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NEOCOVER

The impersonal and involuntary cover is a collective act of forgetting and abandonment by default. It occurs in our daily lives, numbing our senses, driven by disinterest, the routine of city life, distractions, anonymity, ignorance, fatigue, the illusion of vigilance, or simply change. This gradual deviation signifies a civilization losing its way in the quest for tomorrow... It could be a building we pass by every day, noticing only the shop on the ground floor or the pub in the basement. It might be a gigantic banner hiding another building, a new highway creating new synapses, or a suspended passage that overshadows a sidewalk, a tree, or a balcony. It could be a small church in Bucharest, surrounded unwillingly by the cells of modern socialist life. It might be a rusty factory, paralyzed and strangled by another ideology. It could be an impertinent graffiti whose spontaneity cracks the sober plinth of an older generation. It might be the battle lost by a god, abandoned by his followers along with everything in the temple. It could be an improvised DIY project, drawing attention didactically to a beaten shortcut that the mayor forgot about in an Eastern European city. It might be a listed building reincarnated as a supermarket in Venice or Prague. It could be a painted polystyrene cladding that closes the gray chakras of a communist block. It might be kilometers of white PVC windows, arraying accumulations of storage rooms overlooking the boulevard somewhere in Romania, like a fence against the neurotic city. It could be an orphan building that slowly degrades on our watch, remembered for a fraction of a second when we notice, disoriented, that it has disappeared. All these become a dramatic and silent covering, laid softly, step by step, over what we have been or created. But the remains wait, somewhere, patiently, to be discovered, with a little luck, for someone else to tell new narratives on their behalf.

The powerful civilizations of ancient European culture, the Greek and then the Roman, interpenetrated and dominated Europe, far exceeding its borders, carried by imperial sandals. They eventually disappeared, shaping much of the world that followed them. And so, after about two millennia, we encounter the first 'neostyle' - Neoclassicism (a term that was coined later in the mid-19th century). It emerged through the influence of the German Johann Joachim Winckelmann: "The only way for us to become great, or if this be possible, inimitable, is to imitate the ancients." The art historian and archaeologist methodically classified the arts of the ancients during the great discoveries of the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum (for those who have forgotten the history of art or architecture, Wikipedia is a good source for a quick check). So, we are in the middle of the 18th century, in the full age of Enlightenment, having passed through Gothic and Renaissance periods, to name just a few. Archaeology was to definitively awaken from hibernation not only the art of Greco-Roman culture. The scavengers of the past also found the ancient

Egyptians, with a clear advantage of scale which made their things harder to bury. Although the Greek temple has known countless iterations, from Palladian reverences to assumed postmodern caricature, ancient Egyptian architecture seems to have a rather subtle impact on the contemporary world. Maybe I.M. Pei felt the need to match the obelisk brought from Luxor to the Place de la Concorde (obelisks were scattered all over the good world, from the Romans onwards) with a miniature pyramid built in the middle of the Louvre, of course in a postmodern key. But he was not at his first pyramid; he had built several smaller ones in front of his new building for the National Gallery of Art in Washington, which is just steps away from the National Mall, where another obelisk (American, this time) is enthroned. But, in my opinion, the prototype of the modern urban facade, which cannot alternate in other way the wall and the void, is that of the temple of Queen Hatshepsut. It is the pattern of the generic facade, the universal and convenient cliché answer of 20th-century architecture that continues to this day, offering even the sustainable alternative to the energy waste of its transparent brother, the curtain wall. It is curious that modernist masters such as Le Corbusier or Niemeyer retained only the majestic ramps of this absolutely fascinating temple. We won't go into modernism because it's complex and not yet a 'neo' style. Instead, we'll focus on the styles and movements related to it or those that opposed it. The anti-modernism it will eventually generate has led many creative critics to develop more salvific and grounded theories than ever. We only note that modernism, manifested in all the arts, had the courage to break away from the 19th century. And yet, among the first skeptics who dared to shake all the new (and fresh) scaffolding of the early 20th-century world, through playfulness, absurdity, and anarchy, were the Dadaists. Rebellious and euphoric at the same time, the movement was the antithesis, the reaction, the sabotage, and the shadow of any other ideal embodied by any old or new style. So, we could speculate that it would have opposed a canonical modernism (as it became), and its dogmas could not have been challenged later by the postmodern 'insolence' if there had not been the model of the Dadaist detractors. To them, we owe the way to counterattack in any other 'neostyle'. In Nietzsche's terms, if we were to define modernism as Apollonian, then its counterpart, the Dionysian, would be the the Dadaist alter ego.

And yet, why are we in the situation of making Neo covers? What nostalgia brought us here? Was it the fact that the beginning of the 20th century was so fruitful that we invented so many currents, manifestos, and ideologies to last us another century? And it wasn't easy (or maybe it was?) because the world went through two world wars: one abolished the empires, and the other invented the global conflicted concubinage between modern democracy and the totalitarian regime. And society always had a choice. Nazism and fascism preferred simplified classicism, and sometimes rationalism. They detested the Bauhaus, which, together with Art Deco, were left to the capitalist bourgeoisie. At dawn, constructivism seemed to be the perfect glove of the revolutionary spirit, only that the glove became a handcuff. Constructivism, although it had a short life due to the political context where it originated, seemed prepared for the metropolitan vocation, perhaps even more than the western Bauhaus. I imagine it being more compatible with the great cosmopolitan American city, for example, which did not import Bauhaus 'per se' but preferred the grandeur of Art Deco towers, steroidized.

Expressionism, although meteoric, is fascinating and we can say, jokingly, that it anticipates the potential of building with 3D printing technology a hundred years ahead. We cannot omit Italian Futurism, with its veneration for the mechanical dynamics of a building, whether it is a huge power plant, a building with elevators on the facade (as in the sketches of Sant'Elia), a car factory with a test track on the rooftop, or a power plant in Copenhagen whose furnace emits breathable fog, like on a ski slope in the Alps.

While we risk using reductionist labels, we will review what is increasingly crystallizing as the 'neo styles' of our time, without being able to pinpoint a specific cause.

Neoconstructivism

Let's imagine the Chrysler Building with El Lissitzky's towers looking at it over its shoulder. The history of architecture would have been different. In his book 'Content,' Rem Koolhaas criticizes the skyscraper for being isolated among its peers, selfishly consuming space and being only interested in its own height and beauty—a narcissist in the city. This idea was, and continues to be, so intellectually seductive that many elitist architects have distanced themselves from the twisted and faceted forms of the 2000s, starting all over to experiment with purist polystyrene blocks. The discontinuity, the fragmentation of the mass in the air, shifting it like drawers, constitutes the „body language” of the towers that was missing. Almost no intellectualized tower can no longer be conceived as a compact and continuing silhouette with boring slenderness. They all suffer (metaphorically, let's hope) small accidents; they are broken somewhere in the middle, they are eroded, abandoning the convergence in a victorious point.

Neorationalism of today, which initially emerged in the 60s-80s, is exemplified by La Tendenza, a movement through which Italians restored the tradition of urbanity, ultimately formal, through an architecture rekindled with the inherited city. The result was the European version of postmodernism, which we can call naive towards its end, without being pejorative. Perhaps it is not bold to say that Aldo Rossi fell into the very trap he wanted to avoid. The complexity of the Gallarate ensemble in Milan (with a still modernist morphology)—a block start work—is later simplified to a more 'glorious' one, such as the Il Palazzo hotel in Fukuoka, with its allure of a multi-storey Minoan palace, crowned with a strong suggestion of torii gate. And yes, we will keep in mind the eye catching columns in front of the walls—blinds in Japan, glass in New York—a neo-irrational, plastic gesture that continues to inspire today. And why not, instead of round columns, we could even have later some mini Swiss obelisks.

It is interesting that with today's materials, we have the possibility to make buildings look a little older than they are, or to look like they are built different than they are. We are talking about the light facades systems that subtly disguises the depth, variety, and rhythm of heavier materials. You can have a grid embossed on the facade, or highlight the 'idea' of pillars detached from the 'idea' of lintels. Speaking of rhythm, the porches placed on the concourses of social housing are

back, looking more and more sophisticated, which is not a bad thing. And the column.., yes, we live in a cult of the column; it is the new indulgence of architects. It can even be Brancusian, or square and empty, but rotated 45 degrees ostentatiously to expose the edge. Who would have thought? And to hide the frivolity of transparency, yes, it's time for these columns to take a step forward. Does anyone remember Rafael Moneo's splendid town hall in Murcia?

Neobrutalism

It is no longer about the reinforced concrete impeccably exposed, but about a nostalgia for the massiveness of the material, the desire to restore the weight of the menhir, the Neolithic glory. This type of brutalism has detached itself from Western or Eastern European cities, where the prefabrication of buildings was an economical solution in times of emergency. Now, however, in the case of low-budget facades, where you necessarily want to suggest the prefabrication of heavy elements, you can easily scratch the plaster. But today, this trend, in its consistent form, migrates to sunnier regions in the Middle or Far East, where prefabrication becomes artisanal to achieve a deliberate imprecision. It is a displacement towards the context, we could say. I am thinking, of course, of the neighboring buildings of Anne Holtrop and Christian Kerez in Bahrain, Junya Ishigami's underground forays into Japan, or Anton Garcia-Abril's building experiments (with animal help). A prophetic (and no less remarkable) example of this trend is the famous Antivilla from 10 years ago, when architects Brandlhuber + Eberle heroically recovered a factory (smaller, indeed, than Ricardo Bofill's).

Inside, this trend is very seductive. There is no place for planar surface and precision; we aspire to the mineral roughness of the cave that firmly tells you, "Do not touch." There are diaphanous curtains and, invariably, the impenetrable film of the microcement floor, which seems to have buried a nuclear disaster. The furniture must also be heavy, looking like stone or concrete, possibly irregular or chopped. Why not a minimalist brushed aluminum kitchen, maybe even riveted? And somewhere, in a focal point, an Yves Klein ecstatic blue. The note of seduction can come from a velvet piece lying lasciviously somewhere or from the shiny vinyl upholstery or curtain.

NeoKahnianism

I have not found another term for this sober and serene architecture, which could only be of Swiss origin. The predilection of the Swiss school of architecture for this type of evocative, meditative spaces, like temples, regardless of function, is so interesting. This trend goes hand in hand with the neo-rationalism of the facade, only that the formal repertoire of the great Louis Kahn has echoes to measure. Large, circular, semicircular, oval, triangular, or rhomboid cutouts predominate, while rectangular ones are used sparingly. The semicircle or semioval, necessarily with the base up, can be transformed, like an inverted portico, into rows of full folds, reminiscent of Brancusian plinths. Pitch roof holes are also allowed, in different orthogonally rotated positions. The spaces take simple shapes; they are clearly composed, without ambiguities and accidents. We often encounter

symmetry and the planimetric formalism of the 45-degree angle, which announces something. This current is slowly becoming a manifesto. The black and white sketches with plans and sections reduced to the essentials are so wise and they are almost worshiped on Instagram.

Neocontextualism

Sounds like it sounds. In the iconic scene from 2001: A Space Odyssey, set in prehistoric times, we witness the reaction of our presumptive ancestors as they encounter the mysterious monolith. The object (actually a hyperintelligent and surviving entity of the universe) has a prismatic, minimalist form and is strange to people, regardless of the context (fictional or real), because we cannot assign any meaning to it outside of the objective form and therefore cannot relate to it. If art makes great progress in a conceptual world that we are willing to accept , the real environment in which we live and build thrives to preserves its fragile complexity, and any misstep can trigger an alarm. Today's neocontextualism is fearful of the future; it calls for responsibility, appeasement, adaptive reuse, and sustainability. It is bureaucratized and ideological, especially when the public interest is involved. All these noble directives take a form of expression that is quite inhibited and slightly boring. Architects are afraid to dare, and there is an urge to be complementary, discreet, and uniform.

Neocontextualism is the safe choice for an architectural jury. The building does not have to be heroic; contrast is seen as a lack of taste. The iconic thing must be an error. Young anonymous architects no longer win competitions like Jørn Utzon, the Rogers-Piano duo, or Johan Otto von Spreckelsen did. No one remembers which building won the prestigious 'Mies van der Rohe' prize, but we all rekone the image of Habitat 67 by young Moshe Safdie. The new rarely becomes the protagonist and is too often complementary. In this way, the younger generation will not have what to list anymore in 100 years. Those who do not have the privilege to build neocontextualist or at least vernacular in the city can do so in the 'neotraditionalist' manner in the countryside. And, keep an eye to the historicized experiment, built with the support of His Majesty King Charles. It's coming!

Neo Art Deco

This trend is endless. You don't exist if you haven't 'liked' at least one Neo Art Deco project. It is a continuously evolving trend that will disappear only with civilization itself, and it is compatible with any other 'neo' trend. It is preferred and practiced both by distinguished architects and those at the beginning of their journey. It epitomizes good taste; you can't go wrong with it. It is almost universally accepted by clients. It shakes the foundations and challenges the industry producing interior and exterior finishes. Curved glazing panels of varying sizes, made from glass, ceramic, or concrete, spread across facades like unrolled Doric columns in full bloom. Inside, white glass globes supported by gilded and arched arms , or chandeliers made of neon tubes (with visible craft joinery) are glittering. Roman arches cutting the decorated walls, stylized furniture up to the macro pixel with velvet upholstery that does not necessarily convey the idea of comfort, zigzag

cladding of various scales with different materials, enormous round mirrors or half mirrors—is a quite simple repertoire of means with endless possibilities.

Neo Postmodernism

This label allows anyone who has reached stardom in a creative field of popular culture to quickly switch to another creative field, preferably one that requires extensive study and possibly vocation, and to gain validation and authority instantly. Usually, the fashion industry is the most subject to these intrusions. A simple signature or image adored by cohorts of fans can elevate a collection or product line to an unparalleled level of success. It is interesting that athletes were among the first whose image became a cult object, if we think of Air Jordan or Stan Smith sneakers. It's like owning a Monet or a Picasso. Now it's the turn of the singers. Neo Postmodernism is the transcendental environment in the creative industries. The tireless artistic search of the creator can find the visceral answer in a completely different field, sometimes with the hammer, when the artist's disposition (time is compressed in the absolute moment) erupts and subordinates another universe, or at least the space and matter in it. We relive the pure creation - the Sublime of the torn canvas by Lucio Fontana or the Pollockian splashes like a burst of Big Bangs. Yes, postmodernism makes us equal with history, or with other artists among us.

The collage instantly unites worlds and intangible values. Everyone can build their own Frankenstein to be worshiped and, why not, sold. Sampling, random or suitable, can give birth to a new symphony. A simple mood board made quickly, scattered in front of a creative board, can give birth to the next trend. The Internet has become a personal purgatory of creation, from where we filter, with authority, the original to generously give it to the world.

In architecture, neo-postmodernism has surpassed the moment of reference of the Greek temple. But its reminiscence—the pediment, placed at the disposal of his mother's house (where it is broken, contradictory) by Robert Venturi—quickly became a model (controversial, but we all love it now) that inaugurated the race for the aestheticization of the traditional pitched/gabled roof from Scandinavia to the Iberian coast. The neo-postmodern windows can be scattered Japanese square holes, round (ideally a choo-choo hole), square and turned at 45 degrees (preferably small), or rural-rhomboidal holes. The Scarpa-like merging circles (maybe three or more) would also be a possibility, but we have a chance to collide with the neo-Kahnian style.

In furniture design, Neo Postmodernism causes ecstasy. I can't tell if this movement belongs to the artists or the curators. Neo Postmodernism is a release of artistic expression and archetypes that would make even the most skilled neo-psychoanalysts think. Ancestral childhood naivety! To encompass the imagination of an entire culture down to its roots... it's as if everything is expressed and we're just at the beginning.

It is clear that the past remains magnetic for creation, perhaps because of the huge reservoir to which we all have access at any time. Could it be that, fed up

with computing the same things ad infinitum, artificial intelligence will inevitably regurgitate everything that fed it and surprise us with something 'new' ?