

Re: Doing Dubai

Wes Jones

The name *post-critical* has been adopted by current architectural discourse for the brand of activity pursued by theoretically inclined (i.e., formerly *critical*) practitioners and academics. The name announces a perception of the failure of criticality, the belief that after decades of assuming critique's ability to challenge authority, it is instead critical practice's limitations in that regard that have become most apparent. The conscientious problem addressed by thinkers today – the difference from the critical period of post-structuralism – is *accommodation*. It stems from recognition that authority has prevailed because there is no place from which to offer a significant critique that is not somehow already compromised by the system. Accommodation has two senses in here. First, the accommodation of the potential critique by the system before that critique is even offered, and second, the accommodation by the critic to the terms of the system in hope of making the critique intelligible and thus effective. In the first case the system's comprehensiveness denies the critique any privileged position *outside* from which its efforts might gain legitimacy, while its seamlessness prohibits any independent operational maneuverability. The result is that, however transgressive the intent of the critique, its very presence – necessarily within the system – is an indication of the system's acceptance of the critique, as a contribution to the system. In the second case, the critic finds that the system controls the discourse to the extent that it controls the rule of logic, rationality and significance. Since the critic wants to make a point, to communicate, he/she must subscribe to the conventions and assumptions of utility that permit this communication. In the case of architecture, this means that requirements of licensure, financing and functionality must be accommodated at a minimum, and if the critical architect wants to operate at the larger architectural or even urban scale then the *price* of admission grows commensurately.



Fig. 1: Billboards on Sheikh Zayed Road.