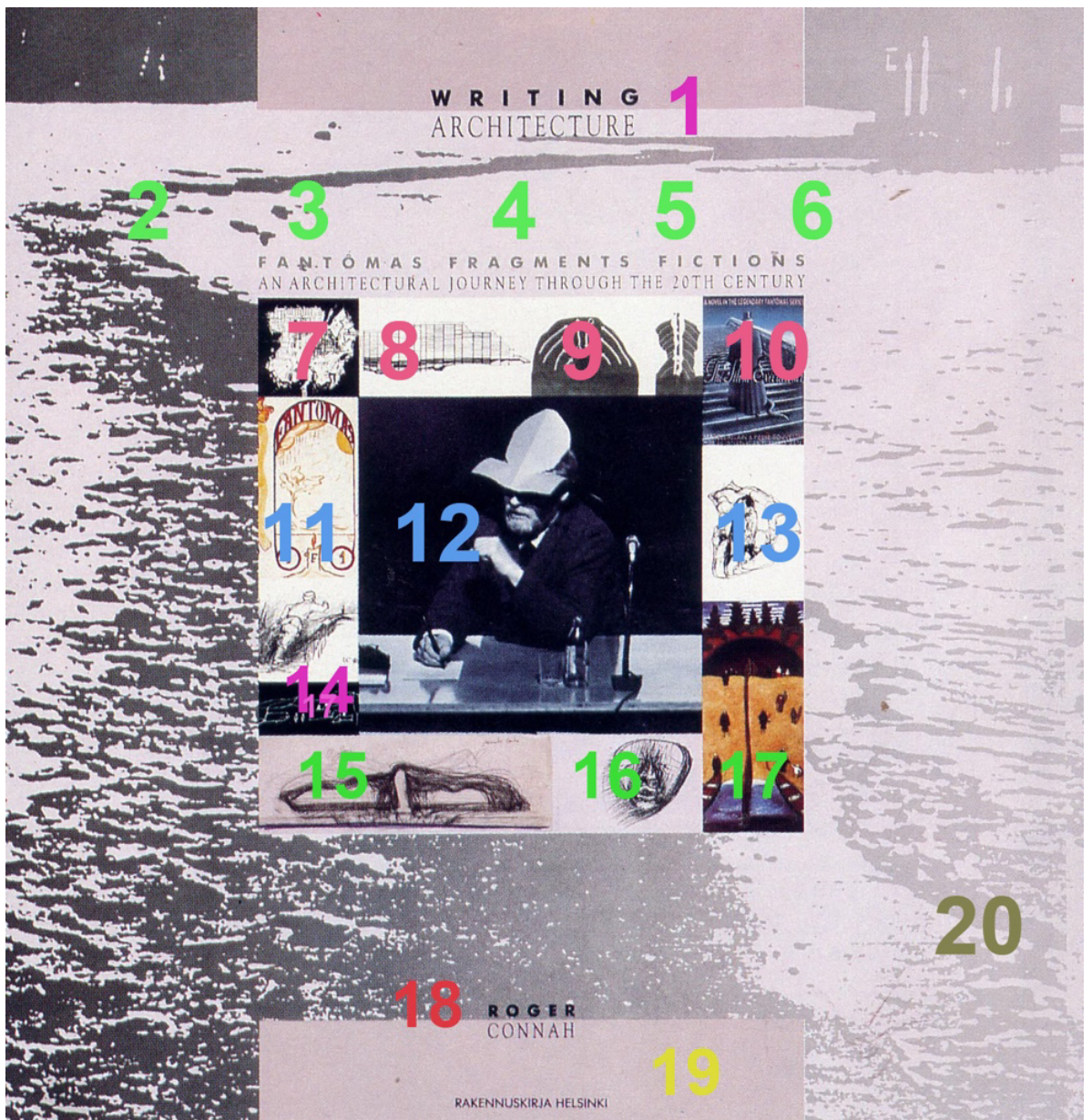
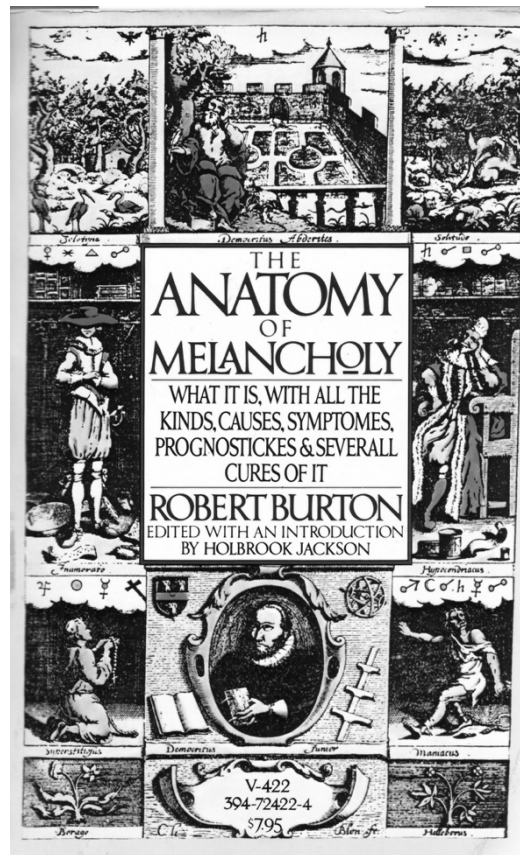


THE COVER OF WRITING ARCHITECTURE



THE COVER OF WRITING ARCHITECTURE



In the second decade of the 21st Century, in the midst of what appears a never-ending hunger and huge media interest, ‘Starchitecture’ has become, to swerve towards Marshall McLuhan, an alienated and alienating experience. At the same time, the work of various souls, from professors to researchers, from practitioners to other players, is re-calibrating itself through research, data, practice and meta-history. Architecture is necessarily contesting itself, not quite architecture against architecture. We would expect contemporary research to allow us to understand why. Yet research is first and foremost a diligent – some would say vigilant – systematic inquiry that veers towards commentary. This swings two ways. It operates as an investigation, usually to explore, find, and discover ‘facts’ including the *cult of the fact* (Liam Hudson, 1976). The driest research is also a form of catch-up. It repeats and recalibrates more or less measured enquiries back to us across university and conference, across time and trend, usually with the help of funding streams. It is not the Holy Grail.

More interesting perhaps is research and writing that discovers, in order to revise; whether it revises facts, methodologies, theories, opinions, narratives, perceptions, or applications does not really matter. In this respect, good research like good writing on architecture is research or writing that can go wrong; it is narrative-busting. With some luck, this type of research breaks open the straitjackets that language and mind have applied to language and mind. Especially our own!

Of course, new architectural research does not just concentrate on isolated topics. Projects that appear depend on funding, networks, conference fetish, the politics of friendship and publishing, whim and taste; to research, to design, to build, to write one book, to design one installation might be to cancel another out. Research can only be thrilled if it is a constant struggle to affront architecture with its own deception. It should not fall back on funded, peer-assessed, measured-grant projects, though it will naturally and periodically try.

Research is more important than that: any investigation, scrutiny and examination must cross - often shockingly - the relationship between *being* and *architecture*. Live research like live theory occurs in every pedagogical act, every professional act, every generous offer and enquiry, every aside or meaningful gesture. Everything else is manageable economics, catch-up turf games and policy strategies. We structure change because we wish to change; not to serve targets, reduce gases and babble.

What's wrong with this picture? We ask. Research is first and foremost an enquiry into how we avoid dwelling in the arrogance of our own intimacies and our own texts. Any future plans must move *being* and *architecture* towards un-being and architecture. And for architecture, too long in public exile, research is a critical hymn to silence or the philosopher's stone.

For the last three decades and counting, ever since studying both architecture and literature, these two likely yet often conflicting partners have rebounded off each other in my own work. Architecture and writing; projections, films, epic poems, choreographies, renovations, exhibitions, town plans, scripts, confessions. All insinuations, anxieties and obsessions make up this matrix.

The nature of a matrix is of course (inter)relational. Touch one and the other reacts. Poke into another and yet another is informed and reformed. Critical thinking and research are irresistible but not in the usual sense. Early work rebounds with later work in an attempt to understand ignorance, anxiety, alienation and hubris. Is this the grand deception? Is debauchery too strong a word for architecture itself?

Observation becomes legitimate when it turns into research through contest. The cover of *Writing Architecture* is a mandala, a map of the un-thought. It is about non-knowledge and unseen dreams. It is a test for future theory, a menu for probes in this alienated experience. It is as relevant now as it was in 1989, when the book was published.

Indicated here, in the 1-20 menu, are running concerns, anxieties, opportunities, griefs, obsessions and passions that are linked to the way architecture constantly continues what some consider its grand deception into the healing and treatment of mankind. Cliché it may be, but everything *just* everything interconnects. Love and garbage, architecture and being, research and scholarship must all rebound back into pedagogy and practice and must always be accompanied by the anti-library: *Being* and *Architecture*. We research ourselves when we think we write architecture.

*



The cover of *Writing Architecture* (1989) is an assemblage, a compositional arrangement. Its 2D surface effect belies deeper associations like a flat-glass work of art significant in Early Christianity (windows, stained glass) and those alchemical transformations of the profane to the sacred associated with mediaeval cults. It is a short-cut to the architect's thematic content which performs personal experience but is never avowable except within architecture. Its direct cousin is the frontispiece of Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*.

1 **W R I T I N G** Futura Bold script, triple spaced, robust: the controlled influence and interference =. "Writing as *worklessness* (in the active sense of the word) is the insane game, the indeterminacy that lies between reason and unreason." (Blanchot)

ARCHITECTURE = Goudy tightened to 80%, squeezed into an unknown constraint of the discipline that seeks new form. "What happens to the book during this 'game' in which *worklessness* is set loose during the operation of writing?" (Blanchot - *Writing of the Disaster*).

2 *Pihlajasaari* Helsinki (Roger Connah, 1979) – This is an expanded, highlighted, screened and amended photograph of Pihlajasaari outside Helsinki, early evening with receding tide revealing the wet sand of the *liminal* zone -, that space where the water meets the land. Forever changing, forever moving, the dynamics of creativity itself

3 FANTOMAS – futura bold, spaced = a set of French ‘policier’ books written about a special visitor who carries out the crime elegantly, wears white gloves, and leaves his calling card to indicate the dada-moves of such a delinquency. Consistent with the idea of Kurt Schwitters’ *Merzing architecture*, this is an infusion of ideas from alchemy to hermeticism familiar to Sufi saints, poets, shamans, and wandering scholars.

4 FRAGMENTS futura bold spaced = knowledge and non-knowledge. Nothing but a set of fragments, which always avoids any consolidation, any totality. The notion of fragments of course has the potential to irritate when it can take intuition to infinity.

5 FICTIONS futura bold spaced = all critical writing involves fictions as the ‘I’ moves to the ‘eye’ and re-scripts from one’s own experience. The author is eventually dead, as is the architect, which reminds us of the flimsiness of the vocabulary that keeps appealing despite fashionable discourses that can intervene at various times and eras.

6 AN ARCHITECTURAL JOURNEY THROUGH THE 20TH CENTURY - *Old Goudy All Caps* = vagabondage, flâneurial, a montage of the absent bricoleur, the absent subject (St. Reima not St. Pietilä?) traced through the series of known and unknown influences from beyond architecture. Implies a philosophically nomadic and spiritual journey. Possibly results in martyrdom within the conflicts that Modernism could not and would not address.

7 A plan of Dipoli Students’ Centre, built in 1966: this was Pietilä’s Merzbau of Kurt Schwitters re-scripted, re-created and choreographed as an architect to an unusual ‘don’t be fooled’ source: the Red Army Choir, for example, or Beckett’s *The Unnamable*. When Schwitters said “It’s all crap!” just what did he mean and what was he referring to? Pietilä even began by recreating Schwitters’ Merzbau in his earlier student apartment in Otaniemi outside Helsinki

8 A line drawing, a sectional imagination of the Intelsat HQ, Washington, competition entry, 1980; quite the building before its time, slinky, silky, amorphous, the chain-link of future digital architecture and morphing new geometry, achieved by many other architects later, when software met the new Saints.

9 From Pietilä's exhibition *Zone*, 1967; the most inventive, linguistic *homo ludens* exhibition that crawled in between language and architecture, dipped into Wittgenstein but by-passed Nietzsche and picked out the gems that were never voiced, and so little understood.

10 Book cover of *The Silent Executioner* (1911) by Marcel Allain & Pierre Souvestre, a novel in their legendary Fantômas series. "Enfantomastic", wrote James Joyce. See Magritte's *The Backfire* (1943) = a community, a special community and invites us to see architecture as a detective story. Fantômas, what does it mean? Nothing...everything...so what is it? "Nobody and yet, yes, it is somebody." "And what does the somebody do?" "Spreads terror." (See *Fantômas, Still-Life*, Writing Architecture pp. 28-30)

11 Pietilä's drawing from his *teenage* school years in the 1930s when he held a secret one-member, two-member club called Fantômas in Turku, the old capital in West Finland (late 1940s): a Freemasonry for one!

12 The subject, the object, the architect: *the alchemist* St. Pietilä attending a seminar at Oulu University in 1979, after responding to someone who remarked he had not been wearing his signature *calotti* hat. Thereupon the subject-object elegantly rips up an A4 piece of paper and makes the hat.

13 A *smudge study* from the early drawing and thinking process for the Dipoli Students' Centre (late 1950s, early 1960s), demonstrating both regular and irregular lines, which also became the two reconciling aspects of the building, the rational and the irregular (not the irrational!) = Finally, something Aalto understood, as the decisive juror of the Dipoli architecture competition: the *gestalt of the gestalt*.

14 A *reverse white-on-black image* section of the Dipoli Students' Centre inviting the interpretation of a cave, a grotto, an interior dark space lightened by the 'magus' self in the forest and recalling the competition pseudonym in 1961 = *The Caveman's Wedding March*. Situated underneath a sketch by Pietilä of a soldier advancing into that 'cave' of the Second World War when he was briefly at the 'front' during the Winter War (1940).

15 A *sketch* from the Monte Carlo Multipurpose Centre, an invited international competition project (1969), which in all the world looks like an expressionist being about to take off. Recalls Munch and Hélène Schjerfbeck = Scary monsters or Monsterpieces, well ahead of the Archigram winner of the competition.

16 Small wizened, frightened *figure* found in Pietilä's sketch book from around the war time. Existed alongside those sketches of his comrades finding themselves confused and fighting for their life and existence = would have made a suitable book cover image for Vaino Linna's war novel *The Unknown Soldier*, instead of the more literal locker-room, boys-together *sisu* image.

17 *The Entrance to Hades* by the Finnish artist Hugo Simberg (1892) = Up and down, either side, hell or high water, the Zone, the liminal space, always in between and that fence running right down the middle. Go either side and life is unsettling = it has to be. Learn the comforts of uncertainty, and gentle calm re-scripts architecture of anxiety.

18 AUTHOR Futura Bold First name – Old Goudy Family Names = sans serif and serif, = the divided self, a disciple making, according to J.M. Richards, merely a 'disciple's connections'. This was the self who lived most of what is experienced in the book in Finland but wrote most of it down and out whilst living in India (1986-89). Look again Sir James, the martyrs change their wardrobes and books survive where ashes lie.

19 RAKENNUSKIRJA HELSINKI Futura light = the Building Book Company Ltd. An awkward sounding name for a pioneering publisher at the time, but brave enough to take this book on = an unusually hand-crafted, designed and written book on architecture.

20 The cover story remains an open secret. *Writing Architecture* won the CICA International Critic's of Architecture Book Award for Architectural Criticism 1990. It was considered: "one of the most significant architectural books in the world during the past three years."

