

On the Falsation of Deceitful Architectures

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How to cite: Miranda, A. 'On the Falsation of Deceitful Architectures.'
Architecture_MPS, 2013, 3(1): 4, pp. 1–15. DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.amps.2013v3i4.001>.

Published: 01 December 2013

Peer Review:

This article has been peer reviewed through the journal's standard Editorial double blind peer review.

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Architecture_MPS is a peer-reviewed open access journal.

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Architecture_media_politics_society. vol. 3, no.4.

December 2013

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Professor Antonio Miranda Regojo-Borges is a polymath; an architectural critic whose knowledge base covers centuries, reaches across disciplines and informs his polemic thoughts. He writes quixotic and “antiquarian” prose - in the style of Wollflin’s principles of art history, Kant’s theories on taste, and William Gilpin’s Eighteenth Century tour journals. In its enumerative tendencies, it is reminiscent of the analytical theorists Edmund Burke, whilst in its examination of architecture in the cultural industry context it reminds us of Theodore Adorno. At times ironic, at times bombastic, and at times mocking, his writing style will alienate as many as it enthuses. He will not care.

This text offers both a critique of modern culture and an outline model for architectural criticism. Rooted in the most radical beliefs of a Twentieth Century Modernism, that for many seems moribund today, it argues that the pillars upon which the modern utopian vision was constructed remain essential – perhaps more essential than ever today. In the media obsessed, consumerist context of the present, and in the aftermath of the latest economic collapse to befall the world economy, it argues for an architecture of “the essential” – a functional and poetic architecture of the anti-spectacle.

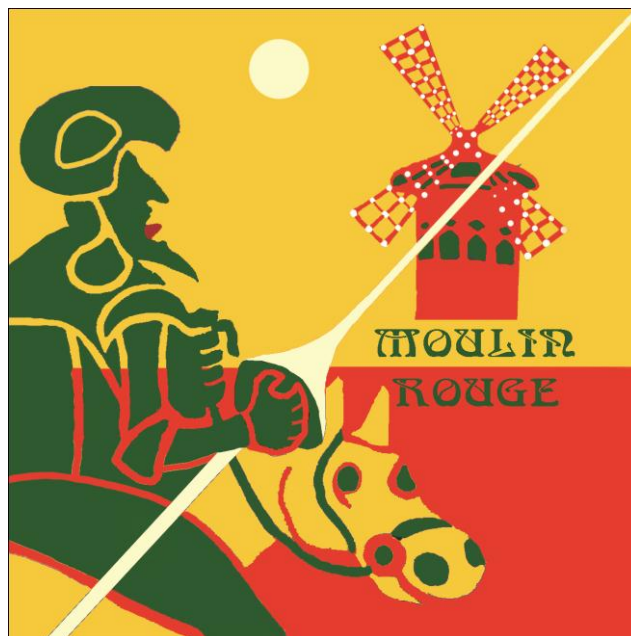
Antonio Miranda is the author of 15 books amongst which we can list, to name but a few: *Antología de arquitectura moderna 1900-1990*; *Ni robot ni bufón: manual para la crítica de arquitectura*; *Horizonte cerrado*; *Columnas para la resistencia - variaciones sobre ciudad, arquitectura y subcultura*; and *A todos los becarios de la reina - ocho ensayos de estética civil*. He has spent a career of over 40 years writing some of the most ardent and focused architectural criticism in the Spanish language. Based on the idea of “falsation”, as developed by Karl Popper, it comes close to being a manifesto for criticism. It offers guidelines for rooting out “bad” architecture – a series of pointers to be used in judging the work of an architect. These pointers, he suggests, will not produce “great” buildings, but may be useful in the “identification” of architecture that does not conform to “minimum standards of function and rationalism”. For some it will be rigid, prescriptive, dogmatic and impractical. It is certainly satirical, ruthless and uncompromising. *On the “Falsation” of Deceitful Architectures*, as the title suggests, is no ordinary architectural text.

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Moulin Rouge. Painting. Antonio Miranda Regojo-Borges

“The truth shall set you free...

...and the face of the Earth shall be renewed”.

- John 8:32. 1st Century.

“Et Renovabis Faciem Terrae”

- Rabanus Maurus. 9th Century.¹

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INTRODUCTION

At one of the examinations I had to pass before becoming a university professor, a member of the panel asked me, in a tone half-ironic, half-inquisitorial: “Then you believe there is good architecture and bad architecture, and you can tell the difference?” I have often repented the cowardice of my reply. Instead of saying “Yes, sir, and I can assure you, with all respect, that your works, precisely, are not the best,” I chose to escape into ambiguous byways. Once the examination was over I felt like St. Peter after his denial of Christ and since then I have devoted a good part of my time to self-redemption by writing works of architectural criticism.

Before continuing, and in honor of that member of my jury, I should say that not all bad architecture is bad in every way. The quality of a work is defined by its weakest, its worst part, as Marx said, paraphrasing Reid, about the strength of a chain.³ But bad architecture, thanks to its successful mendacity, has the inestimable and paradoxical virtue of helping us to identify good architecture, which is rare and true. That is the beauty of the bad. The beast in the bad is its extraordinary abundance.

My remarks here are directed to both teachers and the general public, to those for whom learning is important but for whom unlearning - Socratic irony - is even more so. In this sense, leaving behind our acquired baggage is an essential act of cleansing that is necessary if we are to better identify false architecture and challenge the myths and false “works of art.” Liberating architecture from the confines of its artistic halo should be one of the first functions of collective critical thought.

The scope of a work of criticism is as ample as that of the work it proposes to examine. It is enough to note that a good many of the best works of modern architecture were neither made by architects, nor born of any artistic pretension, nor have they entered the ken of the *acritical* editorial world. This is the case

for much of the excellent industrial architecture we find around the world.⁴ Despite all the risks it involves then, it seems necessary for the sake of the discipline itself to establish a paternalistic, even dogmatic, barrier (as Stravinsky would demand) of intolerance – and intolerance to the barrage of saccharine trash thrown up by the communications media against which, the most *acritical* part of the population, is defenseless.⁵ Sending noxious and banal messages through its media, today's economic system elevates as 'works of art' the most pernicious examples of architecture. In these messages, and in the works themselves, the visual treacle, the structural incoherence, the cultural falsification, the bombast, the 'originality' of novel design, the cosmetics of bad taste, the sterile caprice, the irrational construction, the commercial rationalism and official imbecility, all pass as contraband - shamelessly but successfully - under the name of something rare: the historical logic of form, or architecture.

THE MOTIVES FOR THE DEFENSE

In this state of affairs we may risk the hazards of dogmatic criticism - if the two words do not constitute a contradiction. The boldness of the battle ensign and the belligerent didactic action well merit the trouble, not so much to facilitate the maximum in profound criticism as to proclaim the essential minimum that permits us to expose a counterfeit - to distinguish parsley from hemlock; that is, to detect and denounce an architectural fraud. The process of *falsation* is the litmus that detects the improper - or that which is alien to the truth and sense of a project. Improprieties are both the object and the objective of *falsation*; improprieties in relation to the era, material, place, structure and geometry of the *Self-imposed Previous Order* (SPO) of the project itself.⁶ The non-essential is alien since it is superfluous or useless, while the improper is alien since it is incompatible and prejudicial to the 'essential' structures and systems of the work. The greater part of these fiascos are discernible, especially, through the discussion of sections, plans and elevations - documents that tell us, very clearly, if we are faced with goulash or 'limpid verse.'

Today, when architecture has laid down its arms in the polis, before the gauds and frippery of a free-trade ideology that has reduced a good many fashionable and famous architects to root and wallow in the most facile and vulgar past - when architecture believes it has lost its utopian possibilities for direct action - it is necessary to take two steps back before advancing.⁷ In countries historically deprived of Renaissance, Reform or Revolution, it is at least ridiculous to take for granted the subjugation of a fragile modernity. A light varnish of actuality does not permit the illusion that the old contradictions (society/state, humanism/collectivism, ethics/aesthetics, beauty/taste, theory/ideology, poetic/style, suburb/city) have been confronted, much less resolved, in many regions or many minds. On the other hand, a cryptofascism - watchdog of the present anarcholiberalism - extends its power behind the empty mask of a postmodern or anti-modern formalism that bewitches the consumer with a spectacle of masses inscribed with the worst sort of architecture.⁸

Re-establishing criticism, i.e., the teaching of architecture, with a new life - more human and dignified - demands that we denounce the frauds. To do that, however, we must be able to locate and exalt the collective and enduring positive and aristocratic values - those that concern the struggle for the dignity of **all** our kind.⁹ These values could be: reason, liberty, utopia, justice, peace, humanism, cosmopolitanism, fraternity, progress, optimism, inconformity, beauty, rebellion, truth, love, imagination, life, simplicity, dialectic, austerity, happiness, generosity, coherence. While not topical, they are no less necessary for the entelechy or substance of architecture and of the city.¹⁰

The unification of such a number of attributes in a single discipline can only be achieved through study and an arduous, dry, rough and elusive architectonic poetry. This ordered and materialized synthesis of clear and complex ideas for the creation of artificial beauty, intellectual emotion and geographic and

urban fitness.

This yearning has precedents in other poetics. Paul Valery and Pedro Salinas concur. Literary poetry, the paradigm of the poetic, shows itself to us as an obligatory reference, since it is an anticipatory cultural activity of a universal nature that compresses, demiurgically, and with the fewest words possible - the greatest quantity of desires of all humanity.

- "All that endures is the work of the poets." (F. Holderlin) ¹¹

- "Through my mouth speak the multitudes (W. Whitman). ¹²

- "We know that in us many men breathe" (G. Apollinaire). ¹³

In addition, Auguste Perret defines the architect as the poet who thinks in terms of construction.

The poetics, or manner of creating, of the Modern Movement, although still green, should be able to mature, like a fruit - like any living being - without putrefying. And putrefaction is indeed the term for the post-modernism that ravaged the 1980s with the flatulent corruption, the purplish kitsch, of Johnson, Graves, Jencks, Bofill, Krier, Portoghesi, Stern, Tusquets, Venturi, etc. The empty colonialistic trash produced during this period was sponsored and protected by the financial mechanisms of the real estate market, the ideological mechanisms of the military-industrial complex, the parasitic nonculture of the jet set, facile plebeian taste, ambient *acriticism* and mental indolence. The critical moratorium – the sleeping of reason – incubated and incubates the serpent's egg under the humid warmth of a bland and tolerant relativism whose cynical slogan was, and is, "anything that makes money is worthwhile."

PRIMARY NORMS FOR SURVIVAL

What Ruskin said in the *Stones of Venice* should inspire obsession, at least among the studious. Ruskin wrote that "independent of style, era or nationality...there should be a law that allows us to distinguish good architecture from bad, because to evaluate without having supporting principles is worse than accepting a dubious coin without trying its ring."¹⁴

We are far from having found that universal law. But, tentatively, we can define some principles that allow us to undertake the necessary and urgent task of discrimination.

Except when they offer exceptional compensations, we should not take as authentic works or projects those which, being pretentious:

a) Suffer internal contradictions in geometric, mechanical, spatial and constructive elements, or incongruities between them, such as using or maintaining the same forms when structures or functions vary. *See: So many pseudo-symmetrical buildings or those symmetrical in elevation but not in plan. See also: the House for His Mother, by R. Venturi.*¹⁵

b) Fail to obtain a character that respects an Actualized Type; in other words, the image of verisimilitude, which, faithfully derived from the exigencies of the work itself, permits the general public to grasp

"intemporally" the purposes of the building. Most of the best "poems" have been written in languages of public and common discourse, not in "original" or unrecognizable languages. *See: the Pregassona House by M. Botta.*¹⁶

c) Lose contact with the advances of contemporary culture, science and technology, because of artisanal or slothful anachronism, indulgent woolgathering reveries, novel and puerile adventurism, servile mimicry, academicism, or any other reason. *See: Our Lady of Ronchamp. Le Corbusier.*¹⁷

d) Violate any intelligent relationship with their space-time, geography, orientation, urban landscape, or other physical requirements of the medium - whether that be the result of their exotic or sophisticated technology, their extravagant contrasts, their chaste or genre repetition, their lack of urban justification, the confusion of project with design, their reduction of exterior spaces to residual areas for the sake of barren bulk, or for any other reason. *See: The metal pillars of Mies; cruciforms, clad, or rammed into wet ground. See also: The Guggenheim Museum in New York. Frank Lloyd Wright.*¹⁸

e) Do not achieve the synergetic simultaneity of scales and proportions among; interior and exterior elements; among public and private spaces and volumes; among individual and collective anthropometry; or between the totality and the unity of their parts - thus preventing unity from being something more than the sum of parts. *See: The Faculty of History building, Cambridge University by James Stirling.*¹⁹

f) Display extreme confusion and complications due to *projectural* failures in annexes, juxtapositions, protuberances or ectopias; display a mixture of different geometries; speak different languages or styles - due to the incapacity of the author, the arrogance of the client or some other reason - and thus impede the complexity and richness that is born of the poetic work of simplicity. *See: The Kimbell Museum by Louis Kahn.*²⁰

g) Exhibit pretentious formalisms and features that are showy, decorative, surrealistic, picturesque, bland, rouged, cosmetic, complacent, or in any way superfluous or foreign to the 'true and proper internal justifications of form, material and size'. These superficial esthetics, always counterfeit, are the slaves of a facile fawning taste. They are the wayward props of the emotion - and the worthless mendacity - of applause. *See: The edgings, moldings, festoons and framings of 'modernism', and 'deco', in the crepuscular 'postmodern' work of the late, previously great modern master, James Stirling, in Berlin.*²¹

h) Constrict the liberty, dignity and greatness proper to the activities, functions, needs and uses of any human being - through a mean and anti-economic spatial-temporal avarice, miserable utilitarian rationalism, comfortable commercialism, contrived disorder, authoritarian monumentalism, or any other device. *See: Any postmodern work as an example of this and all previous epigraphies.*

Still more schematically, it could be said that the two principal filters for *falsation* could be those that lay bare:

1) The lies or falsities in the geometric totality, whose dialectic and complex unity reflect the foundations of technique+finality+morphology.

2) The inconsequentialities in the internal structure - or poetic germ - in relation to itself or to discrete essentials - be these spatial, constructive, historical, representative, functional, social, geographic,

cultural, environmental, luminous...

In short, *falsation* will lay bare incoherencies, pseudomorphisms, diseconomies and any other result not proper to the profound and necessary animus of the work. It is most easily done through even elementary discussions of sections, plans and elevations which clearly expose the frequent betrayals of the Self-imposed Previous Order, present in the very germ of the project. If this SPO itself was not very suitable at the outset, *falsation* must and will lay bare these evil augments too.

To all of this, we may choose to add that the process of *falsation* can also be assisted by the revelation of:

Exaggerations in measures and scales; geometric discords in the layout; violations of an active dynamic unity, i.e., submission to a monolithic and uniform false unity; the spatial-temporal poverty or simplicity; the presence of any unjustifiable element; useless additions; the surrender of architecture into the hands of technology alone; failures of image, silhouette, urban volume, and typology... all this visible in the contradictions between sections, plans and elevations.

In concluding our enumeration of some possible rules for *falsation* – or criticism – we should add one final point of warning. Certain issues should not be considered useful for the criticism of architecture. Amongst these we can list such issues as: a) size, b) material, c) typology and its primary function, d) enunciation of the obvious, e) “style” and influences of, or analogies with, other works and authors. The criteria required for effective for *falsation* includes however: a) the scale and proportion, b) the form and techniques proper to the materials used, c) the character, efficacy and pertinence of the typology, d) the essential structure, vital and profound, of the object, and e) the underlying technique through which architecture becomes itself and perseveres in its identity.

FROM NEGATIVE CRITICISM TO AN “AID” FOR JUDGEMENT

The instruments for basic and primary *falsation* of projects and works could become simply a machine - a detector of lies, frauds, incongruities, mystifications, ideologies, disciplinary complicities and disharmonies that obstruct the development of the artificial, ‘ineffable’ and creative architectonic flow.

The mechanisms of negative criticism in such a machine would be simply, but metaphorically described, as the five senses:

- **Sight**, through which we discover the discords in structure or scale, the tics, spasms and gesticulations that are the result of an acritical and faithless tradition than a true formal structure.
- **Hearing**, through which we locate noises, arbitrary discords, insistent dissonances and misalliances in the symphonic unity.
- **Smell**, through which we distinguish the fantastic, hollow, acritical, accommodating and ideological – the soporific message that falsifies reality.
- **Touch**, through which we detect the ‘arty’, vulgar, sophisticated, plebeian, novel and topical novelties and snares of architectonic fashion.²²
- **Taste** – through which we perceive facile, empty, bland, sentimental,²³ conventional, fawning,

superficial, affected, enchanting, pretty and contemptible honeyed niceness.

In touching on the metaphor of 'taste', we open up another train of thought with regard to falsation. In this context - and perhaps due to aesthetic prejudices - we identify 'taste' with inelegance, with bad taste, with bourgeois taste. To these three facets of taste we can assign any of the following characteristics of plebeian taste: grandiloquence, sheen, mental indolence, concrete literalness, picturesque pictography, sensationalism, technical posturing, 'originality', pre-digestion, superficiality, estheticism, megalomania, ostentation and lavishness. Whilst elegance and good taste are not in themselves values indispensable or specific to beauty, they do define a floor below which everything reeks of kitsch, Belcanticism, religious imagery, Valencian pyrolatry, chinoiserie, folksong, clumsiness, novel effects and Rococo Fascism.²⁴ Elegance is, for us, austerity and distance: The austerity of the Nihil nimis - nothing in excess - of Solon.

This was, of course, a battle cry for some of the Modern Movement in the last century. The material progress accumulated during that century was greater than that of the twenty preceding centuries, but this did not change, nullify or overcome, in similar proportion, negative relations between human beings or between humans and nature. Two world wars offer sufficient proof. Even so, the Modern Movement, interrupted by historical pessimism and fear, is still the point of departure for the architecture of the 21st century. In a masterful piece of journalistic art, the Spanish cartoonist, El Roto announced in 2000 his ironic and dramatic conclusion: "The century has turned out bad, we will have to do it over."²⁵

In doing it over again, we may well do well to consider Tao, Schopenhauer and Thomas Mann, according to whom, we should accept that, in the future, in an intermediate location between the good and the bad, we may find the adequate. Adequate architecture is that which the process of *falsation* establishes as the least that is to be expected. In establishing the least to be expected, we have to distinguish between two extreme types of buildings in any global analysis. The first type - difficult and rough - helps us to think, to know and doubt; to live and work collectively; to better understand the universe; to make intelligence emotional and, as Luther said of music; to refresh the soul; stimulate critical thought and dignify human beings because it illuminates the conscience and transcends mere building. The other - fashioned by the automatic pilot of facile success and cerebral laziness, or conceived by the ideological mentality - stupefies, brutalizes or addles. It facilitates forgetfulness and seeks fantasy. Through mercantilism, it urges immediate affection for the vulgarity and the 'originality' of a saccharine niceness that oscillates between shabby gentility and avarice. In the best, or worst, of cases it is adorned with the snobbish and the lack of internal nobility.

The first type of building is imaginative and creative. In the terminology of Stephen Vizinczey, we can compare it with astronomy.²⁶ The second type, however, does not rise above superstitious astrology and fantasy typical of magazines in the waiting room of the beautician. The distinction we are establishing can be censured as 'rigid' and 'simplistic', but as they say in philosophy - "that which does not distinguish, confuses." So, although sinning in redundancy, and under the impulse of a communicable rationality, we can insist that architecture, to merit the name, must pass certain tests of veracity - tests relevant to:

- Structural authenticity: Constructive, formal, functional and, in sum, geometric structural rationality as a guarantee of strength, potency and non-evident formal capacity.
- Multiple and simultaneous adequacy and accommodation: Appropriate relations between means/ends, parts/whole, messages/languages; pretext/context/text (program/space-time/building), as a guarantee of clarity and quality.
- Coherence: Relationships between form, material, function, situation, time, measure and meaning, as a

guarantee, if not of beauty, at least of elegance.

- Critical utopianism: Evidence of the struggle against inertial dogmas, the quest for money, and any other cause of human suffering, as an ethical guarantee in defense of the dignity of any person.

In short, and paraphrasing Novalis and Theodore Adorno, we could say there is more architecture inasmuch as there is more truth.²⁷

It is our argument that splendor is born of authenticity - of truth. History is full of others who have stated the same thing. In that case, why seek further justification for our work? Vitruvius gave as the attributes of architecture, firmness, commodity and delight - and in much of the 20th century the three were considered inseparable. Buddha too equated truth with utility; Croce equated ethics and aesthetics; Keats wrote that beauty is truth, truth beauty; Socrates said truth, beauty and goodness enjoy an indivisible identity; and for St. Thomas Aquinas, beauty demanded integral unity and internal concordance, that is, structural truth and internal coherence in the total ordering of form. We even find it in Plato - the philosopher who wrote that beauty is unblemished clarity or, more than clarity, resplendence, and that this resplendence - since it cannot be otherwise - is precisely the splendor born of authenticity, of truth.

Despite the clarity of these arguments, it is a commonplace that architects are generally unable to make an historical and cultural criticism that considers the socio-economic context of architecture. Even more notorious is the difficulty found among art historians, theoreticians of the aesthetic, and non-architectural critics in general, in recognizing good architecture, or even to apply simple and communicable structural models, or plain good taste, in selecting works that are worth discussing. No clearer example of this can be found than the fact that two critics of such renown and merit as Rubert de Ventos and Manfredo Tafuri, were bedazzled by the less laudable, but more commercial and sumptuous works, of Boffill and Rudolph respectively. In such circumstances, what remains for architectural criticism? It is neither desired nor remunerated by a society that needs it - like it needs air.

I have already mentioned that this presentation does not aspire to be an instrument of criticism. It is, rather, an invitation, an aid - and an instrument of *falsation* that we should consider as preceding, but inherent in, all criticism. Without criticism, arts and architectures expire at the hands of fashion and 'arty crafts'. Without selective criticism, only two perverse possibilities exist:

- a) A closed world; obscure, academic, exhausting and fearful of any opening to change - because surely change could be even worse.
- b) An open world; brilliant and blinding rather than illuminating, confusing rather than clarifying - through whose doors the pigs enter with the ham, and through whose windows the flies come in with the air.

Criticism nurtures the "becoming" of the arts. It generates new knowledge which, advancing, is renewed and remains. It is, then, not absolute but dialectic; it is dynamics in recess; a cinematic and historical interruption; a parenthesis for considering. In the presence of receptors that change, it is something that, in a moment, will also change. In addition, as professionals know, all valuable architecture is, in its project, criticism condensed. However, it must be remembered that the criticism of architecture is not the criticism of art. We do not accept architecture as one of the fine arts - although its etymology tells us it is super-engineering, poetic science, which can become art. Great architecture does not seek beauty but finds it, like treasure, if it has reached a high level of truth.

In our work, truth must be autotelic to architecture if it is to be measured in its root. A truth that finds its

frame of reference in horrendous external conditions - the client, land use, social system, etc. - can be a truth as frightful as it is useless, to objective *falsation*. The example of the tower made by the mechanical addition of floors, *ad nauseam*, ground to sky, tells us a truth regarding the speculator-promoter, or the lenity of the authorities, or the resignation of the acritical user. But these truths should not hide the autotelic farce inherent to such an inferior object.

Truth is essential, but not the only factor to consider. In times of such proteinic images - complicated and superimposed - a pure and authentic discourse, a dogmatic discourse proper of the Modern Movement, could be valid as a guide to adequate architecture, correct and acceptable. However, it would become a constraining guide to good architecture - rich, complete, intense - an architecture which, having adopted norms and molds, proceeds to transcend them. For this reason, we repeat, the present exposition should be taken as no more than a humble guide for the *falsation* of bad architecture, where the objective character of the adequate is as possible, feasible and trustworthy as it is in numismatics.

There was a time when false buildings did not deceive; they collapsed. Today we always have at hand a 'consultation process' that is capable of keeping erect the most stupid, mendacious and inconsistent buildings imaginable. This collective cretinization, effected through the communications media for the purpose of maintaining status, was reinforced with the spectacular architecture of the last years of the 1980s, abject and parafascist, but received by the media as a 'work of art in the postmodern style.' As a result, I repeat once more then - perhaps only in abeyance to the ethics of survival - that these observations are necessary.

The true critic of architecture, and *falsation* even more, are censured and fought by the media of mass indoctrination because they, even more than the critic of art, are seen - and with some reason - to be attacking Power. This is one of the fundamental roles of the critic in today's context. Our 'guide' will help us do it by helping root out the 'architecture' it produces. It will help ensure we reach the datum of the adequate. A pretty world is not possible, perhaps, but a less offensive world is necessary and urgent.

Prophetically, Thomas Mann told us in 1937 that "truth and beauty have to maintain a reciprocal relationship, since taken by themselves, and without the support that each finds in the other, they never become more than very unstable values."

A BREVIARY OF *FALSATION* FOR URGENT CRITICISM ²⁸

In times of crisis we should multiply criticism. But theory is not enough; experience is necessary.²⁹ Given the time it requires, profound critical study is rare. But in cases where time is short and need presses, there are still a series of datum available to us that will aid us in our task. When two of these occur simultaneously, we normally have sufficient evidence to disqualify a work as inferior or phony architecture - mendacity and imposture, always united with sensationalism and intellectual vacuity, are the most efficacious adversaries of architecture. The 'touchstone,' the instrument of *falsation*, has to be designed to detect and expose them. This urgent criticism does not permit subtleties, but perhaps by excluding inferior or mediocre works it enables us to isolate those which, thanks to their quality, can be identified as authentic architecture.³⁰

Although systematic criticism, and especially poetic criticism, demands a notable accumulation of architectonic knowledge, we can speak, as in medicine, of a kind of first-aid criticism - rapid and urgent - that can be made available to all citizens of generous heart. Here we have, as in a primer, a series of symptoms, any one of which is sufficient to tell us, with some small risk of being mistaken, that we stand before an architectural fraud. Certainty, as we have said before, is provided by the syndrome, or the

coincidence, of several of symptoms that we collate here as *short formulas for the falsation of a work or project*.

According to these formulas, architecture will probably be fraudulent if it:

- Contains more than one geometry or internal order in its layout or generating lines.
- Displays to the viewer five or more different materials in one of its facets.
- Contains two or more types of roofing, which, if tile, are set in heterogeneous inclinations.

This often occurs in works that are small but very gesticulatory, with fractured volumes that make them appear smaller still – they show lines of section or limits in odd places, unexpectedly, which makes one ask: Why here and not there or further on?

- Has arbitrary changes of material in zones where plan, form or volume remain unchanged.
- Contains changes of structure where function or form and size remain identical.
- Maintains form and size, while function changes substantially.
- Develops imbalances and anomalies - always valuable - with the disjointed obscurity proper to *projectural* impotence.
- Has an anecdotal character that causes great enthusiasm at first sight among the plebeian consumers who so love the brilliant trumpery of ornament.
- Cloys when seen time and again.
- Appears directly and obviously as the allegorical badge of morality, politics, etc.
- Contains a cacophony of volumes, forms and juxtaposed decorations in an attempt to mask *projectural* impotence.
- Is mute in its statistical singsong, indefinite and banal.

Such muteness is abetted by zany, routine or thoughtless solutions. ³¹

- Displays bays in the façade as if it were a showcase or repertory, or, on the contrary, maintains the 'Baroque' composition of identical bays for disparate spaces and functions.
- Presents evident signs of pretentiousness, lushness or prodigality.

The dissipation of ostentatious materials is a clear sign of intellectual and ethical bankruptcy, the other face of which is economic misery.

- Combines classical techniques with modern forms, old forms with anachronistic techniques, etc.

Typical examples would be buildings with high-tech façades but covered with tiles.

- Has irreparable functional errors.

An example would be a home for the elderly that uses a cloister or patio, occluded in the volume of the building, as an open-air zone.

Even more concretely, we can add that the symptoms of fraud are more reliable still in the measure that the work or project:

- Contains stair landings that are narrower than the length of the tread; in other words, the width of the landing is less than the width of the staircase.
- Has some of its stairs opening directly on a passage of normal width. Stairs that take an L form in plan, cornered or not, usually indicate irreparable deficiencies in the project.
- Contains a profusion of header joists, no matter how hidden. The case is especially serious when there are steel girders beneath or next to the ground, under the bottom slab.
- Presents some bearing wall and partitions situated outside the lines of force or supported by beams or the mid-section of a slab that is, at the same time, the ceiling of a floor below.
- Shows, like the preceding item, interrupted pillars that rest on beams which in turn span a lower floor.
- Has façades made of massive materials, like stone or brick, that are interrupted in the lower floors, where only refined and empathic pillars of steel appear.
- Is conceived for latitudes below 40 degrees and has curtain-glass walls on façades facing west or northwest.
- Converts the negative space around the constructed area - the un-built part of the plot or the exterior zones around the building - in a muddle of piecemeal, vacant, irregular and residual spaces (useless

used for locating ‘green areas’). In sum, when its intervention clearly damages the environs.

- Abounds with mechanical juxtapositions or masses stuck on with more adherences than integrations in its organization of volumes; or its spatial organization abounds with ‘posterior’ mutilations - introduced parasitically - to previous spaces that were capable and worthy.
- Has dimensional errors in that, for example, the passages for heavier flows are narrower than those for lighter flows, or the larger spaces in the plan have a height that is less than, or equal to, that of many other smaller spaces.
- Has a high inner section that is monotonous and statistically equal throughout, with no variations whatsoever in response to use, form, extension of spaces or the number of floors.

The list enumerated here could be longer. But even with the little data this list collects, the sagacity of the critic can smell out the fiasco of *pseudomorphosis* and the mendacity of an architectural project. At times the giddy coexistence of encased arches and lintels; the profusion of bevells, moldings and frames; and the rigorous symmetry in aluminum façades, is sufficient to expose duplicity. And as for an office building with a façade of serried flying balconies; a day-care center with façades of ashlar; a building whose tile roof has four slopes and whose windows are *en longueur* - these are aberrations we stomach daily. For that reason we do not even notice them. If we add to this, the consideration that the immense majority of what is called ‘successful architecture’ has a false phantasmagoric life... are we not, unaware, lashed to more than a few of these architectural cadavers – in the cruelest of Chinese tortures?

In any event, it is best to be informed.

¹ Rabanus Maurus Magentius: (c. 780 – 4 February 856), Frankish Benedictine monk, theologian, archbishop of Mainz, Germany. Author of the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* (Come Creator Spirit), which is normally sung in Gregorian Chant as an invocation of the Holy Spirit in the liturgical celebration of the feast of Pentecost in the Roman Catholic Church. The hymn is accompanied by the phrase “Et Renovabis Faciem Terrae” (And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth). See: Charles S. Nutter & Wilbur F. Tillet, *The Hymns and Hymn Writers of The Church* (Smith & Lamar, 1911), p.108; Reverend Ivan D. Aquilina, *The Eucharistic Understanding of John Cosin and his Contribution to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer*. Thesis in the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Leeds, March, 2002. p.6.

² Karl Popper used the term "Falsation" (sic) with the meaning “to prove something wrong, by devising a set of conditions under which stated meaning is unmasked.” Karl Popper, *The logic of scientific discovery* (London & NY: Routledge, 1999).

³ "In every chain of reasoning, the evidence of the last conclusion can be no greater than that of the weakest link of this chain, whatever may be the strength of the rest." Thomas Reid, “Of Reasoning, and of Demonstration” in volume II of *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1786), p.377.

⁴In the light of this fact we could propose that one is not so much an architect because one is able to build, as because one is able to distinguish and discover architecture, wherever it may be.

⁵ Reference here is made to the revolutionary demands made upon its audience of, in particular, “The Rite of Spring”. For background, see, amongst others: Peter Hill, *Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring* (Cambridge: Cambridge Music Handbooks, 2000).

⁶ The SPO refers to the need of an architectural design project to be, at all times, coherent and consistent with its objectives. The ‘order’ is thus pre-imposed by the nature or functionality of the Project itself. The idea was developed in: Antonio Miranda, *Ni Robot, Ni Bufón - manual para la crítica de arquitectura*. (Valencia: Universitat de València, 1999).

⁷ We should understand the difficulty of working in a construction medium, which is barely cleaner than trafficking in drugs or weapons. So we speak here of harrying and denouncing not phony architects but rather mendacious works of architecture.

⁸ For Miranda’s works, see: *A todos los becarios de la reina: ocho ensayos de estética civil* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2011); *Antología de arquitectura moderna: 1900-1990* (Madrid: Brizzolis, 1992); *Behind del Espejo, Traducción y prologue* Elga Perez-Laborde (Montevideo, Uruguay: Embrace Publisher, 2008); *Blue Farthest* (Brazil: Thesaurus, 2008); *Ciencia da informacao - teoria e metodologia de uma area em*

expansão (Brazil: Thesaurus, 2003); *Columnas para la resistencia variaciones sobre ciudad, arquitectura y subcultura* (Madrid: Mairea Libros, 2008); *Horizonte cerrado* (Brazil: Thesaurus, 2002); *Ni robot ni bufón: manual para la crítica de arquitectura* (Valencia: Universitat de València, 1999); *Relógio, não marque as horas : crônica de uma estada em Porto Rico* (Brazil: Asefe, 1996); *Scream interrupted* (Brazil: Silver Lining Edition, 2008); *Tu país esta feliz* (Brazil: Thesaurus, 2001); *Un cánon de arquitectura moderna, 1900-2000* (Madrid : Cátedra, 2005); *Vine of Lejos* (Caracas: Editorial El Perro y la Rana, 2009); *Walter Gropius: del modernismo a la modernidad : un viaje de estudios* (Sevilla : Arquitectos de Cádiz, 2000).

⁹ A democracy, within which a single person must suffer physically for the frequent condition of having been born in poverty, does not to us deserve the name of democracy. We cannot forget that, today, under the "democratic" pretext/disguise, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the ultraliberal market, etc., exercise a brutal and inhuman dictatorship on more than half the population of the earth.

¹⁰ Entelechy—the condition of a thing whose essence is fully realized; actuality as opposed to potentiality. This concept is put forward by Aristotle in *Nichomachean Ethics*, Book I, Sec. 1. Connected with Aristotle's distinction between matter and form—the potential and the actual. Matter is not quite a real thing without form, essence, or function to make it complete and whole. The two things—matter and form—are never separated from each other; they can only be identified as being matter or form.

¹¹ "[...] and poets establish that which endures" Friedrich Holderlin, "Remembrance," in *The Course of Remembrance and Other Essays on Holderlin* (*Studies in Kant and German Idealism*), Dieter Henrich (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997)

¹² "Through my mouth speak the multitudes." Walt Whitman, "Song Of Myself." Published in Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005).

¹³ "We know that in us many men breathe." Guillaume Apollinaire. *The Cubist Painters*, trans. Peter Read (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

¹⁴ John Ruskin, *Stones of Venice* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003).

¹⁵ R. Venturi, *The Vanna Venturi House*, Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, PA, 1964.

¹⁶ M. Botta, Sampietro House, Pregassona, Switzerland, 1979.

¹⁷ Le Corbusier. Chapelle Notre-Dame-du-Haut, Ronchamp, France, 1954.

¹⁸ Both buildings are dealt with in numerous publications including: Miranda, Antonio, *Antología de arquitectura moderna, 1900-1990* (Madrid: Brizzolis, 1992).

¹⁹ The design of the History Faculty building was the subject of an architectural competition in 1963 won by James Stirling. After the competition, part of the original site became unavailable. As a result, the orientation of the building was twisted by 90 degrees to fit the land available. In form and plan, it remained similar to the original conception. It was completed in 1968 and awarded a Royal Institute of British Architects Gold Medal in 1970. It is listed by English Heritage. It is included in various books about James Stirling and is dealt with in: Antonio Miranda, *Antología de arquitectura moderna: 1900-1990*. Ibid.

²⁰ One of Louis Kahn's most significant buildings, The Kimbell Art Museum was the result of a design competition in 1966 and was opened in 1972. It has been extensively documented, including in: Antonio Miranda, *Antología de arquitectura moderna, 1900-1990*. Ibid.

²¹ The work of Stirling in the 1970s (including the Faculty of History building in Cambridge and Engineering Building at the University of Leicester) were manifestations of late modernism. The shift in his work in the 1980s is well documented and noted in numerous publications, including: Miranda, Antonio. *Antología de arquitectura moderna, 1900-1990*. Ibid.

²² Like all the deficiencies cited, fashion is nothing more than another policy in the service of Power; the super-concentrated economic power that survives on our blindness in the face of injustice and the sacking of the poor countries. Fredinando Galiani defined it as the "weakness of the human mind". See: Galiani, *On Money: A Translation of Della Moneta*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

²³ Sentimentality appears to contain, not special virtues, but much danger. The antidote for cynicism is not ingenuous and vicious sentimentality but an ethical-critical posture sufficient to confront collective morality, a morality, for the most part, defined by esthetes, militarists and merchants.

²⁴ Belcantism—adapted from the term "Bel canto" (also known "bellezze del canto" or "bell'arte del canto"). It is an Italian operatic term with various interpretations. See: James Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Valencian pyrolatry, literally translated from the Spanish, means the practice of fire worship. The ancient practice of pagan origin continues in a modern "entertainment form" in La Festa de Les Falles de Valencia (the Valencian 'Night of Fire' Festival), held in Valencia, Spain, 19th of March annually.

²⁵ Andres Rabajo, Cartoon Series title: "El Roto" (The Broken). *El Pais* newspaper, Madrid, Spain.

²⁶ Stephen Vizinczey—Author, born, Hungary, 1933. Moved to Canada after taking part in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 where he worked as an author and journalist. In 1965, he self-published the bestselling book, *In Praise of Older Women*. In 1988, he published *Truth and Lies in Literature: Essays and Reviews*, University of Chicago Press. In it he argues that "There are two basic kinds of literature, one helps you to understand, the other helps you to forget; one helps you to be a free person and a free citizen, the other helps people to manipulate you. One is like astronomy, the other is like astrology."

²⁷ Novalis—the pseudonym of Friedrich Von Hardenberg (1722-1801), Germany. He was a poet and philosopher who combined the two disciplines in his writings, together with his knowledge of science. A typically cited example of this is his novel, *Henrich Von Ofterdingen*. See: Wood, D. "Afterword on Novalis," in *The Philosophical Forum*, (January 2002), 33 (3), pp.359-364. Also, knowledgeable of law, philosophy, politics and political economy, he believed in the need to 'educate' and thus clarity and scientific truth.

²⁸ A *breviary* is a liturgical book of the Latin liturgical rites of the Catholic Church. It contains all aspects of the public worship (such as psalms, hymns, chants and prayers) practiced within the Catholic Church. From Latin *brevis*, 'short' or 'concise', it can also be defined as 'abridgement' or 'summary'.

²⁹ An educated eye in criticism is of lightning efficiency. The north European shipbuilders say that "what is good to the eye is good for the sea." With this they remind us of the sagacious empathy proper to the critical habit of looking, seeing and thinking.

³⁰ Urgency cannot be a pretext for hasty and mesocratic judgment. Between two contrasting options, excluding both is often better than a mishmash of the mediocre. Example: In films and television, how are we to choose between, or reconcile the rude and salacious speech of some works and the righteous, puritanical and violent "patriotic" groups opposed to them and which, with reason, accuse them of filth?

³¹ The whisper, says Roland Barthes, is the sound of what functions well. The serenity of the whisper does not imply death, uniformity, silence or entropy, simplicity, or candour. “Zaniness” is a vice of the complicated, confused and gesticulatory. Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

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