

The Politics of Managerialism

The Performative Turn in Typological Thinking and its Post-Critical Instrumentalization

Abstract

The subject matter of this article is the recent return of typological thinking in the circle of post-critics. Here, typology was to be recovered as architectural performance rather than as architectural form, and Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting's idealization of the performativity of Bentham's panoptical prison set the standard for an instrumentalization of typology in the service of efficiency.

This article attempts to chart this new territory with a critical eye to the ethical and aesthetic consequences of the performative and post-critical turn in typological thinking, focusing on Alejandro Zaera Polo's enterprise as a case in point. In *The Politics of the Envelope: A Political Critique of Materialism* (2008), he outlined a new theory of architecture anchored in the performative range of the building envelope and its ever-expanding technological sophistications.

Yet this move authorized a radical instrumentalization and politicization of typology, this proposed paper argues. Zaera Polo's scheme does not lead to the re-politicizing of the discipline of architecture, but rather to architecture's submission to managerial demands, and, in turn, to the triumph of managerialism over politics.

In contrast, theorists such as Pier Vittorio Aureli regard the city as the scene proper for architectural type formation. This leads to a concluding discussion of the role of the city in contemporary type formation in times of urbanization and globalization.

Keywords

Building Envelope, Performative Architecture, Typology, Managerialism, Alejandro Zaera Polo