

Critica de arhitectura

Arhitectura contemporana

Hans Ibelings:

"Unmodern Architecture in Netherlands"

eseu

Architecture and ethics

Early postmodernism bypassed the Netherlands, but took hold the second time around when it was experiencing a revival everywhere else. It is not only traditionalist architecture in the Netherlands (and elsewhere in Europe) that is rooted in European postmodernism, but also the architecture that is evolving in the United States under the banner of New Urbanism and is currently being exported to Europe (where New Urbanism is following the same path as Starbucks, which has been trying for several years to find a niche in the European market for its American interpretation of the European coffee house).

Traditionalist architecture is like organic food. In the past all food was organic, so we didn't need the adjective. But not any longer. It is no longer safe to assume that something is continuing a tradition or has been produced in an eco-friendly way. In today's world, creating something traditional – or something organic – means shunning all the modern resources and technology that are now available, in other words: adopting a deliberately unmodern approach.

Traditionalism in contemporary architecture is not a style that can be precisely defined, but a broad classification for the work and philosophy of designers for whom conventions, customs and traditions are the basis for architectural development. Their aim is neither to innovate nor to break with the past, but to establish an organic continuity with what exists and has existed.

Lovers of traditionalist architecture are like lovers of organic products, in that there is no one reason for their preference. At one end of the spectrum we have an ethical rationale: producers and consumers of organic food object to the inhumane methods of intensive farming and to agricultural practices that damage the environment. Similarly, those who commission and design traditionalist architecture sometimes have moral objections to the destruction of town and country and the (real or imagined) short lifespan of non-traditionalist products.