A Study on the Correlation between Aldo Rossi's Drawing and De Chirico's Painting on the Basis of Metaphysics

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the correlation between Aldo Rossi's drawing and De Chirico's painting on the basis of metaphysics. The argument concentrates on the idea of metaphysics, which pervades Rossi's architectural drawing in relation to De Chirico's paintings and De Chirico's influence on Rossi's concept of design in order to evaluate the value of metaphysical expression in architectural presentation and on contemporary trends in architectural thinking.

Keywords: Aldo Rossi; De Chirico; metaphysics; correlation

Introduction

1.1 Background and Purpose of the study

Giorgio de Chirico is an artist who insisted on returning to the deep meaning of myth and history but who was totally ignored by the modernists. He was interested in searching for the hidden meaning of objects from the point of view of metaphysics, which we should take a different viewpoint from the modern abstract order. He took dream as the dual aspect of human nature and asserted that the hidden part of an object can be revealed through the faith of unconsciousness in human nature.

Nevertheless it has often been said that Chirico’s paintings have a lot in common with the drawings of Aldo Rossi. Apart from the visual and emotional effects evoked by their drawings, the concrete relationship between them is still unknown. It is even quite unusual as well as questionable that Aldo Rossi developed such logical theories as written in his book, ‘The Architecture of the City (L’Architettura della citta)’¹ in spite of the mysterious aspects of his metaphysical thinking. While modern architecture aims at creating space and shape based upon human behaviour through subtle relation with programs and sites, his architecture appears to be dependent on monotonous geometry without consideration for the aspects of space.

What then did he intend to realize in his drawings? It is interesting to reveal the relationship based on the assumption that mysterious thinking in Chirico’s paintings lies behind the architectural thinking of Aldo Rossi.

Therefore, the purpose of this study lies in clarifying a correlation between the architectural drawing of Aldo Rossi and Chirico's painting. In the study, it is examined how metaphysical painting can be utilized as a device to reveal the unknown world, how it creates an expression of paradox inherent within the relationship between death and enigma through the juxtaposition of diverse fragments, and at the same time, how these drawings conduct a silent dialogue with observers in order to be understood by them. This study will provide an opportunity to revaluate the significance of metaphysical painting as an important means of synthesizing thoughts and conveying intention in the contemporary architecture of uncertainty and plurality.

1.2 The Scope and Method of the study

Considering that the scope of architectural thinking of Aldo Rossi is wide and complicated, the argument had better to be focused on the analysis of his drawings since Rossi utilized drawing in order to develop and further his ideas in unique representation. Based on the analysis, not only the correlation between Aldo Rossi's drawings and Chirico's paintings but also Rossi's ultimate metaphysical thinking with his unique way of representations of cities will be explained. The argument is focused on the following subjects; the analysis of metaphysical thinking represented in the drawings of Aldo Rossi, a general observation of the metaphysical paintings of Chirico, the comparative analysis of Aldo Rossi's and Chirico's drawings, and
reevaluation of the significance of architectural metaphysical drawings in contemporary architecture and cities.

2. Analysis of Aldo Rossi's Drawing

As a leader of neo-rationalism\(^2\), Aldo Rossi developed and synthesized his abstract and metaphysical thoughts in his drawings, and thought that architecture meant an action of representation. Therefore, the intention of architectural drawings done by architects varies depending on the meaning of the representation. Since architecture and drawing can be said to be representing each other, drawing acquires the same status as a piece of architecture itself.

Hence an analysis of Rossi's drawings is prerequisite to understanding his architectural thoughts. In this chapter we will search for the metaphysical thinking represented in his drawings by analyzing his them.

2.1 Analogical City

'Analogical City'\(^3\) is a collage drawing created by Aldo Rossi and his colleagues, inspired by Canalleto's "Capriccio"\(^4\) which is possessed by the Parma Museum. In "Capriccio", three kinds of Palladio design\(^5\) are depicted as if they exist as parts of a city; two of them were built in Vicenza while the other one was an un-built project. This is an 'analogized Vicenza' made of particular elements related to the history of architecture and the city.\(^6\) In other words, it was an analogue of Vicenza\(^7\) composed of the diverse elements related to the inexpressible history of architecture and the city itself. Rossi described a process composing time and place in his 'Analogical City'. The analogues in his drawing denote autonomous\(^8\) fragments which contain the meaning of the signifier extracted from the existing texts and become the objects carrying memories of the city.

2.2 The Architectural Thinking of Aldo Rossi

According to Rossi, architecture starts with cognition of time and place of the city.\(^9\) He extracts typology from history to connect time and place, while making it transcend the real place to which the typology belonged and eradicating historical time in order to modulate a conflict between the modernists' concept of Utopia (no place) and the humanists' notion of real place (some-place).\(^10\) As a consequence, Rossi's imagined place constructs an imaginative space where real place and time have been altered.

The concept of 'no place', however, differs from the modernists' abstract notion of space. For the space conceived as no-place is deeply rooted in history and memories. Rossi used the process of analogy to insert reality into the imaginative world which is alienated from real place and where the time of life and death is suspended.

Through analogy, as a most important means used by Rossi, he expressed his suffering regarding the dialectic between the subject and the object, which had alienated him from modernity. This analogical process, as a natural result of memory operation, requires imitating mechanism, which progresses by two steps; that is, the dislocation of place and the dissolution of scale. The one is to be relocated through typological discovery and the other supports Rossi's idea that the dimensions of a city depend more on the real construction of their meaning than scale.\(^11\)

2.3 Analysis of Drawing

<Plate 1> was completed in real places from 1957 to 1980. It shows clearly the process of eliminating fragments and forming collective memories. As the collage shown in <Plate 1> shows, Rossi's architectural concepts is based on the two basic ideas. First, the fragments divorced from their original place and changed in scale evoke an analogical thinking while colliding with each other and being located on an equal status with the city.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fragment</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a The City Hall Square 1965</td>
<td>1. Collective memory Each project symbolizes a fragment in which Rossi's life and memories are inherent. They form a process of revival of collective memory divested from existing place and time to insert into a new text. His fragments act as signifiers obtaining new meanings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b San Rocco Housing 1966</td>
<td>2. Repetition The repetition of analogues continuously enables people to acquire autonomous images. Rossi insists that conceptual repetition creates a permanent system when the principle of repetition is totally denied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Gallaratese 1969</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d Cemetery of San Cataldo 1971-1978</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e Villa and Pavillion 1973</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f Regional Administrative Center 1974</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g Project for a gate and a bridge with Walls 1980</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Analysis of plate 1 (fragment and meaning)
Second, analogized things are repeated to construct collective memory. It seems that Rossi intended to evoke the viewer’s unconscious insight while recognizing a city as a stage where different dramas are preformed. His fragments signify a chain linking one performance to another and maintains both independent and collective meaning to guide the observers to the second imaginative phase.

<Plate 2> shows repeated fragments and images in the drawings of each project of <plate 1>. The theme often includes contrasting concepts to daily life and city, life and death or ruins, which reveals the paradoxical intention behind the concepts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily things: coffee pot, cigarette case</td>
<td>Real life of a city by obtaining daily routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow, form of a human</td>
<td>Inner voice through inconsistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A land registration map</td>
<td>Fragments and daily routine things drawn to a dimension of city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geometrical form</td>
<td>A typology extracted from a city creates an event focusing on the other side of things through the inconsistency of enigma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting of Piranesi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing: untitled, 1976</td>
<td>Imaginative city</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Analysis of <Plate 2>

In other words, Rossi proposed specific images about collective death in order to present successive universality. The images of death and fear are embodied by the deeply cast shadows and plural viewpoints depicted in his drawings.

Drawing 2, for example, conveys the meaning of death and ambiguity by juxtaposing the plane shadow with elevation drawing. It is a paradox that he equated death to such things as beginning, hope and dreams that he had in his youth.

To sum up, Rossi creates a newly analogized imaginative city through a consecutive repetition of the fragments. Fragments containing the memory of place, as a clue to visualizing an undeveloped story, collide with each other to stimulate the observers’ imagination. Thus what Rossi tries is to attempt to develop a dialogue which enables introspection of the reality filled with indeterminacy and ambiguity through the image of silence, sincerity and death. This is an attitude related to memory which establishes Rossi’s architectural concept.

In this way, Rossi generally framed his process in order to complete his architecture. Therefore, it can be understood and characterized under the same context of metaphysical painting which depicts the essence of the city as a distortion of space and repetition of fragments of memories.

3. Analysis of Chirico’s painting

The enigma-like paintings of Giorgio de Chirico had a great influence on the development of 'Dada', 'Futurism' and 'Surrealism'. If surrealists were searching for the "above reality", Chirico's artistic trend can be described as an exploration into the "beyond the physical"; that is to say, "searching for the hidden meaning" behind the object. What Chirico pursued, however, cannot be viewed according to the modernists' point of supernatural order.

Chirico explained that the metaphysical enigma can be found not only in such general things such as architecture or music to which people have easy access, but also in dreams which reveal the dual aspects of human nature. In fact, he emphasized that something from the abyss can appear through a firm belief in unconsciousness,14).

His metaphysical painting can be characterized as follows. First, he tried to avoid all conventional attempts by composing daily things and fragments from memories of a city on a canvas. The objects repeated in his paintings are easily found in our daily lives. He ultimately revealed the possibility of gaining access to inner human nature not only by providing "Naïf"15) in those objects but also by taking it in a different direction.

In his painting 1, distorted objects, interior space and ridiculous form of the human body made of biscuit are overlapped with a city gallery which continuously appears in his paintings. Here, shadow cast from a biscuit box plays the role of connecting the two different dimensions of the city and interior space. In this painting, the logic and general emotion appear mutually interfered. But once their barrier collapse, they return to
the realm of dreams and hopes of childhood. That is to say, a profound thought comes from the deepest and most secret place of our mind.16)

Second, Chirico creates unfamiliar, inconsistent relations by putting different objects together. For instance, he sometimes juxtaposed modern images such as an engine or ship with past images such as monumental statues. In this way, he pursued poetic metaphor and at the same time, constructed an ambiguous system like an enigma. Juxtaposing fragments extracted from a different time and place, he offers a clue to observers which evokes imagination.

In painting 2, the statue and the part of gallery act as archetypes17) that contains memories of the city. The train just about to leave symbolizes the modern city but on the contrary, time seems to be frozen. He created unfamiliar and unpredictable world of expectation, inconsistency and evasion.

Third, Chirico usually distorted space with dual vanishing points and deep shadows to formulate such imaginative dimensions, which proves that he predicted the future avant-garde movement emerging in the early 20th century.

He produces an image in which diverse space is intermingled continuously within a two dimensional canvas, which refutes the visual hierarchy of traditional perspective drawing. In Painting 3, a depth of fantastic space is offered and this method foresees the emergence of Cubism which pursued multi-dimensional expression in a canvas. 18)

It expresses Chirico's thought that the essence of the abyss cannot be found by one viewpoint which is logically determined, but by silence in delicacy. Deeply cast shadow augments the effect of "depayment"19) in his composition of fragments with the method called "dual vanishing point"

As shown in painting 3, a deep left vanishing point and a strong light create a dramatic contrast with shadow evoking death and fear. These fragments encourage observers ask original questions. They feel strongly suppressed through the conceptualized images and revealed forms. Here, Chirico vividly remembers the winter of Versailles dominated by silence. When everything in the city looks back at him mysteriously and suspiciously. He realizes that each corner and pillar has incomprehensible spirits. He confesses that he started to recognize mystery which forces us to create unfamiliar and even uncanny forms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>image</td>
<td>images; shadow enigma ambiguity a girl with no face</td>
<td>Silent stare at the essence of abyss through paradoxical expression of death, amplifying the effect of depayment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>objects</td>
<td>fragments; ordinary things; a doll, a mannequin, biscuits, wild thistle, etc.</td>
<td>An attempt to catch the essence of the city by transition of viewpoint to familiar and universal objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fragments</td>
<td>Archetype; corridor, statues</td>
<td>Creating fantastic images by showing artifacts containing the myth and memory of city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>geometrical frankness</td>
<td>Simplifying the objects to evoke imagination and memories which are unfamiliar makes observers look at objects more carefully.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distortion</td>
<td>Crushing dual viewpoint with objects makes viewers suspicious of the space behind them. This helps in imagining the fantastic space.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>composition</td>
<td>city/ordinary objects momentary/permanent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repetition</td>
<td>Repetition of objects used in paintings establishes permanent meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Analysis of de Chirico's Painting
4. Analysis of the correlations of the drawings and the paintings

To sum up, Aldo Rossi's drawings and Chirico's paintings have the following common characteristics. First, they use distorted space and conflicting fragments of multi-dimensions which enable them to escape from a limited viewpoint. This creates a personal montage requiring reading and insight on the part of the observer. Second, fragments in their works are repeated and continuously changed into spatial analogues to form autonomous memories, which acquire intermittence as well as continuity like the frames of a movie. Third, their themes commonly involve paradoxes of life, hope and the future in the enigmatic composition created by the image of death, melancholy and fear.

5. Conclusion

Both Rossi and Chirico extracted fragments containing memories and the depth of experience that city dwellers felt and experienced. And they introduced an ambiguous and enigmatic world of imagination to observers by means of deep shadow and distorted perspective. They actually proposed a new way of seeing a city through the gap between the real world and metaphysical realm of the world which is recomposed by scaling and alienation of place inherent in the objective world. This was not only a radical counterattack against elementary modern dogma through extreme abstraction but also a reflection of contemporary life which can never be determined and understood form a one dimensional viewpoint.

It can be thought of as a coincidence that the two artists pursued a similar direction. But it also seems to have been predestined that the two artists viewed their city with the same point of view since they tried to reflect the inconsistencies and radical changes in modern Italian cities through the conflict of tradition and modernity.

In conclusion, it is worth reconsidering Rossi's drawings and Chirico's paintings in terms of dealing with the delirious conditions of contemporary cities. And as metaphysical thinking has had considerable influence on the architecture and arts of the second

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>de Chirico</th>
<th>Aldo Rossi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Shadow                  | 1. Paradoxical representation of life through the depayment effect by producing an atmosphere of death and fear.  
2. Evoking imagination as a channel connecting different dimension. |                                                                            |
| Monument of the city    | Corridor, sculpture, plaza                                                  | Role as a theatre stage evoking activities of memory in the city           |
| Daily things            | Glove, watch, plot, biscuit                                                 | Coffee pot, cigarette, a doll                                             |
| Geometrical simplification | Naïve 1. Accessing the essence through the naive viewpoints of children.  
2. Inducing the imagination of observers through extreme simplification | Collective memory 1. Pursuit of geometrical simplicity creating memory of forms, events and places.  
2. Frankness |
| Distortion of space     | 1. Dual viewpoint using multi-dimensional expression and distorting the screen  
2. Distortion of objects focusing on ambiguity by distorting and blurring the forms of objects | 1. Multi-dimensional viewpoints a method of simultaneous description from various viewpoints.  
Successive screens such as in a movie various change of view points |
| Disjuncted juxtaposition of objects | City and ordinary things, permanent/momentary  
1. Focusing on dialectic relation  
2. Expression of experiencing various meanings of objects |                                                                            |
| Repetition              | Repetition of the meaning of objects enables the composition of a story among pictures | Through repeating the contents of the object and the geometrical pattern/successiveness and meaning of nudity |

Table 4. Analysis of the relation between Drawing of Aldo Rossi and Chirico's painting
half of the 20th century, we have an opportunity to rethink today's crisis of architecture and cities that is caused by digitalized drawings and process. Then, we can extend our view to other realms in order to convert our thinking and to construct a regional frame work for the preparation of future development.

References
7) Rossi, Aldo. The Architecture of the City; The MIT Press, MA, 1985
8) Rossi, Aldo. "What is to be Done with the Old Cities" AD 55, 1985.5
9) Song, Hyan J. Memory-Architecture; Phus 9206; Seoul, 1992
10) Scully, Vincent and Moneo, Rafael. Aldo Rossi Building and Project's Essay; Rizzoli, New York, 1985
2) Neo Rationalism (or the Tendenza as it was originally named) was an anti-modernist movement which rejected functionalism and technology in favour of separate architecture (a timeless architecture) concerned more with formal essences. A rationalist approach and an awareness of formal properties were important issues in the initial design process. The thinking behind Neo rationalism is to eradicate the imagination from the design process. Rossi believed that the essence of architectural design should be learned by looking at ideal concepts of the renaissance, and that a finished scheme should not allow personalized expression from the architect but be quite the opposite of a rational idea derived from an understanding of the conflicting classical and modern architecture. If the process is logical and rational it is beyond the architect’s choice to show expression
3) Aldo Rossi, E. Consolascio, B. Reichlin, F. Reinhart, Analogical City-Collage created for a Venice Biannale, 1976
4) "Capriccio", by Giovanni Antonio Canalotto is a drawing depicting Palladio's Basilica of Vicenza, his project for the Ponte di Rialto in Venice, and partial view of the Palazzo Chiericati. 1753–59
5) Pont Di Rialto, Basilica of Vicenza, Palazzo Chiericati
7) ibid. p184
8) Peter Eisenman explains 'autonomous' as a difference between biography and autobiography. Self-denotational fragment is a key to for mulating the place and time of Rossi.
10) Peter Eisenman, "The Architecture of the City", introduction, p9
11) ibid, p8
12) ibid. p48
13) Peter Eisenman, "The House of the Dead as City of Survival" in IAUS, Aldo Rossi in America, p6
14) Giorgio de Chirico, MISTERY AND CREATION, Paris, 1913
15) A candid expression which enables to focus on the hidden side rather than the surface through directness and frankness.
16) Giorgio de Chirico, MISTERY AND CREATION, Paris, 1913
17) Peter Buchanan. Contemporary de Chirico ; precursor to Post-Modernism, p45 "...Archetype exists in the process forming culture and human work encouraging all of us."