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Sweet and Sour
As a Comparative Method of Analysis and a Way of Design That Accommodates Mannerist Duality. An Argurnent for a Generic Architecture Defined by Iconography and Electronics.

Sweet

A gentle manifesto that acknowledges the demise of a universal architecture defined as expressive space and industrial structure:
Let us acknowledge architecture for now that is not ideologically correct, rhetorically heroic, theoretically pretentious, boringly abstract, technologi cally obsolete.
Let us acknowledge the elemental quality of architecture as shelter and symbol-buildable and usable shelter that is also meaningful as a setting for living. Shelter and symbolism that are inevitable, admitted, and explicit elements of an architecture that embraces signs, reference, representation, iconography, scenography, and trompe-1'oeil as its valid dimensions: that makes manifest evocation. Let us acknowledge these elements as the genesis and basis of the art of architecture:

• Shelter that admits within its imagery form *and* symbol – and whose symbolism can be explicitly juxtaposed on generic form, sometimes independent of it and sometimes contradictory to it so we should say that in our time form *followed* function while form accommodates functions – and shelter as a medium for symbolism that accommodates technical realities of our time and that acknowledges cultural context and cultural variety in our world, that promotes a vivid background for living and not a dramatic setting for acting.

• Symbolism that evolves *not* out of Renaissance tradition, whose architecture of form abstracts references to a Classical order from an ideal past-not out of recent Modern and current Modern Revival tradition, whose architecture of form incorporates veiled references to an industrial order from an ideal *past-not* out of Postmodernism, whose architeciure of symbols promotes a nineteenth-century kind of eclecticism involving irrelevant Romantic-historical stylistic associations-and *not* incidentally out of Disneyworld architecture whose evocative representation derives from three-dimensional ducks rather than two-dimensional iconography.

• But a symbolism that derives perhaps from ancient Egyptian, Early Christian and Byzantine, and Baroque traditions whose generic architectures of surface project ornamental images-hieroglyphic bas-relief on masonry Egyptian temples, iconographic murals and mosaics in Early Christian basilicas and Byzantine domes, and scenographic or trompe-1'oeil effects inside Baroque churches. These images are signs as well as ornament – explicit sources of information virtually independent of the planar forms and sheltering surfaces of the generic architecture they are applied to all over – they evoke video projections where, projected onto independent architectural surfaces, the foot of a saint on the wall of a basilica might be amputated by the opening of an arch.

• And an iconography that suggests the relevance for us of the ornamental surfaces of temple exteriors and basilican interiors – and I should include other precedents like that of super-graphics that adorn the Constructivist designs of Konstantin Melnikov of the 1920s or the *faux* ornament depicting three-dimensional architectural elements on the surfaces of country architecture in northern Europe and representing expensive materials on cheap furniture of peasant cultures. But it demonstrates as well a difference in our electronic age when computerized images can change over time, information can be infinitely varied rather than dogmatically universal, and communication can accommodate diversities of cultures and vocabularies, vulgar and tasteful, Pop and high-fauiting – from here and there. In this context the grand advertising Jumbotrons atop buildings in Tokyo and Osaka can, along with temple hieroglyphics and mosaic iconography, work as precedent for a generic architecture employing video display systems-where the sparkle of pixels can parallel the sparkle of tesserae and LED can become the mosaics of today. What S. Apollinare Nuovo does inside we can do inside and/or outside.

Here is architecture as iconographic representation emitting electronic imagery from its surfaces day and night rather than architecture as abstract form reflecting light from its surfaces only in the day – an architecture that embraces human dimensions over those of abstract expression – that celebrates the beginning of an age of virtually universal literacy and embraces meaning over expression.
There are dangers in an architecture of representation that makes art out of information. Didacts can exploit it to promote ideology within art. Abstract expressionism is safer. But techniques available now can help us achieve change and balance via flexibility, and promote richness through variety. *Our* iconography will not be etched in stone.
And it is important to remember that it is a GENERIC architecture that acknowledges symbolism and iconography for our time, that represents ornament and projects detail rather than engages them – is this virtual detail?