

Pandora, Pandora, Pandora

The House for Pandora

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On his flight to Chandigarh, the future capital of the Punjab (1951) Le Corbusier reads Georges Bataille *La Part Maudite* inscribed to him by the author, published a year earlier and read by no more than 40 readers at the time, his reading inspired L.C. to write on p.92:

‘Corbu has been accepted by assholes, and for the other, he is a king. This unselfish practice of painting is unflagging sacrifice, a gift of time, patience, Love expecting no material reward (except for modern merchants). This sowing in the wind is for unknown people. One day, before or after my death they will say thank you. It is too late for so many setbacks in life. No matter: what matters is the key to happiness.’

As my friend Philippe Duboy proposed long ago, this reading inspired the “Open Hand” and the “Poem of the Right Angle” not to mention the exuberant colors of the sun.

This Advanced Studio embraces LC’s understanding that architecture is the practice of a gift above all. Not only in Potlatch sense of North American Indians who were prepared to sacrifice all for the sake of rank and posterity, but as the way to fulfill one’s vocation, one’s love of architecture.

Our site is Alphabet City. Writers, poets, artists and jazz musicians together with drug addicts and homeless made this part of Manhattan an island within. We proposed Pandora House as a place of hedonistic cult. We will develop a new typology to provide a social condenser, not in the Constructivist sense that was still in the shadow of production and utilitarian view of mankind, but in an expanded sense of Bataille’s earlier, pre WWII writings, as in *Vision of Excess*, *The Notion of Expenditure*.

Erasmus in the 16th century translated ‘Vase’ or ‘Jar’ in the Greek text of Hesiod’s *Théogony*, retelling the myth of Pandora, as ‘Box’ thus coining the expression: Pandora Box.

Pandora, (all gifts) she who was fabricated by Hephaestus to furnish mankind with a feminine counterpart was at the same time, with her curiosity a curse. Indeed, in the original myth no sooner she is invited into the household of Prometheus’ brother she opened the cover of the Jar half buried in the earth, and illness and misfortune spread on earth. Only ‘hope’ which was at the bottom of the heap remains inside as Pandora closed the cover again, too soon.

The misogyny in Hesiod's tale is unmistakable. Feminists see it as one more parry in the patriarchy's war against the feminine. Hesiod likely revised an earlier goddess myth, in which the first woman arrived bearing a jar that held not evil, but the feminine mysteries, powers associated with intuition, dream, and prophecy, as well as the unconscious and the fertile unknown. Early fertility goddesses were the matrix from which all life sprang. But in patriarchal pantheons, they were stripped of their fullness and splintered into multiple goddesses with lesser powers. We are interested in the best possible reading of her as the source of all possible gifts.

We will examine a great number of prototypes illustrating a so-called "hedonistic" program, from the Villa of Mysteries in Pompeii to Fun Palace in East London and recent Spa by Frank Gehry in Spain, Peter Zumthor in Switzerland and Steven Holl in Austria (Loisium) and France; In order to invent and shape an unprecedented prototype for the future, engaging all our inalienable gifts; the gift of pain and pleasure, the gift of language, the gift of a rational insight, the gift of color, among many other gifts.

We are inviting artists who live in Alpha Beth City or connected with the 'Gift' issue.

Alphabet City. New York

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