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the political plastic.

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Fulcrum: How would you describe forensic architecture?

Eyal Weizman: Forensic architecture refers to people like property surveyors, who give advice in court in relation to property disputes over legal matters concerning property. But within that term there is fantastic potential to expand the scope of what architecture can do in the world today. The word forensic has gone through a kind of vulgar popularisation that can make us forget that forensics refers to the latin forensis, the art of the forum, the ability and skill to present issues in front of public assemblies. This is how Roman orators understood the term.

It includes, in fact, the presentation of material objects and spaces. For architects this is a question of its tools of representation – of images, drawings, maps, model technologies and, significantly, the public discussion around that issue within a form of political, juridical, or professional assembly.

Forensic people are those that speak on behalf of material things. I think it's clear that in terms of architecture spatial analysis is becoming the pathology of our era, in the sense that we increasingly understand the state of contemporary politics by looking at the thick surface of the earth: at destroyed buildings, at systems of infrastructure, at the earth and meteorology above. For example, we're so often looking at sat pictures of Iran and trying to detect the presence or excess earth as an indicator of a nuclear process presumably being built in the ground underneath. Or we're looking at dwindling nature reserves in satellite imagery and their pattern of vegetation change and making decisions as for the consequence of illegal pollution, or scorch earth tactics, or on the scale of the planet on climate change.

As much as forensic architecture is about an analysis of spatial

conditions it is also about thinking the forums of today, it is about the creation and fabrication of new forums in which these bits of architectural research can be performed and discussed. It's both a diagnostic technique and projective architectural one, that implies that we must conceive of and build new forums for new types of political process and deliberations.

F: The subject of politics within architectural discourse is often misunderstood, or, worse, aestheticised. You said, "architecture is politics and politics is architecture." What then is architecture for you?

EW: To be more precise, I said architecture is the political plastic, in that it rearticulates relations between political forces and material forms. This is operating on all levels of analysis, the detail, architecture, geopolitical, urban – in fact I don't think it makes sense to speak of scales any more – because sometimes small interventions have the greatest impact by expanding their networks of relations and association. Architecture is politics in matter. Like a diagram of sorts, the arrangement and disposition of matter across a terrain becomes the starting point for reading political forces.

Your question about aestheticisation is very important, but there's no way to bypass aesthetics. Politics exists as a sort of an aesthetic operation, following perhaps Jacques Rancière, as what can be seen or sensed and our ability to speak and discuss it. Aesthetics being the field of the sensible or the visible. So when new issues, that had no business being seen or heard, now can be seen, now can enter into the field of perception, new kind of deliberations can also occur and be developed. In forensic terms, there is always an aestheticisation of politics in its presentation or representation. You present a particular issue, you represent a building, a landscape, a ruin, a geological cross section, etc, you seek decisions to be taken on the basis of it, and you have an aesthetic/political intervention.

The relation between politics and aesthetics is incredibly important to understand, and I do not think this relation in itself is vulgar, although I think it can be vulgarised.

F: You explore a very ancient relation between architecture and war, one traversing Vitruvius to the Renaissance quite directly. What does your work reveal about this relationship today, between war and architecture, between war and urbanisation? Can we see this relationship beyond the zones where conflict is directly taking place, as a more latent condition?

EW: I think the urban condition is one of conflict. Urbanism is not only the condition of heterogeneity, multiplicity or density, it's the turning of conflict into form. The condition of the urban is one that creates a proximity of conflicts; these conflicts are sometimes violent, but most often not. Latent. Mostly they are articulated as commercial, financial interests against political ones, in which force shapes form.

All the way down to the Cold and Second World War, the military perceived the city as a homogenous area in terms of its political alliance. When the Allies bombed Bremen or Hamburg, they considered everyone in them as contributing to a certain political project, the Nazi state, let's say.

THESE DAYS MILITARIES UNDERSTAND THE CITY AS A FIELD OF LATENT CONFLICT. NOT A SINGLE BODY DRAFTED INTO A POLITICAL CAUSE, BUT A POLITICAL BODY RUPTURED BY ITS INTERNAL CONFLICTS: ETHNIC, SECTARIAN, RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, OR FINANCIAL INTERESTS. THEREFORE MILITARY VIOLENCE IN THE CITY IS UNDERSTOOD AS VIOLENCE THAT ENTERS A FIELD ALREADY SATURATED BY VIOLENCE.

It's come to precipitate and open fissures within this field. It's a violence on violence. Using contemporary, perhaps postmodern theories the military tries to develop a subtle understanding of the multiple unstable networks that compose the city, how a certain sociology or

anthropology of the urban exists in interaction with the built fabric. The city is not only buildings, it's complex layers of social fabrics. And therefore the violence that is inserted into it is the projection of kinetic energy into the delicate field of social relations.

F: You mentioned that scale is no longer relevant as a means of grasping the conditions of our world today. In that sense, you hint at a critique of disciplinary boundaries – those we are accustomed to associating with a particular scale. Architecture deals with the building; geography deals with the territory; geopolitics with the state, etc. How do you view the contemporary discourse of architecture? What do you see as its shortcomings or potentials?

EW: I think that disciplinary boundaries are traditionally constructed limits on the making and development of knowledge. The problems that we look at never surrenders to these borders of the mind, or of discourse, the problem always traverses scales. So I think it's no novelty to say we must rewire the disciplinary networks in order to get at what we need to deal with. If I'm looking at violence and built matter I must understand technologies of communication, media; I need to understand how buildings are constructed; how cities operate sociologically and physically; I need to understand about munitions. Are these things external to architecture? All those things belong to different scales and to different disciplines, and we must be able to let the problems draw the frame of its analysis, rather than cut the frame of analysis into the problem and around what we know. That might mean that we have to embrace the ever shifting relations between the level of materials details, technologies and the geopolitics of global flows and international relations.

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