The Theoretical Application of the Architectural Criticism Based on Semiology—Taking the Period of “Manchukuo” Police Agency Building as an Example

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ABSTRACT

On the basis of Pierce's symbolic triangle theory, triangle model of spatial symbol was built, and expended to architectural criticism, making the architectural form, significance and content be coordinated and coexist. Now taking the National Police Agency buildings in the period of "Puppet Manchuria State" as critical target, it was researched on Architectural criticism from the perspective of semiology.

INTRODUCTION

"Criticism is judgment"[1]. In criticism, the result of criticism is the overall judgment obtained by analyzing, comparing and arguing the objects of criticism. In architectural criticism, architectural critics research and identify, analyze and compare, argue and judge the construction (the target of the criticism) by the critical thinking (the subject of the criticism), and make comprehensive and systematic evaluation to the architectural design system. Hence, architectural critical thinking is the core of the architectural criticism. It also has critics' special constructivity and conscientiousness, so different critical angles and levels decide that architectural critics obtain the category of critical result in architectural critical activities. Some

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architectural critical thinking can make architectural significance, from and content lose harmony, and distort the conclusion of the architectural criticism.[2] In this case, this article constructs triangle model of spatial symbol based on Pearce's triangular semiotics theory, and integrates semiology and architectural criticism into a set of theoretical tools that can be applied to practice with combining Morris' deep and surface classification method to semiology.[3]

CONSTRUCTION AND RESEARCH OF THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL SYMBOL TRIANGLE SYSTEM

Semiotics was divided into three categories according to its development history and the regional features. The first category was "Symbolic Dichotomy" represented by Saussure. The second type was "Symbolic Triad" represented by Pearce. The third kind was main theoretical research of some semiotics represented by Eco, between the two above. [4] As a whole, 20th century theoretical research about semiology was carried out mostly based on Saussure's and Pearce's theories. Between them, Saussure's "Symbolic Dichotomy" theory (As shown in figure 1), which was called the representative of structuralism. However, when past-structuralism blamed the limitations of structuralism, they began to praise Pearce's "Symbolic Triad" theory. Pearce was the representative of pragmatism. When semiology was introduced to architecture, especially under the situation that the famous architect Louis Sullivan made his comment "Formal Pursuit Function", Pearce's "Symbolic Triad" which represented pragmatism was gaining steam. Pearce thought whichever judgment involved a single element: object, media and interpretation, and whichever symbol was made up of these three relations. This set of semiotics theory had natural connection with the three elements-content, form and significance in the architecture.

Though there was a good fit between semiology and architecture, there was also a certain difference. Because the graph of "Symbolic Triad" (As shown in figure 2) was two-dimension, which was put forward by Pearce, the three elements "object, media and interpretation" would converge to a point eventually. This meant when two-dimension "Symbolic Triad" pattern was applied to architecture, "object, media and interpretation" corresponding to the three elements "content, form and significance" would be restricted in it. However, the "content, form and significance" in architecture were interrelated and developed separately, so Pearce's "Symbolic Triad" theory was not entirely suitable for the application of architectural criticism. For it, the article constructed three-dimensional symbol triangle model according to Pearce's "Symbolic Triad" pattern. (As shown in figure 3).
In architectural critical activities, before architectural critical system was built, architectural critical thinking was usually one-dimension. In most cases, the result of architectural criticism was focused on a factor judgment: whether on the content of architecture; or on form; or on significance.[5] In two-dimensional pattern, when architectural critical thinking conducted its activities respectively in the three levels content, form and significance, it was usually emphasized more on balancing the three critical results, leading to which a certain level of architectural critical activities were not deep enough, and influencing the scientificity of architectural critical result. While in the three-dimensional pattern, the architectural content, form and significance all intersected in space (object of architectural criticism) and developed infinitely to the level it belonged. It represented that the application of the three-dimensional symbol triangle system in architectural criticism could evade the abuse of one-dimensional pattern and two-dimensional pattern, and get the conclusion of the architectural criticism more scientific.
In the above constructed architectural criticism based on the three-dimensional symbol triangle system, the major constituent element was architectural function, form and significance. According to the semiotics Morris’ classification method, it generalized the function and form into the architectural surface study, and the significance into deep study. Such classification was trying to desalinate the architectural contradiction among function, form and significance, resolving the academic dispute arising from the contradiction among the three in architectural criticism. The development course of the architectural criticism was also a change process of the relationship between function and form. Looking through the theories advocated by architectures at all times, it’s not hard to find that function and form had always been dominant, and the surface architectural form derived deep architectural significance. In the early 20th century, master architect Louis•Sullivan made the famous comment of "Formal Pursuit Function", and that’s where "Functionalism" came into being. In the middle of 20th century, though architectural critic Pevsner expressed his opinion of "Formal Pursuit Function" in the book The History of the Building Type, the examples given in it was expressed that the architectural form was architectural significance. Until architectural critic Manfredo•Tafuri pointed out in the book Architectural Design that international style modern architecture represented by functionalism was popular everywhere,[6] which just applied Mies’ appearance mechanically. At this moment, functionalism was completely replaced by formalism. Meanwhile, the architects who advocated functionalism turned to formalism.[7] In conclusion, the architectural function, form and significance were contradictory and interconnected though the experienced architect was unable to define clearly which of the three was more prominent. It highlighted the advantages of the three-dimensional symbol triangle system based on the semiology, both avoiding the phenomena of favoritism in architectural criticism, and alleviating the contradiction among functional, form, and significance.

The period of "Manchukuo" National Police Agency buildings were built in Northeast China by Japan during the Second World War. The buildings were the combination of the Japanese Emperor Crown Type as well as western architecture style and traditional Chinese architectural style where various architectural cultures were represented in one building,[8] which was influenced by "Modernism" at that time. Therefore, it was regarded as a critical object applying in the three-dimensional symbol triangle system.
Objection Dimension

The period of "Manchukuo" National Police Agency building is located at the south corner of "Datong Square", around which a lot of trees are planted. Under the eyes the building is hidden and graceful in the trees, creating a mysterious and quiet environment. On the basis of the practical functions of the office building, the internal space of the building has clear priorities and orderly arrangement. The overall form is a "E" shape, intersection and the position of the hall is at the cross point. The space design technique of centripetal type is adopted, with the hall as the core, it creates a glorious and solemn space atmosphere. Considers the building space as a whole according to people's needs, and feedbacks the function of the spatial arrangement to people. Thus, the influence of the architectural space art on people is more clear, creating a satisfying art space atmosphere just the right. (As shown in figure 4).

Form Dimension

The inner space in the former site of "Hsinking" National Police Agency buildings were solemnly decorated setting off the atmosphere of the hall, and most of the ornaments were made of traditional Chinese components such as drum-shape bearing stone and the sparrow brace, controlling the lighting of the building, illustrating the interior space atmosphere with the change of light, and using it in the user’s mind.

Significance Dimension

Internationalism in the former site of "Hsinking" National Police Agency embodied traditional Chinese culture in the design of the buildings, giving the priority to "day"-shaped and "sub"-shaped in the plane form, expressing "Manchu
Style” architectural meaning, to get Chinese people’s affinity, to appease the public, and to achieve the purpose of historical obfuscation.

CONCLUSIONS

When the object of architectural criticism was the construction in this special historical period, the relation of its function, form and significance was intricate. When such buildings were placed in the above three-dimensional symbol triangle system to have architectural critical activities, architectural function, form and significance would be alleviated hopefully, and the relationship among the three would develop closer and deeper.

REFERENCES