Eisenman Critical Practice: Beyond Urban Formalism In-Between Actualizing Function and Virtualizing Chaos

Written paper

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By transferring Deleuze’s theoretical concepts to Eisenman’s critical architecture, the aim of this paper is to question the conventional praxis of architecture and urban design formalism. This paper conceptually analyzes interstitial spaces through their transitory engagement with flows and territories as a set of affective interactions and social locales in cultural productions, and brings together the notions of assemblage and affect that peculiarly emerge in-between Eisenman’s actualizing practice and his reproductive virtualizing chaos. In his practice, Eisenman experiments with a notion of form that is outside the conventional dominion of modern architecture, in which any shape is “already” informed with meaning, and therefore form is determined by rules of imitation and function. The complexity of creative transformation of Eisenman’s critical form displays as interlaced strands when assemblages tend towards lines of flight and the unpredictable fluid frame of destratification movement comes to be shattered and socialized. Deleuze’s definitions of assemblage and affect stem from his ‘transcendental
empiricism,’ expressing that the ephemeral functionality of affective assemblage is a formation of territorial elements and flows of differential forces that struggle to construct the fabric of the social. The flows of innovative mutations, trans-disciplinary critiques, and singularities in built environment can transpire by challenging the homogeneous architecture and urban design approaches, altering the whole traditional concept of modernist form, and holding potential for ‘radical passivity’ that implies social assemblage determination. The shift to non-representational techniques, exterior arrangements, pure relations, and sustained connections is critical practice because it efficaciously encompasses the materialist and intensive urban experimentations. If the disciplines of architecture and urban design correlate considerably with the notions of assemblage and affect, architects and urban designers may rupture their conventional thinking and practice, thus changing the actual configuration of dominant formalism that brings closeness to the logic of temporality and the logic sensations.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Najlaa Kareem is a Ph.D. Candidate in the School of Architecture at the University of Cincinnati. She is a Deleuzian architect and urbanist whose dissertation challenges and blurs the boundaries between philosophy and the disciplines of architecture and urban design. The theory, criticism, and practice of these disciplines occur in her work via the Deleuzian theory of Difference and Repetition in an attempt to locate varying forms of active and temporal engagements with traditional environments and historical sites. She presented a scholarly paper at the annual Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) held March 23-25, 2017 in Detroit, Michigan. Her paper, entitled New Territories for Old Architecture: Nomadic History as a Design Strategy in the Re-Development Urban Project for the Kadhimiya Historical Site, Baghdad, Iraq, was selected by peer review for presentation and will be published in the conference proceedings. In it, Najlaa explores how the possibility of using history as a dynamic, intensive force in an urban design thinking process can escape the historicism and representational image functionary towards a re-engineered creative historical/architectural dialogue. She is also an Associate Lecturer and Member of the Board of the Engineering Consultancy Committee, the top Engineering Consultancy Board at Thi-Qar University, Iraq.