

Architecture: Problems of Translation

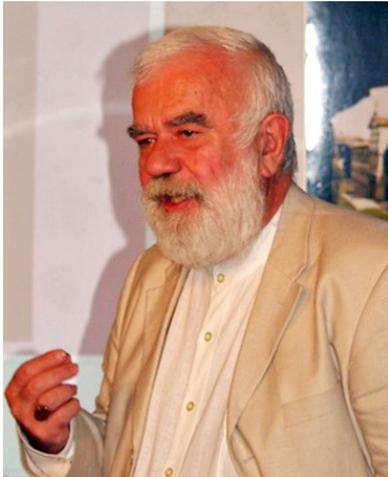
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Abstract: For the past few centuries, architecture has been systematically discussed in Western culture as a “language”, autonomous from other disciplines and yet influenced by them. Architects study the complexity of culture that surrounds them and attempt to make their work a mirror of it: geometry, biology, all of the arts, philosophy, sociology, etc. The predicament in transforming such an enormous variety of interests in a built form that is to be inhabited involves a process of translation from one “language” into another. For example, geometry is not architecture, yet architecture employs it; poetry is not architecture, yet architecture makes use of it. The paper examines a few case studies concerned with the methodology of translation among poetry, painting, sound, sculpture and architecture: Rimbaud, Apollinaire, and Juan Gris, and Livio Dimitriu’s *Stairwells* volume (1974-1979) inside the New York avant-garde movement *Pamphlet Architecture*; the sculptor’s Constantin Brancusi’s *Targu Jiu Complex* in Romania (1936-1937); Le Corbusier’s *Maison Cook* in Paris (1927). What makes for an act of translation to fail? What makes for an act of translation to succeed? It involves moving from one discipline to another, and similarly from one language to another. Where literalness does stop, and where does “creative intuition” take over? The conclusion involves the extraordinary impact of Marcel Duchamp inside Twentieth Century, as best exemplified in architecture by the most original *oeuvre* of the Carlo Scarpa.



Biographical Sketch:

Dr. Livio Dimitriu is an American architect/educator, with a New York private practice since 1978. His urban projects have received 13 national and international gold, silver, and bronze medals, and honorable mentions, in the USA, Italy, and Singapore. His projects have been exhibited at the German Architecture Museum, Taiwan Fine Arts Museum, Museum of Finnish Architecture, the Venice Biennale, MoMA, the Smithsonian, Museum of Modern Art/Paris, and many other institutions and galleries in 28 countries. Mr. Dimitriu has authored and contributed to 31 volumes in 10 countries on 3 continents, along with articles and projects in over 100 magazines worldwide.

Mr. Dimitriu founded USA Institute in 1978, a New York public service and research organization sponsored by the banking and marble, granite, and stone industry, academic institutions, and private donors. He is Chief Editor of USA Books, and has been a Senior International Magazine Editor for a cumulative 25 years with *Controspazio*, *Octogon*, and *Arhitekt*. Mr. Dimitriu co-founded the avant-garde *Pamphlet Architecture* in 1978, and started the first series of volumes ever on New York Architects in 1987. He has been a founding member of the Islandic School of Architecture, a past member of the Olivetti Foundation Scientific Committee and the Canadian Schools of Architecture Accreditation Board, a Senior Fulbright Scholar to Europe, a grant recipient of the National Foundation for the Arts, and twice a recipient of a Romanian Government Research Grant, and of a Pratt Institute Research Grant.

Mr. Dimitriu has held academic appointments/directorships at 21 universities in North America, Europe, and Asia. He has presided and/or participated in scores of competition juries in Europe, Asia, South America, and the USA, and curated over 45 premiere traveling exhibitions, including New York Architects, Scarpa, Sartoris, Figini & Pollini, Botta, Gregotti, Vacchini, Purini, and Anselmi.

Mr. Dimitriu accepted a Ph.D. in Theory/History of Architecture with the highest honors from the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism in Bucharest, an Honorary Master Architect in Stone from the Antica Corporazione in Verona/Italy, and a B. Arch. from The Cooper Union in New York. He is currently a tenured Full Professor at Pratt Institute.

His early interest in literature received a Romanian National Youth Award for Prose in 1968, after mastering the language during 10 years of forced residence in that country, imposed on a foreign citizen, during late 1950s to late 1960s. In the USA, he audited New York University courses with Alain Robbe-Grillet, Tristan Todorov, Julia Kristeva, and Borelli, and lectured on European avant-garde literature with the Kiremidjian courses at Brooklyn College, Modern Languages Association, and American Society of Esthetics, and other American academic institutions.