Aldo Van Eyck: the Shape of Relativity

Robert McCarter begins his book by stating that Aldo Van Eyck, “one of the most important and influential of the third generation of modern architects, proposed an architecture and urbanism fundamentally defined by and deeply engaged in everyday lives of people who inhabit it”. Responding to the deep change proposed by Van Eyck compared to the parthenon and the writing of threshold spaces where children can move and express freely.

The fifth chapter is titled The Shape of the In-Between. The idea of in-between, which is closely linked to that of the threshold and the concept of twin phenomenae, demonstrates an adherence to the reality that can no longer be understood through the oppositions: part/everything, little/big, inside/outside, open/closed...

The sixth chapter, titled Labyrinthian Clarity, talks about the early sixties when Van Eyck’s influence was growing rapidly in the Netherlands and in the Academy of Architecture in Amsterdam. It was called Dutch Structuralism and, as Levi-Strauss’s structural anthropologist, Van Eyck’s thought is based on the belief that reality should be understood in terms of relations rather than functions. Expressions of Labyrinthian Clarity are the Noah’s Ark by his student Piet Blom (1962) and his Experimental Housing Project (PREVI) in Lima (1969-1976).

The last chapter, Architecture as Built Homecoming, describes the last decades of his life. These are years in which postmodernism is rampant, while Van Eyck continues to conceive architecture as build homecoming, a place where the interior experience of inhabitation is provided.

Publishing a book on Van Eyck today, in a period of great crisis of the architect’s figure, serves both to make his thoughts known to new generations, but it also means to understand that an architecture that starts from man and his necessities and has the purpose to build places where human beings can dwell poetically.

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