



1:33 / Bärbel Trautwein

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THE INTERVIEW*

The white edition of the room. Orchids on the shelf. On the coffee table stand some highly caloric Muffins but also some fresh juicy fruits. They look like a cherry on top of the white room.

The Supermodel popped up to make a short interview with the architect. She is short in time but has many questions. The architect is sitting in a white organically shaped chair. The Supermodel too. The Supermodel is wearing a lightly dress, she wears her hair in a certain style. She creeps. Maybe the air-conditioning is not set correctly. The architect is wearing a dress thats different from the Supermodels but similar. The architect wears her hair in a certain style.

The Supermodel starts the conversation:

The Supermodel: We are short of time, and I have many questions, so let's get started. In your interviews you speak a lot about experimental nature of early avant-garde. Is that what your book is about?

The Architect: *The book is based on the show about Russian suprematism that we did two years ago in Gallery Gmurzynska in Zurich. We installed my works imitating suprematism among the gallery's collection of Russian suprematists. Russians were obsessed with the thing during the whole of the XX century: all these sputniks, dogs in space, the monument next to the park of Exhibition of Achievements of the National Economy, exhibition centres with things that would look like hovering planets. It was just like everything was flying, the whole thing. They even had bottle openers shaped as rockets, I used to have a lot, don't know where they are.*

The Supermodel: If I'm not mistaken, even your school project was called Malevich's Tektonik.

The Architect: *Yes, that was my fourth year project when I was a student of Rem Koolhaas.*

Once we were assigned to come up with a new scale for objects by locating them somewhere.

I placed mine on the bridge over the Thames. This was meant to show that works of such suprematists as Malevich and Lissitzky are only seen as art objects because they have no scale to be compared to. But the minute you put scale they become architecture.

The Supermodel: You draw a lot, but many projects never came to life. For about thirty years you were a paper architect. Why did this period last so long?

The Architect: Not actually thirty years. I left school and university thirty-five years ago. Let's say twenty years. Or maybe fifteen. No one expected to build a career like that then – it all boiled down to putting together a simple box with something in it. I took a look at the projects of very large buildings, and they seemed so massive and bulky. So it struck me that they wouldn't be so bulky if they were in the shape of a gentle hill, or something similar. That's

when I started working on visual environment and landmasses applying fluid lines, trying to make a building look as if it were liquid. It took years to translate the word "liquid space" into an idea to be further translated into a building.

The Supermodel: And this has started the revolution! Just as the concept of suprematism in the past. Do you feel anything similar today?

The Architect: *You know, when I started I had a feeling that technological revolution was coming, but I didn't know where it would begin. Eventually the incredible advancement in computer technology changed everything. Even in architecture – especially in general fabrication, which became absolutely seamless. It's not only the seamlessness that connects the building with the ground, but also the fact that there isn't any contradiction between the idea and its technological embodiment, fabrication. For instance, we are now in the middle of a stunning project in Baku where we apply this technology to achieve completeness. The process has become simpler. Instead of manufacturing chairs in London and shipping them to America you can just ship the machine somewhere, and do it there.*

The Supermodel: Do you mean these amazing 3D machines?

The Architect: *Exactly. 3D modeling allows us to build objects, practically one-offs with the minimal costs. You can't apply this to buildings as they require engineering, but this is only a matter of time. There's no need to print out drawings to send them to engineers anymore, it can be done by email. As it is very precise, now you can't make a mistake, which*

would be unavoidable if it were made by hand. No need to build a model here, I email it, and they can start working on it wherever they are. It's practically the same as in car-technology, or airplanes.

The Supermodel: Should we expect new revolutionary genres in architecture?

The Architect: *We should. During the past decades there have been a few drastic changes in architecture. It started off with people defining the idea of what we call norm, which has only one single rational. But then people questioned it. The views on topology have shifted. They used to think that architecture has to land, as there's gravity to deal with the buildings would have to be very grounded. It all was based on production before, it had to be flat and repetitive – like producing same things endlessly. That has changed.*

The Supermodel is listening closely to the architect. While listening she is moving her head in a affirmative way.

The Supermodel: Not only you are a fan of Russian suprematism, but also you have a couple of projects in Moscow: an office complex, and a living tower in Moscow-City.

The Architect: *To be honest, I have no idea what stage these projects are at. Despite my deep connection with Russia, we don't have much work there. But I love the idea of doing something in St. Petersburg, it is a wonderful city. As for Moscow – I find it one of the most*

amazing places in the world.

The Supermodel:

I say the same thing. People ask me: How can you live there? But it's almost like living in New York: amazing restaurants, amazing art, exhibitions, ballet. It's always on educating demand.

The Architect: *Beautiful, and so very spacious. I remember staying with friends who seemed to live by my hotel, Metropol. I decided to take a walk this once, and it took me 40 minutes. Every street is triple in size of a normal street, and buildings are 8 times bigger!*

The Supermodel: They need a few more parking lots and garages.

The Architect: *And public transport. Though their subway trains are beautiful, don't you think?*

The Supermodel: The trains! Did you see Alexander McQueen's show in the subway?

The Architect: *Seriously? I didn't know about it. We used to go in the subway and get out in every station, because they are all so different and so beautiful! And the idea of giving these palaces to people is unique. The Stalinism era architecture is a bit weird, but quite interesting.*

The Supermodel: Yes, I agree. Your work has never had any particular national references. What is your attitude to architects who keep a strong national identity?

The Architect: *I think people in the world*

become more similar, they have similar aspirations and goals. But retained identity is not a decoration. People still have very different habits: they use space differently, live in different climates...

The Supermodel: On a personal note... You've been described as a careerist. Do you feel there can be too much pressure on you?

The Architect: *Not at all. This is a choice. I neither argue, nor regret being a careerist. Of course it does limit your ability to have a normal life, to have a partner or children. But honestly, if I wanted to have kids, I would have had them. Though, coming from Muslim background one would still be looked upon for having children without a husband. Maybe I will regret it one day, but I haven't yet.*

The Supermodel: There must be a lot of travelling.

The Architect: *This is the most exhausting part, actually. But I can't really complain, the work became global. You couldn't do this before. Louis Kahn had to be on location in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Can you imagine, he went from Philadelphia to New York, then Europe, and on. It must have taken weeks. Or Le Corbusier, when he was working on Chandigarh! Thanks God they invented jets! This summer I'll have to travel to the biennale in Venice, then the exhibition in Madrid, Montpellier opening, Antwerp, Baku, China... And this insanity will continue until January. I'll turn into a vegetable without a vacation.*

The Supermodel: I'm going to send you some masks. They don't look pretty but they work. You put one around your ears and your nose, it's honey covered. On the plane people are coughing and sneezing, and I don't get anything. When I get off, I feel hydrated.

The Architect: *Fantastic! British Airways new first class seats are so bad...*

The Supermodel: Sorry, can't speak about this. Only when I turn off the recorder...

... IN A HADID-DESIGNED HOTEL ROOM WHERE THIS INTERVIEW WAS REENACTED AS PART OF AN INVESTIGATION INTO CURRENT MODES OF PRODUCTION AND THEIR RELATION TO ARCHITECTURE.







