

Title: Ethics, Emotion, and Aesthetics: Architecture After the Crisis of Modern Science

Author: Alberto Pérez Gómez

Architecture_media_politics_society. vol. 4, no.2.

February 2014

Affiliation: McGill University

Abstract:

Alberto Pérez Gómez first came to prominence as an architectural theorist and historian with his 1983 publication, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science*; a book that won the Alice Davis Hitchcock Award for distinguished scholarship in architectural history the following year. Having established himself as one of the architecture world's leading thinkers and most original historical theorists, he offered a book that completely broke all norms of either academic or architectural discourse; his 1992 treatise *Polyphilo, or, The Dark Forest Revisited: An Erotic Epiphany of Architecture*. The author and editor of numerous publications since, in 2007 he co-authored *Towards an Ethical Architecture: Issues Within the Work of Gregory Henriquez*, a publication "seeking to remind architects of the critical role they play in leading the creation of a community's collective space".

In the first of these seminal texts he illustrated how architecture was profoundly transformed by the scientific revolution of the eighteenth century - and how the consequences of that revolution are still dominant in architectural practice and discourse today. The second investigates architectural 'beauty' through the prism of erotic desire. Described as treading the borders of fiction, theory, and pornography, it epitomizes Pérez-Gómez's desire to reframe architecture as an emotive, corporeal and visceral phenomenon in the context of today's scientific and material society.

Running through these works is a constant argument that blurs the intellectual divisions of modern thinking – whether they be based on drawing a sharp distinction between the role of emotion and logic in architectural design; the part sentiments and feelings play in our use and understanding of the spaces we inhabit; or the divisions that have emerged in aesthetic and ethical theory that see the former as type of theorised formula and the latter as an isolated and fully quantifiable set of social practices. In addressing these issues, he begins this interview-article with comments on the phenomenological underpinnings in this thinking and his interest in both Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.