1960s Institution Architecture: Avant-Garde Roots and Function

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Abstract

From the early twentieth century, the avant-garde forms an important cultural and interdisciplinary sub-system with a strong impact on architecture. However, it is only in the sixties that the term ‘avant-garde’ starts describing architects, groups, and material and immaterial productions of the latter – simultaneously associated with and distant from wide cultural avant-garde circles of their time. The sixties mark the period when the term enters into architectural history books and writings of theory and criticism. A disciplinary consciousness of the phenomenon is now manifest along with the term’s appropriation as endogenous architectural quality. A terminological approach to the avant-garde of the sixties provides tools for detecting its patterns of formation and ideological constructions, and for uncovering how these may even shape avant-garde’s understanding up to the present.

Introduction

The origin of the French term ‘avant-garde’ is military. Since the twelfth century it has referred to the ‘foremost part of an army; the vanguard or van.’¹ There are few military theoreticians of classical warfare who have not devoted some words to it in their treatises. Its first use in a non-military context is during the 1820s in France, by Saint-Simon and his disciples.² Social theorist
Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825) elaborated a model of a state-technocratic socialism in which society would be led by the artist, the scientist, and the industrialist. Of these, the artist, the man of imagination, would be the avant-garde. In this first Saint-Simonian phase art was by definition conceived as the avant-garde of society. An artistic avant-garde, which would detach itself from other artistic tendencies of its time, did not hitherto exist. By the 1850s, within twenty years of this coinage in arts and politics, the usage of the term proliferated in other directions as well and spread to the cultural arena, describing writers in particular. In this second phase, the ‘avant-garde’ appeared attached to a subgroup within the arts and literature. Not all writers, not all artists, were ‘avant-garde,’ but only some. This signifies the emergence of our modern understanding and usage of the term. A third phase of the avant-garde is its radical transition from the singular to the plural. In other words, there is a co-existence in time and competition between ‘avant-gardes.’ There are few artists today who do not claim to be or who are not described by art critics as such. The term has become synonymous with artistic movement.

It is widely acknowledged that the avant-garde has been amply explored in the field of art and literature and it is from these two fields that much of its history and many concepts emerge (Poggioli, 1962; Bürger, 1974). The avant-garde is a broader cultural tendency though, shaped by politics, architecture, design, theatre, dance, music, intellectuals, and more. From a historical formation’s perspective, it defines a network of identifiably distinct social groupings based on common cultural attitudes and practices. Yet they differ from modernism, which is a larger category with which the avant-garde only partially coincides, even if both peaked during the interwar period. The distinction between avant-garde and modernism is a fairly recent one, even if authors such as Theodor Adorno and Renato Poggioli used these terms as though they were interchangeable.
While not underestimating the ambivalence that the question ‘what is the avant-garde’ still has in the arts and the literary field today, if it is a historic category or an ongoing project, and if so, what defines this project, a respective straightforward enquiry has not yet amply preoccupied the architectural field. Even so, the 1960s mark a shift. It is in this decade when the term ‘avant-garde’ also begins to describe buildings, architects and their productions, correlating with the study of the reciprocal relation between architecture and the avant-garde. This assertion develops through the mapping of the usage of the term in a corpus of influential pieces of architectural history published during a period that begins with the approximate end of the interwar modern movement in 1932 until today. These books are chosen for offering the widest possible space- and timeframe including the period mentioned above.


The term ‘avant-garde’ first appears in this corpus in 1960. From this year onwards it gradually gains momentum, most frequently describing the so-called Soviet avant-garde and fractions of
the modern movement. The essay elaborates this occurrence, and suggests that it results from the historical inquiry into the modern movement and its interrelation with the avant-garde, as well as from revisiting the so-called Soviet avant-garde. I refer to both as ‘historical avant-garde,’ a term frequently used by Manfredo Tafuri who claimed that the modern movement is the avant-garde architecture par excellence.²²

Even if the avant-garde enters architectural discourse in the 1960s, most of the existing methods and approaches to the architectural avant-garde from the 1960s until today, take the term as given; the avant-garde is commonly understood as those architectures that are ‘avant-garde.’ Rarely is it conceptualized and examined with other research objectives: Patrick Schumacher, for example, elaborates it as a sub-topic in his discourse analysis of the discipline and the evolutionary mechanism of architecture, which he names *autopoiesis* (Schumacher, 2011 and 2012); Michael Hays constructs a theory of ‘Late Avant-Garde’ architecture (Hays, 2010); Hilde Heynen examines which variations of the modern movement are ‘avant-garde’ within other related research objectives (Heynen, 1999); Manfredo Tafuri writes a history of the architectural avant-garde formation and elaborates a concept, but an indirect and fragmentary one (Tafuri, 1980); and Leonardo Benevolo discerns three conceptual categories of the avant-garde, not explicitly elaborated yet clear enough, and relates them to a large span of architectural and urban history (Benevolo, 1960). The relatively limited preoccupation with the architectural avant-garde as a concept, theory or history of formation, makes the term remain a slippery one, and is often used as buzz word.²³

This essay develops an argument about the reasons why the above takes place. It is informed by a second corpus of seminal pieces of architectural theory and criticism, books and articles, in which the term ‘avant-garde’ appears in their title,²⁴ and are published from the year the term
‘avant-garde’ starts describing architecture, 1960, until today. Through these writings this paper detects the reasons that various authors ‘avantgardify’ specific architects, groups, material and immaterial architectural productions.25


My essay argues about the disciplinary role of the ‘avant-garde.’ This is elaborated through analysing the aspects of formation and ideological templates of the avant-gardism of the 1960s as compared to those of the 'historical avant-garde.' It is also examined through the case of the ‘Soviet avant-garde’ architecture, continuously revisited and re-avantgardified from the 1960s until today; more specifically, through its re-avantgardingification within the framework of Deconstructivist architecture in 1988. By drawing attention to the fact that the term becomes used all the more frequently from the 1960s onwards, describing a large number of architectural productions, the article suggests the term’s operational role within the discipline and points at the instrumental nature of the ‘avant-garde.’
It is the methodology of my essay to regard as ‘avant-garde’ the architects, groups, material and immaterial architectural productions that were avantgardified by the authors of my historiographic corpus.\(^{37}\) I refer to the ‘avant-garde,’ within quotes, to indicate a building, work, person, group, movement or tendency that is denominated as such in this corpus. The avant-garde, without quotes, refers to theories and concepts within architecture but also within other fields. While the above supposition sometimes stands separate to what is taken as given in the wide avant-garde discourse, it derives from the standpoint of this essay: the architectural avant-garde is here discussed as a product of architectural discourse, for what it came to stand for architects from the 1960s onwards. This essay does not address what the architectural avant-garde really is, or what it was in the 1960s. It rather shows how it was and still is understood by architects. Which values does it carry, and how does it function ideologically and culturally within the field?

1960s: ‘Avant-garde’ Entrée

In the 1960s a radical transformation of the perception of time takes place within the field of architectural history. For historians of the period, such as Reyner Banham (1960), Peter Collins (1965) and Manfredo Tafuri (1968), the modern movement already belongs to the past, and continuity with interwar modernism is replaced by the acquisition of a certain historical distance. The years from 1960 to 1965 sum up the historical research into what was, for the new generation of architects, the forgotten heroic modernism,\(^{38}\) and the early seventies marks the moment when it is also pronounced ‘officially’ dead. Charles Jencks, the main spokesman for postmodern architecture, dates modern architecture's symbolic demise on July 15, 1972.\(^{39}\) During the 1960s, the modern movement is thus relegated to history as a theme for reflection
and becomes a subject of intense discourse. This is followed by excitement, by the imitation of its formal vocabulary, by continuing its idea of technological advancement and social and urban practices, already taking place in the post-war period - but also receives severe criticism such as that by Jane Jacobs. This historical inquiry extends to modern masters’ manifold collaboration with the avant-garde of the twenties and thirties, a subject that receives particular interest and contributes to the set-off for the architectural avant-garde discourse. Architectural historian Anthony Vidler attests that the publication of Reyner Banham’s *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (1960) concurrently creates an excitement for research into the forgotten history of the avant-garde.

The Soviet architecture of 1917 to 1932 follows a different trajectory within western architectural history. In the years between 1932 and the 1960s it faces active repression and passive misinformation in the West. The 1960s mark the moment when it starts being gradually revisited and even evokes an enthusiastic reception by architects. Soviet Constructivism and Rationalism, the architecture of OSA and ASNOVA respectively, by attracting historical attention, affect architectural magazines and projects. ‘The influence of the Russian Constructivists on architects in the 1960s and 1970s is discernible both in the magazines and projects of the period,’ architectural historian Beatriz Colomina attests. The historical inquiry into them is due both to the myth of rediscovering a forgotten treasure when the temporary freedom in the 1960s in Russia permits a return to the sources, as well as to a leftist ideological inclination of historians, theoreticians, critics and magazines. While the Russian revolution is a prime motivator of historical research for both leftwing and liberal historians, the hegemonic response is however to dissociate the Soviet avant-garde from involvement in revolutionary politics, until 1962, at least. The Cold War mostly depoliticizes this avant-garde tout court.
Little magazines of the 1960s and early seventies are also devoted to the history of the modern movement and the Soviet architecture of 1917 to 1932. As ‘little magazines’ are considered various phenomena including posters, manifestos, flyers, postcards, letters, building cookbooks, manuals, or advertisements. Intertwined with history and theory, they initiate a discourse on what it is frequently called the ‘historical avant-garde.’ They compile previously unavailable sources, rivalling and often exceeding those available in books at that time. AD in 1970 and VH 101 in 1972 for example, are dedicated to the history of the so-called Soviet avant-garde.

While entirely absent from the publishing year 1932 to 1960, Reyner Banham first employs the term in 1960. Its usage in Theory and Design in the First Machine Age (1960) is, however, only indicative of the heretofore general perception within the field: to only describe cultural dynamics excluding architecture. ‘Avant-garde’ is here mentioned twice; first, to describe ‘Herwarth Walden, proprietor of a gallery and magazine, both called Der Sturm;’ and second, the Parisian movements of the early 1920s that felt gratified through the phrase and magazine L’esprit nouveau.

It is in the same year, however, that Leonardo Benevolo, an architectural historian, becomes the first in my corpus to attach it to architectures. In his History of Modern Architecture (1960), he avantgardifies the so-called Soviet avant-garde, the modern movement, and architectures from 1880 to 1914, such as the Chicago school, Art Nouveau, Adolf Loos, Tony Garnier and August Perret. His denominations are far from arbitrary since he methodically explores the avant-garde, notably placed in italics, and formulates three conceptual categories which combine architectural and cultural tendencies. The first one denotes the architect as genius
artist, who criticizes the world, aims at originality, evolves a personal style and disagrees with the dominant trends.\(^{55}\) The second conception relates to the re-establishment of the link between art and life. The third category denotes the architect as collective and social force who, in opposition to the aristocratic and individualist character of the first category, claims the new ‘art’ of the proletariat in contrast to the bourgeois.\(^ {56}\)

Moreover, Sigfried Giedion’s 1967 history book provides more context, particularly because he adds new chapters for the fifth edition of *Space, Time and Architecture*, first published in 1941. It is in this edition, and not in the previous ones, that he includes the term. Employed twice in the new chapters, the ‘avant-garde’ describes in both cases CIAM (1928-1959), the principal organization of the modern movement which he directed.\(^{57}\) For him, ‘CIAM was an avant-garde movement.’\(^{58}\) A fundamental change is taking place in the 1960s: the avant-garde spirit starts permeating architecture. It is not an exogenous cultural dynamic with which architecture interrelates or not; it gradually starts describing architects, architectural productions, movements and institutions. It becomes an endogenous quality.

Thus, in the 1960s the term ‘avant-garde’ appears in architectural history books along with the avantgardification of diverse architectural productions, architects and groups; a historical interest in the avant-garde phenomenon in its relation to architecture, along with the beginning of an architectural appropriation of the avant-garde occur. For architectural historians of my corpus, both for those who use the term, such as Banham, and for those who don’t, such as Philip Johnson, Nicolaus Pevsner, and Henry-Russell Hitchcock, architecture and the avant-garde were rather incompatible activities. These activities belonged to different domains, a disposition also shared and finely articulated by the architectural historian Peter Collins (1965), an excerpt of which I include in the next section. Benevolo is the first historian in my corpus
to suggest that they fuel each other occasionally. By unfolding the reciprocal relation between the two, he avantgardifies those architectures which form part of this connection. For example, he elaborates the manifold collaboration of the modern movement with the avant-garde such as in the Bauhaus, in which Feininger, Kandinsky and Klee worked to re-establish this link between art and life; or scrutinizes the complex relation of Walter Gropius to it, and of Mies van de Rohe to Novembergruppe and review G. He avantgardifies all of them. Giedion, in his additions for the fifth 1967 edition, presents a remarkably mature, yet unrefined architectural avant-garde awareness. Even more, it exemplifies a common post-1960s slipshod way of using the term, implying a positive value or elite paradigm, which Giedion ex post facto grants to CIAM, under his direction.

Parameters that allow the shift of the 1960s include, first, the intense interest in the interrelation of the modern masters with the avant-garde, from a historical perspective distant to the present, as supported by Vidler. Second, it includes the growing focus on the cultural dimension of architecture, on architecture as a cultural artefact, apparent through journals such as Oppositions. First appearing in September 1973, Oppositions’ content concentrates on the cultural parameters of the modern movement, situating the heroic figures of the 1920s and the functionalist ethos embodied in histories of modernist architecture in a wider cultural modernity. It introduces new methodologies, like Marxism and structural linguistics. Oppositions extends the history of the modern movement ‘from ideas and forms to institutions and societal conflicts,’ which are however hard to reconcile with professional practice. Third, the 1960s also mark the beginning of contemporary architecture theory.

Fourth, the historical study and fascination with the so-called Soviet avant-garde as a derivative of linguistics is important. The term ‘Russian avant-garde’ is codified from the 1960s within
the Western context. The denomination of the Soviet phenomenon as ‘avant-garde’ takes place by agents of the artistic, literary and cultural avant-garde discourse, before architects revisit it. Thus architecture’s enthusiasm for Soviet architecture transforms into a keen passion for an ‘avant-garde’ architecture per se. An engagement with the concept and its formal language also becomes fervour for the term ‘avant-garde,’ as all stand next to each other in various writings on the Soviet cultural phenomenon. For the architects of the 1960s the ‘Soviet avant-garde’ starts representing what an ‘avant-garde’ architecture is, related to formal language and ideology. In their convergences with the modern movement - both are part of new historical knowledge – they play a vital role in shaping the architectural avant-gardism of the 1960s.

**Architectural avant-gardism of the 1960s**

‘Avant-gardism’ summarizes the qualities of the ‘avant-garde,’ and bundles up the commitment to them into an attitude and even an ideology. This definition by David Cottington, delineating the diverse ‘avant-garde’ architectures of the 1960s, guides the way in which avant-gardism is here to be read. While this section refers to tendencies deriving from parameters of formation, the next one concentrates in the ideological ingredients and to the diverse avantgardified architectures of this decade.

The study of the ‘historical avant-garde’ from a fresh, new historical perspective, the familiarization with its aspects of formation and ideology, and the assimilation of some of the latter coalesce in the 1960s, they go hand-in-hand with the beginning of an avant-gardism that permeates most architecture. It adopts some of the ‘historical avant-garde’ patterns of formation and ideological templates, summarized as: innovation in formal language or
building types; progress and technological advancement, at least as a claim; the internalization of an ideological battle (in a disciplinary or broader sense, even if the latter does not always include a relation to revolutionary politics); bold theoretical positions and/or manifestos, publishing of magazines, exhibitions, a wide and extensive collaboration with the avant-garde, and working within an international network of circulation of ideas.

Measured against the above aspects of formation and ideologies of the ‘historical avant-garde’ in a comparative fashion, Colomina notes that just as experimental little magazines of the 1920s and 1930s drive the historical avant-garde, little magazines of the 1960s and 1970s not only study the avant-garde but move towards their own rebirth and transformation.\(^66\) Joan Ockman, associate editor and editorial consultant of the journal *Oppositions*, describes the journal’s title and editorial agenda, which, by assimilating the ideological elements of the historical avant-garde aims at continuing its legacy. Ockman writes,

The title could also be understood as...an intention to be new, to start from scratch, from ‘degree zero,’ *a polemical project* nodding to Roland Barthes and *typical of avant-garde magazines in the heyday of modernism*: namely, to return a stagnant architectural culture to its ABC’s, *to a pioneer and reformist role in cultural politics*. The contradictions inherent in being an avant-gardist little magazine in America in the 1970s are undoubtedly among the most interesting aspects of *Opposition’s* publishing life.\(^67\)

Arguably, a door for architectural avant-gardism opens in 1955. It is the year when Reyner Banham publishes the article ‘The New Brutalism,’\(^68\) in which he employs the notion of the ‘image.’ ‘Image’ is for him something visually valuable, not necessarily by the standards of classical aesthetics, and when seen affects emotions. It suggests ‘that the building should be an immediately apprehensible visual entity,’ even if he admits that ‘the form grasped by the eye should be confirmed by experience of the building in use.’\(^15\) Banham notes in 1986 that as the image and photographs of U.S. industrial buildings became the creative source of the modern...
movement,\textsuperscript{69} their work became almost exclusively known through the rise of the immaterial sites of architectural production - exhibitions, publications, journals.\textsuperscript{70} This presupposes the escalation of an appreciation of the ‘image,’ which he defended in 1955.

As part of this phenomenon, the 1960s witness an appropriation of the formal language of the modern movement and the ‘Soviet avant-garde.’ The scholar of Soviet architecture Anatole Kopp attests that so-called ‘Constructivist’ and ‘Rationalist’ projects are innumerably produced in European schools of architecture in the mid-1960s, and their formal vocabulary suddenly becomes fashionable in building production. In some cases, the magazine of OSA\textsuperscript{71} replaces the works of Le Corbusier and of the Bauhaus as the chosen formal source.\textsuperscript{72} Similarly, as Kopp implies, the style of the modern movement is also widely adopted. This is finely summarized, and criticized, in 1961 by the architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner. He writes that,

Of course, this time architects were not returning to the Gothic or the classical so much as to modern styles themselves – creating ‘neo’ versions of modernisms in Italy’s neoliberty style, in the work of Philip Johnson, in the neo-expressionism of Le Corbusier’s Ronchamp...‘neo Art Nouveau,’ ‘neo de Stijl,’ ‘neo School of Amsterdam,’ and ‘neo Perret’...\textsuperscript{73}

Bruno Zevi is another architectural historian to testify the above. He uses in 1965 the term ‘anti avant-garde’ for describing neoliberty, neorealism, environmental perceptionism, historicism, mannerism, which, he claims, has produced no substantial shifts, but only works of regressive retreat. For Zevi, this regressive retreat is done by all architectures of his time – the faithful remaining to the modern tradition, the new historicist approach, pop architecture.\textsuperscript{74} Nonetheless, besides pop architecture - commonly understood as the work of Archigram, Archizoom, Constant or Superstudio - none of the architectures Zevi refers to
are denominated as ‘avant-garde’ in my historiographic corpus. In fact, no architectural production is avantgardified in this corpus if merely for the reason of displaying ‘historical avant-garde’s’ formal language, even if innovatively deployed, without having developed other aspects which drive avant-gardism. It is part of my intent in this essay to separate the term ‘avant-garde’ from other evaluative attributes such as ‘successful,’ which Zevi probably besets in the ‘anti avant-garde.’

The ‘avant-garde,’ this essay supports, indicates a unique quality, enmeshed in an operational disciplinary role. This is elaborated in the next section.

Avantgardified architectures of the 1960s do not merely include building production as their activity, and the opposite is likely. The introduction of ‘image’ in architectural discourse prepares the ground for the unfolding of such ‘avant-garde’ architectures of the 1960s which express themselves through powerful images, and which, moreover, adopt the visual codes of their contemporary avant-garde. They immediately convey avant-gardism, not by architecture’s formal language but by association with the visual codes of the artistic and graphic design avant-garde of their time. Archigram, for instance, employs pop and op art aesthetics, collage and montage, arresting advertising techniques, and striking graphics. Constant communicates his vision of a utopian architecture in a non-commodity socialism (the New Babylon project) through models and illustrations ‘looking like a cross between Constructivism and Abstract Expressionism.’

Even if met with strong opposition by theorists and critics, they strongly display an involvement in a range of other activities such as exhibitions, and in the publication of little magazines in which graphic novelties and polemical articles are introduced. ‘Avant-garde’ group Archigram, for example, circulates a magazine, with the group’s name, from May 1961
to 1970. Publishing nine issues altogether, its founding members include provocative statements. While remaining apolitical, innocent, hobbyists, teenagers, and consumerists, and sensing that mass leisure and mechanization is part of a social and political process, they aim to provoke change. They proclaim that ‘we are predisposed to agree a series of logical propositions that WILL ACTUALLY LEAD TO CHANGE.’ Archigram group initiates change in a consumer democracy, in which the consumer is less a target and more of a participant.

Avantgardified architects of the 1960s are also preoccupied with the writing of manifestos. A fine example is Constant. Being educated as a painter and having established with Guy Debord and Asger Jorn in 1957 the Situationist International (SI), he collaborated with Aldo Van Eyck and believed ‘that architecture could change the world,’ Constant works towards the concept of ‘Unitary Town Planning’ as part of the SI. Its principles are stated in 1958 in a writing style echoing the manifestos of the early twentieth century:

The following eleven points, which convey a brief definition of the Situationist action, are to be construed as a preparatory theme for the third conference of the International Situationists (I.S.) […]

5. Unitary town planning is determined by the uninterrupted complex activity through which man’s environment is consciously recreated according to progressive plans in all domains.

In a similar writing style, Constant describes in 1960 _The New Babylon_, a project he furthers on his own on the basis of ‘Unitary Town Planning’:

Individualist culture is at its end, its institutions are exhausted. New Babylon is not primarily a town plan project. Equally, it is not intended as a work of art in the traditional sense nor as an example of architectonic structure. The modern city is dead; it has fallen victim to utility. New Babylon is a project for a city in which it is possible to live. And to live means to be creative.
Summarizing, the architectural ‘avant-gardes’ of the 1960s assimilate some structures of formation, from a materialist perspective, that derive from the ‘historical avant-garde.’ The avant-garde starts in the 1960s signifying a positive value. It would not be perilous to claim that it gradually becomes an evaluation filter and a type of distinction, as this hypothesis is also supported from a historical and theoretical perspective within avant-garde discourse. In any case, avant-gardism is rich and diverse in the 1960s, penetrating the whole spectrum of architecture. It is manifested in magazines and architects’ diverse work and activities.

**Ideological aspects. Operational mode**

Avant-gardism of the 1960s resembles in complex combinations some formative aspects of the ‘historical avant-garde,’ one of which is the internalization of an ideological battle. Two commonplace ideas of the historical avant-garde are opposition and the idea of the break with the past. The initiatives of the ‘avant-gardes’ of the 1960s are filtered through these ideological templates.

The avant-garde marks out defiance, a finally violent rejection of tradition, and insists on a clean break with the past. Its artists are conventionally considered as having a prophetic function, helping their contemporaries invent the future. They incarnate change, which occurs as a historical necessity, with the ‘troops’ following close behind. The idea that the avant-garde creates a rupture with the past presupposes an adherence to the idea of linear progress, evolutionism, revolutionism, and a perception of history as a succession of events. This idea is in avant-garde theory and criticism both opposed and supported – for example, by Habermas, who claims that, in fact, it is directed against what might be called a false normativity in history;
for him, the avant-garde spirit seeks to use the past in a different way. However this may be, this idea was transmitted to architecture, shaping the avant-gardism of the 1960s. While this is evident in the editorial agenda of the journal *Oppositions*, Benevolo claims in 1960 that the (architectural and cultural) avant-garde enterprises always begin by asserting their own freedom and originality in relation to all preceding ones, retaining their independence from the rest of society while putting forward theories valid for all.

Avant-garde art is also, in its classical theorizing, an oppositional formation or a negation culture. Peter Bürger conceptualizes in 1974 the historical avant-garde on the critique it exercised on the institution ‘art,’ representing at that period of time ‘art for art’s sake.’ For Poggioli in 1962 the historical avant-garde wants to react against the dominant nuclei of society and mass culture, while keeping its free exchange with it. For him, ‘the avant-garde looks and works like a culture of negation.’ Fredric Jameson, though, claims that the avant-garde of the 1960s is no longer oppositional and marginal. It constitutes the very dominant aesthetics of consumer society itself. It significantly serves this society’s commodity production as a virtual laboratory of new forms and fashions with a precise socioeconomic functionality. Issues like the one Jameson raises derive from the gap between the concept and ideology of the avant-garde and its formation, as well as from the variations that the subject of opposition take within the theory of the avant-garde.

Likewise, the ‘avant-garde’ architects of the 1960s adopt an oppositional stance, aiming at a rupture with the status quo, as they claim. Here I add that their opposition does not target everything and all. Their opposition is directed to specific conditions of external reality and/or specific internal conditions of architecture. It targets either the reality outside architecture or ideological templates prevailing within architecture of their times - or both, but not to all of
their aspects and respective segments. There are segments with which it coalesces and from which it attracts support. Demystifying the oppositional nature of the avant-garde is an approach supported in avant-garde discourse, including Thomas Crow. Referring to the 1960s and writing in 1985, Crow describes the avant-garde formation as a ‘negotiated resistance.’ The society of consumption, in which the avant-garde groups are formed, displaces resistant impulses but also gives a refuge in a relatively unregulated social space, where contrary social definitions can survive and occasionally flourish. Much of this is, for Crow, a ‘permitted disorder.’ Once the zone of permitted freedom exists, it can be seized by the avant-garde groups which articulate for themselves a counter-consensual identity, an implicit message of rupture and discontinuity. The expansion of cultural economy continually creates new fringe areas, which the avant-garde, as incorporated subculture, occupies with marginal positions and new recruits. Its unique position between higher and lower zones of commodity culture makes the avant-garde perform a special and powerful function: it searches out areas of social practice, not yet completely available to efficient utilization, and makes them discrete and visible.91

The external conditions of architecture during the 1960s, which comprise the social, political and economic reality forces, are characterized by protest and liberation - the opposition to the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, the May 1968 events in France, the civil rights movement or the rise of the women’s liberation movement. A return to class struggle also appears as the economic boom that follows the war shows signs of wear and tear and labour’s mood strikingly changes from its calm post-war wage negotiations. Also, in contrast to the 1950s, the centre of gravity in politics shifts towards the moderate left, which formed the government of many European countries. By the end of the decade the first welfare states appear in all advanced capitalist countries in Europe and the U.S.92 Production is being gradually transformed by technological revolution - this is after all when the information age
starts - and is gradually globalized. The system of development moves through the use of cybernetics towards immateriality, which gives new impulse to the study of highly formalized languages such as simulation and programming.

The internal conditions of architecture are by the 1960s largely defined by the expansion and enrichment of the modern movement paradigm. A number of ideas are included in its wide and abstract nature, yet during the post-war period they are specified and formulated as distinct tendencies. The orthogonal modernist formal language continues as a style; yet it is complemented with Scharoun-like curvatures in the organic architecture, but also with Constructivist-like multiple angled formal language in dispersed examples. The scale is enlarged with the ‘new monumentality,’ and connected to civic and political ideas around the monument. ‘Corporatism’ achieves the modernist anonymity in a U.S. context of advanced capitalism and corporate bureaucracy. The period is also marked by the closure of CIAM in 1959, and the formation of Team X in 1956, bringing into the discourse a social theory based on their concept of Gemeinschaft, and a systems theory which sees society as information systems.

This is the time when the avant-garde enters the architectural discourse and the newly formed ‘avant-gardes’ of the 1960s appear. As my historiographic corpus shows, and by summarizing them in categories, they are four: first, the defenders of the everyday vernacular, social relevance, city movements and participationists, environmental activism or purely activism; second, the technological utopia of Archigram, Archizoom, Superstudio, Metabolism, Yona Friedman, Michael Webb and Constant; and third, the rise of information technologies and computerization, supported by the Yale School of Architecture and the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London. Finally, in the early seventies, a dominant
‘avant-garde’ is Autonomy. Its counterpart is the equally dominant architectural Post-modernism.

But which are the targets of opposition, as well as alliances, of the above ‘avant-garde’ categories? The first ‘avant-garde’ expresses the social and political upheaval of the late 1960s related to activism, the right to the city, and to the struggle regarding planning laws and urban renewal. This ‘avant-garde’ turns to strategies of stimulus, critique and struggle. It allies with those segments of the political domain which support such claims, with the activist segments of society, and with the leftist intellectuals of the Frankfurt school and the neo-Marxian studies. It opposes the status quo of the discipline of the times described before. The second ‘avant-garde’ is comprised by divergent groups which however share the generic passion for technoutopia. Among them, Archigram is the most popular. Using lowbrow visual art imagery, Archigram assaults the status quo of architecture as a conventional, high-brow, ‘upper class’ discipline. Its alliances derive from mass culture and society, thus from the majority of the domain of arts and design, as well as from the society at large. The third ‘avant-garde’ introduces new science and technology in the field, which already affect and radically change society and the modes of production. It neither leads nor aligns with the technological sector of production. It rather lines up with those segments of art, design and culture, which share an enthusiasm for the new capacities in communications and information techniques, as well as with its concurrent ‘technetronic’ segments of society. Finally, and within the early seventies, the ‘avant-garde’ of Autonomy indicates a stance of radical opposition and withdrawal from its current and undesirable external conditions of consumerism and the rise of popular culture. To these external conditions it asserts its own determinism: it is an almost heroic withdrawal from the market forces. At the same time, it opposes the disciplinary status quo, at least as defined by the other dominant ‘avant-garde,’ dominant from the 1970s onwards, architectural
Post-modernism. Autonomy finds its voice in the journal *Oppositions*, which, as mentioned before, states its desire to initiate a polemical project, one which will return the now stagnant architectural culture to a pioneer and reformist role in cultural politics.97

The subject of oppositions of the new ‘avant-garde’ architectures of the 1960s is rich and diverse; its alliances too. They can be thought as a complex system of oppositions and negotiations maneuvering between architecture and its diverse external forces, be it social, economic and political ones, including rest of social players or professional groups. It rearranges the existing value system and the given order. This uncovers an aspect of the nature of the architectural avant-garde from a theoretical perspective.

In this essay the approach to the architectural avant-garde of the 1960s derives from those avantgardified architectures which appear in important history books written by seminal authors. The hypothesis is thus not irrelevant to the methodology this essay follows. The claim however is that the ‘avant-garde’ architectures derive from an avantgardification activity, by specific historians, who act within their own objectivity, subjectivity and time frame. Set in motion by those who avantgardify, the ‘avant-garde’ is the result of a mechanism of selection. Some, only few, architectures pass through the avant-garde filter of the architectural historian. Moreover, as the system of oppositions and negotiations shows, the ‘avant-garde’ architectures rearrange architecture’s internal rules and values in relation to all that surrounds it. This rearrangement of system values is not only initiated by the ‘avant-garde’ architects of the 1960s, but also by the authors of my theory and criticism corpus, such as Tafuri (1968). In the case of the latter, the ‘avant-garde’ becomes their tool, a paradigm, able to let them orchestrate architecture’s internal rules in relation to external societal function systems, which constantly evolve. This is equivalent to what the ‘avant-garde’ does. In this sense the ‘avant-garde’ and
the theoreticians and critics who avantgardify point towards the same direction. Placing both under the umbrella of the architectural avant-garde, as a phenomenon, concept or idea, the architectural avant-garde displays an operational nature, towards synchronizing architecture’s internal rules and external conditions. This (undeclared by all) goal, or direction, is accommodated by the lack of systematic study of the architectural avant-garde – of ‘what it really is.’ As mentioned in the introduction of this essay, the architectural avant-garde has not been sufficiently examined until today, and the reason is obvious.

What the 1960s introduce is a new code in architecture indicating distinction, and a new type of paradigm as the norm. The multifaceted nature of this new evaluation filter presents a new-fangled complication for architecture, which is not always the case for the arts and other cultural fields. It derives from the fact that any distinction through the avant-garde is granted via operational modes, dispositions, and heretofore tools of architecture (exhibitions, magazines, writings) instead of heretofore ends (buildings and cities). It is granted by putting aside the traditional codes of utility and function which make sense only when attached to the building and urban space production. Another intricacy is its formation in collaboration with the broader avant-garde, which blurs the disciplinary boundaries and complicates the internal system-rules of architecture (which is at its base, and like any other discipline, a self-enclosed, self-referential system). These complications are finely illuminated in the words of Peter Collins. Referring to the relation of architecture to painting and sculpture (he does not explicitly mention avant-garde art but his examples, like Bruno Taut, are), he writes in 1965:

Hence today (when, thanks to the efforts of the Bauhaus, the new tectonic forms appropriate for reinforced concrete and steel and have been fully adopted) painting and sculpture may prove more of a hindrance to architectural creativity than an aid…For the danger of architectural design of laying too much emphasis on abstract painting and sculpture as formative disciplines is that they lead to the idea of a building as simply an object in space, instead of as part of a space. They thus accentuate the evil…

98
As the subsequent decades show, architecture resolves the aforementioned complications by placing the ‘avant-garde’ in its ideological core, its productive irritator. It operates on an ideological level, indirectly influencing the building and urban space production, and directly fuelling its cultural one. Yet the equation between architecture’s cultural and tectonic dimension, which are just two of its facets, is now balanced in relation to the 1960s. With their powerful dynamics, the ideologically inclined initiatives of the ‘avant-garde’ of the 1960s start off what will gradually become fate: its turn into a disciplinary tool. This is assisted by the growing historical knowledge and awareness of the interwar avant-garde’s value starting in the 1960s. The ‘avant-garde’ gradually develops into a code of evaluation and distinction, an elite paradigm for directing architecture’s internal system rules measured against its surroundings. Its instrumental nature is exemplified next, through one out of the many post-1960s re-avantgardifications of the ‘Soviet avant-garde’, which takes place in 1988.

**Re-avantgardifications of the ‘Soviet avant-garde’**

Initiated in the 1960s, the re-avantgardification of the ‘Soviet avant-garde’ is still taking place, slowly and steadily. One example, seminal in architecture, happened within the ‘apolitical’ context of the architecture of Western Europe and the U.S. In 1988, the Tate Gallery, London, launches the ‘Deconstruction’ symposium, and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, mounts the exhibition ‘Deconstructivist Architecture.’ Both state that the origin of Deconstruction is Constructivism, the ‘Soviet avant-garde.’ Moreover, the MoMA exhibition stresses the formal similarities between Deconstructivist
projects and Constructivism, yet excludes the latter’s built work, and concentrates on its architectural experiments. Curator Philip Johnson states in the preface of the exhibition catalogue that,

It is perhaps not strange that the new forms of deconstructivist architecture hark back to Russian Constructivism... I am fascinated by these formal similarities, of our architects to each other, on the one hand, and to the Russian movement on the other. Some of these similarities are not known to the younger architects themselves, let alone the predominated. Take the most obvious formal theme repeated by every one of the artists: the diagonal overlapping of rectangular or trapezoid bars. These are also clear in the work of all the Russian avant garde from Malevich to Lissitzky.¹⁰¹

Similarly, the Tate symposium examines the theoretical connections between Deconstruction and Constructivism. This aim is stated in the symposium’s main publication,

At the beginning of the century a conscious theoretical development within architecture took place in Russia, and Deconstructivist theories owe a debt to the Constructivists of that time. Indeed, much of the present work stems from earlier, often intuitive, moves in this direction.¹⁰²

My function here, as I see it, is to lay a ghost. The ghost is that of the Russian avant-garde.¹⁰³

I think we can most carefully address and illuminate the relationship between historical Constructivism and Deconstruction. [...] Deconstruction tends to be identified with buildings that look massively ‘constructed’ or ‘deconstructed’ in a physical respect. Here we touch the very essence of Constructivism and, consciously or unconsciously, the reason for the present attention to this Russian work.¹⁰⁴

Two interrelated premises are here present. First, the ‘Soviet avant-garde’ is re-avantgardified in both the symposium and the exhibition for its innovative formal properties and ideological positions (revolutionary politics excluded). Both aspects are affiliated with Deconstruction. Deconstructivist architects adopt and develop the formal properties of the ‘Soviet avant-garde’ while authors and curators of the events affiliate Soviet ideological positions with Deconstruction. Second, these authors and curators re-avantgardify the ‘Soviet avant-garde,’ stating that it is Deconstruction’s precursor, implying that Deconstruction is ‘avant-garde.’ However, Mark Wigley, co-curator of the MoMA exhibition, literally refuses to denominate
Deconstruction as ‘avant-garde.’ In fact, this negation is so strongly articulated that it leads to the opposite direction: the impression is that Deconstruction categorically is ‘avant-garde.’ Wigley writes,

Deconstructivist architecture does not constitute an avant garde. It is not a rhetoric of the new. Rather, it exposes the unfamiliar hidden within the traditional. It is the shock of the old. [...] Like the modern avant garde, it attempts to be disturbing, alienating, but not from the traditional retreat of the avant garde, not from the margins. Rather it occupies and subverts the centre. This work is not fundamentally different from the tradition it subverts.105

Some of the recognizable patterns of the ‘historical avant-garde’ adopted by this new ‘avant-garde’ coalesce with the avant-gardism of the 1960s. As in the ‘historical avant-garde,’ publications, exhibitions and debates communicate Deconstruction’s ideas. Its network of circulation of ideas expands within three months from London to New York. It creates a powerful collaboration with the avant-garde, such as with the intellectual one and Jacques Derrida, and employs its concepts, such as the so-called Cartesian linguistics and the deconstruction of literary studies, so as to arrive at its foundational principles. Deconstruction does not have an oppositional nature; its character is transformative, ‘it exploits the weakness in the tradition in order to disturb rather than overthrow it.’106 While it ‘occupies and subverts the centre,’107 it neither opposes the architectural status quo nor any of the external conditions of architecture, avoiding a break with the past. Its writings are in a discursive style and not in that of a manifesto.108 Finally, Deconstruction incorporates an ideological battle within a disciplinary context, and articulates bold theoretical positions. Jacques Derrida, associate member and spokesman of architectural Deconstruction, accounts for it the re-foundation, the ‘deconstruction,’ of architecture. This also signifies the desired direction of renewal of the disciplinary grounds, the way that Deconstruction aims at driving and changing architecture’s values and ideologies. Derrida states that,
Deconstruction is perhaps a way of questioning the architectural model...the metaphor of foundations, of superstructures, what Kant calls ‘architectonic’ as well as the concept of the *archè*...So Deconstruction means also putting into question...perhaps architecture itself.\textsuperscript{109}

To make my point clear: during the eighties the re-avantgardification of the ‘Soviet avant-garde’ allows another contemporary architecture, Deconstruction, to claim its denomination as ‘avant-garde.’ While during the seventies the ‘Soviet avant-garde’ offers a rich source of innovative forms that the internal domain seeks within its general stance of withdrawal from its socio-political context, now, along with ‘avant-garde’ Deconstruction, points at an introverted re-exploration of the very foundations of architecture, at the ‘refounding’ of architecture through structural linguistics. Later on, and within the more politicized external conditions of the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the ‘Soviet avant-garde’ would be re-avantgardified for its socio-politico-ideological nature, thus indirectly fuelling the socio-politicized segments of the architectural discipline. For example, its re-avantgardification in the exhibition ‘Building the Revolution: Soviet Art and Architecture, 1915-1935,’\textsuperscript{110} in 2011 suggests a different direction of renewal. While it is often referred to as ‘revolutionary,’’ as the title of the exhibition implies, its re-avantgardification is no longer only due to its formal novelties but also to its political and social context, and the collective spirit it brings about.\textsuperscript{111} This re-avantgardification indirectly encourages a politically and socially active response of the discipline toward the new politicized global external conditions of the 2000s and 2010s. The ‘avant-garde’ works towards re-examining and transforming architecture’s internal system rules in relation to all the external conditions that surround it - a case that I elaborated in previous section regarding the 1960s.
Conclusion

The 1960s mark a shift. The historical study of the ‘Soviet avant-garde’ and modern architecture’s relation with the avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s finds an enthusiastic reception by architects. The avant-garde enters architectural discourse, and the term ‘avant-garde’ begins describing architects and diverse material and immaterial productions when related to the wider avant-garde. Yet it gradually develops into an endogenous to architecture, and positive quality, which does not necessarily qualify an interrelation with the avant-garde. Architectural avant-gardism of the 1960s is rich and diverse, adopts patterns of formation, and includes ideological templates of the ‘historical avant-garde.’ The term ‘avant-garde’ starts indicating an evaluation code and elite paradigm, gradually developing into a disciplinary tool.

To clarify my final point: The avant-garde is a strong concept for its effects. About the artistic avant-garde, Carol Duncan notes that ‘to be used, its meaning must be constantly and carefully mediated’\textsuperscript{112}, yet the same connotations apply to architecture. Avant-garde architecture serves as model, in which what matters most is its usefulness to architecture’s internal system to serve its own transformation. Transformations are necessary for constantly redefining its cognitive, evaluative and normative grounds,\textsuperscript{113} thus keeping architecture’s position and role within globally changing external forces - political, economic, and social - and among its own professional players. As the case of the ‘Soviet avant-garde’ shows, at its very base, the avant-garde’s nature is instrumental; it is a driver of difference and change in architecture. ‘Avant-garde’ architectures contribute to prescribing architecture’s self-definition measured against the different social systems it is situated in.
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**Notes**

3 ‘Let us unite: in order to reach the same goal we have a different task to perform. We, the artists, will serve you as avant-garde: the power of the arts is the most immediate and the most rapid. [...] What destiny more beautiful for the arts than to exercise a positive influence on society, a true ministry, and to project themselves ahead of all intellectual faculties, in the era of their greatest development!’ Response of an artist to a scientist in an imaginary dialogue in Saint-Simon, Henri de, *Opinions littéraires, philosophiques et industrielles* (Paris: Bossange père, 1825), pp.346-7. Cited in Hadjinicolaou, Nicos, 'On the Ideology of Avant-Gardism,' *Praxis: A Journal of Radical Perspectives on the Arts*, no.6 (1982), p.41. See also Egbert, Donald "The Idea of the ‘Avant Garde’ in Art and Politics,” *The American Historical Review*, vol.73, no.2 (December 1967), pp. 342-4.
4 Cottington, David, *The Avant Garde*, pp.5-6. See also Hadjinicolaou, Nicos, 'On the Ideology of Avant-Gardism'.
9 See for example the issue ‘What Is an Avant-Garde?’, *New Literary History*, vol. 41, no. 4 (Autumn 2010).


22 Tafuri, Manfredo, *Theories and History of Architecture* (London: Granada, 1980), ‘Note to the second (Italian) edition’. Note: since the modern movement constitutes for him the avant-garde definition doesn’t always require him to name it ‘historical’.

23 This assumption derives from my book-in-progress based on my doctoral dissertation *The Concept of the Avant-Garde in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Architecture*.

24 Only exception is Kenneth Frampton’s article in which, while the ‘rearguard’ appears only as subtitle, it forms a core subject.

25 In this essay, any reference to theory and criticism indicates this specific corpus unless otherwise indicated.


37 In this essay, any reference to history books indicates this specific corpus unless otherwise indicated.


40 ‘Now [1968] the generous myths of the initial Heroic period, having lost their role as powerful ideas, are reduced to subjects of debate.’ Tafuri, Manfredo, Theories and History of Architecture, p.2.

41 “Once relegated to the status of ‘history,’ modern architecture itself was susceptible to academicization, even to revival...it was the revival of modern architecture as style...” Vidler, Anthony, Histories of the Immediate Present, p.5.


Constructivism relates to the work of the group OSA, which is the acronym of Obedinenie Sovremennikh Arkhitektorov, Union of Contemporary Architects. Rationalism relates to the work of the group ASNOVA, which is the acronym of Assotsiatsiia Noykh Arkhitektorov, Association of New Architects.


Colomina, Beatriz and Craig Buckley, eds., _Clip, Stamp, Fold_ , p.8.

Colomina, Beatriz and Craig Buckley, eds., _Clip, Stamp, Fold_ , p.15.


Banham, Reyner, _Theory and Design in the First Machine Age_ , p.89.


CIAM is the acronym of Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne, the International Congress of Modern Architecture. Founded in 1928 by 28 European architects invited by Le Corbusier, and with Sigfried Giedion as secretary general, this highly influential organization had the objective to research and formalize the principles of the modern movement through eleven congresses and events across Europe. It disbanded in 1959 with the final eleventh CIAM meeting in Otterlo, Netherlands.


‘It does not seem particularly controversial to mark the beginning of contemporary architecture theory in the sixties.’ Hays, Michael, _Architecture's Desire_ , p.x.


Cottington, David, _The Avant Garde_ , p.4.

‘Against this [sense of closure of modernism with the historical research in it], the unruly incursions of Archigram, who set up their ‘Living City’ exhibit in the front lobby of Terrace in 1964, provided a healthy sense of utopianism and continuity with the early modern avant-gardes.’ Vidler, Anthony, _Histories of the Immediate Present_ , p.xv. A new generation of historically conscious architects appears in the sixties. Reyner Banham observes in 1960, that these architects read the writings of the Futurists for themselves, and feel once more the compulsion of technological ideology and the need to take a firm grip on it. Banham, Reyner, _Architectural Review_ (May 1960), p.332.

Colomina, Beatriz and Craig Buckley, eds., _Clip, Stamp, Fold_ , p.8.


71 The magazine of OSA was *Contemporary Architecture*, in Russian Sovremennaya Arkhitektura, and was published in Moscow from 1926 to 1930.


75 The *Dictionary of Architecture* (1991) provides the widest range of assessments of architectures and architects in my corpus. I mention them so as to point out the abundance of choices an author has for describing an architecture besides naming it ‘avant-garde.’ ‘Leading’, 86 times; ‘famous’ 22 times; ‘the greatest’ 22 times; ‘influential’ 18 times; ‘pioneer,’ 16 times; ‘genius,’ 14 times; ‘original,’ 13 times; ‘important,’ 11 times; ‘pioneering,’ 6 times; ‘avant-garde’ 6 times; ‘successful,’ 4 times; ‘visionary,’ 3 times; ‘revolutionary,’ 3 times; ‘brilliant,’ 3 times; ‘one of the best,’ 3 times; ‘ingenious,’ 2 times; ‘radical,’ 2 times; ‘prominent,’ 2 times; ‘outstanding,’ 2 times; ‘accomplished,’ 1 time; ‘interesting,’ 1 time; and ‘gifted,’ 1 time. In this way I highlight that the use of the term has a particular meaning, which differs from other attributes.


78 Archigram, no.9 (1970).


89 Jameson, Fredric, 'Periodizing the 60s,' in Sayres, Sohnya, ed., The 60s without Apology (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press in cooperation with Social Text, 1984), p.196.
93 Team X was a loosely organized band of individuals which grew out of CIAM. It was named after the committee responsible for planning the tenth congress of CIAM in 1956 in Dubrovnik: the CIAM X Committee. The composition of the group varied through the years. The seven more active members were: Jaap Bakema, Georges Candilis, Giancarlo De Carlo, Aldo van Eyck, Alison and Peter Smithson and Shadrach Woods, and, at a later stage, Giancarlo De Carlo. Team X organized its own meetings (1960-1981) after challenging the urban principles of the CIAM organization and CIAM’s final dismantling in 1959.
96 Editorial statement, Oppositions, no.3 (January 1974): There is an ‘awareness of the marginal role played by architecture in a society dedicated to consumption...In the last analysis there are perhaps only two factors that hold us together, apart from our mutual awareness of the marginal role played by architecture in a society dedicated to consumption: firstly, a faith in the importance of architecture as a poetic manifestation, and secondly, a belief in the importance of criticism as a necessary force set in perennial opposition to the established values of an empirically oriented society’.
97 Ockman, Joan, 'Resurrecting the Avant-Garde: The History and the Program of Oppositions,' p.182.
99 This was a one-day symposium in March 1988 organized by the Academy Forum. In conjunction with the symposium two special magazine issues have been published: ‘Deconstruction,’ Architectural Design, vol.58, no.3/4 (1988), and a year later ‘Deconstruction II,’ Architectural Design, vol.59, no.1/2 (1989). In the same year, 1988, the symposium was synopsised in: Papadakis, Andreas, Catherine Cooke and Andrew Benjamin, eds., Deconstruction: Omnibus Volume (London: Academy Editions, 1989).

Foreword in Papadakis, Andreas, Catherine Cooke and Andrew Benjamin, eds., *Deconstruction*, p.7.

Cooke, Catherine, ‘Russian Precursors,’ in *Deconstruction*, p.11.

Wigley, Mark, ‘Deconstructivist Architecture,’ in *Deconstruction*, p.133.

Wigley, Mark, ‘Deconstructivist Architecture,’ in *Deconstruction*, p.133.

Wigley, Mark, ‘Deconstructivist Architecture,’ in *Deconstruction*, p.133.

Cooke, Catherine, ‘Russian Precursors,’ in *Deconstruction*, p.11.

Wigley, Mark, ‘Deconstructivist Architecture,’ in *Deconstruction*, p.133.

Wigley, Mark, ‘Deconstructivist Architecture,’ in *Deconstruction*, p.133.


In addition, involving original research and being historical studies, these exhibitions have been possible due to better access to archives that opened for Western scholars after Gorbachev’s *Perestroika* in 1986. See Cohen, Jean-Louis, ‘Uneasy Crossings. The Architecture of the Russian Avant-garde between East and West,’ in *Building the Revolution*, p.13.


CULTURAL PRODUCTION IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES: ART COLLECTIVES, INSTITUTIONS, CULTURE INDUSTRY

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EDITORIAL STATEMENT FOR VOLUME 2

For the second volume of the re-bus Special Issue “Cultural Production in the 20th and 21st Centuries: Art Collectives, Institutions, Culture Industry” the editorial team has put together three articles that highlight the contested spaces in which the relationship between institutions and their history develop. Thus, the historiographical revision of the term ‘avant-garde’ as applied to architectural currents since the 1960s provides great insight into how exactly definitions are wielded by intellectuals and members of the public sphere in order to characterize and shape the discipline’s common sense, extending into wider use (L. Stergiou). This essentially discursive practice faces deep conflicts when it comes down to historicity, inasmuch as the definitions that have become hegemonic are opened up by the particularities of contexts. This is the case of avant-garde cinema in the New York of the 1960s, in the sense that the concept of the ‘amateur’ used by certain artists associated with the Charles Theatre generated an ‘in-between’ space that resisted both the ‘common sense’ of avant-gardism and commercial productions (B. Hummel). These spaces in which the traditionally ‘hard’ definitions of institutions become fluid are well exemplified in curatorial approaches that give primacy not to rational (or historical) presuppositions but affective ones, such as Brazil’s Instituto Cultural Inhotim, where affect becomes the means to structure an experience of an otherwise inarticulate space (A. Heeren).

Ana Varas Ibarra & David Murrieta Flores
re-bus Issue 8 Co-editors

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