The Ruin and the Function

Aristide Antonas

Modern Greece is introduced with a unique act of archaeology; it would not exist without the link to the grand narrative of the Ancient Greek world. This relation to ancient Greece is the most important modern character of this recent culture. The country was already inaugurated in the 19th century as the modern version of an ancient culture. It was supposed to repeat the past in a necessarily non authentic way. This new narration of an impossible reenactment of Greece in situ was installed as a european invention of Greece; we can learn about it by Lord Byron or Hölderlin but also through the poems of Ludwig, the Bavarian king whose son, Otto, became the first ruler of the Greek Kingdom. The reposition of a lost culture and the mourning of it has always been the "modern task" for new Hellenism beginning from the works done on the Acropolis in order to wipe out the ottoman village at the top of the hill around the Parthenon till the commission of the new Tschumi museum. The ruin becomes the beholder of a modern abstract narration about absence and the testimony proving the reality of a mythic past. The ancient ruins were thus the first signs of modernity in Greece. They testified that the ancient culture happened in the same place and that this same absent culture could be represented, approved and protected today; they included the modern honor to the past as an abstract, empty reference of the present. A greek advertisement of the ministry of tourism "Leit Motiv" insists: Live your Myth in Greece. This same motto could apply to the

modern Greek culture that was supposed to repeat or mourn, within a modern narrative, a lost past. //// Nowadays Greece is found in a similar position concerning its modern built environment. An urgent need to understand the city center as a dead structure asks for an abstract, fundamental understanding of space independent from the function the city was performing in its late past. The modern Greek cities are in some of their instances already ruins. We are used to understand the form of buildings after modernism as the coherence of a specific materiality to function. Sullivan's words (Form Follows Function) define architecture as a system of different coherences to specific functionalities. A syntax of formalism is usually presented as a regulation between the form and the function it installs or covers. The modern Greek ruin tradition creates an interesting rupture between the function and the form. It suggests that remains are valuable as transformed by time, useless testimonies of an non-existing past. The Parthenon was the first guarded archaeological space, closely related to the modern inauguration of the city of Athens and exposed to many readings of visitors all over the world; the Parthenon was constructed as the glorified ruin par excellence, announced as framed from a constructed urban void. The modern aspect of ancient ruins entered the civilization of modern Greece through a violent way. ///// PRESENT RUINS /////

The very city centers of Athens and Thessaloniki, emptied in parts today, show a new condi-

tion of ruin and a new distance to functionality. Parts of the city become insignificant scenes of built mass. They are not now glorified ruins which install a privileged important narration. The empty buildings are only the unusable remains of a different optimistic era. The modern Greek city becomes a ruin of itself; it cannot anymore perform the functionality it was built for. The city life has to abandon or revisit its scene, transformed now to an abstract background detached from the city life. The fundamental characteristics of this emptied architecture are to be revisited through different paradoxical archaeologies and reconstructions. What seems of fundamental importance in the Greek architecture scene is this transformation of the space conditions due to this new narration of the deluge that already transformed the city. An archaeology of the given and the transformation of the everyday await new interpretations. The Greek cities depend to this investigation of their recent past. /////

The pavilion of Greece 2014 will thus not only challenge the relation of Greece to its modern architecture but also rethink the relation of an archeology of Greek modernism towards a possible future for its remains; what could the function of such a constructed landscape be after the decline of the civic tradition of modernity? What are the fundamental characteristics of the built environment that can be reinterpreted anew towards a different city? The question is not only Greek. The curatorial interest will insist on the tradition of the modern Greek past that

may lead to the local possible future (that will follow the situation in which Greece is found some years ago) but also drive towards general answers concerning the civic life of the cities of tomorrow. A possible reconstruction of empty city centers, a manual for empty city centers can be based on a research concerning the emptied parts of the Greek city and their fundamental material characteristics. The Greek cities urban transformations seek again the new meaning of an already produced space. Programing new strategies for the future of the Greek cities will be linked to alternative archeologies of the emptied parts of the greek city centers, to their function and to their material status. Greece as the space of archaeology par excellence, the place that programmed its modern future through its glorious past, needs a different archaeology of the modern; it seeks a role for its material urban scene today. Greece could be revisited as an urban research laboratory for future Europe. In this frame the role of legal regulations that created the existing scene (the constitutive role of *polykatoikia* as the typical building and antiparoche as the protocol of the city's expansion during the 50s, 60s, 70s) is pointed out as producing an idiosyncratic, narrative, invisible power of urban material formation. The texts of the laws that determine this complex past and some legal transformations can show together the existing scenery as realization of the law and also some different possible situations that can appear through changes to texts, introducing new urban legal frames.

Η Λειτουργία των Ερειπίων

Αριστείδης Αντονάς

Περιγραφή εγκατάστασης της επιμελητικής πρότασης: λίγοι επιμήκεις αμφιθεατρικά τοποθετημένοι αναβαθμοί - καθιστικό, προθήκες παρουσίασης υλικού από αρχαιολογικές σχολές και από κτίρια του μοντέρνου ελληνικού παρελθόντος που συνδέουν ερείπια και σύγγρονες κατασκευές, προβολές μικρών εύληπτων αποσπασμάτων από επιλεγμένα κείμενα, μακέτες, νέες κατασκευασμένες τομές και κατόψεις υφισταμένων κτισμάτων με επεξεργασία σε photoshop./// Το θέμα The Ruin and The Function (Η Λειτουργία των Ερειπίων) αντιμετωπίζει άμεσα το ζήτημα που θέτει η φετινή επιμέλεια της Biennale. Όχι μόνον γιατι σε κάθε ερείπιο (απαλλαγμένο από χρήσεις κτίσμα) συναντάμε τη δυνατότητα μιας ενατένισης του θεμελιακού (fundamental) χαρακτήρα της αρχιτεκτονικής. Ο επιμελητής της έκθεσης Rem Koolhaas έχει επίσης τονίσει εν σχέσει προς την φετινή διοργάνωση ότι θα αναδείζει ειδικά σε αυτήν στρατηγικές που συνδέουν την αρχιτεκτονική με την διατήρηση του παρελθόντος κτιριακού αποθέματος. Η Ελλάδα είναι η χώρα που εγκαινιάστηκε ως μοντέρνο κράτος υπό το πρίσμα αυτής της σχέσης με το εξιδανικευμένο κτιριακό απόθεμα. Ταυτόχρονα η ειδική της συνθήκη καθιστά τα κέντρα των πόλεών της παραδειγματικά ως προς κάποιο πρόσφατο αστικό απόθεμα που καλείται να επαναπροσδιορίσει μέσα από μια πέρισσότερο παράδοξη αργαιολογία. Το θέμα της επιμέλειας ονομάζει λοιπόν από τη μια πλευρά κάποια αναφορά στην αρχαιότητα και στην

αρχαιολογική προτεραιότητα που έχουν ειδική σημασία για την νέα Ελλάδα: αναδεικνύεται το κτισμένο παρελθόν που αναλογεί στην νέα Ελλάδα ενόσω κτίζεται ως σύγχρονο κράτος και παράλληλα ανασκάπτεται από ξένους και έλληνες αρχαιολόγους. Από την άλλη πλευρά ο τίτλος της έκθεσης αναφέρεται στην σχέση ανάμεσα στην αρχιτεκτονική και την σκηνή της δράσης της εν γένει.///

Παρουσιάζεται δηλαδή από την μια πλευρά υλικό αρχαιολογικής αξίας από αρχαία και μοντέρνα "ερείπια" και από την άλλη περιγράφεται με διάφορους τρόπους η αστική λειτουργία των μεικτών καταστάσεων που προκύπτουν ανάμεσα στο ενίοτε αχρηστευμένο φόντο της πόλης και στις νέες καταστάσεις που μπορεί να φιλοζενεί.///Ζητούμενο είναι να φανεί από την έκθεση η ειδική συνθήκη της νέας ελληνικής πόλης που ενίοτε κτίζεται δίπλα σε ή πάνω από ερείπια. Η έκθεση φιλοδοξεί να αναδείξει ένα αρχιτεκτονικό ζήτημα που σχετίζει τη σκηνή και την δράση στην προοπτική μιας διαφορετικής αστικής θεατρικότητας.///

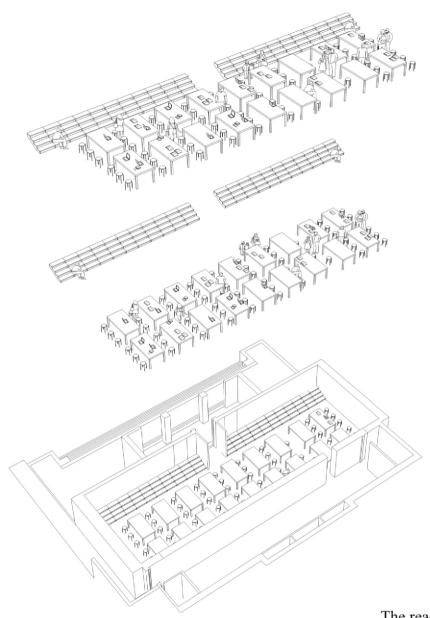
Η συνύπαρξη των δύο καταστάσεων ερείπωσης της αρχαίας και της νέας με τις δράσεις που επισυμβαίνουν γύρω τους συμπλέκονται σε ένα αποτέλεσμα που χρησιμοποιεί υλικό από την ελληνική και τις ξένες αρχαιολογικές σχολές και την πολύ πρόσφατη μοντέρνα βιβλιογραφία της αρχιτεκτονικής, απώνυμη και ανώνυμη.



Archaeologies of the given; display windows



The reading room and the amphitheatric stairs



The reading room and the amphitheatric stairs



Display of unexpected Archaeologies



Display of unexpected Archaeologies



View of the front elevation; scaffold

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