



Günther Feuerstein

Androgynos – Das Mann-Weibliche in Kunst und Architektur

Androgynos – The Male-Female in Art and Architecture

240 pp. with ca. 320 ill., 233 x 284,5 mm, hard-cover, German/English

ISBN 978-3-930698-74-5

Euro 68.00, sfr 118.00, £ 46.00, US \$ 79.00

After the angry gods had split the originally perfect, androgynous human being into man and woman, for the Greeks the only possible way of re-uniting the two sexes was in the form of a bi-sexual being created by fusing the nymph Salmacis with Hermaphroditos, the son of Hermes and Aphrodite.

It is not only Greek and Roman antiquity that was concerned with this subject: in many early cultures, in the religions of India, in theosophy and in alchemy perfection is seen in a happy union of man and woman. A number of pictorial records make this abstract idea visible. Latent longing for a new unity is also to be found in more recent art, especially in literature, film and painting.

If we grant architecture the ability to form metaphors, to make statements about human existence, to go beyond fulfilling everyday needs, then here too the question of sexuality must become visible. We know the theory that something upright is phallic-male and that rooms, caves and domes represent the uterine-female. But this book goes a – doubtlessly speculative step further. It makes a mental leap to recognize something specifically androgynous in architecture: the »tower on the dome« as a symbol of union, of penetration, of conjunction (which is love and aggression at the same time), the »house within the house« as a symbol of a being within a being etc.

If we abstain from sexuality then we come to elemental basic architectural questions: to the age-old subject of antithesis and synthesis, unity and duality, contrast and harmony.

Günther Feuerstein, Professor at the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Linz and also a lecturer at the Akademie der bildenden Künste and at the Technische Universität in Vienna, must be considered *the* catalyst in the Viennese post-war architectural scene, as almost all architectural avant-garde groups of the town have come from his circle.

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