

WEEK 11-LABOR

ARCH-572, ARCHITECTURE THEORY AND CRITICISM

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Pier Vittorio Aureli, in his essay "Form and labor: Toward a history of abstraction in architecture", writes that Abstraction is a process that is interpreted as the reduction of essential elements from its totality of its simple parts(104). Le Corbusier's 'Modern Architecture' for example, was "reduced to its function, i.e., to its use-value"(105). Aureli writes that "abstract essence of labor lies not only in the process through which labor becomes a commodity, but also in the very nature of human labor itself"(106). Karl Marx, in his essay "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844", says that man is an animal who is devoid of specialised instincts, hence has to constantly produce its environment. Hence labor power is just an "aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in the physical form, the living personality, of a human being"(106). Albert Kahn's Ford Motor Company Plant in Highland Park, Michigan built in 1909 is an example of factory architecture reduced to its most purest form of functionality, where architecture was meant only to create a free space where production of labor could be extracted the most, without having think about the quality of human-labor(110). Aureli's belief was that productive labor always implies a public sphere and not merely as a dutiful subjects ready to act under surveillance(113). As Mario Tronti perfectly describes, "labor struggles are an irreplaceable instrument of self-consciousness for capital: without these struggles, capital would not be able to recognise its adversaries and thus it would not acknowledge itself."(Turin:Einuadi, 1966, 289)

Iris Rogoff, in her Journal 'Free', talks about her proposal for developing a free academy, and the reactions she received, where everyone questioned about the returns it needed to produce, and no one asked about the curriculum or the difference between conventional and free academy.(1) He expresses his concern that by political formation and its influence in reorganising education systems into disciplined factories, where knowledge is reduced to calculated results that can be visualised and compared across to its counterparts; where power to think and have opinions is being replaced by formal trainings; are stepping us away from the goal of keeping knowledge as open and free to all (4). Rogoff talks about the relevance of student struggles in present time, arguing that protests in the past 40 years indicates that the current era is of educational reforms, which has "led to the construction of a new political subjectivity, the knowledge worker"(4). It can be understood that when knowledge is not just focused on forming productive labour, but to speculate, examine and experiment, it has the power of going beyond what can be conceptualised in the present time.

To present idea of extending leisure operating within the field of labor, Andreas Reumpfhuber talks about the architecture of 'Fun Palace', which was incepted post-war years. The idea was to rebuilt the economy and change the way of production modes in factories(20). A place where the post-end-of-labour workers is not just buried, but liberated by allowing them to interact with the space and one another. A place for leisure, where spare-time could be spent learning and where one could prepare himself temporarily for a new life(28).Fun Palace was now just an extension of a factory, which is just a modern representation of production, which aims at teaching the Labor for future, an age ruled by automation and cybernetics. "The World is Labour"(32), where everyone is being prepared to work for the upcoming changes in how we work with the fast moving technology. It is saddening how true it is and how I see myself entrapped in the same 'Rat-Wheel', where everybody is running, yet fixed at the same place. No-where to stop, no where to run. We are all educated to be the part of same system, where we can be utilised as efficient and skilled labor, who needs not to be explained, what to do, how to behave. The only way I see for myself is to either be a part of the labor, or just become a capitalist myself exploiting the labor for my own purpose. (Work in an architecture office or open one of my own and hire others to work for me)