“It seems that architecture builds in an isolated, self-contained, ahistorical, and fetishistic manner. They never seem to allow for any kind of relationships outside of their grand plans.” -- Robert Smithson, 1973 "Entropy Made Visible"  

“… the only rooms that can still be locked from the inside are reserved for isolates, dopefiends, or those who need loneliness like the dopefiend needs his dope…” -- Thomas Pynchon, 1973 "Gravity’s Rainbow"  

“… the ideology of consumption, far from constituting an isolated or successive event of the organization of production, must be offered to the public as the ideology of the correct use of the city.” -- Manfredo Tafuri, 1973 "Progetto e Utopia"  

“If we now consider instead of an isolated system, a system in contact with an energy reservoir, we necessarily are confronted with open systems in which the exchanges with the external world play a capital role. In these open systems, in order to be sustainable the principle of dissipation must be applied. For reasons to be explained later, we shall refer to this principle as order through fluctuations. One has structures which are created by the continuous flow of energy and matter from the outside world; their maintenance requires a critical distance from equilibrium, i.e., a minimum level of dissipation. For all these reasons we have called them 'dissipative structures.'" -- Ilya Prigogine & René Lefever, 1973 "Theory of Dissipative Structures"  

“Instead of the confusion that comes from the modern civilization’s characteristic educational approach of isolating variables in tunnel-vision thinking, let us here seek context and connections, which come from social anxiety.” -- Howard T. Odum, 1973 "Energy, Ecology, and Economics"
Foreword

Jack Halberstam

This is, apparently, nothing more incestuous in a building than the layers of insulating material that, only over the past few decades, has been filling chambers and sheathing facades all over the world with supposedly beneficial universal effects. This book presents a surprisingly ambitious proof that the assumption that these insulating building materials are innocent and irrelevant is one of the biggest mistakes that have been made by architects, educators, and historians over the past fifty years. Not only does it debunk the innocence of these few interior centimeters but it also shows the pedagogic and technical discussion is just the starting point in the construction of an architectural agenda for the coming decades. This book presents a surprisingly ambitious proof that the assumption that the 1973 OPEC oil embargo did anything other than perpetuate and intensify modern, problematic intellectual habits and path dependencies about energy in architecture would continue to overlook the power of far more cogent contemporaneous observations on energy systems. So, instead of continuing to ignore the 1973 OPEC oil embargo as a pivot in the energy politics of architecture, this book instead begins with a quartet of 1973 observations about the concept of isolation from Robert Smithson, Thomas Pynchon, Manfredo Tafuri, Howard T. Odum, and Ilya Prigogine. Though divergent from one another, all of these quotations depart sharply from a paradigmatic misconception with isolation. Together, these contemporaneous scientific, urban, and artistic observations reflect matters, but profound, non-isolating habits of mind that strongly contrast with isolating intellectual habits that, even now, continue to modulate the thermodynamic principles of energy efficiency and energy conservation. These platitude persist in architecture despite profound transformations in thermodynamics that, more than a century ago, required a far more accurate and powerful characterization of energy system dynamics. In regards to these transformations, the persistent focus on efficiency and conservation is but reverb in the oil embargo character of energy system dynamics. The persistence focus on efficiency and conservation as a religious meeting hall.

1973 Petro-Pentecostalism: Calvinist Thermodynamics, Born Again

Now the ad exchange force, this man-made Fed, Washington gas station now ready converted to a religious meeting hall.

Seeing energy, using energy, saving the planet, and seeing such a share in a deeply rooted habit of thought, “The Prosthetic Man and the Logic of Capital” at the scale of energy efficiency/conservation discourse overlays liberal cultural and economic concepts on the scale of our balance of thermodynamics. Cutting, fracturing, and atomizing the scale is a shared process of energy conservation. However, you cannot make energy more or less efficient as all energy is always available. The energy efficiency discourse of conserving less and extracting dissipation allegedly diminishes life. In regards to the role of people, buildings, and designs in the thermodynamic revolution of civilization, the dialectic energy of these concepts reflect major social and social consequences. To address this, we must, more evidently, and non-isolatingly in this book, and oppositely, but with the support of this book, and oppositely, but on a more radical, different reevaluation — a different kind of work in these systems — for energy and the energy systems that will ingest material in a Southern future for civilization.

Introduction

Buildings are Non-Isolated, Transient Structures of Dissipation: A Reckoning in the Form of an Introduction

1973

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