

The carp and the rabbit, by François Roche

Opening of satellite of Pompidou Center, Metz, 11 may 2010.

Guiheux-Migayrou and Guignol-Rambert walk arm in arm, flaunting their self-satisfaction. That's not the least of the day's paradoxes, but it's especially intriguing: these two fake figureheads, each seemingly so unlike the other, exposing themselves in the sun lights. After all, the former lives shut away in his refinery, fearing to face a world he can only see through the filters of the past, the battles that brought him the Pompidou scepter, and the latter... well, we're still wondering what exactly he's good for, aside from his promised and proclaimed servility... isn't open cowardice a performative act in today's society?

But the most surprising thing is to see the former, who once (long ago) was a pioneer, so fully assuming his present role of conservator, acting like the museum equivalent of a nightclub bouncer or a cop.

In a position to write history,[1] he exploits it, helping make it congeal and turn to stone, with the illusion and fantasy of classification... something between a Creationist entomologist and the malicious comeback of an ambushing Alphonse Bertillon...

He who freezes the future of things condemns them to never come to be, even if that's done with sophistication and diligence, and decorated with an encyclopedic knowledge, and all the more so if the futile and fabricated demonstration of power is unfolded with the virtuosity of a wannabe philosopher, bitter that he has never been able to extricate himself from the royal armchair that has slowly and malignantly smothered him. That's not harmless.

Anyway, here we are in this garrison city, with the carp and the rabbit strolling arm in arm, proud of their young friendship, with undisguised pleasure... or perhaps avowed obscenity.

How did these two come to form such a perfect union? What a coup – joining together one figure who gained legitimacy through the emergence of the Orléans FRAC (regional art center), standing on – and sucking the blood of – a generation of auteurs, in order to get them to commit voluntary euthanasia in his suicide opus Non-Standard, and another, a minor water-bearer in professional circles (from editor of the monthly D'Architectures to head of the Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine), a man about whom there's not much to say, except to mention his marvelous affability, like the devoted vizier in the Iznogoud comics, a question of character and calling. These two might seem an unlikely match unless you happen to know them personally. In fact, they were made for each other's... cupidity.

What is the quiddity of their coitus non-interruptus? Of their wedding night? You tell me. It was the kiss of death at the eponymous institution: the grand ceremony as Claude Parent[2] was lowered into his coffin by the same man who helped liquidate him 20 years before, Jean Nouvel.

A clever move to take the whole pot. The two accomplices not only coolly planned out the whole thing, they claimed the prize as the dowry due them for their embrace.

It's open all week, so come one come all. The lip-smacking prospect of a (funhouse mirror) show bringing together the little water carrier and the pseudo-philosopher using radical architecture to rehabilitate the Boomers, on the backs of those they spit on and those they silence to keep their powers of postmodern creativity as the admen that they are.

It's what's known as the strategy of the carp and the rabbit: power, glory, treason and mediocrity in the palace of the republic.

No need to say another word about the Metz show, no sir. The architecture room is as mortiferous as they are. A cadaver (not so exquisite) and a series of tombstones, as gray as they are... as desperately gray as death... and scale models refurbished for the occasion. Like the portrait gallery in a castle whose owner suffers from Alzheimer's. Double-dealing hypocrites and double agents.

Architecture has nothing to do with what they make it. But their union is sacred and consummated. In France today, architecture is in their "dirty hands."

On this May afternoon in the year 2010, Guilheux-Migayrou and Guignol-Rambert skipped the light fantastic at the Shigeru Ban.

Over the canopy hovered the specters of Frei Otto and Cecil Balmond, opening their cape like Mephisto in the Murnau movie, and what that cape covered and hid was labyrinthine, heterotopic and above all designed by Hans Poelzig....But more on that another time.

Glossary

- "To marry the carp and the rabbit" is a french expression meaning a union of two people (often politicians) who don't belong together.
- Frederic Migayrou is the actual director of the architecture department at the Pompidou Center.
- Alain Guilheux was the previous director of the architecture department at the Pompidou Center.
- Francis Rambert is the actual director of the Chaillot architecture center
- Guignol was a puppet conceived by Laurent Mourguet in 1808.
- Alphonse Bertillon was a 19th-century criminologist and physiognomist. The latter word is used in French for a nightclub bouncer.
- Non-Standard Architecture was an exhibition curated by Frédéric Migayrou at the Pompidou Center in 2005.
- Dirty Hands, a 1948 play by Jean-Paul Sartre.
- Iznogoud was a 1960s series of comic books by René Goscinny and Jean Tabary.

- Jean Nouvel is a so-called “international” architect beloved by Boomers.
- Claude Parent is a radical architect.
- Pseudo : du grec pseudês ψευδής: false.
- Frei Otto and Cecil Balmond, structural architect and engineer.
- Faust, by Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, 1926.
- Hans Peolzig, architect, 1869/1936.

 [1] For someone (FM) who dreamed of being – and could have become – a Michel Ragon, Reyner Banham... and some others more actual.... the fall isn't so much painful as monetizable... in these parts.

[2] Perhaps Claude parent dreamed of it, both of the hilt of his sword [as a member of the Académie française] and of being resuscitated by Iago, haunted by the ghost of Orson Wells. JN has the stature of a traitor, and that's not the smallest compliment. We recognize his talent.