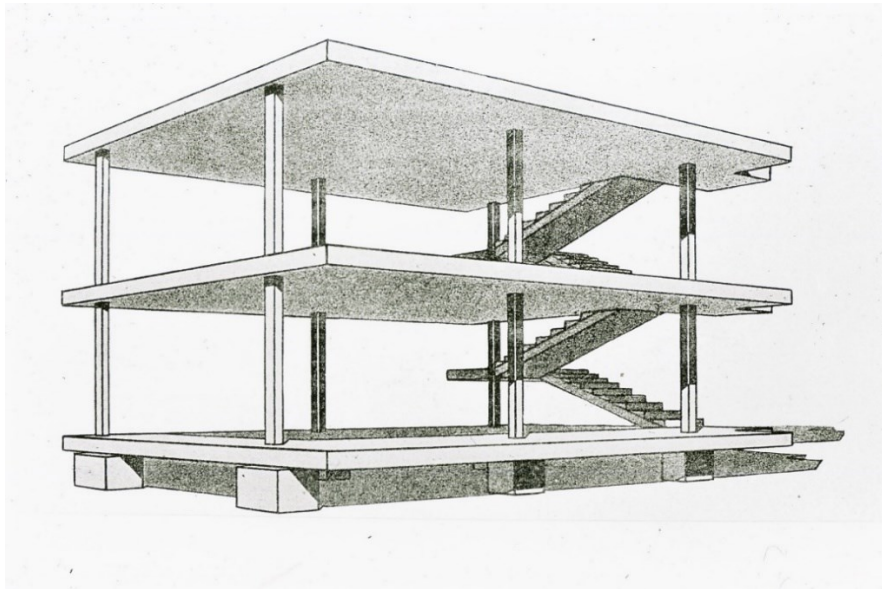


Figure 6 - Le Corbusier, The design for Maison Dom-ino

Eisenman's evaluation of Dom-ino presents a wide range of analyses towards the internal features of the design, thus the total study transforms into the deconstruction of all its spatial configurations. He claims that the different sizes of floor slabs, the placement of the columns, and their relationship with the staircase prove the intentional nature of Le Corbusier's architecture. After reviewing the other possible arrangements that Le Corbusier could have used in order to provide a physical structure for the building, Eisenman illuminates that intentional autonomy is the dominant aspect of Dom-ino. Every specific selection that is included in the design has the significant purpose to develop a *sign* within the self-referential architecture of Eisenman. The idea of identifying architectural elements as signs indicates the determination for identifying those features for a specific goal, not as simple instruments for the structural or spatial configuration for the totality of the design, but as signs of their own autonomy within the building. As an example, the horizontal datum that Dom-ino sets with the gridal placement of the columns back from the

edge are signs of the self-referential aspect of the structure.⁷⁶ The thorough analysis extends even to the design elements at the base pillars of the building. Eisenman refers to them as the markers of the floor slab, which indicate the “distinction between the way the vertical element meets the top and bottom of the slab”.⁷⁷ Consequently, the discontinued columns become block-like signs that only serve for the acknowledgment of their own existence. With this method, the pillars carrying the base represent the bottom slab as different and separated from the two upper ones. Overall, Le Corbusier’s indication on the shape, size, and location of these footings defines itself as a different entity than simple structural tools. At this very state, Eisenman illustrates an architecture that overcomes the functionality of its features, thus those signs start to suggest “another primitive condition” for architecture.⁷⁸

The significance of Dom-ino according to Eisenman is that it is a “sign system” referring to the most primitive state of architecture; that it is distinguished from simple geometry and that the building becomes a break from the 400-year-old tradition of Western architecture.⁷⁹ Consequently, Eisenman’s studies opened the way to a new and radical understanding on architecture; focusing on the importance of intrinsic features and the interrelations in-between them led the way for self-referential architecture that concentrates on its formal configurations. Overall, his suggestions of dissociation from the reason, representation, and history combine with the formal methodologies he puts forward in Dom-ino article; and together develop a formally autonomous architecture that is concentrated on its elements and their own formal definitions. Segregating from the external forces, Eisenman

⁷⁶ Eisenman, “Aspects of Modernism,” 147.

⁷⁷ Eisenman, “Aspects of Modernism,” 149.

⁷⁸ Eisenman, “Aspects of Modernism,” 149.

⁷⁹ Eisenman, “Aspects of Modernism,” 151.

generates a new way of designing; that is not bounded to any of the historical, cultural, and social backgrounds. Resistant architecture as a self-referential sign transferred to theory as the freedom of architectural design, without the need for being dependent on any environmental conditions. This radical disengagement that Eisenman offered caused architecture to evolve around its formal configurations and its intrinsic interrogations in theoretical discussions while resisting the external forces.

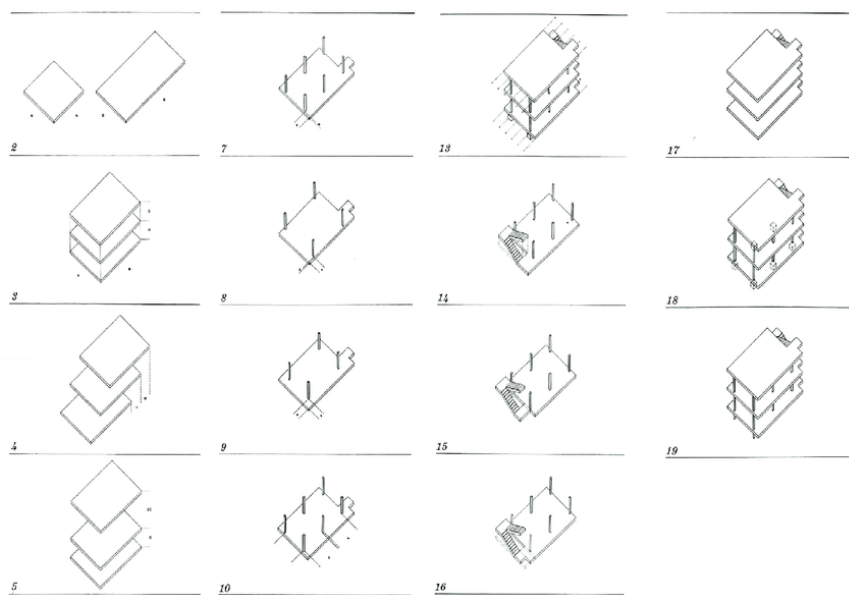


Figure 7 - Peter Eisenman, Reconfigurations of Maison Dom-ino

In opposition to Eisenman's autonomy that focuses on the internal formal values, architectural historian and professor K. Michael Hays proposes another perspective. In his article "Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form" he points out a more balanced relationship for the dialectic feature of architecture, as it is reflected in the

title, “between culture and form”.⁸⁰ Within the text, Hays discusses that *criticality* is the natural entity of architecture; which has the necessary resistance for the “conciliatory operations of a dominant culture” yet also it is “irreducible to a purely formal structure”⁸¹ Within the article, Hays firstly analyses the two natural aspects of architecture: as an instrument of culture, and as an autonomous form. He recognizes that the relationship between architecture and culture is mutualistic in a way that they enrich and realize each other continuously. Architecture becomes “a functional support for human institutions” and “a reification of a collective vision”; thus becoming the physical reassurance of the “hegemony of culture”.⁸² On the other hand, the continuous nature of culture provides historical background to architecture and its productions; therefore, presents an originating point to the discipline. This is also the very source of discussions on retrospective analysis in architecture, whether if architecture should deny “any historical objectivity and capitulation to the idea that all schemes of interpretation are hopelessly subjective”.⁸³ On the other hand, the architecture of formal autonomy reflects what Eisenman had represented by his studies of semi-autonomy. In fact, Hays realizes semi-autonomy as an architecture that is not bounded to the cultural aspects yet connects with them via formal qualities.

By maintaining a thorough evaluation of these two positions, he then interprets the idea of the *criticality* of architecture with the examples from the designs of Mies. Hays argues that within the architecture of Mies, the most radical aspect was the idea beneath his approach towards forms and masses, which did not exist in the traditional and modernist thought of that time. “Instead he has invested meaning in the sense of surface and volume that the building assumes in a particular time and place, in a

⁸⁰ K. Michael Hays, “Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form” *Perspecta* 21 (1984): 14-29.

⁸¹ Hays, “Critical Architecture,” 15.

⁸² Hays, “Critical Architecture,” 16.

⁸³ Hays, “Critical Architecture,” 16.

contextually qualified moment.”⁸⁴ Hays leans on the balance between the formalist approaches of design and the concerns of the cultural background. The semi-autonomous architecture enables the possibility of creating critical interpretations via formal arrangements. His reading upon the architecture of Mies is not only concentrated on his designs —realized or not— but also on his theoretical ideas on the issue of the form itself. Hays refers to Mies’s aphorism on architecture and form: “We refuse to recognize problems of form, but only problems of the building. The form is not the aim of our work, but only the result. Form by itself does not exist. Form as an aim is formalism; and that we reject.”⁸⁵ Hays summarizes Mies’s architectural vision as the process of distinguishing architecture from the external forces that influence it; which are the states produced by the market and taste, the personal interests and expectations of the author, and essentially the purpose of defining its meaning directly according to the tradition.⁸⁶ Hays sees this as an opportunity for architecture to strengthen its formal stability with the resistant attitude towards these external conditions. Without ignoring the cultural references, he suggests an architecture that is possible via criticizing the external values thus developing a resistant response with formal applications. He admits that the uniqueness of Mies’s architecture derives from this very idea of creating a resistant design through the criticism of formal and cultural aspects, thus resolving in a semi-autonomous architecture.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Hays, “Critical Architecture,” 20.

⁸⁵ The referenced source is the booklet for the *Mies van der Rohe* exhibition in Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, which was held in 1947. The exhibiton is directed by Philip Johnson as well as the edited catalogue. Many of Mies’s designs and writings are included in a chronological order within the exhibiton in MoMA, analyzed and discussed in a distinctive insight. See; Philip Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1947): 184. https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_catalogue_2734_300062055.pdf.

⁸⁶ Hays, “Critical Architecture,” 22.

⁸⁷ Hays, “Critical Architecture,” 27.

In the issue of *Perspecta* 33, architectural critic and historian Stanford Anderson posits himself closer to Hays's perspective, he recalls for a *quasi-autonomy*—an in-between architecture considering the engagement of common necessities of society as well as the freedom cast upon form.⁸⁸ His proposition for the discipline visualized an architecture that is both “quasi-autonomous” and socially responsible at the same time. In his article, Anderson introduces one of his earlier texts that was not published by the Architectural Association in 1966, titled “Problem-Solving and Problem-Worrying”.⁸⁹ In this study, he illustrates essential processes towards an architectural project, the ways of thinking of the provided information on the design, which he collaborates as the “problem-solving” mode of the discipline. Within this mode, he admits that there is a main goal for an architect to reach at the end of the design operation. The issue is that the operation is also configured and shaped by the architect in order to define it and provide a solution. As the problem becomes well-structured with detailed descriptions, the solution presents itself as the “perfect fit” for the occasion. In Anderson's perspective, this approach is seen as “inductive, seeking to define the problem carefully in order to have a fixed standard against which to judge any proposed problem solution”.⁹⁰ Building an architectural statement that does not provide any space for criticism, according to the author, is one of the biggest confusions of autonomy. Rather than architects presenting these *fixed* perspectives on certain problems, Anderson writes, the discipline should shift its priority towards “problem-worrying” that requires a continuous search. Consequently, this is an architecture that is constantly in relation to the problems which required a solution in the first place. An architecture that exists as long as it is

⁸⁸ Stanford Anderson, “Quasi-Autonomy in Architecture: The Search for an ‘In-between’” *Perspecta* 33 (2002): 33.

⁸⁹ The full text that Anderson presented to the Architectural Association in 1966 is available within his article in *Perspecta* 33. See Anderson, “Quasi-Autonomy in Architecture,” 31-34.

⁹⁰ Anderson, “Quasi-Autonomy in Architecture,” 32.

provided with a variety of problems; not only solves them perfectly from a single point of view.

2.3 Towards Pragmatism

Anderson's idea of quasi-autonomy suggests a position in-between, but the architecture of the 21st century developed itself as one of the poles that he recommended for architects to avoid. Drifting further away from the concentrated formal qualities of the discipline, the issue of creating an ability to interconnect with the external forces became a more and more crucial aspect of architecture, such as the social, cultural, and political conditions of the city.⁹¹ In the book *The New Architectural Pragmatism*, a collaboration of articles providing different ends of the pragmatist approach, architectural theoreticians Robert E. Somol and Sarah Whiting became the two crucial figures in pragmatism discussions. Together they presented the idea of a *projective architecture* against the "criticality" in architectural theory.⁹² It was in 2002 that Somol and Whiting introduced the idea of a resistant and projective architecture within their article "Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism".⁹³ They refer to Hays' and Eisenman's understanding

⁹¹ Three years before Anderson proposed such an argument, architect and theoretician Stan Allen discussed about the natural effects that architecture cause. In one of the lectures Allen delivered at Columbia University in 1998, he referred to the critical shift that is required in order to fully comprehend the opportunities that architecture possesses. Allen's perspective upon the sources and outcomes of architecture illuminated that, according to him, architecture is never a powerful tool for criticism. It does not comment *on* the world, rather it operates *in* and *on* the world. For more, see Stan Allen, "Practice vs. Project," *PRAXIS: Journal of Writing + Building* Vol. 1(Fall, 1999):112-125, and his unpublished paper "Pragmatism in Practice" sent to the Pragmatist Imagination conference at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in November 2000.

⁹² Esin Kömez Dağlıoğlu, "The Context Debate: An Archaeology," *Architectural Theory Review* 20, no. 2 (2015): 268.

⁹³ Although the article was originally published in *Perspecta* 33 (2002), it was included in many other sources as well. The actual source of the publishing referenced in this thesis is; Robert E. Somol and Sarah Whiting, "Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism," in *The New Architectural Pragmatism: A Harvard Design Magazine Reader*, ed. William S. Saunders (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007): 22-33.

of disciplinarity as the autonomy that enables critique, representation, and signification, while it should have been directed towards instrumentality that shows projection, performativity, and pragmatics.⁹⁴ According to the article, the definition of disciplinarity in autonomous approach is: “directed against reification rather than toward the possibility of emergence”.⁹⁵ The idea of architecture creating opportunities for emergence was the main notion that leads to a *projective* architectural practice. Somol and Whiting differentiate what autonomous architecture has imported into the theory with the discussions in the late-20th century. By referencing particular architects and their studies on the topic, authors illustrate that one type of disciplinarity was concentrated on the autonomy and the process — as Eisenman emphasizes on the Maison Dom-ino—, and the other was the disciplinarity as force and effect —as the world-famous architect and critic Rem Koolhaas staged within his project for the Downtown Athletic Club.⁹⁶ Furthermore, Somol and Whiting argue that these two examples of modern architecture start to comprehend the critical project within the discipline from the *projective* one —by developing a pragmatist approach that is separated from strict rules and designations. The freedom that Somol and Whiting realize while introducing the term “Doppler Effect” necessitates a variety of position and a frequency between numerous notions occupied within the interrelation between the source and the receiver —such as a pendulum swinging from one point to another. This dialectic aspect that the authors illustrate provides architectural projects the ability to adapt according to the various exchanges of architecture’s intrinsic features such as; material, program, function, atmosphere, form, economy.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Richard Anderson, “Tired of Meaning,” *Log*, no. 7 (Winter/Spring, 2006): 12.

⁹⁵ Somol and Whiting, “Notes around the Doppler Effect,” 24-25.

⁹⁶ Somol and Whiting, “Notes around the Doppler Effect,” 26-27.

⁹⁷ Somol and Whiting, “Notes around the Doppler Effect,” 27.

The Doppler shifts the understanding of disciplinarity as autonomy to disciplinarity as performance or practice. In the former, knowledge and form are based on shared norms, principles, and tradition. In the latter, a more Foucaultian notion of disciplinarity is advanced in which the discipline is not a fixed datum or entity, but rather an active organism or discursive practice, unplanned and ungovernable [...] Rather than looking back or criticizing the status quo, the Doppler projects forward alternative (not necessarily oppositional) arrangements or scenarios.⁹⁸

Somol refers to the project of IntraCenter as a predecessor of architectural pragmatism, which is designed by Whiting and Ron Witte of WW. According to Somol, the building accomplishes to reimagine a mixed-use community center by replacing “representational theming” with “material phasing”, therefore “abandoning the *critical* project in architecture”.⁹⁹ The main idea of IntraCenter is to project an opportunity for the *similar*, and that way it acts as a “prop for the possible emergence of various singularities”.¹⁰⁰ Another essential notion within the project is the collectivism that IntraCenter continuously redefines one’s relation to the building. The design consists of spatial organizations that are open to different rearrangements, which is translated as the space of *sliders* by Somol. It is not a space of traveling through time or space, but through “virtual possibilities of social inhabitation”.¹⁰¹ Somol emphasizes the IntraCenter as a box of material, programmatic, structural, and environmental phase transitions that realize a new collective of architectural emergences. “Not yet another bleak commentary on the ‘loss’ of public space, this is a community center that *swings*, a demonstration of the

⁹⁸ Somol and Whiting, “Notes around the Doppler Effect,” 27-28.

⁹⁹ Robert Somol, “IntraCenter: The Seduction of the Similar,” *Assemblage*, no. 40 (December 1999), 69.

¹⁰⁰ Somol, “IntraCenter,” 69.

¹⁰¹ Somol, “IntraCenter,” 73.

potential promiscuity of the collective, a celebration of the seduction of the similar.”¹⁰² The architecture that WW defines creates a series of possibilities in harmony with the social and cultural transitions of the environment. From the perspective of Neo-Pragmatism, its architecture instrumentalizes form as a method for engaging with the environment rather than focusing on autonomous design principles that is solely concerned of form.



Figure 8 - Robert Somol & Sarah Whiting, 3D model of the IntraCenter

Although the Doppler projects that Somol and Whiting mentioned present themselves as architectural features which aim to alter the discipline for better adaptation, authors avoid claiming that the Doppler designs require certain expertise on the topics of interest. No matter what the conditions of urban landscape are, Somol and Whiting’s approach requires a scientific perspective on the issues between architecture and urbanity. Studying the problematic conditions of architecture within the urban landscape necessitates different scientific proficiencies regarding the

¹⁰² Somol, “IntraCenter,” 75.

certain fields of study such as sociology, economy, environment, culture, and politics.¹⁰³ In fact, the Doppler theory does not even attempt to limit the fields of expertise to an architectural perspective. Architects, when creating a Doppler effect within their projects, focus on the concrete notions of the design to avoid leaning towards heterogeneity.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, when architects interest in topics that are outside of architecture's primal scope, they do not interrelate with those problematical topics as self-realized experts. Rather, their acknowledgment of being "experts on design", looking from an architect's vision, is what gives them the ability to affect those topics. The interrelation that is created between those topics and the design is the essential feature of such architecture. In this point of view, architecture not only conducts the qualities of a design, but it also affects other qualities of sensibility such as atmosphere and ambiance. Positioning the viewer within the context of completed work of architecture thus the Doppler includes the atmospheric interaction as well as the optical and conceptual.¹⁰⁵ The carried shift of information between the subject and the object is the crucial part of such designs, thus the engagement that architecture builds with its environment also includes the engagement with the viewer. This is the essential aspect of a projective architecture that attempts to absorb all information from external forces and develops a pragmatic approach to cast upon the design. The main outcome of such a projective program is the possibility to engage with multiple fields of studies and create the opportunity for them to participate in the Doppler that architecture realizes.

¹⁰³ Lars Lerup develops the idea of "met form" in one of his articles in *Log*, which is the architectural form belonging to the total metropolis and acts as a nucleus of a local ecology. With this new perspective towards the form, architecture transforms into an interconnected discipline with its location, climate, culture, and nature. Lars Lerup, "Met Form," *Log*, no. 5 (Spring/Summer, 2005), 28-31.

¹⁰⁴ Somol and Whiting, "Notes around the Doppler Effect," 28.

¹⁰⁵ Somol and Whiting, "Notes around the Doppler Effect," 29.

One of the main features of Somol and Whiting's proposal of a projective architecture is that the need for the discipline to release its resistant modes of design, especially the ones concerning form. They argue that architecture has been developing itself as a resistance against the outer sources, thus focused on the introverted methodologies along with the search for the autonomous form. By preventing this resistant perspective, they submit an architecture that is oriented towards the absorption of what is outside of the intrinsic aspects of the discipline. An architecture that is open to any external forces and is ready to adapt to its surroundings. As a critic, theoretician, and designer, Jeffrey Kipnis supports the idea of a transitioning architecture but opposes the "non-resistant" behavior that Somol and Whiting suggest. He argues that architecture has evolved within three modes of negation previously: "formal invention", "symbolic appropriation", and "infrastructural subterfuge".¹⁰⁶ He illustrates the well-known figures of the 20th century as the leaders of the formal invention, who focused mainly on the physical aspects of the discipline. It was the famous architect and critic Rem Koolhaas to shift into the elaboration of these formal devices, according to Kipnis. He emphasizes that Koolhaas was the one to concentrate on the infrastructural systems or architecture and instrumentalize the resistance in order to develop an effective disestablishment of the discipline.¹⁰⁷ In his article, Kipnis acknowledges the important progress that Somol and Whiting started, implying the necessary ingredients for producing and exploring new architectural effects distinguished from the generic building qualities. He suggested the discipline to accompany "new effects" to preserve that openness throughout analyzing the effects of these modes of resistance, while at the same time defending the resistant aspect of architecture.¹⁰⁸ He describes these new effects as

¹⁰⁶ Jeffrey Kipnis, "Is Resistance Futile," *Log*, no. 5 (Spring/Summer, 2005): 105.

¹⁰⁷ Kipnis, "Is Resistance Futile," 105.

¹⁰⁸ Kipnis, "Is Resistance Futile," 108.

the resistance that construct new audiences, the necessary yet never sufficient, as the precursor of new alliances, and finally, new regimes.¹⁰⁹ He writes:

Traditionally, architecture has drawn impetus for its meta-critical discourse from the social sciences and its links to engineering or from the discourse of the visual arts and its links to philosophy and literary criticism. The persisting legacy of the former, for example, is the conception of architecture as an instrument of direct social action and the synonymy of architectural performance with function or use. The influence of the latter is apparent in the bifurcation of architectural aesthetics into a phenomenology of perceptions and a mode of representation and signification.¹¹⁰

This issue of utopian dreams as the core aspirations of the theory in architecture revitalizes the discussions about the need for an engaged theory and design. Even though the issue of form in Somol and Whiting's studies is concentrated on the plasticity and adaption, the firm grip this "form" has with the theory causes uncertainty. In *Log* no. 33, Kelly Chan writes about the unstable parts of the *projective architecture*, while revealing that Somol and Whiting's proposal articulated a "death wish" to the architectural theory.¹¹¹ The presence of the coexisting—and even contradictory—paradigms altogether under the same roof of "design" resulted in an end-of-theory for architecture. Without the ability to focus only on one notion at a time, this new architectural pragmatism requires non-resistance and multi-functionality towards the internal and external forces, culminating in an agglomeration of architectural segments rather than a total understanding reflected on the design.

¹⁰⁹ Kipnis, "Is Resistance Futile," 108.

¹¹⁰ Kipnis, "Is Resistance Futile," 108-109.

¹¹¹ Kelly Chan, "Project Against Autonomy," *Log*, no. 33 (Winter, 2015): 121.

The project of autonomy may have encrypted architecture's criticality, but the project against autonomy —and its various understated postscripts— aborts the mission altogether, settling for the status quo with deceptive optimism. Divested of its anticipatory power, projective architecture no longer adumbrates formless ideals, plots heterotopias, and portends alternatives to compromise. It simply exists; it is content to be an object. If we are to truly jailbreak architecture from idle commentary and complicity, we must first believe that architecture is possible.¹¹²

On the other side, the new pragmatism in architecture is also challenged with the idea of *projectivity* by means of its ability to engage with the environment and propose an altered scenario for the discipline. As a critic, theoretician, and educator, Roemer van Toorn emphasizes the idea of a projective discipline, concentrating on the converse opinions of architectures belonging to a dream or reality. Looking at the issue from a material perspective, Toorn relates with the current state of architecture; therefore, evaluating the idea of “engagement with the reality” as Somol and Whiting proposed.¹¹³ He illustrates the pragmatist architecture as “an addiction to extreme realism”, “a kind of degree zero of the political”, and free from the consequences it would lead to in reality.¹¹⁴ Consequently, Toorn analyses the ability of pragmatism to affect reality by its design principles. He acknowledges three types of architectural works; while *projective autonomy* is focused primarily on the geometrical configurations, *projective mise-en-scène* and *projective naturalization* are considered architecture as infrastructural experiments.

¹¹² Chan, “Project Against Autonomy,” 126.

¹¹³ Roemer van Toorn, “No More Dreams? The Passion for Reality in Recent Dutch Architecture... and Its Limitations,” in *The New Architectural Pragmatism: A Harvard Design Magazine Reader*, ed. William S. Saunders (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007): 60.

¹¹⁴ Toorn, “No More Dreams,” 60.

Projective autonomy tries to restore contact with the user and the contemplator through passive experience, while projective *mise-en-scène* and projective naturalization seek interaction. While projective autonomy is interested in form — what the aesthetic by its own means is able to communicate—, the projective *mise-en-scène* seeks the creation of theatrical situations, and projective naturalization seeks strictly instrumental and operational systems.¹¹⁵

In order to fully illuminate what he means by these three types of projective architectures, and how they visualize and realize the discipline within their methodologies, Toorn continues the extensive analysis on them one by one. What he recalls as *projective autonomy* is actually the autonomous architecture that is presented especially by Rossi, Eisenman, and Hays. With the revolving ideas around the self-sufficient, tasteful, and subdued form, autonomy is referred within the text as “not concerned with movement, complexity, or any of the other dynamic processes that can be used to legitimize projects”.¹¹⁶ On the contrary, with the works of *projective mise-en-scène*, the contemplation of designs is not the crucial aspect. Rather, they tend to create advanced realities by the use of theatrical programs, thus develop the city as a giant datascape.¹¹⁷ The experimentation plays an essential role in this approach, not via revealing a finished work that carries a fixed reality, but by contrasting the current reality with the one that is presented in the project. Lastly, for the third that Toorn argues, *projective naturalization* is differentiated from *projective mise-en-scène* by not exhibiting scenarios onto aspects related to society, religion, politics, globalization, or individuals.¹¹⁸ The super-functionality of these projects focuses on movement and interactivity, providing open processes that function

¹¹⁵ Toorn, “No More Dreams,” 61.

¹¹⁶ Toorn, “No More Dreams,” 61.

¹¹⁷ Toorn, “No More Dreams?,” 63.

¹¹⁸ Toorn, “No More Dreams?,” 67.

automatically with relation to the courses of reality. Overall, these projective practices are concerned with the future of modernity, and about how architecture could return to a discipline capable of configuring the essentials for making the most of the possibilities. With a strong connection with reality, these types of practice have the urge to develop a true prediction of the future, according to Toorn; yet do not give the most attention to the unknown problems of the present:

What these projective practices fail to see, however, is that utopian dreams are necessary in order to develop in a project a perspective that reaches beyond the status quo. [...] Utopian dreams also enable us to make a detached diagnosis of the present. This moment of exile from the addiction to reality could make us aware of our inevitable and implicit value judgements, of the fact that excluding political and social direction itself sets a political and social direction.¹¹⁹

As a theory that can be defined as both *projective mise-en-scène* and *projective naturalization*, the new pragmatism consists of systematic processes aiming for the projection of the external forces unto the architectural production. These forces control, shape, and transform the processes of architectural production via disabling the resistant notions of architecture. As a result, architectural form is controlled by these external forces thus it is segregated from the disciplinary criticality. While it is crucial for architecture to accomplish a certain engagement with the community, as Somol and Whiting prioritize, the reduced criticality of the discipline causes ambiguous attempts towards form. Without the self-criticizing approach of architecture, form becomes an instrument and loses its resistance against external forces. Moreover, the new pragmatism becomes the creator of a *dependent* architecture, which is depending on the solutions of its internal problematics of material, form, space, and function on the absorption of the external forces that drive it. However, another architecture is possible in a position between the formal-

¹¹⁹ Toorn, “No More Dreams?,” 69.

resistance and the external-dependence. Without sacrificing form for the external forces, it is possible to enhance the engagement with these forces which results in an architecture that relates to its environment while preserving its internal criticisms. The criticality that the discipline requires is dependent on architecture's goals towards form. In fact, it is the only way for architecture to continue its *projective* approach while retaining its *resistant* form: through *absoluteness*.

CHAPTER 3

TOWARDS AN ABSOLUTE ARCHITECTURE

The contemporary pragmatist approach in architecture is contested by the works of Pier Vittorio Aureli, who introduced the notion of *absoluteness* in architecture. In his early articles, Aureli directly opposes pragmatists' architecture and their principles on architectural production. In one of these works, Aureli refers directly to Somol's own depiction of *form* and *shape* in architecture.¹²⁰ As a pioneer of pragmatist architecture, Somol asserted the notion of shape against form.¹²¹ In his perspective, shape regrets the conscious generative process for architecture, but it emerges from improvisation and opportunity. On the other hand, form becomes the difficult one, according to Somol, the manifest of itself as an architecture that needs explication of its own generational process. While form must be reasoned, which is why Somol transposes it as a difficult process, the shape is arbitrary. Aureli narrates these ideas as; "This distinction divides the panorama of contemporary architecture into two categories: the *movers* and the *shapers*. For Somol, the shapers find their strategies in the instantaneous appearance of formal manifestations, while the movers center their work on the generative process of form, starting from external or algorithmic data."¹²² The critical perspective Somol suggests derives from a new architectural optimism, and it transforms into a new architectural pragmatism to reorganize its theoretical tools and give architecture the opportunity to see what is becoming the mere scene of shapes. Aureli emphasizes: "He envisions a world in

¹²⁰ Pier Vittorio Aureli, "Architecture and Content: Who's Afraid of the Form-Object?," *Log*, no. 3 (Fall, 2004): 29-36.

¹²¹ Robert E. Somol, "Movers and Shapers" (lecture, Berlage Institute, Rotterdam, April 2004)

¹²² Aureli, "Architecture and Content," 30.

which architects, finally free from the intellectual taboo of the *difficult* and of their many responsibilities to society, technological resources, program, and the moral blackmail of utopia can legitimately reappropriate a space of their own, which until recently was considered superfluous.”¹²³

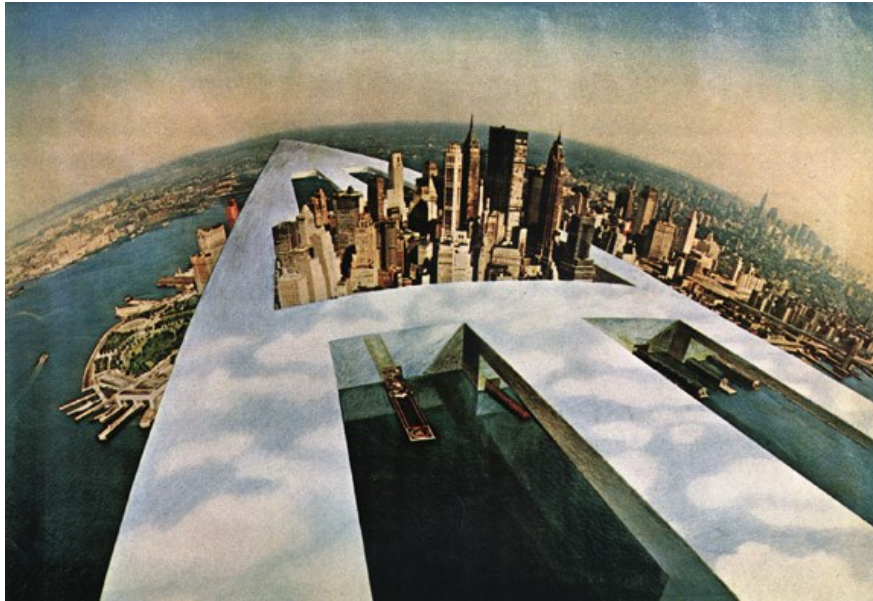


Figure 9 - Superstudio, Continuous Monument

Somol expands the notion of a shape-architecture starting from Malevich’s *Architectonics* to Superstudio’s Continuous Monument, to John Hejduk’s masques, and lastly to the latest designs of OMA. “According to Somol, such examples of new shape-architecture do not require any critical, hermeneutic, geometric, linguistic, formal, scientific, or metaphysical effort in order to be created or interpreted.”¹²⁴ It is understood that this shape-architecture is freed from its different layers of in-depth

¹²³ Aureli, “Architecture and Content,” 30.

¹²⁴ Aureli, “Architecture and Content,” 30.

thoughts, as Somol recommended for the new architecture of the 21st century. Aureli interprets that Somol portrays the new trend of shape-fetishism caused by the new millennium and claims that the quality of large-scale shapes in the scene of contemporary architecture derives from their superficiality and emptiness. The essential feature of this obsession for shapes lies in their condition of “being there” rather than “being something”.¹²⁵ He refers to Somol’s perspective towards architecture as a generic thought of the century, which resulted in an architecture that is separated from its difficult layers of meaning.

Today the content of the easy contributes to an economy of information that, behind the mythology of accessibility, the ordinary, the spontaneous, and the self-organizing, hides an unconvincing ideological and political opacity. The superficiality of shape is nothing but the solidification of excess content, of metaphors, meanings, and symbols without sense; a solidification for which the architectural shape is often a literal mold. These shapes can be interpreted as hieroglyphics; incomprehensible, yet wanting their stubbornly figurative and symbolic character to be deciphered.¹²⁶

Aureli distinguishes shape from a form with its generative nature of easiness and immediacy. Form, in fact, does not generate on its own but is generated, thus stimulates architects into a journey over its constitutional processes —such as linguistics, geometry, philosophy, and sociology.¹²⁷ He refers to form as a crucial aspect of design that reestablishes architecture within the urbanity in a generative process. His book *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture* develops a new perspective towards the creation of form; concerning its critical condition within the

¹²⁵ Aureli, “Architecture and Content,” 32.

¹²⁶ Aureli, “Architecture and Content,” 33.

¹²⁷ Aureli, “Architecture and Content,” 34.

city and its effects on architecture.¹²⁸ With the term *absolute architecture*, Aureli underlines the individuality of the architectural form, which is separated from its environment where it is conceived and constructed.¹²⁹ Far from referring to its original meaning of purity, absoluteness in Aureli's studies is described as being especially itself when it is differentiated from the other.¹³⁰ In the context of architectural discussions, "the other" becomes the city that surrounds architecture. This separation of architecture from the city is critical for the self-realization of architectural form, thus for the absoluteness. Although this claim of separation is not a principle of urbanity, Aureli clarifies, but it is a form that exceeds it: "In this way the possibility of an absolute architecture is the attempt to reestablish the sense of the city as the site of a political confrontation and recomposition of parts."¹³¹ In fact, absolute architecture could be interpreted as a combination of autonomous and pragmatist architectures' approaches to the form. Indeed, absolute architecture realizes its own approach for developing form as a self-critical condition of architecture, but also enabling social, cultural, and political engagement with the city.

¹²⁸ Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2011).

¹²⁹ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, ix.

¹³⁰ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, ix.

¹³¹ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, xi.

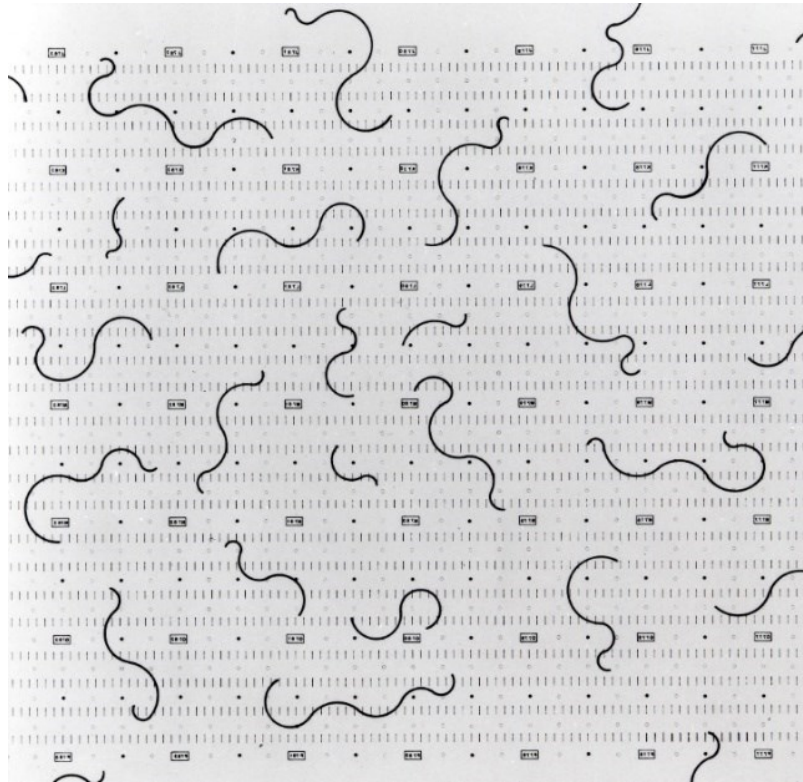


Figure 10 - Archizoom, No Stop City

The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture searches for the autonomy of the project, not the autonomy of design. The difference between the notions of *project* and *design* is described by Aureli as a crucial aspect in architecture. The term *design* illustrates the very act of building and producing, but *project* refers to the strategy that is orchestrated in order to produce a generative structure for architecture.¹³² Aureli illuminates that the architectural stage in the early 2000s transformed the classical Vitruvian triad of *firmitas*, *utilitas*, and *venustas* into a millennial thought: structural complexity, formal redundancy, and image.¹³³ Aureli's interpretation of this

¹³² Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, xiii.

¹³³ Pier Vittorio Aureli, "More and More and Less and Less: Notes Toward a History of Nonfigurative Architecture," *Log*, no. 16 (Spring/Summer, 2009): 7.

transformation reveals questions about the possibility of eliminating the figurativeness in forms, which cannot be achieved by another style rooting from modernity. This is a search for a nonfigurative architecture, without any ideological, typological, or stylistic configurations. By analyzing the different periods and thoughts of architectural history, he concludes that the progress towards the new has always required the denial of the former.¹³⁴ While referring to them as “constructive denials”, he mentions that they lead the evolution of modernity thus will lead the search for the nonfigurative.¹³⁵ Once again, Aureli acknowledges the project of No-Stop City by Archizoom as one of the first examples of nonfigurative architecture. Denoting Archizoom’s own title for the plan “Proposal for a Non-Figurative Architectural Language” as well as the very approach for the creation of it inspire Aureli for theoretical analysis. The notion of language that Archizoom mentions is crucial at this point because the very plan consists of an abstract field of dots and X’s completed with a typewriter. The disposition of the dots and X’s derive from the spacing of the typewriter itself; therefore, they represent the architecture within a void, which is the city.

The extreme evolution seen in Archizoom’s project can be interpreted as an act of transferring the process of subsumption from the realm of physical space perception to the realm of biopolitical management in which the grid is not simply rows of columns that define the concept of physical space but the rational and isotropic distribution of infrastructure that defines all architectural reproduction.¹³⁶

Eventually, to continue to investigate the possibility for a nonfigurative architecture, Aureli shifts his focus to the actual city. He executes this search by analyzing the notions of grid, order, composition, plan, surface, and finally, limit. Within each

¹³⁴ Aureli, “More and More and Less and Less,” 7.

¹³⁵ Aureli, “More and More and Less and Less,” 7.

¹³⁶ Aureli, “More and More and Less and Less,” 8-9.

topic, he finds an essential feature that in fact supports the non-figurativeness in architecture. The grid, a critical particle of the structure of the city, is the idea for a formal reduction that helps to map the complex modern environment, rather than a strategy for the formalist development of the city.¹³⁷ As a compositional device, it does not only frame and controls the liberalization of urban space. The grid is much more than an instrument for taming the unescapable growth; it is the “only element within the city that could orchestrate the design of everything from a single room to an entire city without requiring the predefinition of all the stages between those two poles.”¹³⁸ As a totality reflected upon the plan, form is now more than a representation: it is a process. Referring to the influential theoretical project, the *Hochhausstadt* by Ludwig Hilberseimer, Aureli argues that the form of the city emerged from the repetition of basic elements and types, along with the logic of the “most conventional geometry possible”, the grid. With the disappearing zones and typologies, the inhabitants of *Hochhausstadt* belong to everywhere.¹³⁹ Consequently, after many more depictions of different projects, Aureli arrives at the conclusion that the possible afterthought for the non-figurative architecture is possible through the acceptance of the non-figural form as a limit to itself—rather than a vehicle for its extension.¹⁴⁰ With all of these translations of archetypes within the city, Aureli accomplishes to illustrate the main task of architecture: to transform into a public, common, and graspable element with its organization of space.

As the title of Aureli’s book suggests, this is a “possibility” for architecture. In order to interpret the notion of absoluteness and its different possibilities, Aureli seeks the origins of the idea in architectures of the past. Emphasizing the works of Palladio,

¹³⁷ Aureli, “More and More and Less and Less,” 10.

¹³⁸ Aureli, “More and More and Less and Less,” 13.

¹³⁹ Aureli, “More and More and Less and Less,” 14.

¹⁴⁰ Aureli, “More and More and Less and Less,” 15.

Piranesi, Boullée, and Ungers, the author analyzes their studies and approaches on form and on the city throughout *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*. Within the introduction of the book, Aureli clarifies that the selection of these four figures was a subjective interest, and he approached them not as a historian but as an architect analyzing others' works. Although his main concern is to evaluate these studies and search for an absolute architecture afterward, he especially converged to the issue theoretically.¹⁴¹ Without falling for the recent figurative trends of form-creation processes, Aureli pursues for the absolute form that can define architecture in the contemporary city: an architecture that directly confronts urbanization and reflects upon it. He clarifies two methodologies for the mentioned possibility: first by distinguishing the difference between the concepts of the city and the urbanization; and second, how urbanization overcame the city over time.¹⁴² Through analyzing various projects for cities, Aureli focuses on their effects and their representations. In conclusion, he presents a redefinition for notions of *political* and *formal* as crucial aspects of urbanization that can relate with the formal qualities of architecture. Against the analyzed themes of thoughts, Aureli proposes an absolute architecture that is derived from the city and reflected upon form; thus it becomes a representation for and against the entirety of urbanization.

Aureli distinguishes urbanization from urbanity via analyzing their etymological origins. In ancient Greece, Aristotle differentiates politics and economics as *techné politiké* and *techné oikonomiké*. According to Aureli, the former is used regarding the public and common interest; while the latter describes the administration of private life and its space, the house, or *oikos*.¹⁴³ Thus in ancient Greece, *techné politiké* was concerned about the community, the way that individuals live together

¹⁴¹ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, xii.

¹⁴² Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 2.

¹⁴³ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 2.

within the very space of *polis*. In Aureli's point of view, the very fact that different groups are being located in the same political space brings conflict among parts that form it: the debate between individuals.¹⁴⁴ The possibility of *polis*, as a place of the many and a place of politics, lies in its ability to transform the conflict into coexistence with the decision-making processes. Moreover, because politics is originated in the *polis*, it has the possibility and necessity to create and resolve conflicts.¹⁴⁵ On the other hand, *techné oikonomiké* concerns the foundation of private space as a complex organism which Aristotle illustrates in three categories: despotic relationship of masters to their slaves; paternal relationships such as parenthood; and marital relationships of husband and wife.¹⁴⁶ Economics, in the sense of ancient Greek, focuses on the administration and control of the house and its members. Therefore, unlike *polis*, the authority of the economy acts in its own interest of the house because it belongs in the sphere of the private space of *oikos*. The differentiation between private and public spaces reflects on their role within the communities: while *oikos* ensures the social space and natural reproduction of its members; *polis* confronts the discussions taking place in the agora for the common sake.

Whereas in Roman city, the Latin word *urbs* differs from the Greek *polis*. Aureli describes the term *urbs* as "the very material constitution of the city" that exceeds any community and "could be founded *ex novo*, in a tabula rasa condition."¹⁴⁷ Unlike the Greek *polis* requiring a frame around a walled city, *urbs* referred to the expansion in the form of the city, the urbanity, thus it was not used in order to address restriction. Within the Roman *urbs*, there is also the condition of being a citizen,

¹⁴⁴ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 3.

¹⁴⁵ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 3.

¹⁴⁶ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 3.

¹⁴⁷ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 4.

civitas, which concerns the political rights of its inhabitants. *Civitas* is a term that is regardless of people's origins of the nation, rather it is the condition for the coexistence of people living in the same community. The contrasting idea between the Greek *polis* and the Roman *civitas* is crucial for Aureli, that he argues it reflected the essential difference in political and social environments of the two cultures. Looking from the architectural perspective, Aureli points out that while the *oikos* illustrated the domestic inhabitation of houses, the *civitas* was concerned with the structural system protecting the cluster of houses under the same city.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, the existence of *civitas* as the very idea of the city where its inhabitants live as a community and have shared rights among them resolves with the idea of *infra*. In other words, this *infrastructure* is in between houses that develop the necessity for urbanity.¹⁴⁹ While *oikos* indicates the closed-system of the house and its domestic authority over its members; the Roman *civitas* expresses not only the physical and social program in each particle within the city but also the idea that establishes the common understanding throughout the nation.¹⁵⁰ This difference between Greek and Roman perspectives emphasizes the essential social conditions that shape the cultural aspects as well as the formal configurations about urbanity.

¹⁴⁸ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 6.

¹⁴⁹ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 7.

¹⁵⁰ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 7.

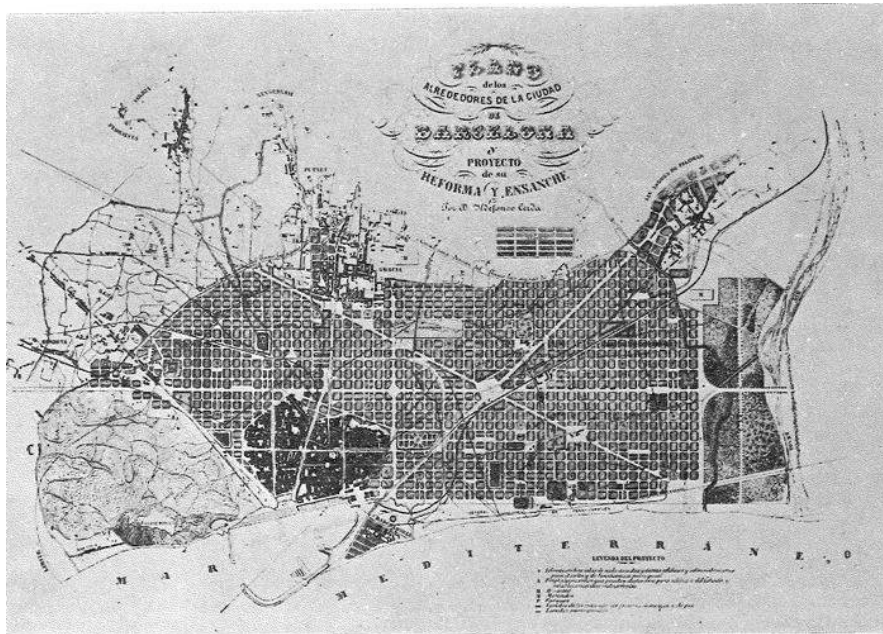


Figure 11 - Ildefons Cerdà, The Plan for Barcelona

As an articulation of the Greek and Roman notions originating the idea of a city, Aureli analyzes Ildefons Cerdà’s proposal for Barcelona in 1859, revealing the origin of the term *urbanization*.¹⁵¹ The plan consisted of social, political, and cultural projects for the expansion of the city of Barcelona. Cerdà conveyed a series of surveys focused on the demographic, economic, and environmental conditions of the city, which at the end became a pivot for the future of the cities.¹⁵² Moreover, he inserted the public program into the plan scheme by analyzing the use and function of these spaces, thus merging his proposals with a coherent and empirically reliable theory of *urbanización*.¹⁵³ His perspective on understanding and elaborating on land

¹⁵¹ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 10-13.

¹⁵² Michael Neuman, “Centenary Paper: Ildefons Cerdà and the Future of Spatial Planning: The Network Urbanism of a City Planning Pioneer,” *The Town Planning Review* 82, no. 2 (2011): 118.

¹⁵³ Arturo Soria Y Puig, “Ildefonso Cerdà’s General theory of ‘Urbanización’,” *The Town Planning Review* 66, no. 1 (1995): 20.

as a whole rather than scattered towns and centers ensured the overall theory of *urbanización* to evolve upon the total of cities. Even though the social and political concerns were essential for the redevelopment of Barcelona, Cerdà also suggested a formal definition for the physical reconditioning of the city.¹⁵⁴ Within the design, the housing blocks accommodated the public services that were necessary for the expansion of a city. In Aureli's words, the proposal for Barcelona represents "a potentially infinite space that extends beyond the centers of cities according to the technological and economic capabilities of a productive society."¹⁵⁵ In fact, Cerdà's *urbanization* differs from its Roman predecessor as it realizes the state of an expanding city and its processes that lead to the transformation of *urbs*, whereas *urbanity* referred to the social, political, and cultural conditions of the city.

3.1 Architecture as a Project

Aureli introduces the notion of a project as one of the results of absolute architecture. By becoming a project architecture can propose an alternative idea for the city, rather than embracing its already existing conditions.¹⁵⁶ This is an idea of an architecture that is capable of transforming the city, not as a part of urbanization but as a regenerator of urbanity. Aureli's interpretation of the architecture of Andrea Palladio illustrates the notion of a project within the disciplinary understanding that is mainly concerned with form. Against the style-oriented architectural thought in 16th century Italy, Palladio recombined the formal features of architecture and their attribution to the city. When interpreting Palladio's projects, it is possible to detect a major goal for defining the strategy that leads architecture. The concern for the city is apparent in Palladio's villas, and even his most popular one Villa la Rotonda. Palladio's

¹⁵⁴ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 11.

¹⁵⁵ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 11.

¹⁵⁶ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, xiii.

emphasis on the site-specificity of his villa is visible via the acceptance of loggias around the projects. These barns, as Aureli interprets, are crucial keys of the geopolitical environment, thus provide a “sense of context” and a “semiotic distinction” that resulted in classifying these buildings as villas rather than palaces.¹⁵⁷

Aureli argues that within all of his design works spread over 40 years, two major ingredients become significant mediating between two opposing forces: “on the one hand, and abstraction of the orders, proportion, and symmetry; and on the other, a site-specificity, with each building being carefully inserted into the tight and complex medieval fabric of the city.”¹⁵⁸ It could be evaluated that Palladio’s generic idea of the form includes the architectural integrity between different elements in-between and the interrelation that is created via this composing. Palladio’s understanding of architectural elements as individual forms resolves in his studies as they are separated and distinguished from each other in his projects. The two projects for Rialto Bridge represent Palladio’s understanding of architecture and its absolute form undoubtedly as a form of connection in-between the city. Over the Grand Canal running through the city of Venice, the bridge acts as a civic hub constructed with two parallel rows of shops. In the first project that Palladio proposed, the bridge was accompanied by two square spaces in each end, remarking the approaches to the canal. With the second edition that Palladio designed, he focused solely on the formal qualities of the bridge, this time including the square in the middle of the design. Aureli comments on this shift of the city square from the entrances to the center of the structure as the intention to create a forum in order to create a dialectical connection to the city.¹⁵⁹ With this approach, Palladio contrasted the characteristics of the forum with the continuous activities of the canal below. In further analysis,

¹⁵⁷ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 48.

¹⁵⁸ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 56.

¹⁵⁹ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 73.

Aureli claims that the architect's concern was to establish a modern dialectic between "the absoluteness of architecture and the openness of the city."¹⁶⁰

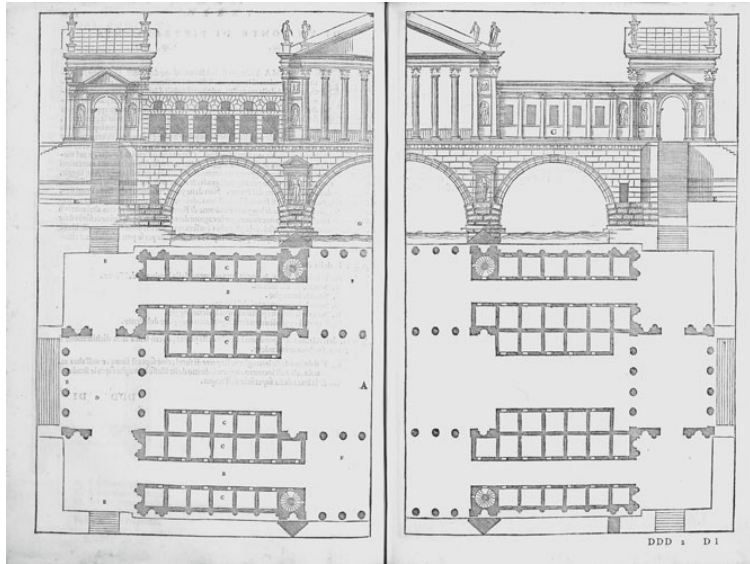


Figure 12 - Andrea Palladio, plans and elevations for Rialto Bridge

Palladio's architecture remains as an example that on the one hand, operates with its formal integrity within the city; and on the other, resonances to wider geographical thus universal contexts. As it was illustrated with the project for Rialto Bridge, Palladio's design principles exceed the discipline's influence over the city, especially by becoming a finite and clearly recognizable object that cannot be exposed to a general program of architecture. "Palladio's architectural form is not deployed onto a plan, nor is it an urban role; rather, it is invested with the representation of an alternative idea of the city within the very space of the existing city."¹⁶¹ By this approach, Palladio's architecture represents a city that is no longer restricted by the

¹⁶⁰ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 76.

¹⁶¹ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 82.

limitation of *civitas*, but as a territory in which the idea of form derives from its intrinsic involvements that aim for the city.

Italian artist Antonio Canaletto depicts Palladio's architecture in his own visual interpretation titled *Capriccio, or a Palladian Design for Rialto Bridge, with buildings at Vicenza*. Canaletto's reading of these buildings clearly refers to the Palladian use of architectural forms and their absoluteness in the formal sense that any type of translocation from one significant site to another does not affect the total integrity of the designs. The painting illustrates three of Palladio's works within a singular architectural collage that creates an ideal within the city: Basilica, Palazzo Chiericati, and as the name remarks, Rialto Bridge. The collage combines these buildings by Palladio, showing his ideal city as an imaginative end-product. Canaletto's imaginary interpretation becomes the reflection of absoluteness within Palladio's architecture: a city that is performed by separated projects as an absolute whole. "In this painting, Canaletto depicts Palladio's project for an anti-ideal city made not by overall plans but by a coherent, yet disposable, architectural program."¹⁶² Canaletto's painting creates a representation of a city made of different architectures as a project within the urbanity, transforming it into an "anti-ideal city" that consists of imaginary arrangements. Within the painting, the combination of Palladio's architectures generate a project for the city.

¹⁶² Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 58.



Figure 13 - Canaletto, or a Palladian design for Rialto Bridge

The idea that architecture is a separated entity from the city, thus it realizes its own presence via its formal absoluteness is not significant to the architecture of Palladio. In Aureli's book, the interrelation of architectural form and the city around is additionally discussed in parallel with the works of Giovanni Battista Piranesi. The two critical engravings of Piranesi, the *Scenographia Campi Martii* and the *Ichnographia Campi Martii antiquae urbis* illustrate the reconstruction of Rome after the fall of the Roman Empire. The city that remains after the destruction shrank to the central area of the Campo Marzio which is located along the bend of the Tiber River —abandoning most of the ancient marvels in the eastern part. After the fall of the Roman Empire, these ruins were used as the foundations for a new city, resulting in a pattern of streets evolved around them. Piranesi's plates focusing on the city of Rome after its fall illustrate a new city being born from its ashes, but rather from a different perspective. In the former plate of Piranesi, he distinguishes the existing ruins in their current condition, which are located in the desolate landscape around the city. Aureli evaluates that this attempt of Piranesi shows the intention to liberate

architectural form from its historical and political context.¹⁶³ Deriving from the important tradition in 15th century *instauratio urbis* —attempts to restore the form of ancient Rome—, *Scenographia* compresses three contrasting actions into one plate: destruction, restoration, and reconstruction¹⁶⁴.



Figure 14 - Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Scenographia Campi Martii*

In the second plate, the *Ichnographia*, Piranesi dislocates the urban fabric that occupied and characterized the eastern part of Rome and overlaps those ruins on the site of the modern city of Campo Marzio. The overlapping city thus becomes a new idea of Rome; which, according to Aureli, Piranesi developed as a radical response against the prevalent political conditions of Rome in his time.¹⁶⁵ The idea behind

¹⁶³ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 85.

¹⁶⁴ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 87-89.

¹⁶⁵ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 92.

instauratio urbis was not to build and protect monumental architecture that resembled ancient Rome but to accept those ruins with the concept of heritage that indicates the reconstruction of a new Rome.¹⁶⁶ With the improving technological tools used for the cartography, the idea behind the topographical precision was characterized by the figure-ground technique which distinguishes urban features from the architecture of the city. About this new approach used for illustrating the built space, Aureli refers to the *Nuova pianta di Roma* by Giambattista Nolli.¹⁶⁷ He considers Nolli's plan as the first scientific survey of Rome that consists of twelve sheets that show the contradiction between the built space of the city and its architectural objects. *Nuova pianta* depicts details from minor or major buildings from the city along with architecture; such as stairs, courtyards, fences, fountains, obelisks. The characteristic idea behind the Nolli plan is that it uses the figure-ground technique which is represented with series of linear hatches. With these hatches, the architectural features are distinguished from the rest of the built space.

¹⁶⁶ One of the early examples for *instauratio urbis* is Pirro Ligorio's *Antiquae urbis imago* dating back to 1651. Ligorio's plan included a series of cross-referencing images of ruins that gather in order to formally address the new Rome. The city appears as a collaboration of buildings without any reference to streets, thus Ligorio's *Imago* shaped only by architectural elements originating in the ancient Rome. Aureli discusses that the coherent language of *Imago* is the precedent for Piranesi's *Campo Marzio*. For more, see Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 93-95.

¹⁶⁷ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 106-111.



Figure 15 - Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Ichnographia Campi Martii

The method that is used in *Nuova pianta* resembles the difference in-between the figure of architecture and the ground of the city. “In the Nolli map, this division was meant to be effective in the urban management of the city. The blackened sections indicate the parts of the city that were adaptable to change and reform, while the architectural poché indicates parts that were more fixed.”¹⁶⁸ At this point, Aureli clearly refers to the buildings on Nolli’s plan as artifacts within urbanity that define

¹⁶⁸ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 109.

the stability of the city. Moreover, he emphasizes architecture as it limits the urban environment and creates different attempts to affect the city physically:

In Nolli's representation of the relationship between architectural space and urban space, architectural space no longer appears to propel change in the city, but instead frames such change as an obstruction to the all-encompassing forces of urban space. Architectural space is defined by its internal logic, while urban space appears determined by the external constraints of the built mass such as circulation, property, and density, and is thus not reducible to a univocal form like architecture.¹⁶⁹

On the contrary, Piranesi's depiction of ruins emphasizes the interrelation between architectural space and urban space. He created a figure-figure technique—different than Nolli's figure-ground plan—and rendered the city not as an urban mass consisting of architectural spaces but as a combination of their formal qualities. In the *Scenographia*, Rome emerges along with the idea of *instructio urbis*; a city reimagined with the ruins. The plan of *Scenographia*, as Aureli claims “is neither a mapping nor a restoration of ancient Rome; the *Scenographia* reveals that the premise (and perhaps the goal) of the reconstruction of the ancient form of Rome was the destruction of modern Rome—the destruction of a form that Nolli had represented in all its urban dimensions”.¹⁷⁰ The very non-existing urban space in Piranesi's *Campo Marzio*, on the other hand, depicts certain architectures from the city, thus it frames urbanism comprised only of buildings. Consequently, architecture becomes the major instrument for rethinking the city, as it is emphasized in both maps of Piranesi and Nolli.

¹⁶⁹ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 112-113.

¹⁷⁰ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 138.

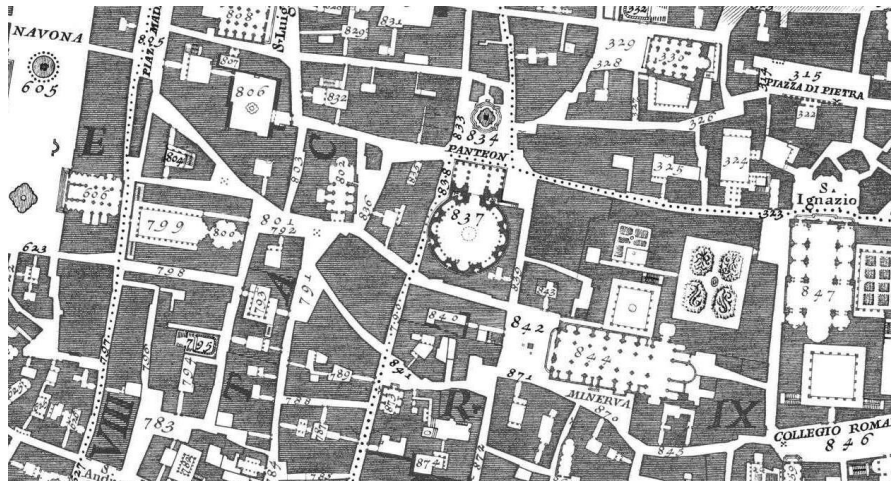


Figure 16 - Giambattista Nolli, Nouva pianta di Roma

Aureli refers to the Nolli map as the illustration of the difference between architecture as finite space and the city as a total urbanity, which concludes as the representation of architecture as an island within the city.¹⁷¹ In both maps, buildings are emphasized as definite objects in the city. Nolli accepted the architecture as a fixated condition of the city, which is represented with a blackened mass that defines the borders of the urbanity. Piranesi, on the other hand, “unplugged” the infrastructural qualities of the city in *Campo Marzio*, thus revealing a city separated from its functional attributes of urbanity. In his interpretation, buildings are displaced from their locations in order to generate a new idea for the city. “Rather than interpreting such a scenario as a terminal point of the city, however, Piranesi presents it as a latent beginning embedded within what already exists in urban space —the ruins.”¹⁷² The focus on ruins in Piranesi’s maps reveals the ambition for such a new city to be able to connect with its past, therefore the totality of the creation process becomes an intrinsic quality for architecture. Within this perspective, the critical

¹⁷¹ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 139.

¹⁷² Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 140.

difference between architecture and urban space is radicalized, in fact allowing architecture to rethink the city as a project. With Piranesi's understanding of architectural form, the discipline transformed into a way of possibility to criticize the existing conditions of the city. Hence, Aureli confronts this idea by exhibiting the architectural form as the source for this search for a re-imagined city, rather than an outcome that exhausts from its existing features.

3.2 Architecture as a Finite Form

The possibility for absolute architecture to become a project for the city, as Aureli theorized, originates from its formal qualities. While he classifies these aspects of form as "finite" and "well-defined", the actual focus is on the *limit* that the form conveys between the outside and the inside of architecture.¹⁷³ In order to become a *project* within the city, architecture must generate certain limits that separate itself physically from the existing urban context. These limits are essential supports for the separation of architecture but also for the engagement that it conveys with the city. The use of plinth in Mies van der Rohe's architecture is a crucial example of the use of limits in form. Aureli argues; "By putting emphasis on the building site, the plinth inevitably makes the site a limit for what it contains."¹⁷⁴ As an element that generates the idea of limit, Rohe's use of plinth re-imagines a series of relations that the site has in-between the city. This does not only affect the conditions that are placed on the plinth but also that is outside the plinth. Aureli emphasizes the experience that the plinth offers as follows:

One of the most remarkable things felt by anyone climbing a Mies plinth, whether in New York or in Berlin, is the experience of turning one's back to the building in order to look at the city. Suddenly, and for a brief moment, one is estranged

¹⁷³ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 30.

¹⁷⁴ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 37.

from the flows and organizational patterns that animate the city, yet still confronting them. [...] It is this emphasis on finiteness and separateness that makes artifacts like these the most intense manifestation of the political in the city.¹⁷⁵

As a result, Rohe's buildings become the very representations of the limit that Aureli mentions. These designs do not present this condition of limit as norms of architecture, but as *states of exception* that "force the generic to conform to the finite form of location".¹⁷⁶ In fact, the forces of the outer, urbanization, become explicit via this approach, thus they are forced to define their contentious position in contrast. Consequently, the notion of limit in architectural form becomes both the isolator and the generator of politics within the city, therefore it supports the new possibilities that a certain *project* offers for the city.

In order to comprehend the notion of limit and its effects on absolute architecture, Aureli emphasizes the works of Boullée. According to Aureli, not only the use of architectural elements and their repetitive arrangements but also the use of natural light plays a crucial role in Boullée's architecture to become an absolute object within the city. Moreover, he argues that the lack of decorative elements and ornaments in Boullée's architecture is balanced with the shadows and light effects.¹⁷⁷ He argues that the monumental architecture of Boullée became one of his manifestations for the city, as a project that both exhibits and counters the spatial transformations in Paris. The scale and composition of his architecture generate a new vision for the public, as a limit for the totalizing spatiality imposed by French classicism and its urban products.¹⁷⁸ Opposing Kaufmann's emphasis on the architect, Aureli asserts that "Boullée's project was not a 'revolutionary' negation of

¹⁷⁵ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 37.

¹⁷⁶ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 40.

¹⁷⁷ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 142.

¹⁷⁸ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 146.

the existing architectural tradition, but rather a critical, postrevolutionary appropriation of this tradition for addressing public space”.¹⁷⁹ It is essential to understand the evolutionary urbanity of Paris in order to understand Boullée from Aureli’s perspective. With the development of Paris during the 17th and 18th centuries and its new form of publicness, Boullée realized the opportunity to establish his conceptual and formal foundations within his designs: which Aureli recalls as an essential example of absolute architecture. The emergence of systematic simplifications and standardizations in architectural language resolved with a constantly changing urban fabric of the city. Aureli conveys that this process resulted in three different forms of architecture and urbanity; the courtyard, the square, and the axis—which replaced the old limits of the *hôtel*, *palace*, and *boulevard*.¹⁸⁰

Among these forms, the *hôtel* was the essential one that confirmed the limits of its courtyard, addressing a finite formal language within the city. Aureli argues that the *hôtel* created a “concave entity” within the city with its façades looking towards its courtyard.¹⁸¹ Moreover, it defined a “hollow” space as an absolute architecture in contrast to the urban fabric of Paris. One of the other spatial instruments for creating regularity within irregularity was the *palace*, which framed an architectural space with the uniformity of the buildings around it. All these *palaces* indicated certain *limits* around specific areas around the city and representing the political power that governed it. Aureli mentions that the replacement of a monumental building with a *palace* for representing this power established an architectural framework within the city that can be repeated within the entire urbanity of Paris.¹⁸² The *boulevard* exhibits another perspective for the city: it is neither a cluster of buildings with a courtyard

¹⁷⁹ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 144.

¹⁸⁰ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 151.

¹⁸¹ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 152.

¹⁸² Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 155.

in-between nor an open space that is surrounded by the image of power. With the demolition of the city walls of Paris in 1670 —or in other words, the *bollwerk*— the expanding system of fortifications enclosing cities became the *boulevard*, a wide system that supports the circulation through the city. The removal of the city walls leads to the expanding city’s circulation, providing the possibility of endless growth. Aureli underlines Boullée’s architecture in this period of Paris which is against the governing management of the city, presenting an architecture that is at its “degree zero of form: a composition of elementary and self-limiting volumes”.¹⁸³ About Boullée’s projects for the Metropolitan Church and the Museum, Aureli emphasizes:

These patterns seem to exaggerate the repetition of the form of the emerging metropolis. In this sense, both the patterns and the bare walls of Boullée’s architecture can be understood as an analogy of the process of architectural abstraction implied in French classicism, but now developed to its logical end. It is possible to see the walls of Boullée’s finite objects as mirroring and emphasizing the uniformity of the architecture of squares and the boulevards framed by “walls” made of endless rows of trees.¹⁸⁴

In his project for the National Library, Boullée visibly interprets these entities of the city and transforms their existing roles in the urban fabric. The library uses the location of a *hôtel* within the city, which Boullée adapted to house a large collection of books and a reading room. The main problem with the existing *hôtel*, as Boullée himself acknowledged it, was the structure of its long and narrow wings on either side of the courtyard, which would mke it difficult to organize and manage the library accordingly.¹⁸⁵ Boullée solved the issue with one gesture by covering the existing

¹⁸³ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 163.

¹⁸⁴ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 164.

¹⁸⁵ Étienne Louis Boullée, “Architecture: Essay on Art” in *Boullée & Visionary Architecture*, ed. Helen Rosenau, trans. Sheila de Vallée (London: Academy Editions, 1976): 103-105. Retrieved from https://monoskop.org/File:Boullée_Etienne-Louis_Architecture_Essay_on_Art.pdf

courtyard and transforming it into a massive indoor space for a storage area and a reading room. In fact, as Aureli points out, the architect reflected the uniform pattern of the previous building in his new design by the use of repetitive panels on the ceiling and bookshelves that surround the central space.¹⁸⁶ The solution echoes the compositional principles of the urbanity of Paris with its attempt to interpret the uniform and horizontal patterns of the city. Thus, the project for the National Library realizes a space that is enclosed and separated from the city but also acts as an interior public space. Boullée's interpretation of the old *hôtel* becomes a representation of what Aureli thought to be an absolute architecture that is both engaging with and separating from the urban context of the city. The engagement within this project does not originate on the use of a pre-existing building and refunctioning it with additional architectural elements, but actually on its condition of reflecting the urban pattern of the city with its supplementary architectural features. The previous courtyard between the buildings of the *hôtel* continues to be a public space in Boullée's project as a common spatial entity within the city; but also, the design develops its own features that address the city with new values.

¹⁸⁶ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 168.

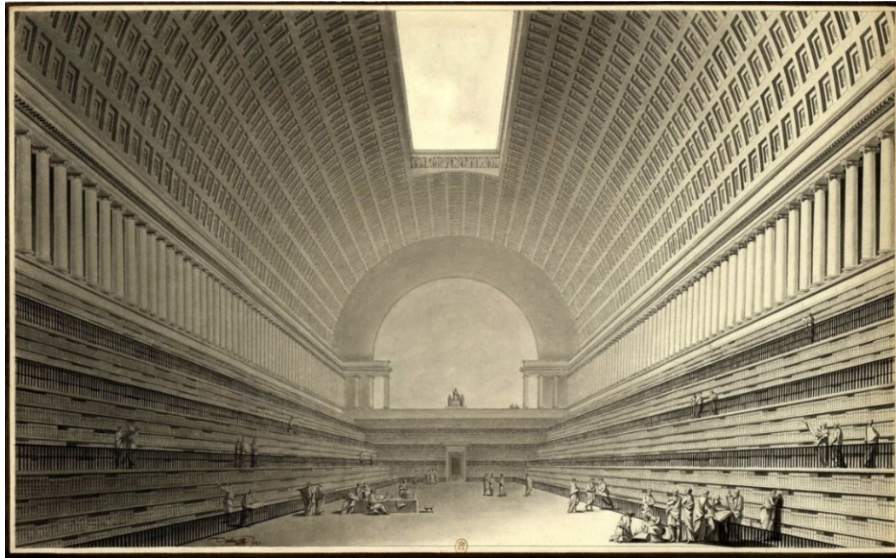


Figure 17 - Etienne-Louis Boullée, perspective from the National Library

One of the obvious features within the project for the National Library that reflects the existing urban pattern of Paris, according to Aureli, was its vaulted courtyard. He emphasizes that Boullée anticipated the public halls of facilities such as train stations, which reach the architectural limit of its interior space in order to contain mass-circulation within the building.¹⁸⁷ A similar approach towards the circulation within the building is seen in one of his other designs: the project for the Coliseum. In his book, Boullée argues that his intention was to adapt the original Coliseum in Rome to the festivals in Paris that celebrate the “national well-being” of its citizens.¹⁸⁸ Because of the function of the building, it requires a form that provides security and accessibility for the masses that attempt in the festivals. In fact, the movement of these masses is the essential aspect of the Coliseum, as Boullée himself mentions:

¹⁸⁷ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 169.

¹⁸⁸ Boullée, “Architecture,” 100.

Imagine three hundred thousand people gathered in an amphitheatre where none could escape the eyes of the crowd. The effect produced by this combination of circumstances would be unique. The spectators would be the elements of this surprising spectacle and they alone would be responsible for its beauty.¹⁸⁹

According to Aureli, the Coliseum represented an “absolute formal symmetry and sameness” which Boullée placed at the heart of the city; therefore, it “analogically sublimated flows and circulation in the concrete limits of a form that constituted a machine for gathering a crowd”.¹⁹⁰ Within the project, the symmetry and the sameness of its architectural elements corresponded with the condition of equality: not as a symbolic representation, but as a formal quality of its architecture. Aureli emphasizes that Boullée’s architecture and its vast, uniform, symmetrical, thus equal spaces “destabilized the hierarchies” which became “states of exception” by opposing the principles that architecture exhibited.¹⁹¹ Hence, Boullée’s project for the Coliseum punctuates the urban fabric of Paris by offering a strategy that is outside its norms, as a new approach towards the city.

¹⁸⁹ Boullée, “Architecture,” 101.

¹⁹⁰ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 171.

¹⁹¹ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 172.

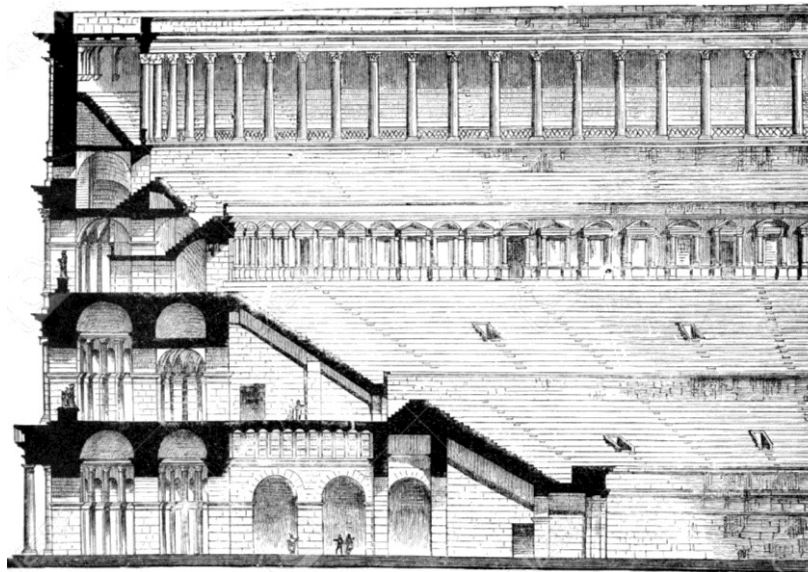


Figure 18 - Etienne-Louis Boullée, section of the Coliseum project

The architecture of Boullée exhibited the urban conditions of Paris within the principles of his designs, presenting them as values that shaped the city socially, culturally, and politically. Rather than neglecting the traditional methods in French classicism, he recuperated its most notable traits such as the uniformity of the city's structure, the existing horizontal lines, the concave spaces of *hôtel*, and the royal squares. His unique approach included the architectural materials that resulted in designs realizing finite limits within their spatial configurations. With the use of elementary architectural features and different methods for combining them, such as repetition, symmetry, and sameness, Boullée provided a series of designs for the city that is separated from the traditional urban fabric. He thought that such an architecture provides buildings a certain "character", which Boullée describes as "to make judicial use of every means of producing no other sensations than those related to the subject".¹⁹² In fact, this "character" can be interpreted as the opportunity for

¹⁹² Boullée, "Architecture," 89.

architecture to engage with the urbanity around it. This approach for the urban fabric resulted in designs that are derived from the very physical conditions of Paris, generating projects that are formally limited, but also engaged with social, cultural, and political aspects of the city. Hence, his architecture criticizes the existing urban context in a way that resolves both physical and social projects for the city. Aureli emphasizes Boullée's projects as they were "recapitulating" the conditions of the urban pattern, "not as a ubiquitous force but as a finite, and thus critical, form".¹⁹³ The criticism in Boullée's projects enabled the architecture that is both engaged and separated, which is not focused on intrinsic autonomous design principles nor Neo-Pragmatist thought, but solely on form that derive from and aim for the city.

3.3 Architecture as a Part of the City

Aureli's definition of absolute architecture extends beyond the boundaries of the physical limits of the project's site. His theory develops an ideal approach aiming for the enhanced engagement with the city. With an architecture that provides well-defined limits and finite forms, the project becomes separated but able to relate with the very conditions of its urban context. This relation in-between the architecture and the city is constructed solely by the design, its principles, and approach towards the urbanity around it. Palladio realized this relation in his projects with the existing forms of the city, transforming them into architectural objects that suggest new conditions for urbanity. Palladio developed an architecture that is limited strictly to the site's boundaries, and his theory was concerned with the use of architectural elements and their effects on the totality of form. Piranesi, on the other hand, developed this relation by incorporating the ruins of Rome with the new city, generating a radical understanding of past and present urban forms in a single combination. While his understanding of urbanity was not only aimed at the features

¹⁹³ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 176.

of architectural elements, it was not addressing a critique towards the existing urban context, but more of an attempt to create a *tabula rasa* condition for the city. In Boullée's architecture, the totality of form became the most important aspect of the design, but his projects accompanied the aim of criticizing the city via the use of existing spatial notions within Paris. His principles for the combination of architectural elements such as symmetry, repetition, and sameness became the most powerful tools in his monumental designs. As it is illustrated in Aureli's book, these architects realized their starting points as an architectural form, and progressed towards the urbanity of the city. Although the definition of "absoluteness" requires focusing on the formal aspects of the design, it is possible to address the architecture by defining its limits and form starting from the urbanity.

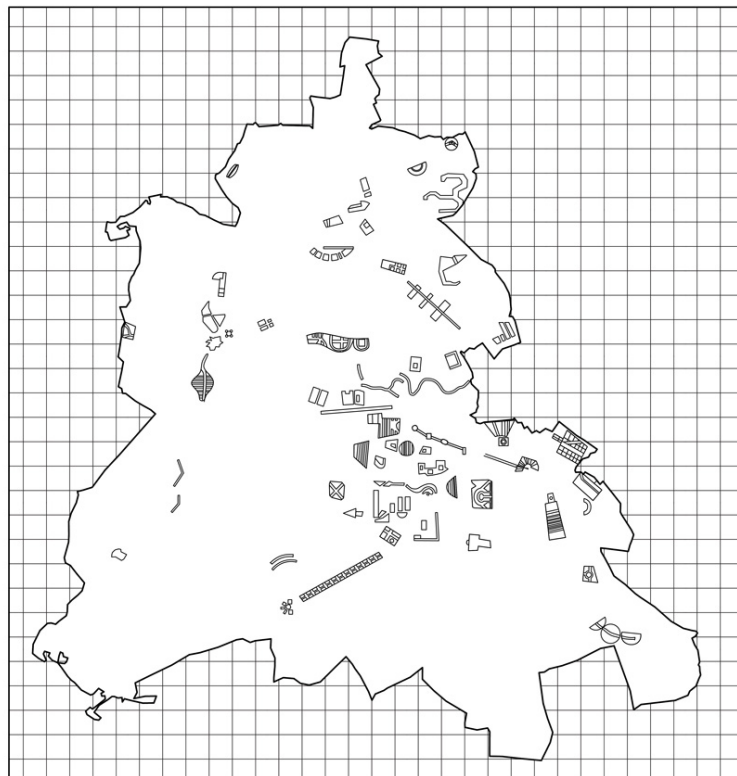


Figure 19 - Oswald Mathias Ungers, Berlin as a Green Archipelago

In 1977, Oswald Mathias Ungers conducted a group of architects to work on the divided city of Berlin after the war. The demolished city, and especially its west part contained vast areas of empty buildings as desolate islands, which lead to the decline in its population. Ungers' project was titled *Berlin as a Green Archipelago*, in which he developed a theory that proposes shrinkage for the city into dense urban centers as a response to the dramatic depopulation. Archipelago, in dictionary terms, refers to a group of islands surrounded by a sea. In Ungers' project, as Aureli transmits, islands transformed into architectural objects within the city, which became a "sea of urbanization".¹⁹⁴ The post-war Berlin provided a base for the project with the radical drop in its population, which Ungers thought was an opportunity to turn the crisis of the war into the project for the shrinking city. In fact, Aureli emphasizes that Berlin as a Green Archipelago is a unique case on its own, simply by addressing an urban crisis through "shifting the focus from the problem of urbanization —the further growth of the city— to that of shrinking the city".¹⁹⁵ The critical idea behind the project was first the acceptance of the city's depopulation, and then the intention to recover the city via the use of limits and finite forms of architecture as a possible archipelago. Ungers' articulation of the limits and finiteness in architectural form is realized as a possible idea for "cities within the city", which Aureli describes as a "recovery of defining its traits of the city, such as its inherent collective dimension, its dialectical nature, its being made of separate parts, its being a composition of different and at time opposing forms".¹⁹⁶ Aureli asserts that this acceptance was not an ambitious approach for the "disurbanization" of the city, but was a method for reinforcing the city's form by the use of limits in architecture.¹⁹⁷ These limits derived from the very existing context of the city's urbanity thus provided each island within

¹⁹⁴ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 177.

¹⁹⁵ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 178.

¹⁹⁶ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 180-181.

¹⁹⁷ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 180.

the archipelago with architectural forms. Hence, depicting architectural forms from the existing city fabric is not a unique strategy for Ungers's project for the Green Archipelago, but is visible in his older projects.

Ungers adopted the same idea of "city within the city" from one of his earlier canonical projects he proposed as a competition entry for Grünzug Süd. Within the project, he analyzed the morphology of a series of architectural objects that surround the open and closed spaces around the site and transformed them into austere compositions of new housing systems. Throughout the analysis, Ungers interpreted the city's existing collection of spaces and buildings and evolved them into a linear composition of architectures and building typologies. He extracted the systematic collaboration of architectural elements from the existing urban fabric, such as the arrangement of walls, the volumes of firewalls, and the array of housing façades with their repetitive openings. These features consisted of the very composition of new housing units, hence a new urbanity for Grünzug Süd. In Aureli's perspective, the essential idea of these two projects was addressing the contrast between the extant and the new; therefore, it suggested the understanding of accepting the existing condition as a starting point for the project.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, the possibility of the formal tension to acknowledge the dialectic between formal and spatial autonomy of those parts provided the vision to conceive those objects as a whole coherent structure. Although the idea was to concentrate on the existing site and its formal values as separate entities within the city, Ungers and his students did not focus on solving the micro-scale issues of the urbanity, but rather on proposing exploitation of them as a project for the new urban form. Derived from the extant conditions of the city, Grünzug Süd became a representation of Berlin on a smaller scale. As Aureli emphasizes, Ungers' "city within the city" was not a project that is against the fragmented city, "but an attempt to reflect the splintering form of the city from within

¹⁹⁸ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 190.

the architectural artifact itself”.¹⁹⁹ In this sense, Grünzug Süd was not built accordingly with the studies of Ungers, but it provided the idea of an archipelago for his studies in the future.

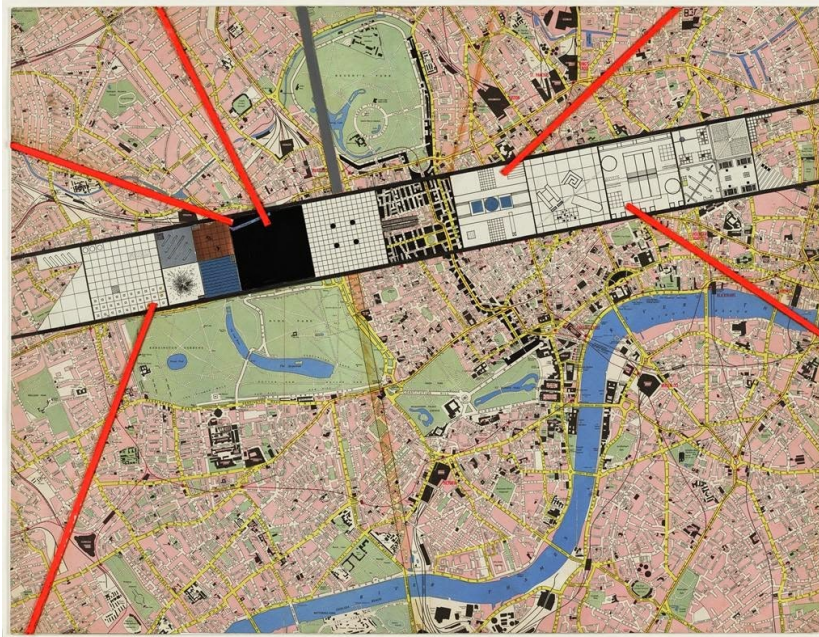


Figure 20 - Rem Koolhaas & Elia Zenghelis, Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture

Ungers’ ideas influenced many young architects around the world, who are especially focused on the dialectical relationship between the architectural forms of the city. Rem Koolhaas, who met with Ungers’ works when studying at the Architectural Association, is one of the most radical figures that reflected the theory of “city within the city” on the contemporary architectural landscape. With his tutor Elia Zenghelis at the AA, Koolhaas produced the project called *Exodus: or the*

¹⁹⁹ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 190.

Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture in 1972.²⁰⁰ The project consists of two parallel walls dividing London into two areas, which itself is zoned as eight parts representing the morphological and programmatic spaces that belong to the city parts—such as the suburb, the hospital, the park. Because it is a metaphorical prison, the voluntary prisoners are the inhabitants who accept the reality of the city as it is made of segregation and separation rather than unity. Aureli argues that Exodus was a significant reference to Ungers' Green Archipelago and Grünzug Süd.²⁰¹ Both of the projects accept the urban forces that create crises in the metropolis and use them to address collective architectural forms within the city. As Aureli designates that through the definitive thus absolute form, while it is most radically illustrated in Exodus, architecture could reassemble the forces of urbanity that can develop a series of “allegories” derived from the very conditions of the city.²⁰² Consequently, these opposing effects on the urban space are demolished by the use of certain limits on architectural forms; such as the limits on the social conditions, or the limits on the physical environment. In fact, Aureli emphasizes that the project of Exodus presented what Ungers illustrated as a common theme in his studies: “the principle of turning the splintering forces of the metropolis into architectural form that addresses the collective dimension of the city”.²⁰³ Only in this way absoluteness is achieved through the form, which leads to an engaged city of architecture and its inhabitants.

²⁰⁰ Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis, “Exodus: or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture,” in *Exit Utopia: Architectural Provocations 1956-1976*, ed. Martin van Schaik and Otaker Macel (Munich: Prestel, 2005): 80-85.

²⁰¹ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 196.

²⁰² Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 197.

²⁰³ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 197.



Figure 21 – Rem Koolhaas & Elia Zenghelis, projects for Hotel Sphinx and Welfare Palace Hotel

As one last example that accompanies these ideas about the possibility that enables an absolute architecture, Aureli refers to the critical approach that Koolhaas and Zenghelis implemented. The tension in-between the eradicating forces of urbanization and the architecture which accommodates them characterized two

crucial projects that, according to Aureli, became the out-growth of Ungers' architecture, and the starting point of Koolhaas and Zenghelis' "metropolitan architecture".²⁰⁴ Following Ungers' strategy, which idealizes the most controversial aspects of the site, Zenghelis' social housing project of The Hotel Sphinx (1975) is located in the middle of Times Square. Similarly, Koolhaas' Welfare Palace Hotel is also a hotel for social housing, but on a much larger scale. The project is a proposal for transforming the whole of Welfare Island. Both buildings are designed within the typology of hotels in dual composition: the base containing the collective and open facilities, and the tower for hotel rooms and private areas. Aureli emphasizes that these projects cast criticism on New York's present crisis via representing the "two faces of the capitalist city" with architectural forms, which are "extreme individual anonymity" and "seemingly limitless potential for encounter".²⁰⁵ Morphologically, they both challenge the singular designing strategies in order to retreat into the individual creation of finite, thus limited forms.

In Koolhaas' controversial book *Delirious New York*, the whole proposal for the Welfare Island rendered together with different "city within the city" examples from projects in Manhattan.²⁰⁶ All of these buildings are depicted as islands, and the city is reduced to an empty grid, which is reflected on the "New Welfare Island" that shapes new blocks on the land. The island becomes a collection of "cities within the city", as a miniature version of Manhattan made of absolute forms. In fact, Aureli claims that the composition of the island "reconstructs the ideal integrity of the city" derived from the contrasting and separated forces of the city.²⁰⁷ This effect does not originate in the totalizing urbanization strategies or the pile of architectural

²⁰⁴ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 215.

²⁰⁵ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 218.

²⁰⁶ The proposal for the Welfare Island included Koolhaas' other projects from *Delirious New York*: The RCA Building, the Hotel Sphinx, and the United Nations.

²⁰⁷ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 220.

fragments around the city but in the very manifest of the city that exhibits its crises via absolute architectures. Reflecting Ungers' approach towards architecture, the New Welfare Island emphasizes a scenario of the decline of population in New York, thus presents the architecture that survives the process of a shrinking city. The artifacts that occupy the empty grids of the island become the last representations of the "cityness" in this scenario.²⁰⁸ Aureli asserts that via projecting an absolute architecture as an island of New York interprets the "the last opportunity for the city to become something and survive its decline".²⁰⁹

Within the project of Berlin as a Green Archipelago, Ungers recaptures the very essence of urbanity in architectural forms that define certain limits for the shrinking city. The idea of consolidating the islands populating them also deserts the areas between them to become an "informal" metabolism of the city.²¹⁰ These deserted areas between islands can be interpreted as what is outside the urban artifacts, such as antitheses for the urbanity. While on the one hand, the islands exhibit the architecture, the antithesis aims for the opposite: to survive outside architecture and realize the very essence of the absolute form. Hence, Aureli asserts that while islands enhance the idea of the city via architectural form, the "sea" generates a series of conflicts regarding the "opposing tendencies" within the urbanity.²¹¹ In Koolhaas' depiction of the Green Archipelago, the buildings included on the Welfare Island are referring to the limits that are created by their architectural forms, and so to the possibility of surviving from this urban decline:

Berlin as a Green Archipelago postulates a city form that, in order to be defined, requires confrontation with its opposite—urbanization—and with the city's most

²⁰⁸ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 222.

²⁰⁹ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 222.

²¹⁰ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 225.

²¹¹ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 225.

controversial aspects, such as division, conflict, and even destruction. At the same time, such an idea of the city postulates a form in which even the most disruptive forces can be framed by the possibility of giving them a form—that is, the possibility of establishing criteria of knowledge and reification of these disruptive forces in the form of architectural examples. *The city within the city* is thus not only the literal staging of the city’s lost form within the limits of architectural artifacts; it is also, and especially, the possibility of considering architectural form as a *point of entry* toward the project of the city.²¹²

As a result, following Ungers’ and Aureli’s perspective, architecture becomes not only a physical artifact within the urbanity, but it is also what survives and transmits the idea of the city. Only by providing architecture with necessary conditions of urbanity an absolute form can be achieved. By addressing these conditions, architecture develops its form regarding to the limits of the urban context around it. An absolute architecture is only possible without following the autonomous boundaries of intrinsic formal qualities or falling for the Neo-Pragmatist urban forces of the outside, but with accepting those urban conditions as features that define the design. It is crucial to realize such an architecture that reflects and generates urbanities that echo the existing cities. Reclaiming the criticism and the adoption of urban qualities, absolute architecture can establish a new strategy towards the “sea” of urbanization. As an architecture that both separates itself from and engages with the urban context, it is one of the most critical responses for defining the idea of the city today. In existing urbanities, it is crucial to realize the necessities of such an architecture in order to generate what Aureli called *absolute*. In light of these discussions, the next chapter will demonstrate the possibility for such an “absoluteness” via analyzing a recent contemporary design from Turkey called Arter. The analyses and the criticisms are not limited to the selected artifact only but can be elaborated through the very principles of the current contemporary scene of

²¹² Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 226-227.

architecture. What if the architecture is not capable of such a survival within the urban context, and it surrenders to the downfall of urbanization; then how can an idea of the city exist?

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY: ARTER

The selected case study is the Arter building which is a popular contemporary art museum in the city of İstanbul. Arter has actually been an active art gallery since 2010 and acquired a new building recently. Designed by Grimshaw Architects and opened in 2019, the new building of Arter is located in Dolapdere, Beyoğlu, which witnesses a rapid urban transformation. According to the lead architect of the project, Kirsten Lees, Arter is a “vibrant cultural hub” that assembles both artists and audiences in order to celebrate contemporary art.²¹³ According to her, the project is developed as a dynamic, multi-layered, and interdisciplinary building that introduces cultural and artistic works to the audience. The design and building processes included local consultants and specialists such as Turgut Alton Architects from İstanbul, which lead to a multi-disciplinary team that addressed the formal qualities of the building. Lees points out her approach towards the formal configurations of the project as it originates from the responsibility for creating accessible spaces for the public, both within and around the building.²¹⁴ “Derived from concepts of transparency and fluidity, inspiring and adaptive public spaces are at its heart, with carefully positioned large picture windows used as a way of opening the building to the street and connecting the gallery to the city.”²¹⁵ As the main idea for the design is connecting the surrounding urban context through the building, the entrance gallery is positioned for creating an “internal street” across the site.²¹⁶ Lees’s

²¹³ “Arter Museum / Grimshaw,” ArchDaily. Access date 07.07.2021, <https://www.archdaily.com/943460/arter-museum-grimshaw>.

²¹⁴ “Arter Museum / Grimshaw.”

²¹⁵ “Arter Museum / Grimshaw.”

²¹⁶ “Arter Museum / Grimshaw.”

explanation of the building of Arter establishes a formal understanding that is close to the theory of absolute architecture in ways that the project aims at creating an engagement with the surrounding city. As Lees described, the building of Arter establishes its form in relation to the context and form of the city, therefore enables opportunities for generating the *absoluteness* that Aureli suggested. The way that Arter creates its form presents the concern for engaging with the urban context through its architectural features. However, the project neither develops its formal qualities while concerning solely on its intrinsic conditions of the discipline nor attempts to unconsciously absorb the forms of the city around. Arter asserts a form that is critical both for its architecture and for the city. Hence, it is a close representation of what Aureli suggests as an absolute architecture. The reason for analyzing Arter's approach towards the architecture and the city is that it is one of the recent examples of contemporary architecture in Turkey and it responds to the conditions of the urbanity around via the use of its form. Moreover, the relationship between the *absoluteness* of the form of Arter and the city of İstanbul translates Aureli's theories within the very physical context. The form of Arter acts as an instrument for approaching the city; on the one hand, the design separates itself from the existing urban context with its formal qualities, and on the other aims for the engagement with the city. The building is a result of the urban regeneration process in Dolapdere, and it becomes a depiction of the very conditions outside its site. Accepting the urban context around it, Arter generates its own criticism towards the city via an architecture that reflects the physical urban conditions, hence it develops a finite form within its urban fabric. As Aureli emphasizes for the absolute architecture, a project such as Arter firstly creates well-defined limits that distinguish its formal qualities and then celebrates the urban fabric around with its architectural features.



Figure 22 - A perspective of Arter from Irmak Caddesi. Photography by the author.



Figure 23 - Arter and the urban forms surround it. Photography by the author.

The following analysis consists of three major concepts attempting to elaborate the possibility of Arter becoming an absolute architecture within the city. In this three-step process, and these notions are interpreted with Arter's approaches towards absolute architecture. The form, to begin with, defines the physical conditions of the building that conveys the idea of Arter within the city and resonates with the existing urban fabric of Dolapdere. Analyzing, absorbing, and reflecting the formal qualities

of the city via the form of the building enables the interpretation of these external forces within the design. Hence, architecture not only becomes a single artifact *within* the city but a series of criticisms *for* the city. The second title is dedicated to the podium of Arter, which is the main factor of engagement with the existing urbanity around. In Arter, the podium is not used in a conventional way for defining a public space with an elevated platform, but as a combination of frontal and rear open areas and the ground floor, acting as a passage through the building. In fact, by this approach, the podium becomes one of the essential parts of the building, enabling the interrelation of Arter with the surrounding city. The third aspect of the building is the idea of limit conveyed within the design. While on the one hand limits assert the general form of the building, defining its architectural boundaries for achieving a certain formal quality; on the other, they become restrictive features for the users of Arter. While the building separates itself from the urban context via these limits, it also alienates its formal qualities from the same urbanity for the sake of control over the city.

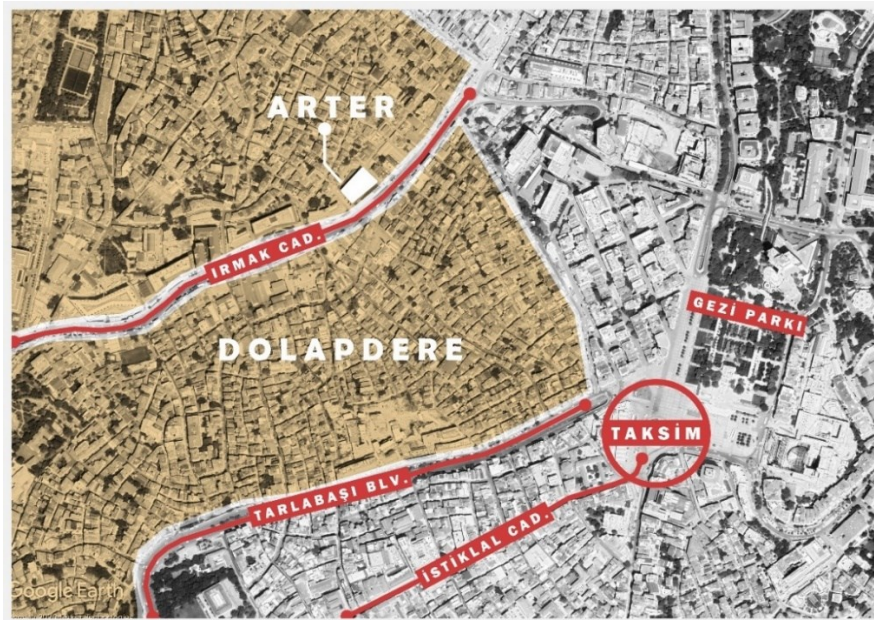


Figure 24 - Representation of the location of Arter and its connections to Taksim Square.

At this point, it is critical to note that Arter represents the contemporary architecture of Turkey in a way that is radical for its urbanity. As a response to the urban context, the building realizes what Aureli suggests in the first place: the “possibility” of an absolute architecture. In Arter, it is not realized as a series of strict principles that are followed by formal elements of architecture, but as an approach for considering form with its effects on the urban context thus generating a relationship in-between accordingly. In light of the previous discussions regarding the formal autonomy versus the Neo-Pragmatist thought, Arter only aims for selected urban conditions that its architecture could develop. Without limiting the design either to the autonomous forms of architecture or to the idea of absorption of the urban context out of it, Arter represents the formal features for creating the *possibility* that Aureli proposes. The building realizes architecture not as an inclusionary design approach for absorbing and achieving possibilities that exist within the city, but as an architecture that is concerned with the existing conditions of the urbanity. In fact, by addressing its ambitions towards the city with its form, Arter develops to be a candidate for becoming a *project* for the city.

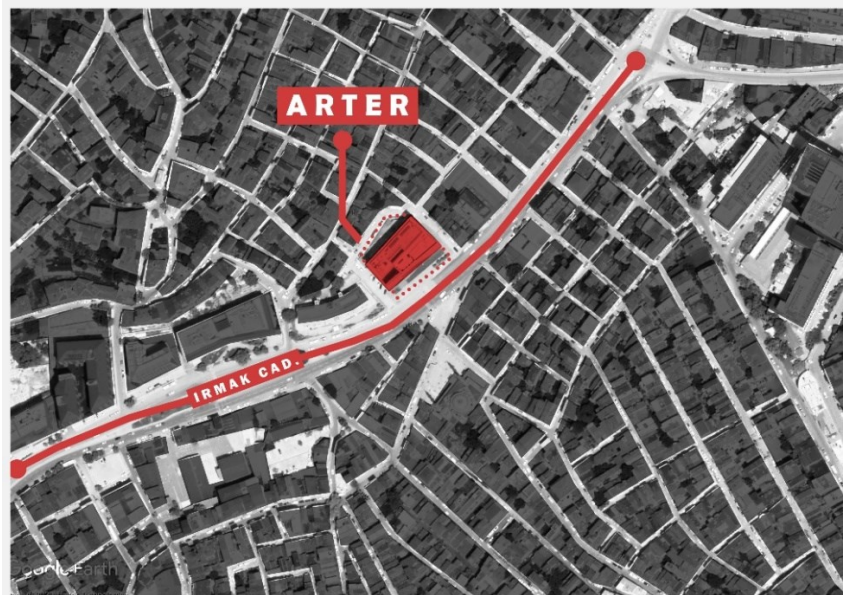


Figure 25 - Representation of Arter and the interrelation with the surrounding urban context.



Figure 26 - The frontal façade of Arter looking through the urban context. Photography by the author.

The building is located in the main street of the Dolapdere area called Irmak Caddesi and became a crucial playground for urban transformations in the city. Each side of the Irmak is occupied with transforming or regenerating buildings, creating a gradient through the urban fabric consists of both old and new urban fabric. It is critical to note that this existing urban context provides the necessary forces for the project to develop a certain approach towards the city. The evolving urbanity around generates a shift of users in public, as well as a shift in the program of those buildings. Before the urban transformation began in Dolapdere, the urban fabric has mostly consisted of small housing units and workspaces in a traditionally generated neighborhood. When the new urbanity started to change the area, especially on the

main streets such as Arter's, these buildings were demolished one by one, or renovated and transformed according to the "new" idea of the city. The urban context of Dolapdere today is an agglomeration of the traditional urban fabric and these new types of buildings mostly focused on tourist attractions, art galleries, and museums. The very site of Arter is in the middle of this contradicting environment, as it is positioned in-between other transformed sites, thus became one of the essential design elements that support this change in the urbanity. While suggesting a contrasted architecture for the city, the project also generates ways for balancing between the existing urban context and the condition of the "new". And as a predecessor of change in Dolapdere, Arter becomes an essential figure within urban transformations, not only because of the size and the volume it changed, but because of how it responded to the urbanity.

When analyzing the approach of Arter towards its site, it is crucial to understand the conditions of the urbanity as well as the architectural responses it generates towards them. In fact, it is clear that the design itself is aware of its radical position, thus realizes ways of balancing the contrast between its architecture and the existing urbanity. The project is receded from the Irmak Caddesi in order to create a public space in front, and also to follow the curvature of the corner it occupies. The space in front enables the building to participate in the existing urbanity while creating a platform that designates the actual site of Arter. On the other hand, this public space in front also supports the overall form of the building, which becomes a monumental feature within the city. While on the other side of the Irmak Caddesi buildings are placed closer to the curb of the pavement, leaving a much narrower space for the sidewalk, Arter's approach realizes the opposite as a response. In fact, the public space in front of the project aims to transform into a public square, as a focal point for the city. Consequently, the layout of the building in total acts as a regular and natural artifact within the city while following its existing language, but it also introduces "new" features for the urbanity. Even though this is an architecture that replaced an existing piece of the urban fabric with a contemporary building, it does not resign from the city but supports urban conditions via its architectural form.

4.1 The Form

The overall form of the building acts as a box-like monument located at the heart of the urban fabric and contrasts itself from the surrounding urban context. The form of the building is a mass within the very urban fabric, which resembles Boullée's designs. While Boullée used specified techniques for achieving a monumental architecture in his designs, such as repetition and symmetry; Arter uses another approach for generating formal qualities in relation to its urban environment. The building is a monumental artifact that separates itself from the environment and the city via its formal qualities. Rather than focusing on its autonomous formal features that generate a concrete and idealistic form of the building, the design develops certain fragments of form and reflects the external urban conditions within. Although it is easy to understand the overall form of Arter as a "white box" that is contrasting with the urban context, the building actually transforms and regenerates the forces of urbanization that surround it. In fact, the "box" is severed into different fragmentations of forms, acting as parts of an architectural whole while comprising a form derived from a contemporary architectural perspective. These fragments are what Arter realizes throughout the analysis of the existing urban fabric, and accepts the outcomes as elements that direct the form of the building as a response for the city. Rather than mirroring the formal quality of the existing urban context via using similar forms in similar ways as it is in the surrounding urban fabric, the project aims to celebrate the idea of the city using the idea of form. Hence, it is not a building that echoes the surrounding urban conditions nor an introverted architecture focused on its intrinsic ambitions; but an attempt to generate a *possibility* towards the city.

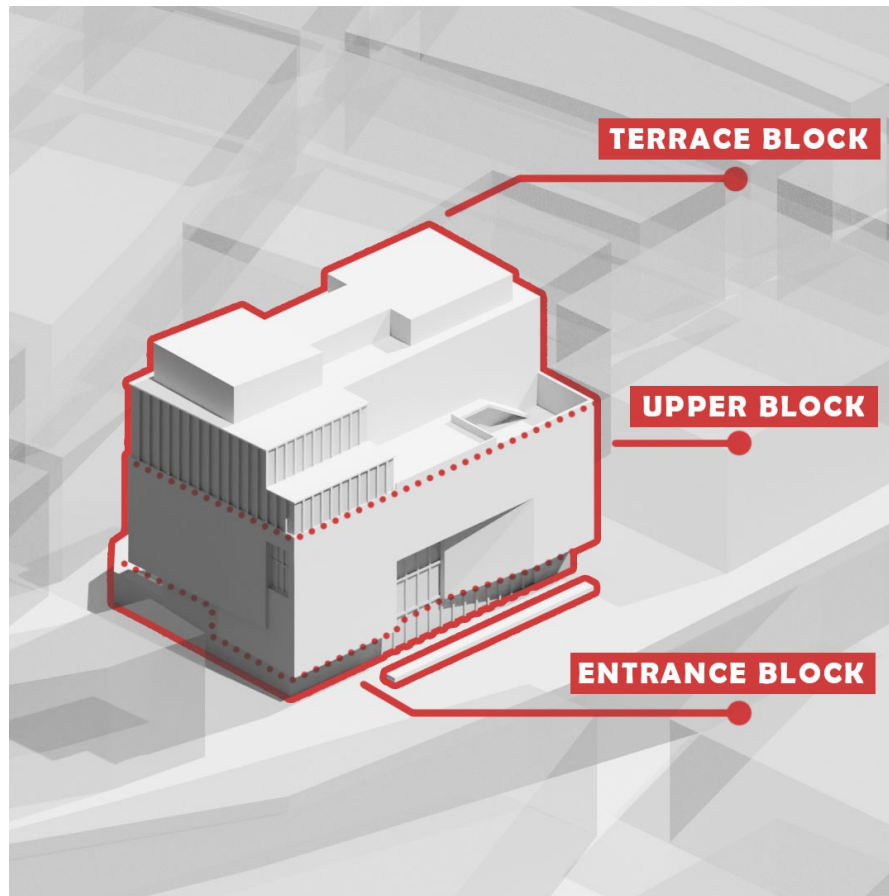


Figure 27 - Illustration showing the three blocks of the form of Arter.

At this point, it is necessary to introduce the overall form of the project as the combination of three different blocks that are interrelated with each other: the ground level which allows transmission in-between the inside and the outside, the upper block that constitutes the very image of “Arter”, and the upper terrace that presents new perspectives towards the surrounding context. These three blocks provide various qualities for Arter with their formal configurations, while together composing a totality of form for the design. They do not fracture the total form into separate parts, but rather realize different formal qualities that the building interprets with the urban context. It is crucial to acknowledge that these fragments are not separated from each other by their functional or programmatic roles within the building, but merely by reflections of the external forces of urbanization on the

design. Each of these blocks develops a certain interpretation between the design and the urban context thus contributes to the form of the building. In this way, the forms of Arter become results of the interrelation in-between the architecture and the city, not the intrinsic principles of the discipline nor the external forces of urbanity. As parts of a project, each one of these fragments also assumes the role of aiming for the enhanced engagement with the city and addressing the urban conditions. Throughout an architecture that is capable of such an engagement, the project realizes that it is possible to renew the interrelation between the artifact and the city via the form.

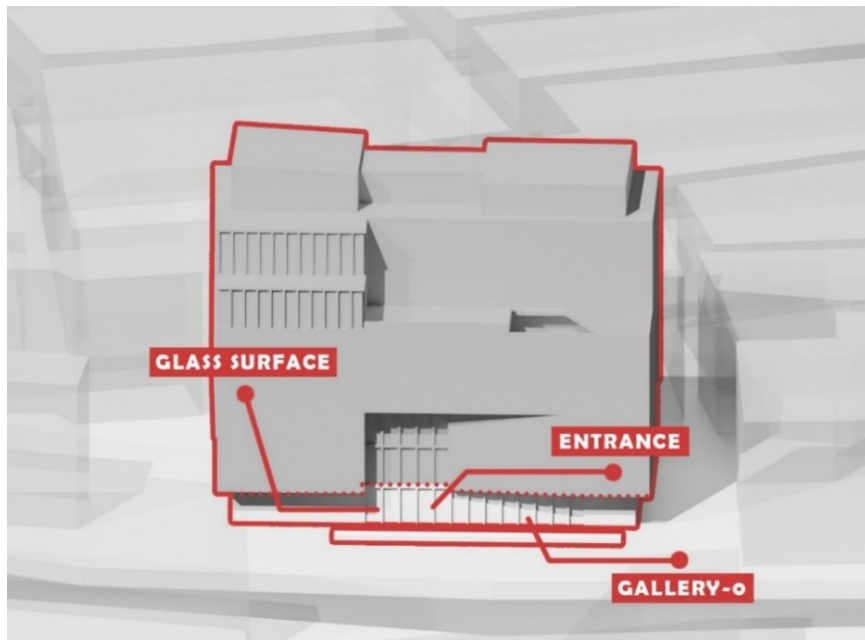


Figure 28 - Frontal elevation of Arter and its formal features within the entrance block.

The entrance block, as it is mentioned previously, is one of the most critical parts of the project considering its notion of transparency that provides physical activities through the building. From the formal perspective, the block becomes a platform for Arter to realize its monumental architecture. It is where the building starts to transpose its architecture within the city and start to analyze its urban environment

for developing an engagement with it. The block forms a base platform for the building, while on the one hand housing essential features for vertical and horizontal accessibility, on the other it suggests transparency that enables urban engagement throughout the existing fabric. In fact, the entrance block acts as an introductory aspect for Arter which enhances the urban communication for the building by the use of its glass surfaces. These surfaces are not solely used as materials that showcase the entrance hall within them, but moreover, as formal aspects that enable transparency between either side of the building. With this notion of transparency, occupying most of the frontal and rear façades, the building introduces its formal qualities in acceptance with the existing forces of urbanization. Not as a programmatic design element, but as an architectural feature that aims for such an engagement, the entrance block represents the idea of originating the forms of the project on the surrounding urban context. By creating a visual integration between the forms of the project and the forms of the city, the entrance block realizes the aim of Arter to derive its formal features from the city and interpret them in a contemporary way. With this block, the building becomes a semi-transparent artifact within the city, that in one half it transmits the very urban conditions as they are and in the other, the project asserts its formal approaches and configurations to the city via using its form. Furthermore, Arter transforms into an entity within the city that on the inside, it exhibits the very notion of urban context; and on the outside, it becomes a project that conveys the surrounding urban features via its form.

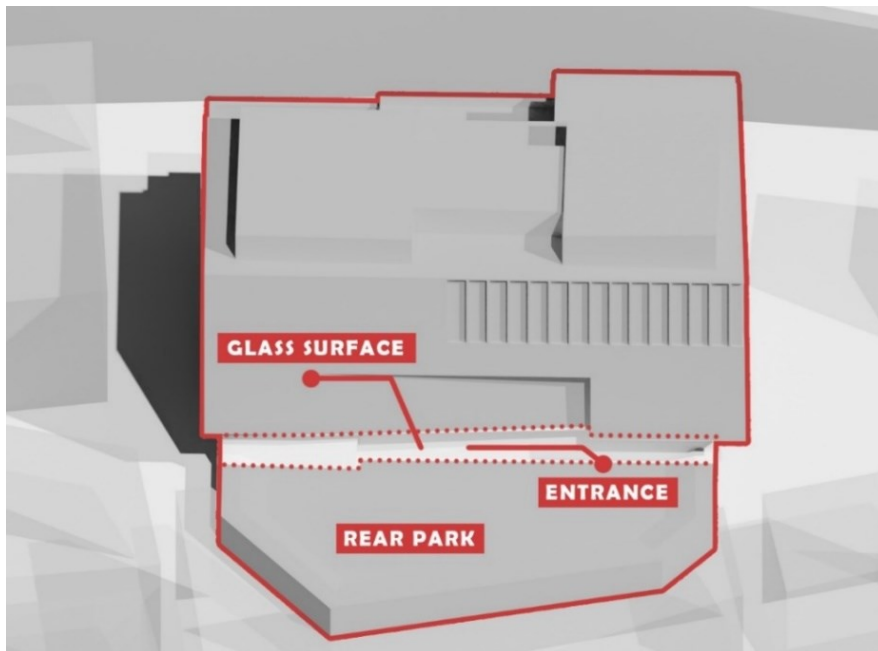


Figure 29 - Rear elevation of Arter and its formal features within the entrance block.

The upper fragment, the main “box” that constitutes Arter, is the second essential part of the project that realizes the approaches of the design towards the city. The majority of the upper block resembles a white mass defining the very form of the project, and even with its minor openings that tear through the form, it preserves the idea of its absolute form. Although the upper part of Arter is a monoblock that creates a monumental image for its environment, its architecture contains variations that generate new ideas for both its solid design and the urban context that surround it. Unlike a singular white box, this upper part is composed of several masses that intersect one another and transform the form of the building as well as its interior configuration. While these colliding volumes generate a variety of exhibition spaces inside the building, they also affect the overall form of Arter, creating a ruptured surface on the upper block. These torn surfaces are direct references for the overlapping areas within the exhibition spaces, which are accompanied by transparent surfaces that break the “box-like” image of the building. Far from being limited to the use of different materials, these torn surfaces are also reflected on the form via the angled fringes that tear along the façades. These fringes fracture the

monoblock in order to provide a fragmented façade that is in direct relation with the architecture of the surrounding urban context.

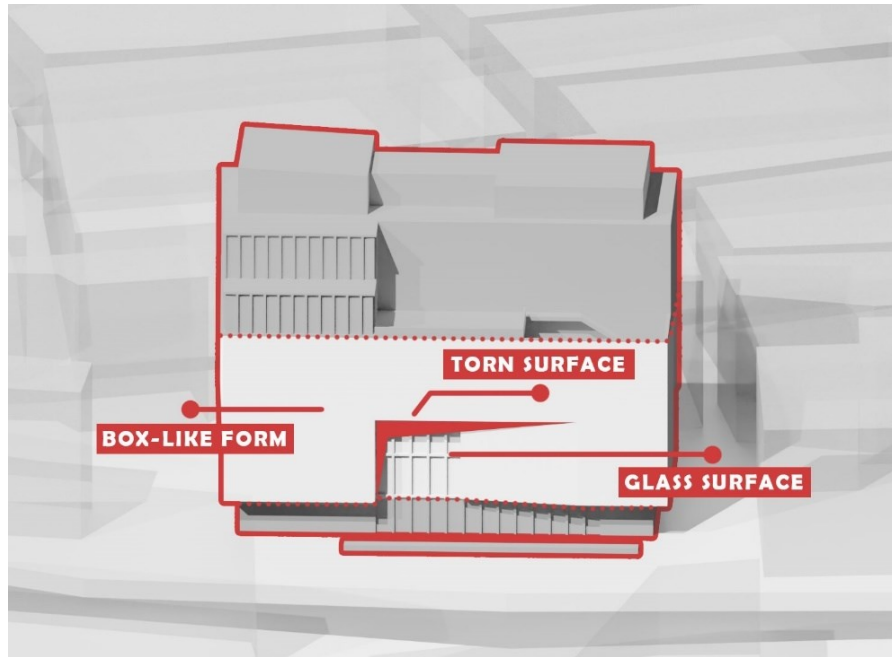


Figure 30 - Frontal elevation of Arter and its formal features within the upper block.

In fact, this fragmented form of Arter recreates an existing architectural tradition in Turkey that is called “cumba”.²¹⁷ Even though “cumba” is a traditionally used in central window on upper floors, in Arter is it emphasized as façade-long fragments that create angled surfaces on the form. The use and interpretation of “cumba” within the project is apparent in each façade of the building, in a contemporary emphasis, thus supports the upper block to be distinguished from the rest of the design. Hence,

²¹⁷ “Cumba” is a traditional architectural element in Anatolia which has been frequently used in houses or public buildings. It is a small, windowed space cantilevered outward from the main walls of an upper floor, which aims at collecting more natural light inside the building and creating new perspectives towards the exterior.

the same effect continues throughout the design and develops the whole building to be distinguished from its environment. By this design strategy, both the separation and the engagement of Arter are created by forms of architecture. As a direct reference for the traditional yet existing urban context of the city, Arter visualizes a balanced interrelation in-between with its formal qualities. With the use of such an architectural element within the project, it interprets the contemporariness with the current urban landscape. Moreover, it is clear that Arter does not only aim to reinvent urbanity for its surrounding context, but also to reinvent its architecture in order to adapt to the city. With the use of “cumba” in its façades, the project defines a new relationship with its urban context, while distinguishing the building from the rest of the environment.

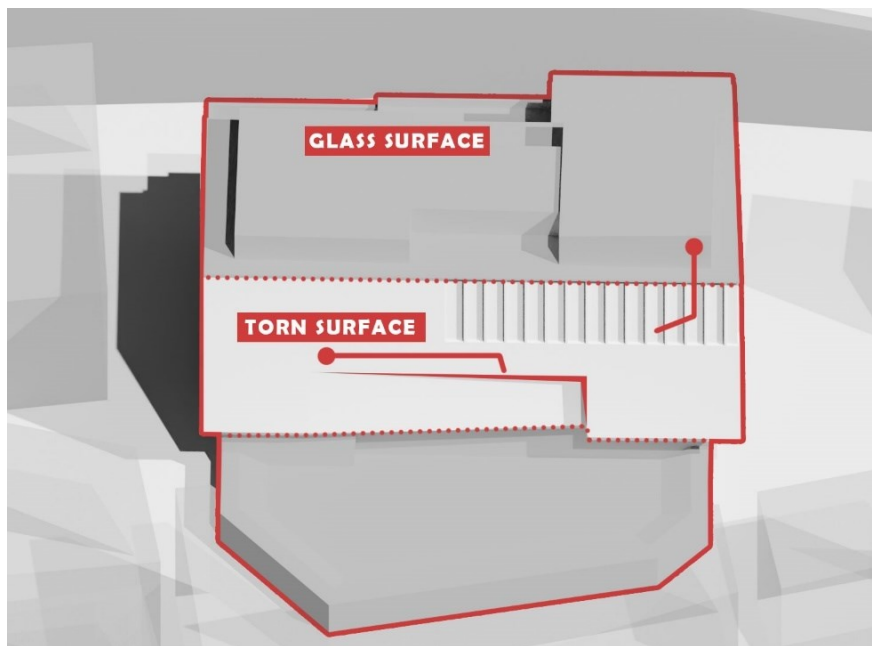


Figure 31 - Rear elevation of Arter and its formal features within the upper block.

On the rooftop of Arter, the very fragmentation of the building’s form continues with a similar method, but this time with masses in varying sizes, creating a finished look for the monoblock below. While placing box-like forms on top of the building, the

design suggests several terraces that complete the building. The biggest terrace is also a part of the exhibition space, which is an extension of the interior to the open-air platform. From the outside, this terrace is hidden by the walls around it, as a continuation of the façade of the monoblock. These walls surrounding the terrace are not solid structures but meshes that enable light and air to flow through the terrace. As a result, the terrace becomes a burrow within the building, that is not visible from the outside but presents a perfect opportunity to peek through the city from within. Different than the two lower parts of Arter, this top block approaches the city from another point of view. With terraces located at the top of the building, the project recognizes the physical distance between them and the city, hence develops a design strategy for combining the architecture of the design and the necessity to engage with the urban context. The rooftop terrace, or the open-air exhibition space, is the main element that generates such an interrelation in-between: while playing an essential role for the program of the building, it also stretches the boundaries of its architecture in order to participate in the city.

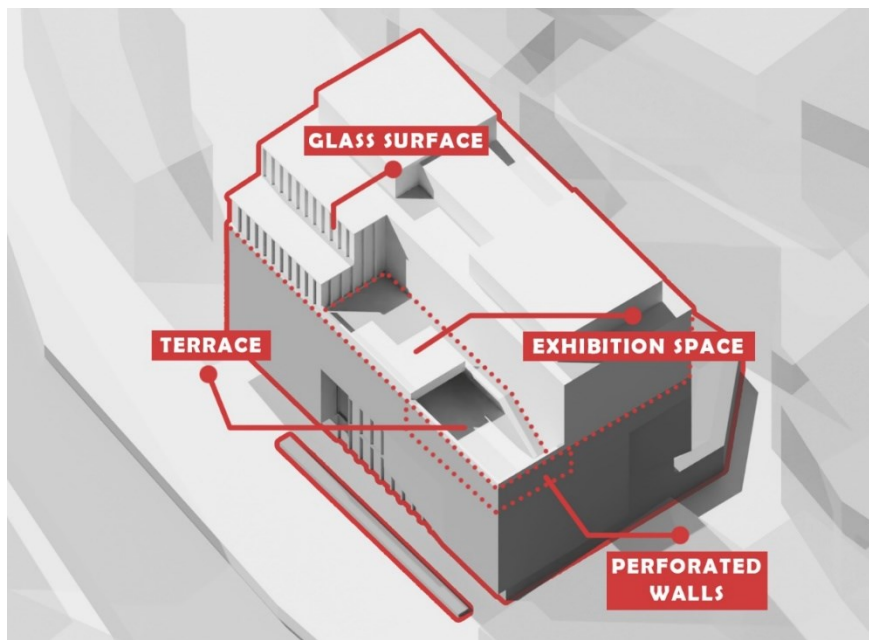


Figure 32 - The formal features of Arter within the terrace block.

As a complete architectural artifact that consists of these three blocks, Arter asserted its form as a result of the reciprocal relationship between the project and the city. Each block does not only participate in the totality of the design, but also in the idea of the city in its own formal qualities. The entrance block aims to reconnect architecture with the urbanity, to heal the wounds that are caused by the urban regeneration process that was required for creating a site for the project. This is essential for a project that is located within the city as a *tabula rasa* condition, in order to enable the urbanity to redevelop relations with the building without becoming an alienated artifact within the city. The upper part, or the monoblock, is where Arter ambitiously presents its contemporariness through its form, not only as a way of architecture but also as a progress towards a new urbanity. The clean white box that the project realizes tries to catch the very essence of the surrounding architectural context and reflect those in its formal qualities in response. Lastly, the rooftop terrace also provides a block for the building, but as a burrow that redefines the formal principles of Arter in order to generate new possibilities for interacting with the city. The mesh walls around the terrace maintain the project's approach on its form, but in an altered way that employs the opportunity to rediscover new urban perspectives. In total, rather than being shaped by the forces of urbanization, Arter interprets these features in its architecture as forms that derive from the city and aim to address it accordingly. Therefore, the building becomes an artifact within the city and originates its principles on the urban conditions, but also asserts its form with contemporary values, as a bridge between the architecture and the city.

As an artifact within the urban context of the city, Arter introduces its form with a series of fragments that resonate with the urbanity, resolve formal qualities with, and transform the existing condition accordingly. The aim of the project to integrate its form within the architectural qualities of the city is a necessity for each of these previously mentioned fragments. Hence, these fragmented blocks realize certain ways separately for such an integration that can address the formal relationships between the artifact and its environment. Moreover, these blocks constitute the totality of Arter's form which aims for achieving similar interrelations with the city.

The analysis of these three parts illustrates that the architecture of Arter is concerned with such a formal integration with the existing urban context. From the emphasis of the “cumba” in the traditional architecture to the fragmentation of a single monoblock that exhibits an architectural monument, the project focuses on generating new possibilities both for its surrounding urban context and for its internal qualities. Even though the architecture of Arter suggests a contemporary understanding via its form through different blocks, the most critical part is clearly the one that generates physical interactivity with the outside of the artifact. Different than creating formal resemblances and representations of the surrounding architectural features or enabling a visual connection between the inside and the outside of the project, the actual physical alliance originates in the very act of approaching the building. At this point, it is critical to define Arter as an artifact within the complex fabric of urbanity, which develops its own interpretation of the city via its form. To survive the idea of architecture within the forces of urbanity, it is crucial for the project to distinguish its own objecthood as a part of the city. With the well-defined limits of its site and form, as Aureli conveys, the project can generate its own quality within the “sea of urbanization” and separate its architecture from the rest of the city. Hence, it becomes a project that is different than what the surrounding urbanity suggests but also is an absolute architecture that has a strong formal quality to address the city with.

4.2 The Limit

As it is mentioned previously in this study, Aureli interprets the architecture of Mies van der Rohe for his placement of architectural artifacts within the very urban sites. The plinth plays a crucial part in his architecture, which Aureli refers to as a project’s “self-defined limit” that envelops the building.²¹⁸ Besides other features of the

²¹⁸ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 36-37.

architecture of Rohe, the plinth especially becomes a critical element for the progress towards its relationship with the forces of urbanization. In fact, placing the building higher than the street level on a plinth generates a limit within the urban fabric that participates in the process of animating the project along with the very urban aspects of the city. On the one hand, the plinth creates a well-defined platform that architecture can occupy while it is distinguished from the urban environment, and on the other it presents the existence of that very architecture for the city, enabling the possibilities for engagement in-between. Rohe's plinth transforms the site to a limit that affects both the city and the architectural artifact, thus reorganizes the integration between a building and its site. Consequently, as Aureli asserts, this use of plinth changes not only the experience of what is placed "on" it, but also the experience of the city that is "outside" of it.²¹⁹ Hence, Aureli's interpretation of Rohe's architecture confronts the use of plinth from both sides and transforms the project into an urban entity as a first step towards *absoluteness*. Consequently, providing a base platform for architectural artifacts is necessary for building certain limits around it; in order to generate new possibilities for urban engagement. With the use of plinth, Rohe aimed to include architecture in the very context of urbanity, which became an essential part of Aureli's studies for today's architecture.

If the entrance block of Arter is the podium that supports the urban program of the building, the surrounding platforms become the plinth, as it is realized in Rohe's projects, which defines the limits of the site. As Rohe did with his plinth, Arter too aims at generating a platform that both distinguishes the project from the urban context and engages with its forces. The way that Arter develops its formal language within the existing urban context is radically dependent on the possibilities of engaging with the city. As the building evolves with three different blocks, illustrating the variety of aims towards the urban conditions; it also resonates with different aspects of the city and reflects them within its very form. While the main

²¹⁹ Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 37.

block of Arter connects the lower and upper parts and performs the essential program of the building in a constrained relationship with the city, the upper terrace acts as a visual link in-between the project and the urbanity that celebrates a new type of relationship. On the other hand, the entrance floor is where the physical encounters occur in-between the users, hence it becomes a *podium* for the urban engagement. As a result, it is a critical feature of Arter's architecture that translates what Aureli theorized for absolute architecture to perform. In fact, the podium transforms the introverted character of the upper blocks into a more exterior-oriented architecture. Moreover, the approach of the podium appreciates *absoluteness* through the process of creating finite formal qualities. Therefore, the podium of Arter becomes one of its main architectural features that directly engage with the city. It transforms the plinth of Rohe's architecture into a critical element of the design with a similar architectural concern of creating a well-defined relationship between the building and the city. Even though it does not reflect the very architectural principles of Rohe's plinth, the podium of Arter can be seen as an approach towards the same goal: to become a part of the urbanity.



Figure 33 - Mies van der Rohe, Seagram Building and the plinth that defines its borders between the urbanity.

Moreover, as it is a reflection of Rohe's plinth, the podium does not consist only of the building's ground floor, but also of what surrounds it. Arter is occupied with two main stages of squares on the frontal and rear façades of the building. They are not simple spaces that support the definite program of Arter, but rather stages for architecture to act upon for the city. In fact, they reserve the very ideas of both urbanity and architecture in the same space and create an urban space for common interaction. As a result, these stages become essential features in the architecture of the building, becoming spaces of transition in-between the architecture and the city. They both cover different openings of the building and play the critical role of providing the space for the radical transformation that occurs in formal qualities of

the two contrasting ends. From the urban point of view, these stages are the realizations of where architecture attempts to relate with the urbanity; and on the other perspective, for architecture, they become the platforms that generate the possibility for inviting the city to the inside of Arter. Establishing two different stages is a crucial aspect for the project of Arter, both formally and socially. As Aureli conveys, the way for architecture to enable its absoluteness is through its formal finiteness, in which Arter develops its stages surrounding it as it is in Rohe's plinth to distinguish the formal quality of the project. The podium and the two surrounding stages altogether form a horizontal axis that extends throughout the site, creating a transparent yet formally finite space that the building evolves upon. With this system, these design elements create the opportunity for Arter to define its limits for generating a well-defined form for itself, but also enhancing the engagement with the city via creating visual, physical, and social connections between the surrounding urban context.

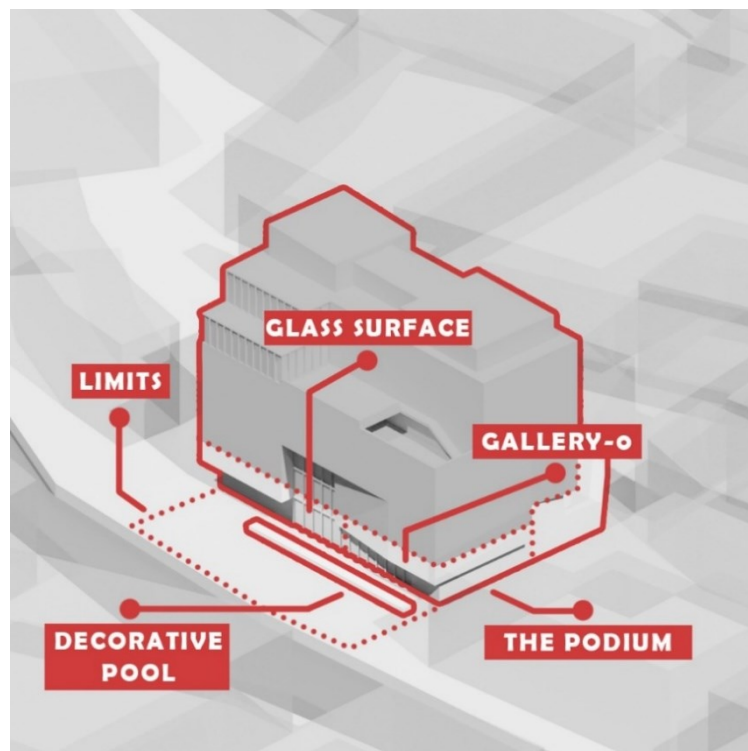


Figure 34 - Illustration of the podium of Arter and its limits.

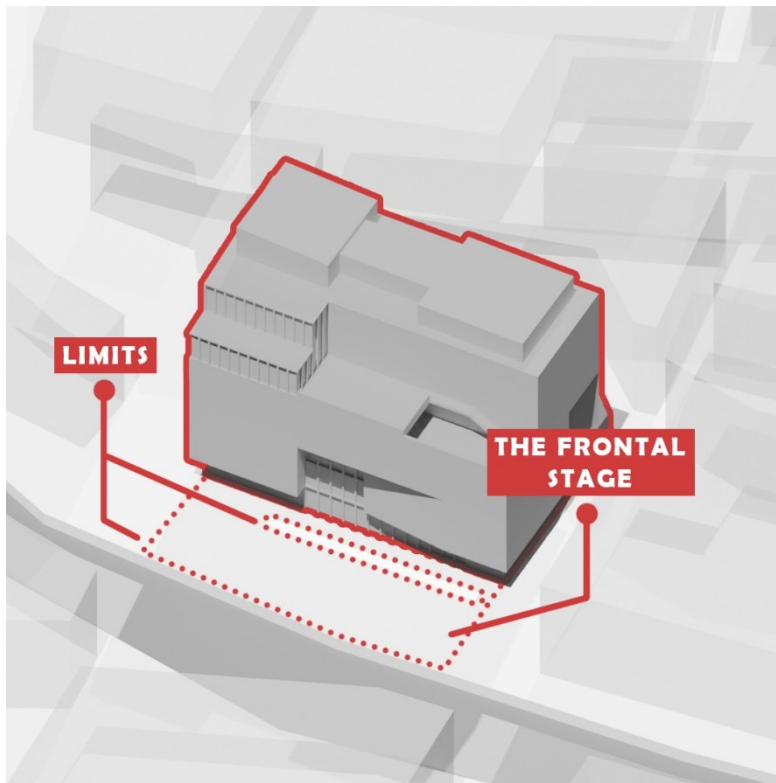


Figure 35 - The frontal stage of Arter and its limits.

Facing the Irmak Caddesi, the frontal stage consists of the square-like urban space that Arter created by retrieving from the street and the axis that surrounds the façade. The space in front of the building extends between the curvature of the street and the podium of the project, creating a public focusing point within the urban fabric that implements social encounters. Moreover, this stage in front also contributes to the monumental form of Arter. The building becomes physically separated from the surrounding urban context, and the overall form of Arter presents itself as an artifact within the city. With this process of separation, the form of the building resembles the architecture of Boullée as an isolated figure within the surrounding forces of urbanization. Although the environment around the project is not as clean as it is in Boullée's designs, the frontal stage still defines itself as an urban space, thus revealing Arter as an architectural monument within the city.

The front stage is where the podium of the project interacts with the surrounding urbanity. On the one hand, Arter institutes the contemporary design principles throughout its architecture; and on the other, it extends beyond the formal limits of its podium via the frontal stage, thus narrates the same ideals for the existing urban conditions. The podium supports the stage as a structural feature and as the building rises its form resonates with it via the fractured façade that creates a dent on the frontal surface. Even though this dent on the façade is not located within the frontal stage or the podium of Arter, it becomes one of the main formal qualities of the design that stabilizes its existence within the urbanity. From the other side of the street, this fractured façade on the podium and the upper floors becomes an invitation for the city. While it is occupied with surfaces that exhibit the interior features for the urbanity, it also redirects the focus from the fracture to the insides of the podium and the frontal stage. Therefore, the front stage becomes a station located in-between the city and the podium of Arter.

However, the way that the front stage connects with the building causes problems of accessibility for the public. As an architectural feature that covers the extends in front of the main façade of the project, there is a decorative pool that divides the very entrance of the building from the rest of the frontal stage. The pool does not block any visual interaction as it is a small and narrow platform between the urban square and the entering space of Arter. But since it only has a single accessing point for reaching the doors, the pool becomes an absolute limit to the urbanity. Nevertheless, the limit on that entrance is also enhanced with a security booth that controls the flow throughout the building. Even though the booth is not a part of the main building, it becomes a much smaller and alien artifact within the same site that damages the finite form of Arter. Whereas the security booth and the decorative pool enable the overall control of the building, without them the frontal stage could have become a singular yet wholesome urban space that truly invites the surrounding environment into the building. These two elements create certain limits for both the architecture and the urbanity, which complicates its process of engaging with the city.



Figure 36 - The decorative pool in-between the entrance block and the frontal stage. Photography by the author.

The podium on the ground floor does not only houses the main entrance for the building, but also an exhibition space called Gallery 0. Placing a gallery on the ground floor promotes the exhibition for the users both from within and outside the building. Gallery 0 has a glass surface that faces the stage in front and acts as a store window that introduces the presented contemporary artifacts directly to the urbanity. Moreover, it becomes a critical architectural element for Arter regarding its effects on the frontal stage, becoming an inviting feature of the design. The glass surface does not only occupy the ground level of the façade but extrudes to the upper floors to presenting the different spatial configurations of the exhibition spaces in Arter. The use of glass in the main façade of the building affects how Arter's form is appreciated from the outside; even though it does not change the overall shape of the design, it influences the connection between the interior and the exterior conditions of Arter. Especially on the ground floor, the glass that separates Gallery 0 and the urban square transforms into a store window that showcases the inside of the building. However, the very fact that the frontal stage is divided into two separate areas by the decorative pool also delimits the possibilities that Gallery 0 suggests for the urbanity. Without the pool, the store-front windows of Gallery 0 could become a part of the urbanity outside the building, visually and physically connecting the

building to its environment. In fact, with the pool separating the frontal façade of the building from the urban square, the windows looking through Gallery 0 become impossible to observe unless one passes the security booths. Even though the use of glass at the ground level supports the integration and communication between the inside and the outside of Arter; it also becomes an interior-oriented feature of the design since it does aim for focusing the frontal stage on the inside of the entrance block, rather than the other way around.

In opposition to what the urban space in front offers for Arter and for the city, the rear stage creates a more closed system for the intrinsic features of the project. Even though it directly faces the houses in Dolapdere, the rear stage does not allow any physical interaction in-between. It is separated from the existing urbanity by walls and terraces that imitate an amphitheater, hence it becomes only accessible from the ground floor of the building. The interaction between the rear stage and the surrounding urban pattern is limited to only visual, which transforms its effects on the city. While the stage is placed as a common space for the project, serving as a gathering area for open-air activities, it clearly rejects the outer fabric of the urbanity, hence develops a one-way relationship within the city. As the stage is connected with the ground floor of the building, the houses on the existing urban pattern become the limitations for Arter, alienating it from the rest of the urban fabric. From the architectural perspective, the form of the rear stage does not extend beyond being a backspace for Arter. It becomes a missed opportunity regarding its closeness with the housing pattern of Dolapdere, that the space could be envisioned as a gathering space for all, thus creating a common project for the city by including its inhabitants without any restriction. As a result, the rear stage becomes a feature of urban separation for Arter. The design principles on the stage are focused on preserving the project from the urban conditions, thus generates an introverted architecture that is concerned with its boundaries. On the other hand, because of the inability to access the rear stage from the outside, it becomes impossible to engage with the forces of urbanization around, which alienates the building from its environment.

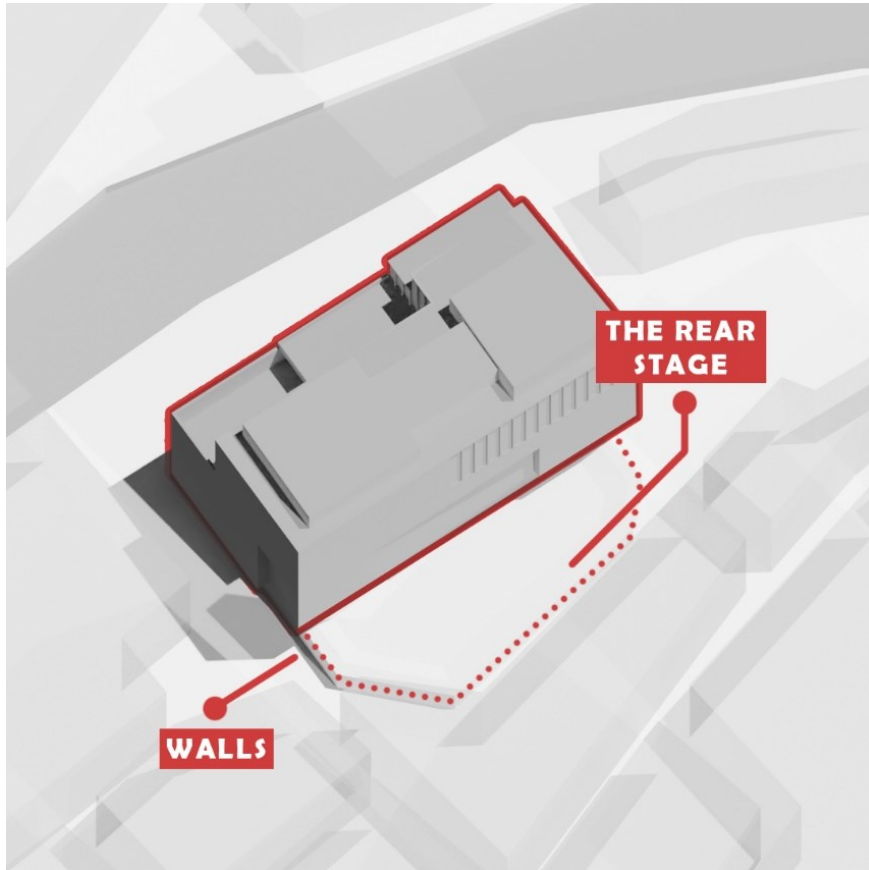


Figure 37 - The rear stage of Arter and its limits.



Figure 38 - The rear stage and the walls that define and limit its boundaries in-between the urban context. Photography by the author.

As an architectural element that provides open spaces for creating a connection with the surrounding environment, the rear stage fails its main mission of addressing the city and prioritizes the building rather than the urbanity. In contrast to the frontal stage that invites the surrounding urban pattern into the building, the rear stage blocks this very transition as a boundary between the architecture and the city. Although the possibility to interconnect the project with the urban pattern is enhanced with these stages and the podium as a horizontal axis; the rear stage blocks this very flow, and the goal of Arter transforms into a one-way approach that aims at absorbing the urbanity around. At this point, what Arter develops as an architectural artifact is a system of layered relationships between the project and the city. Looking from the Irmak Caddesi, the project presents itself firstly with its inviting architectural features by visually connecting the entrance hall and various exhibition spaces with the exterior space of the city. The podium of Arter becomes a separated architectural element from the rest of the form. Then, the decorative pool embraces the frontal façade as a physical limit between the urbanity and the building, thus creating a divergent spatial configuration within the very urban space. The pool becomes an obstacle that is to be exceeded, providing the entrance for the building behind it. On the other side, the rear stage suggests a private area for the building, that is heavily connected with the existing urban conditions but at the same time ruptured from the city. Together these features generate the form of the building as a series of formal features that aim towards the city. While some of these formal elements contribute to the absoluteness of the building's form, some present physical boundaries between the architecture and the urbanity.

4.3 The Frame

As a series of architectural features, each of the formal qualities of Arter conveys an idea of architecture and projects it while underlining the very qualities of the urbanity. In fact, they become *frames* that Arter's architecture realizes as a way of

developing a relationship with the city. Frames are the physical openings on the outer shell of the building that enable visual interaction between the inside and outside of the building. As they are placed on every façade of the building, as well as the one on the rooftop that creates a terrace. There are three primary frames within the design that reconnect the interior of the building with the existing urban fabric around: the frame of the podium, the frame of the exhibition spaces, and the frame of the terrace. These frames constitute the very project of Arter from different points of view on architecture and urbanity, thus the building becomes an alliance of them. As an overall approach, they are the very starting point for the engagement between architecture and the city, which Aureli essentially aimed for. Each one of these frames outlines a different aspect that the project and the urbanity intersect and presents it via formal configurations of the building. Therefore, these intersections and issues become exhibited via the very form of Arter, which transforms the project into a building that propounds different approaches in its architecture. These frames do not only exhibit the intersecting relationships between the building and the city but also aim to enhance the engagement in between via providing physical connections within. In fact, through these frames, Arter expresses an architecture that is essentially focused on its form: not as a final goal but as a strategy towards the city.

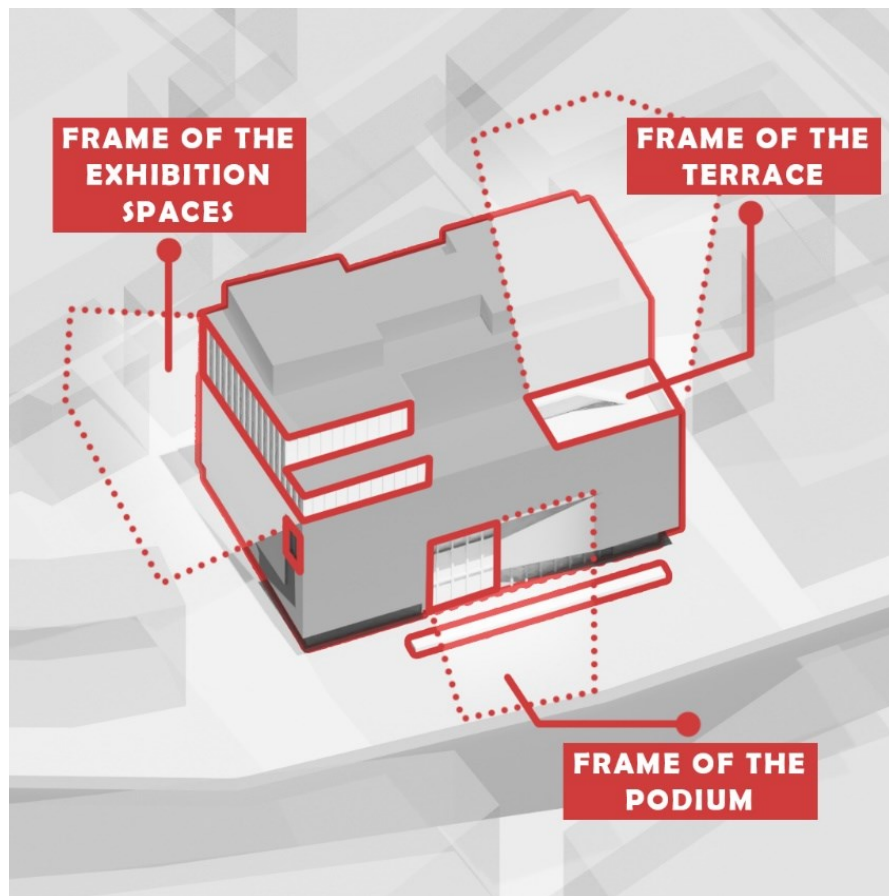


Figure 39 - The frames of the building and the visual connections that they create.

As a necessary step towards what Aureli recalls as absolute architecture, Arter aims to instrumentalize these frames in order to constitute itself as a project for the city. The use and effect of these frames change regarding their location and direction, such as the frames on the upper floors that are openings to the very urban context of the environment and the frames on the ground floor that creates a direct intersection between the podium and the frontal stage. The very idea of inserting frames on the outer shell of Arter's form asserts the engagement with the surrounding urban context while reconnecting the inside and the outside of the building. This engagement is not limited to the physical links but also enables social and cultural interrelation due to the transmissive frames in-between. The form of Arter remains complete even though the frames enable different points of view for the architecture

and the city to reconnect. They do not damage the total form but support it while creating various links with the surrounding urban pattern. The frames provide this social and cultural engagement in-between via focusing on the very intersections and accepting them as values that exist within the urban context. On the other hand, the frames of Arter interpret what Rohe emphasized with his plinth: creating a platform that illustrates the limit in-between thus presents the reciprocal participation in the project.

One of the most critical examples for these frames is the podium of the project, where the urban fabric and the form of the building intersect the most. Although entering the podium also implies retiring from the city in most cases, Arter proves the exact opposite. With the frame that is located in-between the frontal stage and the podium, the entrance block starts to consolidate the city and the architecture into a single urban artifact. The critical impact of the frame at this point is to reconnect the parts of the design into a singular formal feature of architecture without losing their distinguished qualities. With the frame at the center, the frontal stage and the podium become a singular element of Arter, providing both the engagement and the separation within the same process. As the entrance block houses two different floors, a gallery that visually connects these different levels, a ticket office, a cafeteria, a bookstore, and an entrance to the exhibition space; with the frame, they become visible from the outside due to its windows looking at the frontal stage. Therefore, from the frontal stage, the podium becomes a frame that presents a core aspect of the form of Arter; and from the inside, it becomes a critical space for its architecture and frames the urbanity around it. It transforms into a focal point both for the form and the program of Arter and reflects that to its exterior. As a result, standing inside the frame of the podium becomes a unique experience for the users: the city transforms into a performance to be observed, and the architecture becomes a scene that frames it.



Figure 40 - The view from the frame on the podium showing the urban context around it.
Photography by the author.

The frame of the podium is a critical example that illustrates how the forms of Arter and the city transfer to the inside of the building. The architecture of this frame realizes its space as a reflection of the outside and mimics the very formal qualities of the urbanity on the insides of the building to develop an engagement in between. As a frame, it outlines certain features of both its architecture and the urbanity around thus becomes an engaging factor for them within the form of the building. It does not aim to affect and change the existing urban forms but invites them into the building thus the podium creates a new arrangement with what the urbanity suggests. Therefore, the frame of the podium becomes a transmissive element between the interior and the exterior. It becomes one of the essential features that generate the interrelation in-between architecture and urbanity. The frontal stage transmits into the interior space of the podium and to the rear park and reconnects the urban pattern that was disrupted by Arter in the first place. The form of the project is not affected by such a flow through the building, rather is provided an opportunity of engaging with the environment. In a way, the podium transforms into a concave on the building's form, a hollow space that emphasizes such interrelation between the two ends of Arter's site. Moreover, with the concave of the frame, the podium becomes

one with the surrounding urbanity and increases the possibilities to find ways of social and cultural engagement.



Figure 41 - The exhibition spaces looking through the perforated walls surrounding the frame of the terrace. Photography by the author.



Figure 42 - The perforated walls surrounding the frame of the terrace and its perspective towards the city. Photography by the author.

Regarding its direct relationship with the outer urbanity, the podium is the most visible and critical frame that the design develops. The roof terrace, on the other hand, presents another point of view for the idea of frames that reconnect the architecture and the forces of urbanization. Rather than facing the urbanity horizontally as the podium does, the upper terrace orients its concave space vertically. Thus, with the frame of the terrace, the building recreates the site it occupies as a platform for interacting with the urbanity. By relocating the actual space from the ground level to the roof, Arter generates a frame that is both new and familiar for the urban context. Moreover, with the porous walls surrounding the terrace, the frame becomes a cage-like structure at the heart of the city. The frame of the terrace does not damage the overall form of the building but creates new opportunities for social, cultural, and political engagement with the surrounding urbanity. Observing the city from the top of the building enables new perspectives to be directed on the urban pattern, thus enables new links to be built. In fact, because the frame of the terrace also functions as an open-air exhibition space, it has the potential to directly relate with the environment, while also supporting the visual connection with the urban pattern around.

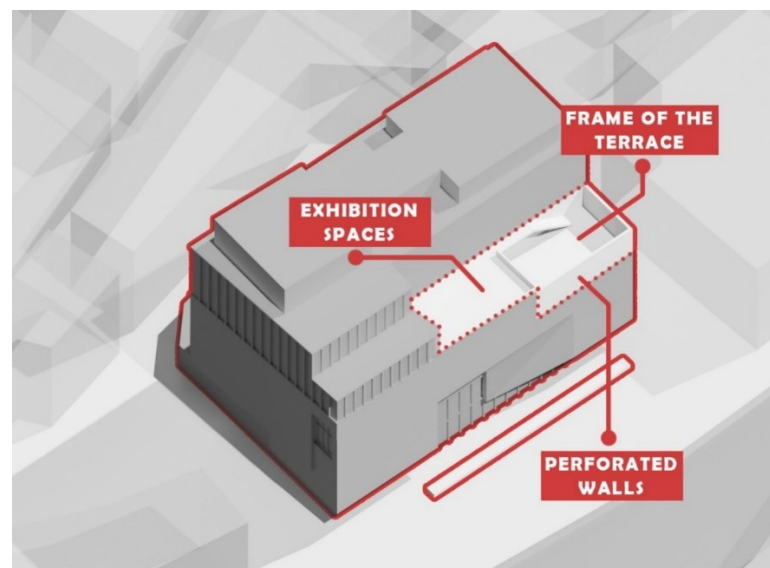


Figure 43 - The vertical frame of the terrace and its spatial qualities.

However, by preserving the formal qualities of the building, the roof terrace detaches itself from the other side of the engagement. Because the form of the building is a critical aspect of the design, the walls of the terrace do not define any idea of a frame from the outside. Preserving the form of the building generates certain limits for the frame of the terrace, but it also decreases the chances of building a reciprocal relationship in-between. Even though the walls are semi-permeable, their placement on the surrounding of the terrace prevents any physical interaction from the street level. Therefore, it becomes an unlikely possibility to invite the social, cultural, or political aspects of urbanity through the frame. As a result, the terrace becomes a frame that is only able to observe the city, and not to be observed from it. This difference of opportunity between the users of the terrace and the street creates a gap that damages the very intentions of creating a frame in the first place. Although the concave of the terrace recreates the urban site on the top of the building, it misses the most important aspect of it: the possibility to directly communicate with the urban environment. Detaching the terrace even with the walls surrounding it gives an unbalanced advantage to observe the other for the users of the terrace.



Figure 44 - Frames on the exhibition spaces showing the urban context around the building. Photography by the author.

On the floors between the podium and the terrace, the use of frames is limited to the actual exhibition spaces. In some areas, Arter realizes certain points of observation that connect urbanity with architecture. They become a critical part of the architecture of the building, as they provide a visual connection with the environment of Arter, as well as the natural light. Even though it is a radical attempt to invite natural light inside the exhibition spaces, and to rupture the solid façade in order to achieve that; the idea of placing a transparent surface in the very within these areas suggests the visual connection as a part of the program. As a formal element, these windows become frames that surround a certain angle looking towards the urbanity, thus presents the urban pattern as a part of the museum. These frames reflect on the form of the building as they rupture on its surface and allow transparency between the inside and the outside. Rather than acting as an architectural feature that supports the exhibition spaces while providing visual integration between the environment, these frames become the main element as they recall what is missing in the other parts of the building. In fact, the form is adapted to them as a core aspect of the design. Even though these frames provide a visual connection between the inside and the outside of architecture, because of the height of the floors it becomes impossible to observe the building back from the ground. As a one-way approach that aims at building an engagement with the urbanity, it transforms Arter into a project of gaze towards the city.

These frames within the architecture of Arter are included in the design for creating new possibilities for urban engagement. In the first place, the very approach of the design concerns urbanity, provides an urban space in front and develops an architecture that is focused on inviting the surrounding urbanity to inside. The form of the building, on the other hand, is not defined by the existing language on its environment nor solely reflects it. Rather, Arter presents its architecture as an attempt for addressing the city via using formal qualities. The placement of its monumental yet approachable form aims at creating an integration with the urbanity as the main goal of its design. In fact, Arter realizes its architecture as an emphasis on the urban

context around and provides certain points of connection via its formal configurations. These connections support the architectural form of Arter as well as the existing urban pattern and attempt to develop a common environment in-between. The podium and the upper block are the two essential parts of the design for building an engagement with the urbanity. Because these spaces are where the physical interaction between Arter and the urbanity occurs, they become focuses of the engagement that the project attempts. The terrace, on the other hand, creates the most direct yet inaccessible basis for the very interaction. With the perforated walls that surround it, the terrace becomes an inevitable space of peeping into the city, which clearly illustrates the most critical issue of Arter.

The way that Arter generates these frames via its form creates a unilateral relationship rather than a reciprocal. Even though the form of the building is completed with spatial configurations that enable physical interaction in-between, the project terminates these possibilities while limiting the very features. The podium creates the platform for reconnecting the inside with the city, while at the same time generates borders for the project site for avoiding the free flow through the building. Thus, the connection between the frontal and the rear stages is restricted with architectural features such as the decorative pool in front. As a result of this process, the frame of the podium misses the opportunity to generate a real connection with the city. The frame on the upper block provides a new perspective that observes the city from exhibition spaces above the ground. While it does not produce any physical interaction with the urban context, it also becomes the very limit in-between. The contrast of the inside and the outside is represented with the frames of the exhibition space; hence, they function as an element of separation. Lastly, the frame of the terrace aims to reconnect the urban context with the architecture of Arter while generating a space that is open for any type of urban activity. The frame develops a series of walls surrounding it which continues the form of the building while conceals the terrace behind it. In a way, the terrace carries the potential to become the most direct space of interaction for Arter, but it is disguised as a part of its formal continuity thus inseparable from the rest of the building.

Arter resonates between these architectural theories such as Kaufmann illustrated the architectures of Boullée and Ledoux with emphasis on their approach of separating the notion of form from the boundaries of the discipline. As these two architects examined form as a focus of their studies, Arter too realizes its formal configurations as the ultimate approach toward the city. Even though the form of the design is not developed by using the same methodologies of Boullée and Ledoux, Arter did establish a certain formal definition by creating its own features. Rather than using symmetry and repetition of architectural elements, the building presents the very essence of the revolutionaries, which is to generate architecture by creating an intense formal unity between its features. By distinguishing the entrance block, the upper block, and the terrace block from each other, the overall form of the building is cut into different parts, thus they become one of the main formal elements of the design. Without such separation of these blocks, Arter would transform into a single block that is dismembered from its formal features. As in the architectures of Boullée and Ledoux, the importance of hierarchy in-between these formal elements plays a crucial part in the design of Arter. Therefore, the notion of hierarchy enables a series of self-criticisms that separate the intrinsic and the external qualities of the building from each other, leading towards the discussions of autonomy of the design.

From another perspective, the design of Arter contrasts with both theories of formal autonomy and architectural pragmatism regarding formal conditions. The building reflects the ideas of *resistance* and *absorption* that are originated in these theories. Nevertheless, Arter does not define its form as a mere representation of either of these approaches to architecture. The previously analyzed parts of the design, such as blocks, stages, and frames, integrate with the theories of autonomy and pragmatism in different ways. To illustrate, the way that the whole building is divided into three blocks provides segmentation for Arter, to be evaluated accordingly with its formal configurations that reflect the autonomy of the design. These blocks present the form of the building as a collaboration of different parts, such as Eisenman emphasized on the Dom-ino. As Eisenman established a series of formal re-arrangements by using the existing parts of the Dom-ino, Arter generates

these three blocks in an autonomous understanding that focuses on the intrinsic conditions and formal qualities. On the other hand, the two stages on opposing façades realize the opportunity to develop an interconnection with the city, while supporting the accessibility of the building from outside. From a pragmatist perspective, the stages are the attempts of Arter to absorb the surrounding urban conditions and to define the form of the building. And lastly, the frames of Arter are placed as units that provide transparency in-between the architecture and the city, such as the glass windows or the open-air terrace. These frames become the very features of the design that focus on creating a visual connection with the environment and absorbing its conditions into the insides of the building in a pragmatist way. However, these frames are also a critical part of the autonomous architecture in Arter considering their placement on the façade. In fact, the notion of the frame is the mere combination of both autonomous and pragmatist principles as they create physical interaction between the inside and the outside of the building but are placed with intrinsic forces.

As an opposing proposal for the theories of autonomous architecture and architectural pragmatism, absolute architecture plays a critical role in the design of Arter. As the formal configurations within the building reflect the idea of limit in Aureli's theory, they have the possibility to transform the design into a project. While the theory of Aureli suggests an architecture that has a well-defined form that generates social and cultural engagements with the city, Arter creates the same possibility with the use of its architectural sections such as the blocks, the stages, and the frames. Even though this process of separating the blocks from each other decreases the chances of forming well-defined limits, the project preserves the finiteness of its form. Moreover, these three blocks generate their own approaches for engaging with the surrounding urban conditions via their formal qualities. The entrance block becomes the most direct part of the design for physical interaction, the upper block aims at providing determined vistas for the urbanity, and the terrace block creates another possibility for physical engagement via the perforated walls that surround it. The stages, on the other hand, enhance Arter's connections with the

city by creating platforms on the ground level. The frontal stage acts as a collector in-between the building and the street and transforms into a public space for interconnection within the city. On the contrary, the rear stage becomes a private space for Arter even though its proximity to the houses that constitute the urban conditions around the building. These two characteristics of the stages establish different attempts of the design that aimed towards the city. Therefore, it is critical to mention that in relation to Aureli's theory of absolute architecture, these stages conflict with each other. While one is supporting the limits of the design by extending the accessibility into the street, the other generates additional limits that create new formal finiteness for the building that does not primarily reflect the overall design of Arter. Finally, the frames within the design become the indirect formal qualities that aim for engagement. As these frames generate visual connections with the surrounding urban context, they transform the formal finiteness on the surface of the building. The frames present the interconnection that is enabled via other formal qualities of the design and illustrates the absolute architecture that Aureli suggested. As a result, with the formal qualities of blocks, stages, and frames, the building illustrates itself as a series of attempts towards the urban conditions.

From the formal point of view, Arter develops a monumental architecture at the heart of the city and produces a series of approaches towards the surrounding urbanity. The form is a result of both the principles of contemporary architecture and the existing urban conditions. The building is observed as an architectural artifact that provides certain ways of engaging with the urban fabric; nevertheless, its unilateral character creates a dilemma by inviting the city inside while at the same time restricting the accessibility. The form of Arter could be interpreted as a response to the previously mentioned autonomous and pragmatic architectural practices as it contrasts another strategy towards the forces of urbanization: the building becomes a giant frame within the city that serves as a new point of view, and a new artifact to observe. Without limiting itself to the autonomous and pragmatist theories of form, Arter develops its form in a position that directly faces urbanity. However, the way that it applies its frames in order to engage with the environment only allows for the

observation of the city. The one-way relationship that Arter builds is visible through different stages, as it endeavors to preserve its formal qualities from the existing urban environment. The use of limits serve the absolute architecture of its form, as Aureli mentions as a necessary notion for a project, but they also disable the very intention behind generating frames. Although the engagement between Arter and the city is possible via generating certain limits on the form of the project, they become the pioneers of restricting the design when they start to disable the physical interaction in-between.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The formal analysis of Arter enables the criticism of the previous theories of autonomous and pragmatist architecture, as well as the absolute architecture by Aureli. As another way for generating architectural forms within the city, a new formal understanding is required for building an engaged urban context with the social, cultural, and political conditions of the environment. The way that Arter establishes its formal limits generates a series of possibilities that are critical towards the city. From the frontal stage to the frame of the terrace, each formal feature creates a contradiction within the urban context by using formal configurations. While Arter's blocks distinguish the overall form of the building by defining its limits in three parts, the stages suggest frontal and rear spaces for interacting with the city directly. These qualities refer to the effect of forms in architecture and their ability to address the urban context via formal features. With the analysis of Arter it becomes clear that the approaches for building form within an urban context instruct a two-way relationship between the architecture and the city. As the form becomes a critical aspect for the design to be engaged with its environment, it also carries the need to be derived from social, cultural, and political conditions that surround the architecture. From a theoretical perspective, the *well-defined form* of absolute architecture transforms into a *well-addressed form* that both provides limits for the separation, thus politicalness for the engagement. As a result, the political form becomes a priority for architectural production, enabling new possibilities for the urban context and starting new discussions that focus on the physical configurations of the city. With the political form in designs, the city transforms into a series of architectures that aim for urban engagement via producing formal absoluteness.

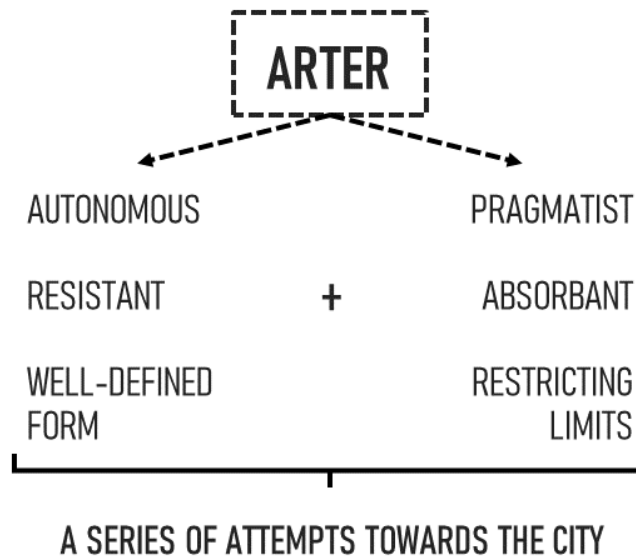


Figure 45 – A diagram for distinguishing the formal qualities of Arter.

From the overall perspective, Arter realizes the opportunity for enabling the engaging factor in architecture within the urban context. In this way, the design reflects both the autonomous and the pragmatist approaches; moreover, becomes an illustration of Aureli's proposal for an absolute architecture. As he emphasized in his theories, architecture has the potential to transform its autonomous attempts on the form into a project that aims for the city. Arter reflects the theory of absolute architecture in ways that are interrelated with the previous approaches of the discipline. From the formal point of view, its architecture exemplifies both the autonomous and the pragmatist understandings within the discipline. While the building's form creates resistances on the one hand, on the other it aims for absorbing the outer context of the city and its formal qualities. And finally, reflecting the preconditions of an absolute architecture, Arter generates forms that are separated from the urban context with its restricting architectural feature around the building. Considering these qualities of the project, the architecture of Arter transforms into a series of approaches towards the city, and generates new possibilities via its formal qualities even though it does not limits its approach with a singular formal understanding.

The way that autonomous architecture considers form as a focus of the discipline generates a design approach that configures a formal quality that is connected with the urban context. As a project, architecture can enable certain ways for creating a form regarding its outcome on the urbanity. In this sense, the form is a crucial aspect of such an approach due to its effects on the very physical conditions of both the outside and the inside, thus the infrastructure in-between. The city is no longer separated from its parts, but a totality of urban artifacts as a whole. Without such an understanding to architecture and the ways to produce it, it becomes impossible to develop architecture as a project, as a political act towards the city. Only then architecture can present itself as a project, enable ways of engagements, and develop an urbanity around it that is primarily absolute. In fact, the idea of a political form is the critical aspect of such an engaged urban environment because it provides both the autonomous and the pragmatist discussions of the discipline. Along with these arguments, Aureli presents absolute architecture as a possibility that depends its ability to create theoretical discussions on the very idea of being political. The political form becomes an inevitable outcome of absoluteness, thus an essential part of the finite form that is preconditioned for a project. In fact, the idea of a political form resonates coherently with the design of Arter as it generates a series of architectural features that enable such integration in-between the project and the city.

When the main course is for the urban engagement, the city becomes dependent on architecture, therefore on the form, and its ability to be political both towards the discipline and towards the physical environment. Rather than following the strict rules for autonomous or pragmatist approaches attempts towards criticality, as Eisenman, Hays, Somol, Whiting, and many others did in the past; it is possible for the form itself to be political aspect towards the city. In fact, by accepting form as a political notion in design, architecture itself becomes a source for establishing critical theories that aim for urbanity. The idea of form being a political notion within the design provides the possibility for architecture to be critical towards the surrounding urban environment. Not only is political for the social and cultural conditions of the urbanity, but the form is also physically political as an expression of architecture.

While a building is positioned within the city, architecture immediately starts to define its spatial configurations and formal limits. Therefore, the very form of architecture becomes the source for a political idea, which is generated and placed by, again, the form. Moreover, the idea of being political is not a mere outcome of the form, but can also direct the design towards a critical reading of the city.

In today's architectures, where the focus on the discipline is shifting towards the digitalized design processes of computers, the idea of form is mostly understood as it is a separate part of the physical environment of the city. Either considering it as the absolute aim of architecture or as a step towards another idealistic condition within the city, the architecture of today does not focus on its possibilities as a political notion of the design. While the contemporary architectures of the 21st century usually generate form as an instrument that leads the way towards the current trends of sustainability, parametric design, and neo-organicism; the form is actually can be defined as the core aspect of the discipline and the generator of a political architecture. Moreover, the contemporary trends within the discipline can be integrated with the idea of political form, thus it becomes possible to create an architecture of current trends with an aim for the city. Without such an understanding, these architectural wonders become lonely artifacts within the surrounding urban environment. Such as Boullée illustrated with his drawings in the 18th century, these architectures distinguish from the existing urban context and become architectural artifacts that scatter within the city. Aureli's idea for absolute architecture reimagines these architectures as projects that aim for the city, with a precondition of a formal quality that engages with the political aspects of the city. Therefore the idea of a political form becomes a crucial aspect for absolute architecture, and for the architecture of the 21st century.

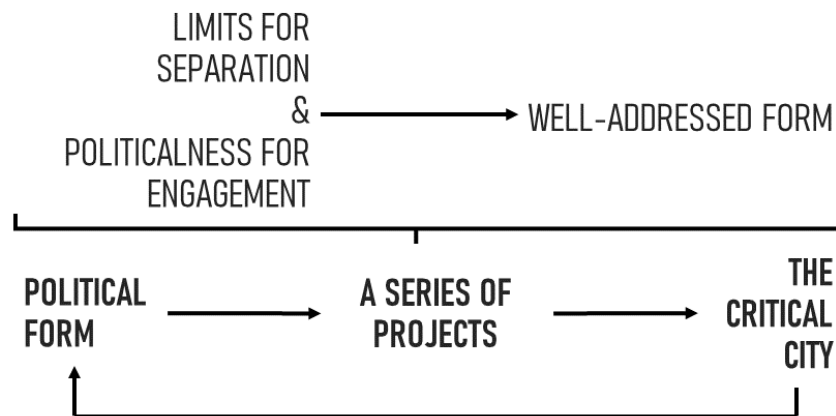


Figure 46 - The idea of political form and its effects on architecture and the city.

It is critical to comprehend the notions that are necessary for creating such a *well-addressed form* for architecture. As an interrelation between architecture and the city, the process requires a combination of approaches within the discipline. As Aureli suggested for an absolute architecture, a finite form is possible via developing limits that separate the project from the surrounding city. These limits become the very aspects of form that distinguish its formal qualities and define the architecture as a singular entity within the forms of the urban context. While the condition of separation is enabled by creating limits that distinguish the formal qualities of architecture from the context of the city; the idea of engagement originates in the very notion of politicalness of the architectural approach. As the idea of engagement is the main aim of the theory of absolute architecture, which differentiates it from other theories, it becomes a critical part of the formal configurations within the design. Without such an understanding of politicalness, that derives from the social qualities of the city, architecture disables its opportunity to create an integration with the urban context. Therefore, the idea of a *well-addressed form* is achieved by generating architectural forms that are on the one hand limited and separated; and on the other, political, thus engaged.

With this architecture that is able to be political via its formal features, the surrounding city starts to be the objective of the discipline. The way that the notion of politicalness affects the architectural form generates *well-addressed forms*. These forms establish such an architecture that becomes a series of projects that aim for the city, therefore, enable the idea of a critical city at the end. These projects become the very pioneers of the critical city with their well-addressed and absolute formal qualities. With the political form, as an addition to Aureli's theory of absolute architecture, the discipline generates a reciprocal relationship between architecture and the city; both being affected by its present conditions and aiming to reflect its own politicalness with its physical elements. In that way, form becomes an outcome of both the architecture and the city that shaped it. In return, that *well-addressed form* generates a political understanding towards the critical city which understands and enhances the relationship between architecture and the city. Moreover, the critical city transforms into the starting point for creating new political approaches for the discipline. As a result, the forms of architecture and the forms of the critical city join together with a similar point of view towards the political aspects of the physical context. Merging these forms provide the possibility for generating a unity between the physical conditions of the city, therefore enable the process for establishing a formal engagement in-between the features of the urban context.

The idea of a political form reconfigures the processes that result in architectural production. Concentrating the formal absoluteness as a priority for the design, the form starts to translate urban conditions into architecture. Absorbing the elements of the urban environment into the project creates new opportunities to reflect them on form, or to resolve them within the design and generate new formal features that resonate with the critical city. As a result, absolute architecture becomes the very pioneer of the surrounding urban context. The project starts to be both the active and the passive element regarding its formal configurations in relation to the city. Hence, this process is a crucial part of the development of *well-addressed forms* in architecture considering the engagement with the outer forces of urbanity. Without enabling such a political aspect of the design, the form separates its architecture from

the critical city. Generating such architectures within the same urban context provides the city with a series of different projects that convey political forms. As a result, the way that these forms direct the social, cultural, and political notions from the city into projects transforms the architectural configurations within the urban context. The idea of politicalness becomes a pendulum that resonates between the criticism of architecture and the existing conditions of the critical city. Rather than developing competition between the political aspects of architecture or the urban context, the pendulum creates a balance under the control of the formal finiteness. The critical part in this process is the very end after the city becomes constituted by architectures that are engaged and have well-defined forms. That is the time to combine the different approaches within the same urbanity, as a single unity between architecture and the city.

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