

Pedagogy of the Cubicle: A Retrospective Look at Beaux- Arts Traditions in Constructing Individuality Through Isolation

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PLACE / SPACES

'Loge' (cell, cubicle, box, cabinet, compartment, hut) is a spatial typology built to serve often ritualistic, also quotidian practices of physical, social and mental seclusion. From monastic life, to prisons, one can find various examples where voluntarily or involuntarily; isolated cells were used to renounce one's contact with the outside world in order to incubate contemplation, concentration for individuals.

One of the strongest rituals of loge is found in the pedagogic traditions of *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, a seminal model that influenced the history of architectural education in the world. 'Loges' were the spatial educational tools invented and used during the architectural competitions, which were central pedagogical and curricular motives of the *École's* educational system. The individual cubicles (varied in size in different periods) divided by rigid walls were aligned on a corridor, kept under strict probation by guardians, isolating students physically and socially from the outside world and each other during the periods of architectural competitions. In order to become a 'logist', competitors first had to be selected based on their preliminary sketches, and then assigned to these cubicles for durations that varied from 2 hours to 3 months, preparing the renders of their projects loyal to their preliminary sketches (Levine, Middleton, 1984). Thanks to the separating walls, strict rules, regulations, as well as the guardians, malicious exterior influences were inhibited, assuring competitors an uninterrupted blank slate to manifest their geniuses, channelling the heavenly beauties into their works and a guaranteeing them the opportunity to claim the credits personally.

One of the indications that prove importance of loges in the *Beaux-Arts* system can also be marked in process of its transfer to its new premises in Rue Bonaparte. As the entire complex was redesigned by Debret in 1820, *Batiments des Loges* (the *Loges Building*) was the first to be completed in 1824, (even before the *Palais des Études*) for its indispensable role in running the competitions and an assertion of a just selection of future members of the Academy as in the case of *Prix de Rome*.

Aureli (2013) argues that individual subjectivity was primarily seeded in the form of religious devotion and renunciation as practiced in ascetic and monastery culture. Similarly, the pedagogy of the 'loge' corresponded well to the Albertian definition creation and the construction of semi-divine renaissance figures (the artist, architect, judge etc.), fortifying the role of isolation as a creative stimulus and assurance of individual subjectivity.

Although this seminal pedagogic tradition has come to cease with the dissemination of the *École* in 1968, it is still thought-provoking to reconsider different forms of spatial and

non-spatial isolation present in educational practices today and its role in constructing individuality.

This paper aims to bring forth the particularities of designing 'en loge' stemming from École des Beaux-Arts tradition, to shed light on the pedagogic roots of constructing individuality, as well as its continuing influences in the practices of architectural education today around the world. This retrospective look will be based on the study on 19th and 20th century archive materials on being in 'loge', referring to rules and regulations, plans, memoirs of students and discussions on the changes of the loges in its use. This study will be accompanied by a selection of contemporary architectural education practices, in order to discuss and speculate on the continuation of 'loge' system in various disguises.

It can be argued that certain pedagogical traditions have been central to the construction of architecture as a discipline. Merquior (1985) delineates Foucault's four co-requisites for discipline: spatial distribution (segregation); control of activity (imposition of routines); exercise (physical and mental); and strategy (tactical manipulation and ordering of people). This perspective parallels the acquisition of skills and norms through the pedagogy of the loge and places it central to the construction of the architect-as-author, and field of architecture as an autonomous discipline. Therefore, by discussing in detail the preconceived notions of creativity and isolation, as well as the function of (spatial and non-spatial) pedagogic tools that enable it, it could be possible to better address the disciplinary foundations of architecture that prevail problematically despite radical socio-technological and intellectual paradigm changes of 20th century, and possible openings to emancipate it from the predicaments of an isolated architectural design (learning) practice.

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3: Current condition of 'Batiment des Loges' of Ecole des Beaux Arts Paris, photo by Sevgi Türkkkan



4: National Technical University of Athens, Faculty of Architecture, graduation cubicles, photo by Sevgi Türkkkan, 2017.



5: Istanbul Technical University, Faculty of Architecture, graduation sketch exam, photo by Sevgi Türkkan, 2019.