Meanings of Replica – Fake or Landscape Enhancement?

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1. Background and Aims of study
Many practices of preservation of historic buildings with varieties of techniques have been developed all over the world. There are some cases to rebuild the lost objects or to build “replicas” which imitate the original buildings in detail to regenerate the lost atmosphere. In addition, some foregoing excellent studies to investigate the ways subsequent reconstruction of the cultural heritage after deconstruction impacts local identity formation. For these cases, there are critical arguments of authenticity. Replicas can be interpreted as “fake fabrication of the past”, while “device to enhance historic landscape and their atmosphere”. Strictly speaking, all replica should be the “fake”, however, while it exists in site and being perceived “as found”, it may contribute to enhance the landscape as total, even though replica deceives observers, creating “fake” historic atmosphere.

In this study, meanings of replica buildings are analyzed and we summarized 3 significances of replicas: a) Symbolism, b) Tourists’ attraction and c) Visualization of the imaginative (or idealistic, unreachable) world.

2. How has the Replica been “Enjoyed”?
What values has the replica been generated in history? We collected and analyzed examples of replicas found in various cultures.

(1) Follies (artificial ruin) in English Landscape Garden in 18th century
In 18th century in England, with popularity of The Grand Tour, English people toured continental Europe and romantically impressed with the ruined buildings there. Back in England, they introduced value of ruins and in “Picturesque” Gardens they created mock ruins. The role of ruins are considered to be literally “picturesque” and more or less, “superficial”, as former study by author summarized the landscape roles of ruins in British Landscape Garden into 4

Fig.1 Follies in English Landscape Garden
Kew Garden in London and Stowe Landscape Garden, Buckinghamshire
categories: (1) Eye-catcher as a part of landscape composition, (2) Nature without aesthetic intent, such as natural weathering, (3) Reminiscence of past civilization and (4) Ephemeral landscape. They contribute to visualize the idealistic landscape.

(2) Imitation Buildings and Landscape of Prototype in Japan in Early-modern Age
In modern age in Japan (before 1868), there was traditional aesthetic concept, called “MITATE”, which means the permutation of the meaning. This concept was applied not only to drawing, poets, or potteries, but also to the existing landscape. They built replicas of well-known buildings in the city to produce tourists’ attraction. From this manner, we can extract the value of replica to realize the perception of prototypes which is difficult to visit or obtain.

Landscape imitation of prototypes generated peculiar value, such as medieval temples in Tokyo which imitated ancient ones in Kyoto, or miniature of natural landscapes which reflected the ones around traditional Biwako-Lake or ones in China.

Fig.2 Mock Architecture in Early Modern Age in Japan
L: Kiyomizudo in Kyoto (Original building)
R: Ueno Kiyomizudo in Tokyo (Replica of L: Drawn by Hiroshige Utagawa, 1850s)

Fig.3 Shukkei-en Garden in Hiroshima
Built in 1620. As “Shukkei” means “Miniatured Landscape”, various landscape of sights, such as ones in China, were collected and miniaturized in the site.

By these analysis, we grasped 3 significances of replicas; (1) symbolism, (2) tourists’ attraction, and (3) visualization of the imaginative (or idealistic, unreachable) world.

3. Application for Contemporary Replica Buildings
We attempted to apply those significances for present replicas of industrial and architectural heritages.

Fig.4 Old Shimbashi Station
U: Former Photo / M: Reconstructed architecture
D: Reconstructed Platform

(1) Old Shimbashi station
Old Shimbashi station is a milestone heritage of modernization in Japan. In 1872, station architecture was built as first railway terminal in Japan. Original station was burned down due to fire after the great earthquake in 1923. In 2003, the replica was constructed as railway museum with mock platform in the original place.

a) In view of Symbolism
This replica was constructed as a part of Large-scale redevelopment project; “Shiodome SIO-SITE”.

Fig.4 Old Shimbashi Station
U: Former Photo / M: Reconstructed architecture
D: Reconstructed Platform
Surrounded by skyscrapers, original site was successfully re-interpreted and symbolized with historical meaning.

b) In View of Visualization of the imaginative world
The replica makes visitors easily imagine the past with station architecture and series of reconstructed or repaired equipments such parts of the platform or railway track.

(2) Kitakyushu International Friendship Memorial Library in Kitakyushu, Japan
Kitakyushu International Friendship Memorial Library in Kitakyushu, Japan, is a replica of old Dongqing Railway & Steamship Corp. Office in Dairen, China built in 1902, and was built to commemorate the conclusion of “friendship city” between Kitakyushu and Dairen city in 1994.

a) In View of Symbolism
The trigger of construction was what mayors’ proposal to generate a symbol of friendship in both cities.

b) In View of Tourists’ attraction
Construction site was within the district of “Moji harbor retrospective town” with existing historic architectures (some of them were even moved to this site) to form outdoor museum for tourists.

(3) Teatro alla Scala in Milano
Teatro alla Scala, completed in 1778 was reconstructed in 1946 after collapse by bombing in 1943 during the WWII suffering from big damage on roof and the interior. Afterwards, large-scale restoration was executed from 2002 to 2004, with the extension of office building and remodeling of interior.

a) In View of Symbolism
The status as the palace of the opera could be sustained.

b) In View of Tourists’ attraction
Popularity is kept stable as one of the typical tourist’ attraction in Milano, even though it is replica of original building.

c) In View of Visualization of the imaginative world
“Once-lost” historic landscape has come back to exist, and again visualizes, in some meanings, man-remade historic atmosphere.

4. Conclusions
As conclusions, we manifested the following findings as meanings of replicas.

(1) Replica may effectively works as method to create or emphasize visual existence and the scale of the lost, unreachable, or imaginative buildings.

(2) Replica may generate the tourists’ attraction by being connected with other historic sights around.

(3) Provided with related information, replica effectively works as catalysis to generate historic atmosphere.

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