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Claire Jamieson. *NATØ: Narrative Architecture in Postmodern London*. London: Taylor & Francis, 2017, 280 pp., ISBN 9781138674813

It seems that any attempt to define architecture is convicted on simplification. However, to say that architecture is the art of building may not be so wrong (at least not from the position of the Vitruvian heritage of Western European architectural tradition). What make the story of *NATØ* interesting are, precisely, the lack of usual architectural references (built, factual, buildings) and the idea of the effort of the group of architects led by Nigel Coates to eliminate the closure of architecture in its own definition.

The book by Claire Jamieson *NATØ: Narrative Architecture in Postmodern London* speaks of architecture beyond itself, from the position of various artistic practice and the general sensibility which was shared by young urban generation of neoliberal Thatcher's Britain. Jamieson examines the ways in which the architecture is speculated over a rich palette of narrative acts, and reveals the similarities between *NATØ* projects and the wider artistic, film-literary culture resulting in a complex socio-political context of London in the '80s of the 20th century. Also, the book can be seen as a case study of atypical form of postmodernism, quite outside of corporate architecture, that aimed to dissident architectural game with unprocessed techniques of bricolage and subversion discreetly colored by schizophrenia.

In this specific documentary diary, which equally treats study text and illustrations, Jamieson raises two cases of fascination. The first case is a *NATØ* group, while the other case is model of *NATØ* inspiration, 'the subject of the case' – East London with various subcultural phenomena in a unique street-style.

This synthetic study, organized in five separate chapters, follows the emergence and development of the group starting from the late 70s in the *AA Unit 10* through the active four-year period from 1983 to 1987 ended with a post-period until today.

In the first chapter entitled "From object to action: performing architecture 1973-81" Jamieson follows Coates's beginnings, the influence of conceptual ideas of Bernard Tschumi on his architectural profile, trip to New York, cooperation with different artists and filmmakers like Judy Pfaff and Nam Jun Paik and Coates's first

encounter with the New York club scene. This chapter maps the Coates's first steps in the field of performance and art installations, which will come into focus again in the fourth chapter of this book as important critical spatial practice between art and architecture.

The second chapter, "A new expressionism: drawing architecture 1982-84" is about the architectural drawing as a broad experimental field for testing ideas and narrative features, and the ways that drawing was able to withstand the dynamic experience of the viewer by placing him inside the drawing. Drawings of *NATØ* actors seem to have undergone no harmonizing instance that makes them more pleasant to aesthetically oriented view, but I am sure that was not the target. They can be seen as a form of self-expression, communication, meetings of various spatial, impressions, events, and exceptional situations. Without hiding her sympathy to these atrophic caricatural drawings and use of method 'madness' in drawing which achieves a maximum of emotional and stimulating power, in this chapter, the author describes the individual illustrative richness of *NATØ* actors as well as their entirely unique methodology of drawing.

The third chapter titled "The mise-en-scène of the magazine: 1983-84" is reserved for the story of *NATØ* magazine, which has been through three of its publications as they were, represented a medium of communication and the realization of the principles of the group. Perhaps the clearest analysis of *NATØ* magazine can understand the use of intellectual and critical bricolage, in which members of a group are distancing themselves from the academic discourse, trying to introduce architecture in the field of art, fashion and life-style. A careful reading of these lines, to the end of the third head, understand that *NATØ* directed their criticism not towards society but towards the idea of the social role of architecture.

The fourth chapter, "Dreaming the city: exhibiting architecture 1985-87" is certainly the most interesting for the author of this review due to the fact that it is focused on the use of art installations in the work of *NATØ*. In this chapter we see that Jamieson had excellent knowledge of contemporary art theory. She examines the art installation as a spatial practice between art and architecture, establishing at the same time its specificity and giving us a comparative insights into relational theory of new artistic phenomena such as performance, current fashion, film, new media, video and similar. Analyzing *NATØ* projects *Gamma City* and *Heathrow*, Jamieson reminds us of the beginnings of the use of art installations in the work of experimentation groups such as *Arhigram* (let us remember the exhibition *Living City*), or Austrian groups *Coop Himmelb(l)au* and *Haus Rucker-Co*, all to American *Ant-Farm*. Through this short excursion into the practices of the 60s and 70s Jamieson underlines the spacious and subversive critical potential of art installations, its spatial-temporal and narrative potential that allows multisensuous experience. 'Patchwork of events' as Coates calls the installation *Gamma City*, is, in fact, a Freudian free association space in which the observer enters and confronts himself with the assemblage of elements which are perceived individually like metonymic parts that are positioned together in a mental

image along the path of a much wider narrative. Like the installation *Gamma City, Heathrow* represents a specific “constructed situation” made between the object and a building, within which audience can participate.

Last, the fifth chapter very briefly and concisely closes the story of *NATØ*.

The book in front of us analytically demonstrates, comments and evaluates the work of one of the most important contemporary alternative and experimental postmodern English architectural groups. Through five distinct chapters, it examines the important moments of switching architecture in sub cultural scene of London, synthesizing art, architecture and everyday life in a new form of visual unity. Taking a subculture as its own model Jamieson shows how *NATØ* frees up traditional, expressive, representational factors, as well as descriptive analytical practice that take place at a unique logic, distancing themselves from the mainstream architecture.

The special quality of the book is the way in which the author through direct cooperation with Nigel Coates and Mark Prizeman, Villanueva Brant, Robert Mull, Catrina Beever and Christina Norton uses primary sources and documents conversations like contributions, which achieves reliable and comprehensive documentation on studies. Through the obviously shown sympathy, Jamieson raves the episode of expansiveness in British architecture in which art offers the architecture alternative behavioral models and architecture itself is converted into the (anti)aesthetic and vital action.