Abstract

The dissertation is essentially divided into three parts of systematic readings. The first part, Mis-reading, deals primarily with the dislocation of collage in the contemporary city or the decontextualized city. An attempt is made to build up a framework for the understanding of the relationship between collage and the contemporary city. It looks into two particularly important issues. The first issue deals with the limitations of collage as a compositional tool in the city, using Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter's Collage City as an example. The second is an attempt to raise questions concerning the validity and appropriateness of collage as a "vague," "indeterminate" idea and "random" technique in the city. Such ideas of collage have been believed by many to be absolute truths and become a set of assumptions and generalisations. The aim is to challenge these commonly accepted assumptions and generalisations of these concepts.

The second part of the dissertation, Critical Reading, attempts to reposition, or reinscribe collage in relation to the new set of problems emerging within the framework of the decontextualized city and read it through the angle its artistic premise. Disjunction between event and artifact illustrates two pertinent conditions in the decontextualized city, namely the phenomena of the city as fiction, and the city as disassemblage. By a retrospective method, a counter argument is taken to show that the view of collage as "vague" idea and "random" technique is not necessarily true, and these misreadings of collage in the city can, in fact, provide answers to the current urban problems of the decontextualized city, that is, the city of fiction and the city of disassemblage. The aim is to rethink the significance of collage, highlight its internal logic and locate it in the decontextualized city as a form of re-inscription. In rebuttal to the generalisations and common assumptions of collage in the city discussed in the earlier part of the dissertation, the concept of indeterminacy and the concept of assemblage is chosen to be examined as re-inscriptions. Towards this end, specific artistic examples will be selected to discuss the problem as outlined and thereby, establishing collage as a purposeful tool and a critical, artistic convention in transgressing the limits of architectural thinking.

Re-reading, the third and final part of this dissertation will look into the the possible links between these artistic conventions and current urban architectural theory and practice in the contemporary city. Two examples, namely Bernard Tschumi's Manhattan Transcripts and Rem Koolhaas' Delirious New York, closely linked by their participation in the architectural project of Parc de la Villette, are
delineated to discuss the synthesis of the two critical and artistic conventions and their transformation into programmatic indeterminacy and contextual assemblage. Lastly, Orchard Road in Singapore is selected as an urban possibility to discuss the feasibility of such a conceptual framework.

In conclusion, collage, through a re-reading of its original intentionality, a systematic rationalisation and transformation of the artform into a critical and artistic convention, can be used as an operation in reading the contemporary city.