



Spatial Examination of Constructivist Architecture on the Basis of Utopia and Reality

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Abstract

After the 1917 October Revolution, Vladimir Tatlin developed the novel idea of integrating artistic creation into the bigger scope of production. This theory was expressed with emphasize on real materials in real space. The display of the Monument to the Third International in 1920 marked a turning point and constructivism became the USSR's main stream artistic and architecture style. Taking the Monument to the Third International as a reference, architects and artists designed what have been deemed as utopian examples of constructivist architecture using theater stages, decorations, posters, and drawings. However, revolutionary architecture was built on the efforts of the architects who reformulated constructivist approach.

Anatoli Lunacharsky who was appointed as the head of Narkompros, assigned avant-garde artists to institutions affiliated to Narkompros due to their support for the revolution. Tatlin, who was appointed as the head of the Moscow Fine Arts Department in 1919, emphasized that the distinction between plastic arts should disappear and the artist should have an engineer formation in his writings. The fact that Vkhutemas's education program is immanent to Tatlin's ideas, and his assignment to design Monument to the Third International within the scope of Lenin's Monumental Program gave Tatlin a chance to apply his ideas in practice and provide a basis for the constructivism movement to rise. Design of Monument to the Third International led to the adoption of Tatlin's ideas by different artists and architects, afterwards First Working Group of Constructivists was formed in 1921. Constructivists had declared the tectonic style, factura and construction disciplines in which the theory of constructivist architecture is shaped in their programs, in which they refer to historical materialism and scientific socialism.

Monument to the Third International, the first monument of machine art, is a living organism where socialist propaganda is carried out, which overcomes the barrier of time and space due to its technological equipment, and contains spaces where socialist culture can be experienced. The monument, where tectonic style, factura and construction disciplines correspond, influenced names such as Alexander Rodchenko, Lyobov Popova, Alexander Vesnin, as well as Gustav Klutis who completed his education in Vkhutemas, Naum Gabo who criticized the constructivist theories, El Lissitzky whose work was heavily influenced by Suprematism and Yakov Chernikhov, who designed technically advanced examples of constructivist architecture on the utopia plane. Nevertheless, designs that are impossible to implement created by the constructivists without considering the objective conditions of the USSR, the technological possibilities of the period and the needs of the society show that the contradiction of constructivists' discourses and architectural practices.

In the period between 1922 and 1925, the practice of constructivists was proven to be applicable and the constructivist theory was reconsidered with a realistic approach. The Vesnin Brothers' Palace of Labour design, which is essential for the development of constructivist architecture, is a design where tectonic, factura and construction disciplines correspond, the use of industrial materials is emphasized, reflects the socialist culture with analogy, and most importantly, it can be applied with the technological possibilities of its age. Just as Monument to the Third International is the cornerstone of the development of constructivist architecture on the utopia level, the design of the Palace of Labour, is also a touchstone in the real plane. Another essential development was Ginzburg's work Style and Epoch that reconsiders the theory of constructivist architecture and puts it on a real plane. Constructivist architecture was introduced to the USSR with the establishment of OSA in 1925 under the leadership of Vesnin and Ginzburg. Between 1925 and 1932/1934, the constructivists, who aimed to organize the collective life in a world where there was no hierarchy, and to convey the achievements of the proletarian culture and socialist order to the society through architecture, were based on the concept of social condensor. They have succeeded in building workers' clubs, palaces of culture, commune houses and residential buildings in different regions of the USSR.

The aim of this paper is to shed light on the role of constructivist architecture within the greater context of architectural history, the difference and similarities between Utopian architecture and applied designs, and the application of constructivist architecture in communal living practices of the USSR. Analyzing the relationship between arts and politics is critical to this discussion. With this aim, the relation of arts-politics-space,

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created by the disciplines of tectonic unites, faktura, and construction, is evaluated through real and utopian designs. The decisive role that the utopian architecture played in the formation of a revolutionary architecture style is elaborated on. Therefore, the question is posed as to whether the real and utopian designs met the needs of the USSR through the cause and effect relation.

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