Spectacular architecture that prioritizes the visual imagery of its exterior configuration and/or its interior spaces has attracted enormous attention in recent decades, and has seemed to lead architectural innovation. Its professional success and media impact has led to both celebration and critical concern within architectural discourse, and to responses ranging from admiration to destructive envy among various publics. What kinds of imagistic thinking are occurring in recent architectural design? Is spectacular architecture confined to the upper reaches of the globalized economy? Are equivalent but different levels of design inventiveness being devoted to the needs of the multitudes and of the planet itself? Did the balance between aesthetics and social program proposed by the early twentieth century modernists shift by the century’s end to a postmodern disbalance? Are recent geopolitical events, and the accelerating complexities of contemporaneity, bringing about a further realignment of architecture’s double obligation?


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