

II

Kopie und Normung

Mimesis and Copyright, or the Rights of Copies

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"The wonder of mimesis lies in the copy drawing on the character and power of the original, to the point whereby the representation may even assume that character and power."

Michael Taussig: *"Mimesis and Alterity"*

II

Architecture is a mimetic practice. It involves the fundamental gestures of producing similarities in modes of dwelling and relies on methods and rules of construction that seem elemental and "nature-given". Theoretical resources such as Marc-Antoine Laugier's enlightenment allegory of the primitive hut aimed to ascertain the understanding of the primordial origins of architecture invoking the mimicry of nature. Yet interestingly, the classicist ideals of returning to a certain purity of design also introduced a culture of the copy which in concerted efforts with newly developed technologies and modes of reproduction achieved a degree of precision and efficiency that threatened to disenchant the mimetic practice of architecture and the creative arts. The copy becomes a reproduction – a media form in itself – referring both to itself and to its original, a part of an endless series of "aura-less" multiplications. Of course, the perfect copy is by definition impossible. Walter Benjamin wrote in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", an essay he stated in 1935 in Paris after he had fled Germany: "Even the most perfect reproduction of a

work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be."¹ The note could be interpreted as movingly resonating with his own displacement, but he continues with his famous remark: "That which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art."² For Benjamin the "authority" or the "aura" of a work of art, or an original is questioned as it is being reproduced mechanically, or formally rather than through a form of mimetic appropriation, a play that would involve both the author of a work of art but also the person who experiences it. In his earlier essay "On the Mimetic Faculty", written in 1933, Walter Benjamin had already perceived a decay of man's "mimetic gift" which lead to the "shattering of tradition".³ What was once at the foundation of occult practices and primordial gestures of mimicking nature, involving both subjects and things, has been lost in the history of human development. Michael Taussig is equally concerned with the loss of magic in mimesis in his groundbreaking book "Mimesis and Alterity". In it he traces the history of the "disenchantment of the capitalist world" through the encounters of "mimetic machines" invented by the Western World as they try to study and capture the Third and Fourth World and begin to disrupt "earlier sympathies which kept the magical economy of mimesis and alterity in some sort of imperial balance".⁴

In what he describes as “sympathetic magic” he points to a mimetic process in which a copy is granted the character and power of the original, the representation of the power of the represented. Benjamin to whom Taussig is devoted in his study described that magic as a momentary merging of the subject and the object: “Thus the coherence of words or sentences is the bearer through which like a flash, similarity appears. For its production by man – like its perception by him – is in many cases, and particularly the most important, limited to flashes. It flits past.” (translated: “... sie huscht vorbei.”)⁵ But, although Benjamin is vehemently critical and scared of seeing artworks, photographs and films becoming available to mass consumer society, he respects photography and film as they allow for this fleeting magical moment in which the lost aura is regained. So technological reproduction not only allows for having copies of originals conveniently at hand, but photographs and recordings, Benjamin asserts, “enable the original to meet the beholder halfway”⁶. As it were, the possibilities of mechanical reproduction, such as enlargements and slow motion, fundamentally change our modes of perceptions and our aesthetic responses to objects. The reproduction makes us revisit the original, but it also brings to light the set of relations in which the object/subject is situated. Hence, while photography can be seen as a way of simplifying reality or controlling spatial complexity, it is precisely this reductive and selective quality that brings aspects of a scene to particular attention. Benjamin argued in “A Short History of Photography” that rather than going to study buildings on site – as the conventional wisdom recommended – architecture students should look at photographs, which “can bring out those aspects of the original that are unattainable to the naked eye yet accessible to the lens, which is adjustable and chooses its angle at will.”⁷ As he put it later: “photography opens up in this material the physiognomic aspects of the worlds of images, which reside in the smallest details, clear and

yet hidden enough to have found shelter in daydreams.”⁸ The photograph therefore functions in two distinct ways, each with their own political associations and implications: on the one hand, it is a medium of “death”; on the other, a tool for simplifying a constantly changing and complex reality. These are the characteristics that enable photography to capture neglected details and to make sense of unfathomable mundanities that would otherwise elude us. For that matter, reproductions make the original more approachable. The beholder can appropriate it. A Dubai tower can exist as a poster in a dentist’s waiting room. A family can wake up to the arias of Maria Callas. But those reproductions also detach the reproduced object from the domain of tradition and convention. When Benjamin speaks about the “shattering of tradition” in the context of mechanical reproduction he carefully alludes to the potential of contemporary visual practices to be able to refigure vision and essentially transform society. Interestingly as the agency is here with the objects alone, perhaps one could speculate further that the reproduced objects can work somehow politically. Benjamin, in 1936 already personally threatened by Nazi propaganda and horrified by the automatism of mass consumption appears ambiguous and doubtful about conditions of total reproductions. Reading Benjamin, Boris Groys points out “when the reproduction becomes total, the demand for the original aura loses any meaning”⁹. Groys distinguishes between two processes of reproduction: One process is topologically determined, guaranteeing the continuity of the original in time (i.e. through restoration of an icon in a church). The other process is uncontrollable, topologically undetermined, a diasporic distribution of the work in the profane sphere. The latter then could be rather a process of production than a reproduction. The diasporic copy can be seen as the result of a creative process that produced a “new original”.¹⁰ “Whether a diasporic copy is described as a copy or as an original is thus not a question of knowledge, but rather of acknowledgement – a question

of political, or rather theological-political decision." Accordingly the "new original" would have the ability to show the Other in a new and unexpected way as an "unthought-of Other".¹¹

Diasporic architectures

A study by the Renaissance scholars Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood might exemplify a diasporic distribution of whole architectural elements, even buildings that also claim to have become originals. In their book "Anachronic Renaissance", Nagel and Wood discussed in fascinating detail how in Rome medieval icons and models became "ersatz originals" at the very moment when they began to be intensively copied. "[...] The copying created them as originals.[...] Until then they had been nothing more than models."¹² This is exemplified in the myth of the flying house of the Virgin Mary which after the fall of the Roman Kingdom of Jerusalem, had been carried by angels and deposited first in today's Croatia and then near to today's Loreto in Italy where it was relocated on a hill to make it a suitable site for a permanent location of pilgrimage. The authors describe how the model in Loreto had in fact been "generated from a single cartload of spoliated building modules" which have received their sanctity through a process of conversion "by contagion" which allows copies to become real relics. When in the 15th century the structure in Loreto generated its own copies, chapels and churches were dedicated to Santa Maria of Loreto, the authors write: "a new network of virtual holy houses all over Italy had the effect of devirtualizing the Loreto structure: the status of the house as a referential model of the original house, incorporating a few relics and a cult image, gave way finally to the idea of a house relic."¹³

Although not quite perfect copies, these architectural spolia apparently resisted the loss of their aura, or even more so they claim to have become original of sorts. A similar line of argument intended to "clear up some of Benjamin's deep fog of art-historical mysticism"¹⁴ was used by Bruno

Latour and Adam Lowe in their discussion of the replica of Veronese's *Nozze di Cana* that was installed in the Fondazione Cini on the island of San Giorgio in Venice in 2007. Lowe's workshop Factum Arte was commissioned to produce a facsimile of the original painting hanging in the Louvre in Paris. In 1797 when Napoleon conquered Venice, he ordered to tear down the huge painting which Veronese had painted for Palladio's refectory and in which its painted architecture created a perfect *trompe l'oeil* effect. The facsimile was minutely recorded by a specially invented 3D-scanning technique and various photographic inquisitions into the very texture of the brush strokes, the tear marks and exact colors. The data then was used to instruct a special printer that would deposit pigments with high accuracy onto pieces of canvas that were later glued together and retouched by a team of conservators. Despite these various digital and mechanical operations, Latour and Lowe argued not only that the facsimile is a painting, but also, in contrast to Benjamin's argument, that the copy even enhances the originality of the original. Pointing to today's restoration undertakings that take deliberate decisions about what should be added or removed, their analysis begins not with the question of the copy, but rather doubts the unique existence of an original. The copy is argued to be "a stage in the verification of Veronese's achievement, a part of the painting's ongoing biography."¹⁵ The object is argued to exist in what they call "a trajectory". Along this trajectory it is possible, precisely because we can use mechanical and digital reproduction techniques, to retrieve the aura from the flow of copies. What needs to be overcome is the "stubborn persistence that makes the association of a place, an original, and some aura impossible to shed."¹⁶

Whether a work is a "good" or a "bad" reproduction is decided by its quality, the amount of care, and the intensity of the search for the originality that goes from one version to the next: "The distance between version n ("the original") and version n+1 ("a mere copy") depends just as much on the differential efforts, costs,

and techniques as on any such substantial distinction."¹⁷

The idea to expand the notion of the original or of the original location might come particularly handy if we consider the politics in which copies and originals have been enmeshed. Even if it was argued that Napoleon had in fact saved the Veronese painting from the Protestant iconoclasts, Venetians have, since the theft, felt that they had the right to reclaim it. Would the installation of the replica now put an end to this claim? Similarly Athens recently opened the New Acropolis Museum that was specially designed to display the Elgin Marbles exactly as they appeared on the original temple. Occasionally the debate revives over whether the written agreement between Lord Elgin and the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire is a fake and whether the British Museum should not return the marbles. Similarly, the throne room of Ashurnasirpal II in Nimrud, another project conducted by Factum Arte was copied in astounding detail. Adam Lowe's workshop produced facsimiles of the many fragments of the tomb that have been spread to the British Museum, Pergamon Museum in Berlin, the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, The Sackler Collection at Harvard University and The Art Museum at Princeton University. The commission came from an idea for an exhibition that intended to reunite the fragments, including those which had remained on the original site in Iraq. Something seems doubled here. Would it not make sense if all collections send the originals back to Iraq so that the friezes could be glanced in their original beauty and mastery? Surely most museums would not agree to send those precious originals to a war-torn country. The work with facsimiles makes the impossible reunification possible, and again it is acts of love and scientific passion that initiate and realise these complex and expensive projects. And yet, to some degree the possibility of reproduction functions as an agent in a historical bias. This can also be seen in the replica of the tomb of Tutankhamun which Factum Arte completed in 2010 and was intended to be installed in early 2011. As a result of

the political changes in Egypt this gigantic structure that was to be shown to tourists so that the original could be protected, had to remain in a warehouse storage in an industrial area outside of Madrid. The replica awaits until today more peaceful times and somehow the withering of its own aura. (Reportedly most noticeable is the current decay of the plaster of the replica that has to undergo the harsh temperature changes in Spain.)

Let me now start from a different point of view, and interrogate the concept of "agency" in relation to the culture of the copy. It is contemporary copyright that has an agency in regulating the reproduction of objects and pieces of architecture. Here I will particularly examine the relation between modern perceptions of "diasporic copies" and large-scale, global, seemingly indiscriminate replications of architecture as they have become possible through new technologies of reproduction, new international (political) influence and potential modes and practices that cope with those. In an earlier research I looked at "architectural doppelgängers", which aimed to apply a figure often used in Romantic literature and imagination to architecture and architectural copying.¹⁸ While in literature the lives of protagonists are being intruded by the appearance of doubles, often haunted and pushed out of their routines, doppelgängers of buildings frequently perplex. Some are immediately rejected; some seem bizarre, fascinating and not quite believable. The spectacular takes form in the figure of the double. It functions reliably as general amusement, as a present for wives and mistresses, as love-letter or guilty note – built in stone.¹⁹ But the doppelgänger is also experienced as something uncanny, a ghost or potential precursor of imminent death. Architectural doppelgängers are usually found far apart from each other, more so, they emerge out of a condition of distance. Often they appear to be produced in a kind of shadow economy without exact records, no statistics, no "central" planning agency, no archive, no lawyers. Architectural copies can be easily ignored, or dismissed as low art, or appear irrelevant for truly disturbing

the nature and esteem of the “original”. For the haunted heroes of modern writers such as Poe, Wilde, Nabokov and Borges the unbearable condition of being doubled could only end in the death of one.²⁰

While in modern fiction the doppelgänger had to be murdered to escape the threat of replication, modern copyright law was set in place to control and regulate such crimes in the field of culture. Copying, I here posit, is a cultural form that is the most fundamental basis for media. The “culture of the copy” is the changing relation – technological, critical, material and digital – that we have with all sorts of reproductive artificial forms. Law is often lagging behind the reality that it seeks to regulate and so was also the case with the various modes of copying. Seeking to comprehend, harness and regulate ever-new innovations in reproductive forms, the law was itself challenged to such extent that the culture of the copy and that of law co-evolved. Although this essay cannot fully capture its implications and history, it aims to initiate an examination on the relation between copying and its limits as defined by law. While the culture of the copy embraces the vast potential and abundance of ideas about how variations and expressions of an original can find new forms of existence, the question for its legal limits is posed with attempts to regulate something that always threatens to break out of control. Also, I hope to theorize and contextualize some of the findings that developed from my own proposal of critical appropriation and copying of an architectural project by the Viennese architect Adolf Loos which unexpectedly revealed a complex dynamic of previously little known ownership disputes in the Loos estate²¹ (Fig. 1). In the following I would like to sketch out some of the potential meeting points of copyright law as it reacted to or shaped the development of modern architecture.

Architecture and Copyright

Copyright is generally understood as the consequence of a certain conferring of an identity of a maker on an object, a thing, a structured assemblage, or a building. It is

the right to copy, replicate, duplicate and receive the financial benefits of this act. In every period copyright reflects differently on the existing means of production and reproduction, and on our relation to auratic or less auratic multiplications.²²

Calling for the law might well restrict the unhampered freedom of copying in its various forms. But the decision whether a copy can be permitted or prohibited is made as an interplay between the right of an individual originator and a form of collectivity or the common. Copyright disputes put into motion a complex interplay between authors, art experts, lawyers and activists, rarely the authors who have produced originals (often these disputes are post mortem) as well as of surviving relatives who might seek financial benefit or the ethos of an estate. Such disputes bring also private or political interests – a society’s relation to art – into visibility. The relation to copying thus functions as a barometer of sorts, framing both the condition of the subjects of copyright as well as the technologies of their production. Architects have been involved in copyright disputes but being site and budget specific architecture design projects do usually not lend themselves easily to copying as other creative productions. However modern architecture started offering the technological possibilities of type and reproduction. In fact, seen in a historical perspective on the development of design technologies one could argue that the emergence of modern architecture coincides with the development of copyright law, at a moment when modernism sought to distance the author from authorship, the building from uniqueness, and potentially to undo the individual from mass production. The development of modern architecture, its production, seriality and export across seas and that of laws of copyright are necessarily entangled. Perhaps one could even say that it was copyright law that “allowed” architecture to be copied, replicated, mass produced and exported across the world.

As such, new copyright regulations appear exactly at the moment when new practices and new architectural works are reacting to and advance the condition of modernity.

What makes the copy, and in particular the architectural copy, so interesting is to think of it as quintessentially as modern as concrete or steel frames are for architecture, as the print, the photograph, the film or the digital file are for media – that is, as the elements that turn things – physical objects and imaginary objects – into media. Copyright applies of course to all intellectual work, including architecture.

3D Scanning/ printing technologies

Contemporary architecture presents copyright law with a set of new challenges. We can currently observe a fascinating variety of copying techniques that produce reproductions, replicas, appropriations and architectural doppelgängers that challenge the legal confines of the profession, but also reframe the place of objects in history and in contemporary events. New digital production and fabrication started regarding material copying as media forms. The possibility to store and re-store information about objects digitally has made it possible to approximate “originals” in ways that were unthinkable until very recently. Both computer-generated and parametric work put pressure on the notion of authorship and ownership. Mechanical modes of design and fabrication are challenged by new techniques for producing difference in serial formations. This also refers to modes of architectural survey. LIDAR scanners can now capture the 3D reality of entire buildings down to a fraction of a millimeter. Employed in tandem with 3D printers, this means that, if a system to automate the scanner-printer duo existed – buildings could finally reproduce themselves endlessly and at varying scales. This is not science fiction – various construction companies such as WinSun in Suzhou in China experiment already with 3D printing technology for constructing buildings from rubble. Perhaps what 3D printers are already able to achieve, could become a feature of architecture: self-replication. This does not only challenge the figure of the author, but also the agency of objects. In the field of preservation and the

protection of cultural heritage sites, the new techniques of capturing objects and making them available for a potential reconstruction raise new questions about the implications of the intentions of preservationists and agents of national heritage, for example in the restoration projects of destroyed cultural heritage sites, such as the ancient temple of Palmyra that was destroyed in Syria in 2015. The triangulation of photographs by professional archaeologists, as well as crowd sourced tourist material online allows for processes of ortho-photography that can reconstruct precise 3D models, no longer with the need for sophisticated laser scanners. In this context inadvertent tourist images become instruments not of documentation but of restoration.

Another form of tourism to historical sites and museums might soon also involve what the two artists Nora al-Badri and Jan Nikolai Nelles recently explored when they produced a 3D printed copy of a bust of Queen Nefertiti, one of the famous exhibits in the Neues Museum in Berlin. For the artists the reproduction of the bust that they brought to Cairo, was meant as a counter theft aimed to support the claims of Egyptian authorities that wish for the repatriation of the original and the leaving behind of a copy in Berlin. The artistic project also revealed that the Neues Museum not only owns the bust, it also insists on owning its copyrights (on behalf of its Egyptian makers). The process of repatriation, or to begin with the dispute over its potential illegal reproduction, will thus not only involve the over 100 year old origin of the busts, the over 100 years old story of its dislocation from a tomb in 1912, the story of its two restorations in 1952 and in 2010, but also the copyrights for its reproduction that are now granted by the reproduction department of the Neues Museum. This story shows that the various iterations of objects – now in the area of available-digital-object-reproduction appropriated and copied, are not only about the “trajectory” or “biography” of hard objects, as Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe argued,²³ but also about the murky and elastic reality of copyright law that replicates its own claims and entitlements.

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The emergence of the “copyleft” – a form of licensing that offers anyone the right to distribute copies while maintaining the original authorship – around the turn of the 1990s was a response to the digital culture and the perceived inability to regulate copying. Copyleft applies mainly to software, music and text, however, so far, no equivalent practice has been applied to architecture. However, it should – at least it is easy to imagine how it could be immediately applied to elements and details that can be reproduced by printers. The reason for these things not to have yet emerged is not only the inherent propriety of the architecture profession – so indebted, structurally to the idea of property, but because, for that matter, copyright and modes of its critical appropriation have not been sufficiently debated in the context of architectural history and law. But radical practices are beginning to emerge in the field. Certainly for architects already working at the “frontiers” of liminal spaces opening copyright over printable good design might be interested to work again creatively with the potentials of new digital reproductions rather than endlessly reproducing and celebrating the contours of vernacular architecture that is anyway available to people in these zones. Physical printability and copying could indeed become a critical intervention in economical and cultural production, like to democratization and circulation of essential medical drugs in places that could not afford them. It now becomes, more than ever, a pressing necessity to understand contemporary conflicts between copy technologies and copyright, for they engage fundamental questions about who has the right to participate in culture. Who owns it – on behalf of whom and who can benefit? Of course the law is set up to support those in power to protect their interests and property and thus committed architects and theorists will have to seek to break these bonds.

Copyright in the global culture of the copy

What makes modern copyright so difficult to implement is that copyright has to be

differentiated across both time and space. It is applied differently in different countries and has evolved across time. Wars, catastrophes, and migrations have created a world society that has to be reflected also in copyright law that replicates its own claims and entitlements.

In modern international copyright law that evolved in the late 19th century, of course as part of the increased political frictions between nation-states, the state defines the rights of authors both in their lifetime and beyond death. Copyright is applied in accordance with the country in which the author is a citizen, but not outside of its borders. The Bern Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works of 1886 was initiated by an appeal by a group of authors famously led by Victor Hugo. It was the first international agreement to protect primarily the rights of writers. After further meetings in Bern in 1896, in Berlin in 1908, in Bern in 1914, and a concluding meeting in Rome in 1928, the convention dealt with not only works from the literary world but also from the scientific and artistic domain, including musical compositions, drawings, paintings, and only very late with photography and architecture. Further meetings followed in 1948 (Brussels), 1967 (Stockholm), and 1971 (Paris). In 1988, the US joined the convention, allying it to some degree with US copyright law. The most important achievement of the convention was that authors and artists became automatically protected – without the need for “registering” their claims, and it defines that the signatories recognize the copyright laws of other countries in the same way they would recognize the copyright of their own citizens. In this series of revisions to the conventions and in the expanding list of countries that signed it, one can begin to comprehend a well-traceable shadow of the ever more complex and expanding global exchange of goods as well as ideas.

Particularly interesting for this discussion here on the history of protection of architecture in copyright law, is that the difficulty for its adoption was similar to that of photography. Still in the 1910s architecture was doubted as being eligible for copyright

protection. Especially with the expansion projects of modernist housing estates and settlements and the outlook to its potential mass production, such as in the Garden City movement in England, it was argued that architecture had not enough artistic merit to be protected. Similarly up until 1908 photography was doubted to be worth protection through the law. Seemingly, the mechanic reproduction of reality through the shutter of a camera corresponded to the casts and moulds of concrete that – so the experts at the time argued – could not possibly leave a trace of subjectivity on its products. Legal scholar Bernard Edelman has shown how in nineteenth-century France photographs were at first considered to be mere mechanical reproductions of reality, and hence in the public domain. It was only when photography became accepted as an artistic practice that it received legal protection and “the real as object in law [became] susceptible to appropriation, sale and contracts”²⁴. Coincidentally when it was privatized, considered artistic and protected by the law, photography became also suspected of “stealing the soul” essentially turning persons into things.²⁵ Whereas debates about the artistic value of photography took decades to accept that the mechanically reproduced image contains traces of the subject and thus a proprietary relation to copyright, discussions to do with the replication of objects in three dimensions seem to take a different trajectory. The cast courts in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London explored a completely different relation to objects than the British Museum, only a short distance away. While the British Museum had to conquer, raid, dismantle, ship, rail and recompose the actual monuments and artefacts stolen or collected from across the Empire, the cast court took a much more contemporary attitude towards reproduction. In the hands of the Italian artists, wax experts and plasterers, the monuments they copied became a media form. Yet, their reproduction soon gave rise to legal disputes about their ownership. In a particularly enlightening essay Mari

Lending shows how already shortly after the death of the prominent master caster practicing in London, Domenico Brucciani, in 1880, the company that continued the business of Brucciani & Company, began to file lawsuits against competitors who tried to make new molds from casts that the heirs of Brucciani had sold after the masters death.²⁶ These “copyrighted copies”, Lending states, got their ground-ing in a legal initiative led by Henry Cole, director of the South Kensington Museum (from 1899, Victoria and Albert Museum) which was signed by fifteen European crown princes during the 1867 International Exhibition in Paris, only a year after Hugo’s first public claim for the protection of copyright. Cole’s “Convention for Promoting Universally Reproductions of Works of Art for the Benefit of Museums of All Countries” in which he aimed to encourage the production of monuments in media such as casts, electrotypes, and photographs still ignored the requests of Hugo or those of the heirs of Brucciani.²⁷ The discussion about the potential mass-production of plaster-casts for the preservation of historic monuments, only precedes the characteristic reproducibility that the modern concrete cast will enable. One could argue that the numerous revisions to copyright laws, such as the Bern Convention, were stimulated and shaped by political, economic, and cultural shifts that were themselves often inspired by new creative works and technological innovations. Since the communication and computation revolution starting at the end of the last century, copyright issues could rarely be exclusively resolved within a single country. This does not only relate to the expansions of global design culture, new accesses to work online or to global media forums, but also to the architects working abroad, migrating, and to the multiple passports they may hold. The nature of these controversies could be traced back to the era of early modernism before WWI. This threshold period of a new architectural era in which media, new building technology and techniques of mass-production started to emerge also saw the development of copyright and

intellectual properties laws. Early debates around these laws were also entangled in new geo-political developments.

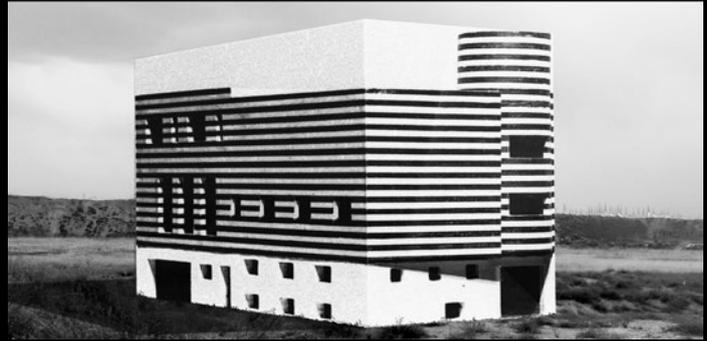
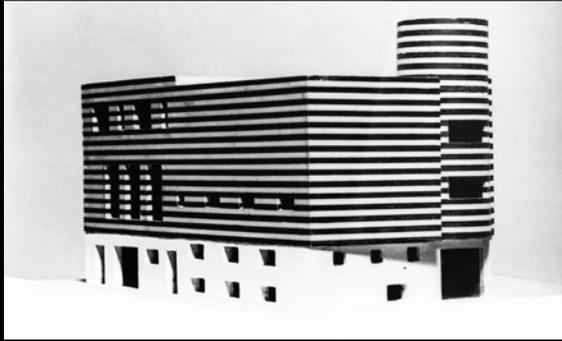
“No more original genii”

In 1914 Adolf Loos wrote an article titled “Heimatkunst” (Vernacular Art). The style of this essay, as most of his writing, reads like a lecture note, or a transcript. And indeed, he had given a talk with the same title in 1912 to the Akademischer Architekten Verein (Academic Architects Union) in Vienna.²⁸ After some lengthy reflection on foreign influence of new Italian and German architectures in Vienna and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he surprisingly concludes with an appeal to architects not to aim for originality, but to rather repeat themselves, making their houses look like one another. Loos, otherwise understood as nonconforming modernist who aimed to confront Viennese culture and its bourgeois conservatism presents himself here as a worrying traditionalist “frightened” that architects subscribe to German building magazines and disregards “imports from Magdeburg and Essen to Vienna”, or what he called also “Munichisation”. Loos rejects both, the decadence of “reproducing old styles”, but also this other new strand of modernist “transparent glass houses which betray their interiors already from far”²⁹. Strangely, at a time when the Austro-Hungarian Empire is entering the shattering experience of the First World War, Loos tries to defend his “native country” with vernacular architecture, that is “always readily at hand and no one should be afraid to use it”³⁰.

In 1921 Loos filed a patent for “House with one Wall” which describes a method of construction in which a concrete party wall already bears the horizontal timber joists for the floors and the facades without the need for a foundation for the two facades. His invention, he writes, will be cost-effective, reducing the materials and labour and will “enable the construction of cheap dwelling houses or of buildings to be used as business/storage/factory premises or for agricultural, military or other functional

purposes.”³¹ The scheme for these small, simple two-floor row houses that could be mass-produced seems to realize Loos’ vision of reproduction without originality that would not only present a bulwark against foreign influence, but also would gain him royalties, perhaps a steady income that he at the time so dearly needed. Modernism, Svetlana Boym so eloquently argued, coevals with nostalgia. She called it “a historical emotion that is a symptom of our age”.³² Nostalgia as a wrongly, or impartially remembered and celebrated past has been a powerful incentive for all sorts of historicist gestures in the history of modernity which currently with the new technological abilities of reconstruction have gained new ground.

Some, like Mies van der Rohe’s Barcelona Pavilion or his recently rediscovered Villa Wolf of 1926 in Gubin on the German-Polish border that a lobby of entrepreneurs and enthusiasts for reconstruction projects branded as “Ur-Villa of modernism” began with archaeological digs on the place of their original sites. Others, such as the Basilica of Our Lady of Peace in the outskirts of Yamoussoukro, the capital city of Côte d’Ivoire celebrate the replica of St Peter’s Basilica in Rome like a spolia of holiness that not only was to surpass the dimensions of the original in an almost all-concrete structure, but also is meant to work as a powerful tool to politically assure the influence of the Catholic Church in the country. Or yet others, such as my own projects of an architectural re-enactment of Adolf Loos’ villa for Josephine Baker in 2008 used the dislocation of the architectural object to China as necessary distance to reflect on the state of the archive and its disputed ownerships “at home” (in that case, France and Austria), but also aimed to celebrate the end of the copyright protection term of 75 years after the death of the architect that allowed architecture to become public property. The question about the owner of the intellectual rights, or about the ownership of an object brings both the nature of the “copy” and the “original” into a new perspective.



1 House Josephine Baker, Paris (1928) Architect: Adolf Loos. An architectural re-enactment by Ines Weizman and Andreas Thiele for Ordos 100, 2008.

Notes

- 1 Benjamin, Walter: *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, in: Benjamin, Walter: *Illuminations, Essays and Reflections*, New York 1968, p. 220.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 221.
- 3 Benjamin, Walter: *On the Mimetic Faculty*, in: Benjamin, Walter: *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, New York 1978, p. 333.
- 4 Taussig, Michael T.: *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*, New York / London 1993, p. XVIII.
- 5 Benjamin 1978 (as footnote 3), p. 335.
- 6 Benjamin 1968 (as footnote 1), p. 220.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 Benjamin, Walter: *A Short History of Photography*, in: *Artforum* 15, 6, 1977/02, pp. 46–61.
- 9 "Anyone will be able to observe how much more easily a painting and above all, a sculpture, or architecture can be grasped in photographs than in reality.": *ibid.*, p. 46.
- 10 Groys, Boris: *Introduction to Antiphilosophy*, London 2012, pp. 102–3.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 104.
- 12 Nagel, Alexander / Wood, Christopher S.: *Anachronic Renaissance*, New York 2010, p. 202.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 Latour, Bruno / Lowe, Adam: *The migration of the aura or how to explore the original through its facsimiles*, in: Bartscherer, Thomas (ed.): *Switching Codes*, University of Chicago 2010, p. 281.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 283.
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