Fusion

Abstraction and saturation as instruments of depth and openness.

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ABSTRACT: The dissertation, titled *The Ineffable and the Knowable*, is a design theory that problematizes architectural design as a concern of cognition, i.e., the relationship between the architectural project and the architect or the user. From a realist viewpoint, each project is taken as a unitary piece of reality that cannot be known—hence ineffable—and it is surrounded by a plurality of qualities and capacities—of which many are knowable. Aesthetics appears as an appropriate cognitive approach to inquire into such a double depth since it does not exhaust the project but, on the contrary, keeps its multiplicity open. To this end, the dissertation advocates an abstract and saturated syntax.

The thesis is a design theory that explores the architectural possibilities of the realist premise that the architectural project is an entity in its own right. This means that each project is autonomous with a double condition: it is a unitary piece of reality surrounded by a multiplicity of qualities and capacities. Moreover, such an ontological stance entails a double cognitive problem: the project's reality is deeper than its manifestations—hence ineffable—and the cognizer, whether architect or user, captures and activates a small

portion of such a qualitative plurality—hence there is a knowable abundance to be discovered. It is in this twofold impossibility or double unknown where this thesis precisely situates architectural cognition. Then, what does it mean for architectural design that what makes architecture being architecture is beyond our sensory and intellectual scope and that there are unraveled phenomena proper to the project in question?

This requires a shift in our approach to architecture, both for the architect and the user; a shift from a factual, direct, measurable, and rational disposition typical of pragmatist, materialist, and problem-solving methods to an ambiguous, indirect, unfathomable, and irrational readiness typical of artistic practices. Aesthetics provides that mode of cognition capable of articulating indirect access to the project's double depth, i.e., the ineffable and the knowable. In other words, aesthetic experience in architecture, whether in design or habitation, achieves two aspects. On the one hand, the project's reality becomes present to us intangibly. The architect or the user feels the project—its immaterial presence—without reducing its substance to concrete material expressions and impressions. On the other hand, the process towards such a deep cognition entails a series of tangible actions that unfold particular—and usually unexpected— outcomes, be it a resulting non-normative design or an unusual occupation of space. Within this framework, architectural design as a socio-cultural and ecological competence resides in the search for spatial configurations capable of fostering the unknowability and inexhaustibility of the architecture delivered. In this light, the thesis proposes a particular design methodology that employs metaphors, variations, and repetitions—as design procedures—and mereological relations between fragments and actants—as formal operations. As a result, abstraction and saturation are the spatial characteristics intended for the work's aperture. (More in detail, a scale-ambiguous, fragmentary, and excessive syntaxes devoid of semanticity and external precedents.) This architecture of open interpretation and free occupation aspires to unpredictable personal engagements. Such an individuality implies the rupture between the architect and the user. Only by being independent and fully emancipated, the latter is as active and creative as the former, and vice versa.

On this ground, the piece presented at Potenziale 3 is a personal interpretation of what the design theory developed in the thesis can mean for contemporary practice and discourse. "Fusion" speculates on the possibilities of multiple understandings of an architectural expression. The work moves ambiguously between a 2D drawing and a 3D object offering various figurations and scales through transparencies, overlays, and fragmentations. This composition forces the beholder to move around the work to find and merge the elements into a personal impression. Each of these subjective apprehensions and paths is nothing but other expressions of the underlying project's qualitative abundance. In short, we are another medium of expression of the project.