

Whatever Happened to Aesthetics within Urbanism? Oblivion or Prejudice?

Miguel Lopez Melendez

Research Associate, Harvard University Graduate School of Design
mlopezme@gsd.harvard.edu

ABSTRACT

Most contemporary architectural and urban debates have overlooked, if not diminished, the critical character of aesthetics as branch of philosophy and mediator of our social interactions. Urban transformations entail social, economic, environmental, political, technological, psychological, and aesthetics changes. Thus, the ubiquity of aesthetics demands more sophisticated critical methods to counter the pragmatism and technocratic approaches within contemporary design practices. But the urgency to tackle the challenges of urbanization has condemned the critical framework that aesthetics provides to oblivion within design. In contrast, this text situates aesthetics at the center of contemporary urban debates and defends its analytical power to tackle the challenges of urbanization, such as climate change, social inequity, and migration crises.

Keywords: aesthetic blindness, aesthetics of urbanization, Urban Theory and History, urban theories and histories

Topic: teoría e historia de la ciudad y el territorio

Introduction

Pragmatism often seduces architects and urbanists to perform their craft. Economic and technological anxiety disturbs design aims before a relentless urbanization. Most scientists, scholars, professionals, and policy makers praise the “perfection” and “objectivity” of forms, machines, and methods. But is not science as subjective as art? Does our obsession with purely technological, economic, and scientific approaches counter or exacerbate the effects of urbanization, such as climate change, social inequality, and migration crises? Architectural and urban processes entail not only social, economic, political, and technological changes but also psychological and aesthetic transformations as well as ethical dilemmas. However, the pragmatism that permeates contemporary design denies a self-evident truth: aesthetic changes inhere within cultural, environmental, human, and urban transformations.

This text explores the decreasing relevance of aesthetics within contemporary urban debates and defends its analytical power as driver of social change to engage urbanization. Thus, aesthetics acquires a twofold dimension throughout the argument: (a) as branch of philosophy (theory) and (b) as mediator of our social interactions (practice). Prevalent criticism within design disciplines and professions—such as architecture, urban design and planning, and landscape architecture—has overlooked, and even diminished, baselessly its cultural depth. Marxian ideas have reduced aesthetics to “mere appearance” by focusing on the economic and political dimension of social relations. But aesthetics is not an innocuous consequence of social interactions; it is inherent to the social, economic, and political dimensions of any cultural reality.

Aesthetics is ubiquitous; thus, it conceals its critical character. The same person who revolutionized Western criticism in the eighteenth century, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, also founded our modern understanding of aesthetics. Reason was a judge that became a defendant accused by reason itself under the Kantian scrutiny (1781), while his aesthetic judgment of natural phenomena categorized night as sublime and day as beautiful (1764). Aesthetic judgments cannot be dissociated from the visual spectacle of urbanization—either the burning skies triggered by wildfires, the flooding and drought events derived from climate change, the dramas behind migration, or a relentless pandemic. However, most scientists, researchers, and professionals who study urban phenomena overlook its critical capacity. Oblivion or prejudice? In contrast, this text situates aesthetics at the center of contemporary design and environmental debates.



Fig. 01. Beautiful but disturbing effects of droughts in Lake Powell, Utah. (Justin Sullivan/Getty Images,



Fig. 02. Albert Skuratov and Samuel Palomino play a Mozart concert at an intensive care unit in Madrid for Covid-19 patients. (Bernat Armangué/AP, 2021)

The word “oblivion” represents a “forgetfulness resulting from inattention or carelessness,” while “prejudice” denotes a “preconceived opinion not based on reason or actual experience” (OED, 2022). Which word explains the decreasing relevance of aesthetics within urbanism? The Kantian rational revolution influenced the rebellion of Western “individuality” against external (monarchic) powers that precipitated the French Revolution. Kant’s three Critiques “decapitated” metaphysical ideas, including God, while founding modern aesthetics (Heine, 1834). The oblivion to which aesthetics has been condemned within architectural and urban criticism over time arguably responds to the assumption that the Kantian “individuality” was a synonym for “individualism.” But the Kantian “autonomy of the will” is a culturally and historically constructed critical attitude—a productive tension between individual and collective interests. On the other hand, individualism has been associated within critical theory with capitalist speculation that denigrates collective benefits.

Aesthetics has been condemned to a superficial scrutiny within architectural and urban debates. The critical philosophy and social theory of the Frankfurt School used aesthetics as category of analysis during the first half of the twentieth century (Benjamin, 1935; Adorno, 1962). However, Marxian critique reduced aesthetics to “mere appearance” by focusing on economic and political issues in the context of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall. The urgent fight against capitalism overshadowed the analytical patience that the critical capacity of aesthetics requires. Marxian ideas theorized: a formulation *Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology* (Tafuri, 1969) that denounced the complicity between capitalist production and architecture as the fate of urban development; *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre, 1974) derived from the political dimension of social relations; and *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Harvey, 1989) to argue that the correspondences between postmodernism and a new “time-space compression” within an increasingly flexible capital accumulation are “shifts in surface appearance” rather than symptoms of a “new postcapitalist or even postindustrial society” (1989, vii). Harvey’s formulation is as productive as reductive. It reduces aesthetics to “surface appearance.” In contrast, the brilliance of the political theorists Hannah Arendt and Chantal Mouffe has an aesthetic sensibility.

There is an aesthetic dimension in the political and there is a political dimension in art. From the point of view of the theory of hegemony, artistic practices play a role in the constitution and maintenance of a given symbolic order, or in its challenging, and this is why they necessarily have a political dimension. The political, for its part, concerns the symbolic ordering of social relations, and this is where its aesthetic dimension resides (Mouffe, 2013: 90).

Mouffe’s words challenge the monopoly of Marxian criticism, which condemned aesthetics to oblivion in academic and professional environments. Manfredo Tafuri’s book *Theories and History of Architecture* (1968), which refers to “Theories in plural and History in singular,” is paradigmatic of a hermetic architectural

criticism that excluded the possibility of histories other than the history of class struggle. Pier Vittorio Aureli's (2008) and Douglas Spencer's (2021) work adheres to this isolated genealogy. The study of "other" critical frameworks, like aesthetics, expands the horizons of architectural and urban criticism toward contexts and contents often excluded by Eurocentric or North American approaches—i.e., African, Asian, and Latin American aesthetic and historical sensibilities. The excesses of capitalism are ubiquitous; thus, the study of "other" cultures and sensibilities can counter social inequalities from different perspectives. How have Western and Eastern epistemologies and ontologies shaped their respective urban aesthetics? Is Tokyo an ordered chaos and Mexico City a disordered chaos? History responded to a circular logic for the Aztecs, while the linearity of History as process defined Eurocentric-Hegelian epistemology (Engels, 1886).

The political tone of critical theory and the reemergence of nationalism in international politics polarize societies equally by exacerbating the antagonism of social, economic, and political identities. But the social, economic, and political sophistication of aesthetics and art can appeal to diverse sectors of society regardless of race, age, gender, or political sympathy. The artist's critical eye does not accuse. "The artist," the philosopher Roland Barthes argued, "knows nothing of resentment" (1980). This text advocates political agonism to identify "adversaries" to be respected rather than "enemies" to be destroyed within social, economic, environmental, political, and urban interactions (Mouffe, 2013).

SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The Post-Modern era scrutinized the strong and functional impetus of Modernism to propose "a time of incessant choosing" within architecture and urbanism. Post-Modernism, according to Charles Jencks (1989), was "both the continuation of Modernism and its transcendence." Thus, it reflected on the productivity of tradition and the lethargy of inherited knowledge. The human, environmental, and aesthetic concerns of Team 10 announced the demise of the functional approach of modern urbanism, while the architectural historian Reyner Banham described the postwar architectural dilemma as the confrontation between history and science (Vidler, 2012). But the debate transcended design.

Hannah Arendt distinguished the modern age, whose scientific character began in the seventeenth century, from the modern world, which began with the atomic bomb. This distinction responded to an "artificial" impetus, which relied on scientific and technical knowledge exclusively that disrupted the status of human beings as "children of nature." The context of Arendt's concerns was the Cold War that divided the world ideologically. She argued that the emancipation of human beings from earth (Space Race) was analogous to the philosophical explanation of the "body as a prison of mind or soul" and the "repudiation of an Earth who was the Mother of all living creatures under the sky" (1958: 2). Thus, extraterrestrial explorations cannot be left "to the decision of professional scientists or professional politicians" because it is "a political question of the first order" (Arendt, 1958: 2). For Arendt, it was not a question to be discussed within the managerial objectives of politics or the technological proficiency of engineering, but a debate about "the political" dimension of *The Human Condition*, that is, the political character of our daily social interactions.

The philosopher Gilles Deleuze considered that the second half of the twentieth century witnessed a transition from the closed systems of "disciplinary societies" to the ubiquity of "control societies" (1992). It motivated users to think, learn, and produce "freely" within an apparently liberating spatial and temporal framework that nevertheless surreptitiously constrains actions and thoughts—the heyday of social media, the personalization of products, and flexible architectural spaces for the sake of creative and economic speculation. The philosopher Michel Foucault theorized the social and political control that disciplinary frameworks exerted on "docile bodies" (1975). He provided an index to study disciplinary formulations in the context of the debate about architectural autonomy of the 1960s and 1970s. The return to the discipline of architecture aspired to consolidate the qualitative parameters of architecture. But it alienated disciplinary knowledge from society and ongoing cultural transformations, especially in the United States.

The philosopher Félix Guattari theorized the conflation of social relations, human subjectivity, and environmental concerns through the concept of “ecosophy” (1989). The latter entailed a new understanding of human interactions with the natural environment that supersedes the dichotomic relationship between human and nonhuman systems. His “ethico-aesthetic” project questions the practical goals of capitalism to focus on a new ecological contract that could revolutionize our thinking methods as individuals, professionals, and members of society. This idea has permeated design through Ecological Urbanism, which promoted the harmonic development of ecological and urban projects with a perceptible aesthetic sensibility (Mostafavi and Doherty, 2016).

The social, economic, and political dimension of these philosophies reveal aesthetic concerns. Arendt exposed an aesthetic debate that counters form-function dichotomies within architectural criticism. She argued that a thing “in some way transcend its functional use, and its transcendence, its beauty or ugliness, is identical with appearing publicly and being seen” (1958: 172). Thus, the aesthetic realm exists since our ancestors designed tools or built shelters. But it consolidated as branch of philosophy within Western thought until the eighteenth century. Camillo Sitte’s urban analysis focused on beauty while Friedrich Nietzsche (1872: 8) argued that the “existence of the world is justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon” amid the Industrial Revolution that transformed European cities. Sitte’s aesthetic focus was not a nostalgic account of the preindustrial city, but a critical assessment of the social implications of a disruptive industrialization. In the twentieth century, Le Corbusier (1923) praised the “aesthetic” order of the engineer architect. The aesthetic sensibility of Mies van der Rohe and Ludwig Hilberseimer intervened upon the twentieth-century metropolis. Hilberseimer proposed a “generic” architecture sensitive to social, economic, and political processes. Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi (1972) learned from the mundane landscape of Las Vegas. Aldo Rossi (1989) argued that the critical capacity of cinema to foresee urban transformations surpassed architecture: “I believe that the Canalettos or the Piranesis of our time are the directors, the people of the cinema; they describe the modern city, its center, and its outskirts [...] The outskirts of Pasolini’s Rome, or of Milan by Antonioni or Brusatti were discovered first in cinema, rather than by architects.” The film director Michelangelo Antonioni criticized the excesses of industrial production and mass consumption. In *Il Deserto Rosso* (Red Desert), the psychotic character Giuliana dissociated cognitively and emotionally from the world. The color of the film evoked the aesthetic transition from the “gray, brown, and smoky” industrialization to the taste of Pop art (Antonioni, 1996).

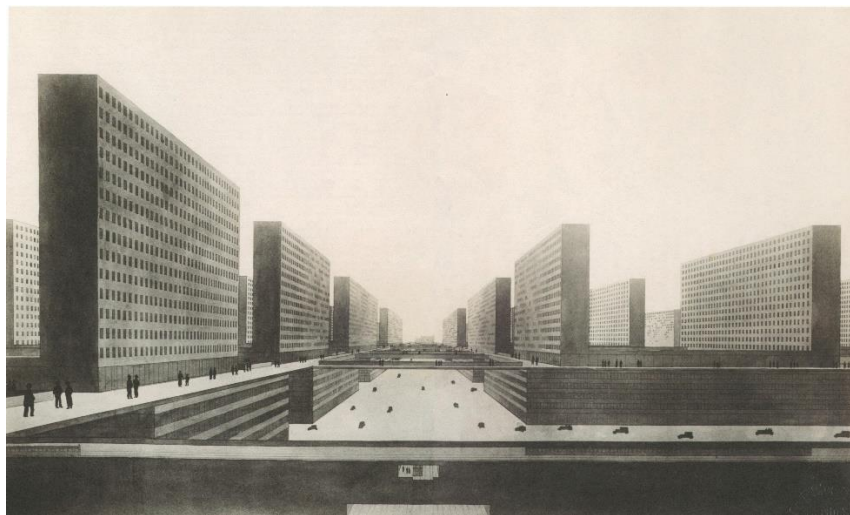


Fig. 03. Highrise City, Ludwig Hilberseimer, 1924. (Art Institute of Chicago)



Fig. 04. *Il Deserto Rosso* (Red Desert), Michelangelo Antonioni, 1964. (Janus Films/Archivio Michelangelo Antonioni)

The landscape architect Ian L. McHarg formulated the alliance between environmental, industrial, societal, governmental, and design efforts. He argued that the most practical methods of urban development, such as the construction and maintenance of highways, must meet social concerns: “The objective of an improved method should be to incorporate resource values, social values and aesthetic values in addition to the normal criteria of physiographic, traffic and engineering considerations. In short, the method should reveal the highway alignment having the maximum social benefit and the minimum social cost” (1968: 1018). The focus on aesthetic values does not entail the abandonment of social benefit, respect for nature, and economic efficiency within urban development.

Aesthetics is not culturally homogeneous. The cultural nuances that sometimes unify and normally differentiate the empirical experience of Madrid from Algiers, Boston, Mexico City, and Tokyo are based on social, economic, political, technological, and aesthetic phenomena. The social structure of European cities differs from the social reality of Africa, Asian, North and Latin American cities. The aesthetic dimension of Latin American design is repressed or, at best, elevated to an anecdotal, but attractive, feature. The architectural and urban oeuvre of Luis Barragan, Oscar Niemeyer, and Lina Bo Bardi responded to social, economic, and political conditions. Their collaborations with artists such as Burle Marx and Mathias Goeritz support the artistic analysis of their projects whose aesthetics antagonizes the excesses of capitalism and modernity.





Fig. 05 and 06. An aesthetically unorthodox Teatro Oficina challenged the “coherence” of architectural dogmatism, Lina Bo Bardi, São Paulo, 1984-1994. (Nelson Kon)

Design research must diversify its means and methods to tackle cultural and urban challenges. Have traditional critical methods lagged behind cultural transformations—i.e., climate change, demographic implosion, digitalization, migration crises, Covid-19 pandemic, racism, war, and social inequity? The ideas of Henri Lefebvre, Manfredo Tafuri, David Harvey, and Fredric Jameson have influenced architectural and urban discourses. But the aesthetic concerns of Jameson’s historical analysis stand out within this critical tradition (1998). He presented the poetry of John Ashbery, Andy Warhol’s pop art, John Cage’s musical provocations, and Wim Wenders’s cinematic depiction of North American landscapes as testaments to the Postmodern turn that eroded old epistemologies. However, Jameson restricts its analytical horizon to a new economic order that reduces Postmodernism to a symptom of the “evils” of consumer societies. He lost the opportunity to elevate the Campbell’s Soup Cans, by Andy Warhol, to critical discourse against consumerism. Saskia Sassen’s sociological approach consolidated the concept “global city” to describe the increasing financial influences on urban transformations at the turn of the century. Her productive efforts have permeated sociological, economic, political, architectural, and urban analyses but they don’t contribute, at least directly, to a cultural critique based on aesthetics.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Architectural and urban debates have built on different critical approaches so far in the twenty-first century. Mohsen Mostafavi and Gareth Doherty built on Deleuze and Guattari to propose the common goals of ecological concerns and urban development in *Ecological Urbanism* (2016). The Journal for Architecture OASE published “Reflections on Architecture with Hannah Arendt” (2020) with the contributions of Cecilia Sjöholm, Pier Vittorio Aureli, and George Baird. It built on Arendt’s political sophistication, which turned our attention to the aesthetic dimension of things and “the public” unfolding of our political “actions” to counter prescribed social behavior. Michel Foucault’s formulations on disciplinary regulation informed the debate on “Public and Common(s)” proposed by Reinhold Martin (2014: 45) in *Mediators: Aesthetics, Politics, and the City* that distinguishes the “public sector” as “a historical constellation of institutions, practices, protocols, and material complexes” from its idealized notion. Martin distinguishes between two tendencies within the literature devoted to urban empiricism: the description and classification of cities, such as the “global city,” and the exploration of “urban imaginaries” that influence our conception of social, economic, and political phenomena. He argues that both tendencies barely come together to treat “the aesthetic and imaginary life of cities as a determining factor in their political economy, as input for their networked infrastructures (as well as their output), or, for that matter, as a key to rethinking the polis itself” (2014: 55). Thus, Martin formulates this alliance through the “language of

media theory, political theory, and aesthetics” to offer a bridge between urban studies (Saskia Sassen’s *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* or Neil Brenner’s *Implosions/Explosions*) and urban imaginaries (Andreas Huyssen’s *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age* and Giuliana Bruno’s *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film*). Urban studies rely mostly on political economy, sociology, and geography, while urban imaginaries promote art, aesthetics, and empirical evidence to produce knowledge. The production of knowledge is not the prerogative of science. It is not a coincidence that one of the first authors quoted by Bruno (2007: 55) in *Atlas of Emotion* is Albert Einstein: “By means of the...film...it would be possible to infuse certain subjects, such as geography, which is at present would off organ-like in the forms of dead descriptions, with the pulsating life of a metropolis.”

The overemphasis on political economy within urban debates has excluded aesthetics as critical framework, suggesting fallaciously that aesthetics lacks political and economic dimensions. Neil Brenner’s *Implosions/Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization* (2014) is an anthology that explores current transformations of “the planetary socio-ecological landscape.” It combines classical texts of Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, and Edward W. Soja with recent attempts to decipher urbanization. The point of departure of Christian Schmid’s text “Traveling Warrior and Complete Urbanization in Switzerland: Landscape as Lived Space” is the film “*Reisender Krieger* (Traveling Warrior, 1981)” by Christian Schocher, which captures “the complete urbanization of society” in Switzerland. It depicts “mountain regions and the putatively rural areas as part of the urbanized worlds” (Schmid, 2014: 94). But the text soon derails the exploration of cinema as analytical tool to exploit it as support of the “planetary urbanization” thesis. The film seems an excuse to support Henri Lefebvre’s thesis about the increasing urbanization of society and extended rural areas (1970). The historical context of *Reisender Krieger* were the riots in Swiss cities triggered by changing European societies. Schmid acknowledges the analytical role played by film within the social unrest of the era. He argued that Schocher’s film exposes “critical aspects of urbanization that are difficult to identify through academic analysis” (2014: 94). Schmid dissects the Lefebvrian distinction (1974) between perceived, conceived, and lived space. “Perceived space,” describes how our senses interact with urbanization—urban space can be seen, heard, and smelled. “Conceived space,” is created by visual images and concepts in our minds. “Lived space,” is directly connected to our personal and social experiences.



Fig. 07. *Reisender Krieger*, Christian Schocher, 1981. (Clemens Klopfenstein)

Schmid chose the Lefebvrian critical framework, while this text turns its attention to the Kantian conflation of the foundation of the means of criticism (the critique of reason by reason itself) and our modern understanding of aesthetics (1790). Kantian and Lefebvrian formulations share a critical framework that relies on concepts and empirical reality. The apparent “formalism” of Kant’s philosophy derives from his attempt to apply the power of reason (concepts) to external phenomena despite the impossibility of controlling them. Kant argued that reason “proves its reality and that of its concepts by what it does and all subtle reasoning against the possibility of its being practical is futile” (1788: 3). A practical rationality is also found in Lefebvre’s idea that urbanization can be seen, heard, smelled as well as conceived and conceptualized. But one idea prevents Lefebvrian criticism from advancing aesthetics as critical framework, while another idea suggests the possibility to develop a Lefebvrian aesthetic analysis through “representation.” Intuition (first idea) is underrated by

Lefebvre’s “conceived space” that is mediated through conventions and concepts. The Kantian evaluation of beauty and ugliness relies on a judgment of taste based on an opinion (intuitive) rather than universal laws (logical), because like any food, the subject tries it with its own tongue and palate. A logical judgment “subsumes a representation under a concept of the object” through which it asserts universality and necessity (Kant, 1790). But the judgment of taste guarantees universality and necessity through a subjective verdict. Science looks for objective and logical consensus, while aesthetics aspires to subjective and intuitive consensus. If I consider that Rafael Moneo’s Museo Nacional de Arte Romano de Mérida (1980-1986) is beautiful, I expect others to agree with me through the universality of Kantian aesthetic verdicts. Why do we assume that science is purely “objective” when its postulates are proposed by subjects? Representation (second idea) conveys meanings that evoke divine powers, an authority, or revolutionary promises. Lefebvre categorized spaces that convey these meanings as “spaces of representation.” Thus, Schmid explains how the Storming of the Bastille evokes “feelings, emotions, and symbolism” in French people despite it occurred centuries ago—precisely when Kant (1724-1804) formulated a conflation of critical and aesthetic theories that played a key role in the outbreak of the French Revolution (1787-1799) along with L’Encyclopédie (1751-1765), the United States Declaration of Independence (1776), and the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Thus, Schmid, and the Marxian tradition, overlooks the role of aesthetics as critical framework for design to engage critically social, economic, and political phenomena such as the French Revolution and the compelling but horrifying visual “spectacle” of urbanization.



Fig. 08. The “spectacle” of tornado damage from a theater in Mayfield, Kentucky. (Shawn Triplett/Reuters, 2021)

But aesthetics is so pervasive that some political and design formulations are sophisticated enough to build on its critical power. Chantal Mouffe (2013) formulated how aesthetics is indivisible from “the political.” The images presented by Rem Koolhaas as part of “Absorbing Modernity 1914-2014” at the Venice Biennale 2014 question national identities through aesthetic features that homogenize contemporary architecture throughout the world. Timothy Hyde aspires to expand “the contemporary debate on the instrumentality of aesthetic judgment” within architecture by studying its progression in Great Britain during the last four centuries (2019: 2). Mark Foster Gage explores how “creative acts can be socially engaged through aesthetic registers rather than those of the nearing century-old positions of critical theory” (2019: 7).

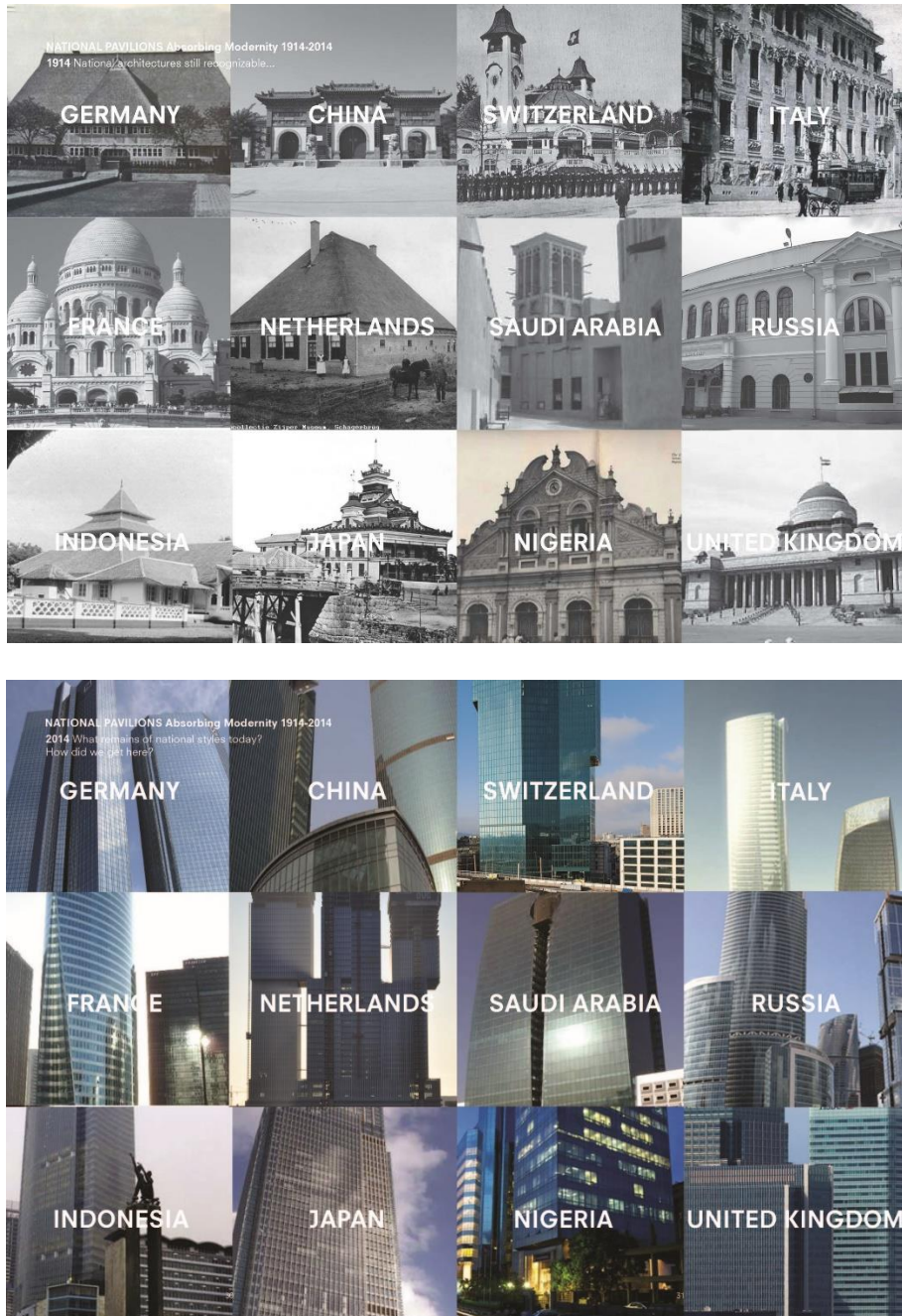


Fig. 09 and 10. Absorbing Modernity, Rem Koolhaas, Venice Biennale 2014: Fundamentals. (Rem Koolhaas/Venice Biennale 2014)

This text built on the theoretical sophistication of Hannah Arendt to argue that the history of aesthetics, as mediator of our social interactions, corresponds to the history of civilization. It acknowledged the political character and social roots of the foundation of aesthetics as branch of Western philosophy in the eighteenth century, when it was part of the rational revolution that precipitated the outbreak of the mother of Western Revolutions. But it paid particular attention to the aesthetic blindness of architectural and urban criticism since the second half of the twentieth century until today. The text traced as many efforts as possible within contemporary design that attempt to use aesthetics as analytical category. Its briefness prevented the author from studying additional ideas that enrich, and even oppose, the proposed debate. The previous lines identified

the place, or the exile, occupied by aesthetics within contemporary urbanism. The following lines offer the main lessons derived from the forgotten aesthetic character of Urban Theory and History.

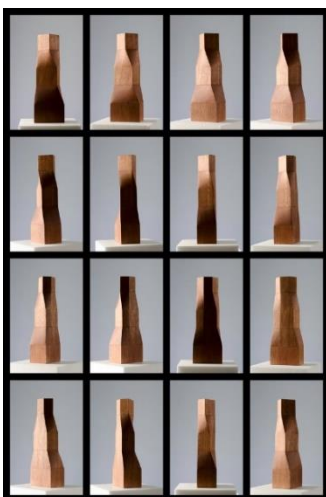
The title of this text is comprised more by rhetorical questions that demand debate than scientific questions eager for erudition. Why has aesthetics been forgotten within Urban History and Theory? The three lessons/debates suggested by the text are:

1. The reigning pragmatism within design research.
2. The reigning pragmatism within architectural and urban practices.
3. The debate between Urban Theory and History and urban theories and histories.



Fig. 11. CityScope PlayGround: MIT East Campus, Kent Larson and Ariel Noyman (MIT Media Lab)

First, research and development (R&D) investment reached a record of \$1.7 trillion USD globally (UNESCO, 2016). The top 15 countries, or R&D spenders, focus on the business sector. Beauty is appealing, the indiscriminate goal is to sell beautiful computers, beautiful iPhones, beautiful buildings, or even beauty itself as a commodity. But beauty as analytical and critical category is expensive, if not irrelevant, for lucrative goals. In contrast, the European Commission called for a “New European Bauhaus” as a collective effort of “designers, artists, scientists, architects and citizens” to “accelerate the green transformation by combining sustainability and aesthetics” (2021). It evokes the Staatliches Bauhaus (Germany, 1919-1933), whose academic program countered the destruction of World War I through the integration of crafts, fine arts, design, and industry, using the power of machines to serve humanity rather than destroy it. The aesthetic sensibility of this European effort counters the technoscientific and bureaucratic approach of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals proposed by the United Nations.



Second, in the same way that beauty sells iPhones and computers, it also plays an important role in design practice. But can beauty, and ugliness, become analytical categories for designers? Is Rem Koolhaas right when he says that architects can be critical, but architecture cannot be critical? (2022).

Fig. 12 and 13. 425 Park Avenue, OMA, 2012 (OMA)

“The shape is at the same time highly artistic and highly efficient, a diagram of maximum beauty and maximum rentability, combined in a single, Brancusi-like shape. Its geometry at the same time reinforces and escapes the existing city.”
—OMA, Project Description

Third, Manfredo Tafuri's *Theories and History of Architecture* is a paradigmatic example of how Theory and History, with capital T and H, has diminished, if not obliterated, the theories and histories of "other" aesthetic sensibilities—Africa, Asian, or Latin American contents and contexts. Can African, Asian, and Latin American architecture and urbanism provide different critiques to overcome the dichotomy critical/post-critical?

The curious reader might identify more than three lessons after reading the text, while the critical reader might disagree partially or completely with its content. The conformist reader might disregard its amusing ideas to comply with business as usual. This theoretical effort promotes constructive debates based on the theoretical and practical dimensions of aesthetics rather than censorship. Unlike dogmatic critiques, "The artist knows nothing of resentment," as Roland Barthes argued following Nietzsche's steps. Thus, the author and reader might meet in the barely explored territory where aesthetics has been exiled from Urban Theory and History.

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