

THE SCHOOL OF EXILE

— *Timo Penttilä*
for and against architecture theory

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THE SCHOOL OF EXILE

– *Timo Penttilä*
for and against architecture theory

Roger Connah

edited by Gareth Griffiths

– *with excerpts from Timo Penttilä,*
“Summum templum architecturae”

and with contributions from:


Alfred Berger

Kari Lind

Jorma Mukala

Antti Nousjoki

Gareth Griffiths

A black and white photograph of the Helsinki City Theatre building. The building is a prime example of modernist architecture, characterized by its facade of vertical, grid-like panels. The structure is composed of several interconnected volumes of varying heights and widths, creating a dynamic yet balanced composition. A large, dark tree with dense foliage is positioned on the left side of the frame, partially obscuring the building. The foreground shows a paved plaza with a grid pattern, and a covered walkway with columns runs along the base of the building. The sky is a uniform, light gray, providing a neutral background for the building's form.

Timo Penttilä, Helsinki City Theatre , 1960-67



For Timo Penttilä, the Helmsman

Good building is not a secret science decided upon in the closed circle of “elite” architects. It is also not the obvious truth that the *Finnish Architectural Review* proclaims, like the muezzin from his minaret. Building serves complex plans for life which reach far beyond itself, and which can be assessed from within building only to a limited extent. When our ideologists complain that modern man neglects architecture to his own detriment, I on the other hand claim that idealistic architectural theory does not at all take into consideration the existence of human individuals that use their own brain for thinking and have their own feeling.

– Timo Penttilä, 1985

Because Finland does not commit errors or make mistakes, it has nothing to learn from history. Everyone helps everyone else immediately and no-one ever.

– Paavo Haavikko, 2006

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Roger Connah, Luang Prabang, Laos, March 2014

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00 THE PHOTOGRAPH



Timo Penttilä, photo: Kari Lind

Trends, of course, first transform taste in architectural acceptance and then they begin to re-write this transformed architecture as if it conforms both to an expected present as much as an imagined past. If we speak about history as that which has happened, we must also think of those processes that ensure memory is lost or dislocated. And if history itself is always in movement, re-defined by our present time, if history is seen as a series of edited events with more or less chance veracity, is it not the emphasis we put on events that shape that history? Would history then not represent a useful or working bias we apply at various times? A working bias conditioned by the vicissitudes of fashion, taste and trends?

Timo Penttilä did not take the good photograph. By that we mean he was not a good sitter, subject or indeed object. It didn't concern him. His facial expression seemed to pause and his body stiffened before the shutter came down and the photograph "snapped". I remember this clearly in the sauna at Hvitträsk in around 1980 when I sat with a visiting US-UK critic and the three P's of Finnish Architecture: Penttilä, Petäjä and Pietilä (There are of course other P's too). The visiting critic writing on Finnish architecture desired to capture the sauna moment, as visitors often unwisely wish to do. He caught Petäjä and Pietilä as far as I remember in photograph, but Timo Penttilä somehow managed to slip out. So did I.

Later it never dawned on me to photograph him during the 4-day visit to his home in Tuscany in 1996, though I took endless sequences of film, which are in Hi8 or DV format. I didn't film him consciously; mostly I propped the camera against a fruit bowl and let it run as we talked. I never liked hearing my own voice and I think Timo said the same. We must have talked about it once and then



US-Finland: The Future of Modern Movement, Schooner Seminar, Helsinki 1980

forgotten it. To this day I have yet to discover the cassettes in the archive of the Hotel Architecture but I am slightly worried, with two floods in 10 years, that I may have lost them. The other photograph I remember of Timo Penttilä was taken in 1980 on board the schooner where the USA-Finland seminar organised by the Museum of Finnish Architecture on *The Future of Modern Movement* (sic) took place. In the photo Penttilä again sat somewhere off to the side, dressed in a thick sweater looking on at Moore, Hollein, Sharp, Pallasmaa, Mäkinen, Söderlund, Laitinen, Gullichsen, Komonen and others all talking. I just think of Penttilä watching, listening and saying little – in those dark glasses – next to Michael Sorkin.



Penttilä & Sorkin 1980

Whether Penttilä would have ultimately agreed with this school of exile hardly matters; that he held an internal discussion about architecture so long with himself is of no doubt. Whether that became a “terrible exile”, as Edward Said might have described it, a “refuge of the extraterritorial” as George Steiner called the un-housed and un-homed poets or the Sufi journey of the unrevealed and lesser-selfhood is left for the reader to imagine. Such a journey, such a life, was not the obvious exile, Penttilä was not un-housed, but existed in three homes.

The architect as migrant, vagrant or nomad: was this self-exile? In the last years of his life, Timo Penttilä had sold his Italian farmhouse and vineyard and moved back to Lapland. He always said “Lapland” to me when we spoke of his fishing in

Supru, not “Finland”. In these last few years, according to his friend and partner Kari Lind, he worked with his Lapp neighbour turning large, ancient, felled and dried logs into some sort of worked sculpture. He probably would not have called them sculptures. There will be little history of this as the two men winched and struggled to get the logs in place to be worked on. The evenings were probably spent around a fire. Who knows the conversation? Who needs to know that conversation? Penttilä knew the unspoken might be spoken more than occasionally, but that not much of anything is revealed from afar, beyond that moment.

For me it is like this: Timo Penttilä had a form of knowledge and learning – later schooled in exile – that few architects at the time appeared to want or even to contemplate. He saw the anonymous and brutal acceptance of controlled and uncontrolled architecture all around him and didn’t particularly like what he saw. He was a realist in a dogfight with his own colleagues who he thought, more often than not, were narrow and biased. He was not afraid to say so. They were in fact, he said, afraid. He knew life had to leave out things, he knew it was no longer a panic to get things done as if this final book he was working on – *The Summum* – would be the book to end all books on architecture. This is probably why, after asking me to help edit and possibly find a publisher in the mid to late 1990s, he asked me to destroy everything. In a way he was always moving from plenitude towards nothingness. And I liked him for that.

The photograph chosen for the cover is the helmsman, the yachtsman; the pose looks controlled, but there is more than a hint of calm concentration. The right hand is lightly holding the rudder stick; the yacht might not be moving for all we know! The sun is overhead, and I want to suggest there is utter control of the boat. But that’s fiction. There he is dressed, ready for the wind, in one of those lightly puffed polyester windjammers that yachtsmen used at that time. But it is the hat, which is simply impossible not to notice. It’s tight, possibly a size too small. I could exaggerate further and say I read a deep concern in the pose, something sterner than the image of those easy souls he was struggling against in Finnish architecture. Deception, he knew, would ensure realities remained hidden. He may already have known then what he would have done later. He knew things that might be useful for others to know. But censorship, clannishness and narrowness made sure that the closer he was to reality the more extreme and aloof he was considered.

The yachtsman can also be alone. Many have created the pleasure and achievement of self-exile on long ocean voyages. The picture will of course soften, it always does, but no one knows when the information froze and knowledge bled to produce the “wrong” working history. It seemed any photograph of the posed architect or the man seated at a conference table or lecturing would not do here. The helmsman with the touch, that lightest of control on the rudder, is as good as it gets.

0
A BOOK FOR EVERYONE
AND NO ONE

As soon as you feel yourself against me you have
ceased to understand my position and consequently
my arguments! You have to be the victim of the same
passion.

– Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Sol LeWit gave us a memorable phrase in the late 1960s: “Banal ideas cannot be rescued by beautiful execution.” The Finnish architect Timo Penttilä, the *last modernist* we might say from that country of indefatigable talent and tectonic skill, would have understood the phrase instantly. Banal ideas turned out some of the greatest buildings in Finland in the post-war period; these buildings, the architecture that was produced and promoted turned the country, if we are to read between the lines of Penttilä’s later “exile”, into a festival of short and long term thinking. To some, this festival demonstrated the brilliance of political and cultural detachment, utilizing the margin of the once-Soviet world, the benefits of self-censorship and remaining mute, turning that somewhat carnival Euro-margin into a major Euro-player today.

To a degree! In one way I have invented everything in this book to suit the subtitle “the school of exile” – in another way, which the pages will show, this architect Penttilä was not so much a seeker of the contemplative retreat, or a new mystic setting up his life after architecture in a vineyard in Tuscany, he was in fact exiled by his own country, his own profession, even his own colleagues. He was also exiled by ideas.

Timo Penttilä was one of the most promising and feted younger Finnish architects post-Aalto in the 1960s. Aalto, of course, was still alive in that decade but he himself went through a rough-ride; the briefly enflamed armchair Leninist-Marxists, even some of the card-carrying architects, hounded him, embarrassed him, mocked him.

Architects with any difference in their veins learnt to keep their heads down. The young Turks were not subtle. Along with Reima Pietilä and Timo and Tuomo Suomalainen (known as the Suomalainen Brothers), Penttilä’s work was often brilliant, well detailed and maddeningly varied. It was consistently misread, not always unreasonably, as an expressionist architecture. His most well known work, the Helsinki City Theatre is arguably a more accomplished work than that more feted cultural complex of Alvar Aalto across Töölö Bay in central Helsinki, Finlandia Hall. In spatial terms, tectonic terms, material terms and phenomenological terms, the Helsinki City Theatre showed an architect at the “top of his game”. Young as he was, there was serious architecture to come.

Fast forward to around 1980 and this young architect, known for speaking his mind and being frank, came into conflict with his own profession. His thoughts, often expressed in a direct manner, challenged many and were, to some, considered savagely disrespectful to the measured value and emerging fame of Finnish architecture. A fame well guided in the 1960s and 1970s by the Museum of Finnish Architecture and the journal *Finnish Architectural Review* towards a “cool” style, a no-fuss rational thinking that merged the clarity of Mies van der Rohe with technological invention. One response to one of Penttilä’s direct tirades rebuffed it with an obviousness that no one missed: *Also Sprach Timo Penttilä!*

Exactly who were those who exiled Penttilä is of course hard to determine and would be subject to a more detailed research. Was it the button-lipped loyalty of the younger Constructivist architects who then went on to adapt their work in the 1980s and 1990s in response to both Postmodernism and Deconstruction (Late-Modernism)? Was it another set of egos altogether that always made sure that any talk of a conspiracy or even a “mafia” was both derided and deflected, whilst operating with clannish and crude methods? Or was it that Finland itself always swerved with ideas, assimilated trends and ideas from the greater architectural community in order to refine their own position, and then claim invention for their own recognition? Penttilä did this too, but he was up front and open about it. Fame and recognition in the small society was a drug. The social and political post-war upheaval and developments could build a new civic Finland. Architects were ideally placed and generally had the egos to play such games. There were star architects then; and they all knew it.

Most within the profession in Finland around the 1960s and 1970s knew this to be a game of serious stakes. Penttilä began to see the games played, the stakes raised and the cards reshuffled. The pack was stacked towards a “Right Architecture”. The question was: who was defining that Right Architecture, and who marked the pack? Penttilä’s strong views on Finnish architecture, its trends, its open promotion and what became a series of uncritical games left many of his colleagues in an unthinking quandary. Hyperbole or not, the term is useful: the *cathedral of critical misery* in Finland made sure Penttilä did not fit. It is never as crude as that of course; even hooligans, as we know throughout the 20th century, have disguised their tactics and used velvet gloves to smash the glass.

In 1980, in circumstances that no one has ever really addressed (including Penttilä himself), Timo Penttilä left to become Professor of Architecture at the Academy of Arts in Vienna. Penttilä taught for almost two decades in Vienna before “retreating” in the latter part of the 1990s to what we might describe as his two exiles: a farmhouse with vineyard in Tuscany and a small cabin in Lapland. During the 1990s and possibly even later, Penttilä had all but given up on any further communication with the profession, colleagues and to some extent friends. When I visited him in 1997, in Sinalunga, Italy, this was told to me, slowly with elegance and calm, with no rancor or regret. “Simply”, he said, “I am re-thinking my life and architecture. I no longer know where architecture fits anymore.” It

was during that brief time that Penttilä introduced me to his reading, his research and his new writing. In English, and already for some years, he had been writing what would appear to me later as an enormous tome on architecture, entitled *The Summum*.

It was not only then that I realized he was attempting to re-think Finnish architecture; for him this was a footnote and secondary. For me he appeared to be aiming for something larger, more engaged. As we talked incessantly for four days, it seemed he wanted to put right the wrongs in architecture over two millennia. Critical ambiguity was not the question here; it was simpler than that. To Penttilä, the world did not understand itself. And it had created its own misunderstanding and misreading. “For centuries”, he added. “And it will go on doing this. Architecture is only one part of this misunderstanding. It happens to have been my life.”

This was a sovereign act. It was said with such powerful indifference that I was hooked. There was an ecstasy in the moment that I could not quite understand myself. To face exile in one’s own country and then eventually live in exile in two other locations might also, for me, be a way to understand the trials he had been through, the opposition he had faced, and – more speculatively – contest the solitude of living in the cathedral of critical misery.



1 THE PASSENGER

(1) **Flight AZ 0137** *Gentile Timo, Gentile Architetto* *Molto secluso!*

It is no longer possible to do anything about it: to modify the misery of modern culture, a great popular movement is necessary, and the misery of architecture is the expression of this knowledge.

– Aldo Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, 1981¹

The script begins here, beyond melancholia. On board flight AZ0137 to Rome. Before the anxieties and any further worrying make themselves apparent, before we go to Siena to find this architect in exile, we need to wake up.

“You have been to Rome before?” the man sitting besides me asks.

“No! To Venice yes! But not Rome.”

“Ah, but you are well aware of the famous places?”

I think I know what he means. The Spanish Steps. The Vatican. Then he says, almost as if he knows I have forgotten, as if there is something on my face that shows my ignorance.

“The Colosseum! The old city!”

I am shocked though I hide it well. Had I just forgotten about the Colosseum? Had it just slipped my mind? Did I wake up in 1950 when I was born, sensing that if I studied architecture I could forget about history itself? Had I studied architecture to forget just about where it started? The Parthenon. The Colosseum. Or even further in the past! Would I have been as confused if we had been flying to Athens and the passenger next to me had asked if I was going to see the Parthenon? What? The Parthenon? Or was this a realisation of that simple turn in my life at the age of 13, when I understood how redundant and absurd everything was?

Did I not study architecture because I had an uncle in Birmingham who was an architect? And though he wasn't a real uncle, I thought the Modern Bungalows that he drew were what architects did. I could also use my Latin, which was near hopeless. I had no other idea about architecture. I was already mimicking how I should behave as an architecture student. Almost forty years later I wondered if I had any other idea about architecture. The Colosseum? What? I was emptying

myself, dissolving any identity I had, by the second.

What did I know about this man I was visiting? He had once lived in the North in Finland, but now lived in Siena. Once very well known amongst the post-war younger Finnish architects during the 1960s and 1970s, he was now almost regularly dismissed from the critical histories. A recent large collection had not bothered to include his work. He had been a Professor in Vienna but had now given that up. Or so I thought. I had also visited him in Otto Wagner's room in the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna in the early 1990s. "You know" he had said, leaning over me, "this was Wagner's room. Otto's room." He laughed. We laughed.

I had laughed with him before in a sauna in Hvitträsk, in the countryside outside Helsinki, the once atelier home of the architects of the National Museum of Finland (1904), Gesellius, Lindgren and Saarinen. Today they'd be called GLS! We went for a coffee. I don't remember our conversation. I don't even know why I had visited him. We might have been corresponding with each other. His story didn't seem simple but I felt I had to make it as simple as possible. For me he was in exile. And for anyone who had consistently used architecture as an exile, as an alibi, his story had to be interesting. Exile also had to be a school of sorts.

I imagined his passion greater than mine. It had to be, so ordinary were my own thoughts, so tired had I become of anything connected with the intrigues and personalities around Finnish architecture. Was this to be a rude awakening? One of the clearest films I remember from my years at Jesus College in Cambridge was Michelangelo Antonioni's film *The Passenger*. The story, the possibility of picking up another person's passport by chance, the possibility of assuming the identity of this person and forgetting one's real identity, fascinated me. I had never stopped thinking of some variation of this story, some way of dissolving my own self. I now realised that the *Passenger* on the flight AZ 0138 to Rome and the *Passenger* at the Cambridge Arts Theatre were necessary coincidences. By visiting this architect in Siena I was retracing what I felt was lost in the twentieth century. What I had lost in that century. And I too had become a passenger to the century.

*

Before we get to Rome and take the train to Florence I feel I must explain my worry. I am, and it is increasing, worried about worrying. Organised but oppositional, this worry may be a form of coping with difficulties that have come since childhood. But worry to me also demonstrates intense self-doubt, intense questioning. The thought-movement the Buddhists speak about, perhaps. The contest is unavoidable; impermanence is so powerful, change is so desired that to destroy any achievement becomes imperative. In a way it is a game of censorship played on the person closest to you, yourself. If it implies a future, worry has only one fall back, death itself. Only the moment can escape this. If this is a calculated reaction, a strong coping strategy, it must accept selflessness, it must recognise the lack of passion, the loss of drive. If it is a nagging activity that must always

be ridiculed, it has never been so for me. Worrying occupies so much in any day that it quite simply blocks out any other worrying. In this the worrier is safe.

Architects can be worriers. People often trifle with worriers, dismiss them, ask them to drink more, play more and go out more. Worrying can turn on-days into off-days, or more happily, turn sadness into joy. The unhappy tears of an instant, and I agree with the psychotherapist who is reminding me of all this. We just don't do enough worrying about worrying. Of course if I want to make a success of this visit to the architect, if I want to understand exile and architecture, I should be doing more worrying about architecture itself. This I promise to attempt when I reach my destination. But right now I am looking down at my Italian shoes, the pale tan leather and wonder why they look so shabby so quickly. Now *that*, the psychotherapist says, is worrying!

There are apparently more respectable worries, which we think make our simpler worries a little ridiculous. If so, this is the other worry I have right now. If writers can set out to write a life, or put a life into words, could the architect build his life, or put a life into buildings and then dissolve it all? Was this the sort of question I could put to a once-renowned Finnish architect, exiled or not, worried or not about philosophy, architecture or, possibly, his liver?

*

The non-stop train that I need to take into Rome is hourly. Pity the traveller that just misses that hour. The espresso I take served in a small glass has medicinal associations. After almost an hour of heat and humidity, thoughts cannot turn to architecture. Instead I have this ridiculous idea of meeting the architect dressed in shorts. Why this should be ridiculous in a temperature of 35 Celsius I cannot say, but the psychotherapist informs us that such concerns demonstrate an "internal openness to the essential strangeness within every person". Personally I think this is more direct. Architects, many in the twentieth century, surely have often turned out their own work from that essential strangeness within them. Would I ever get this far in my discussions with this Finnish architect, whom I once shared a sauna with –silently, laughingly and unspeakingly – many years back?

Car cars cars! I find the Florence train and from the window leaving Rome I glimpse a motorcycle crash. The traffic continues to weave and I notice the words on the cover of the book I have with me by Adam Philips: "a telling, engaging, brilliantly, amusingly and unsettling book... almost provocatively casual."² Was it still possible to be provocatively casual in architecture and remain seriously interesting? The landscape sent a message: if you missed it, you missed the history of the suburbs in any European town. The light was fierce, the sun still high at this late afternoon hour. It was five o'clock. The train approached Chiusi where I was to change for Sinalunga. There I was to telephone again. I was to be met by a young boy or an older woman. They'd recognise me.

I made a quick mental summary of worry. Why an architect? Why a man

apart? Why a fortunate condition? Why live in three countries? Lapland, Austria, Italy? Why the philosophy project? Was it boredom, passion, outrage or revenge? Or sovereignty? Why the school of exile: out of indifference, desire, dissatisfaction, or arrogance? Why the rejection of home? And why do these worry me enough for me to keep on re-inventing them?

The station immediately intervened and imposed upon me some feeling of the monastery, of isolation. It was comfortable to wait in its emptiness, shaded from the heat. The white walls, the wooden slatted benches looked as if they waited for the one person who wanted to spend the rest of their life there. I wanted to hang on to the dignity of the waiting room. The dead too would be treated with such respect. The craft was spare but not without delicacy. It was difficult to imagine it bettered anywhere in the world.

She did find me. Outside the Sinalunga station. The older lady. No sooner had we turned out of the station piazza we were climbing. The drive of 10 kilometres to the architect-in-exile was quietly spectacular. The space at the station stayed with me as we travelled along what my daughter called “swishy” roads up into the lush olive slopes and hills of Tuscany. We tried some conversation. Spare but it worked. *Architetto Timo, molto intelligente, molto studioso. Molto secluso*. It is not difficult to work out the exile implied in the words, an exile so close to myself that I shiver with expectation. The thrill of closing out luxury to the thrill of the moment is everywhere. We arrive, passed olive trees, along the winding gravel and sand road. High up and, lo and behold, from behind a wall, there’s the *architetto gentile* to greet me. And yes, he’s in shorts!

He’s lost weight and looks fitter. I could not remember the heavier person I met in Hvitträsk some 16 years earlier. Nor did I recognise the figure from the lectures. We quietly shook hands. There was nothing else to do. There were no questions. Good food? Good journey? Instead: should we sit here? Within five minutes we were sitting in the green veranda at the top of the flight of outer stairs into the kitchen. There was no time to fetch the mineral water. Our conversations began instantly. Any other ceremony was redundant. I was immediately relieved and when I gave the bottle of Glenlivet malt whisky he announced that he had given up alcohol. We laughed.

Whether this was a message to the past, to the heavier days, I wasn’t sure. So many of his generation had demonised alcohol and been made demonic themselves. Hallucination had theorized their architecture, a dulled brain had distorted their criticality, and their practices had often swerved between yachting and drinking. The stories merged. It was well known but never stated: the Finnish architects hypnotised themselves, some went silly with abstinence, some binged and died. He had, I was glad to notice, survived both.

Already the possibility of a good red or malt later settled everything. He got up for the mineral water a full half hour after I had arrived. I was gagging for it. Our conversations were not structured but they kept returning to two main areas, or worries, as I liked to think of them: the problematics and errors in metaphysics

on architecture and the inevitability of “world” disbelief and misunderstanding. I must admit I was thrilled at the possibility of trying to understand dissatisfaction, distortion and disenchantment. Life and architecture rarely came together this way. His colleagues thought him a touch insane to stop practising architecture, he told me. If they thought it a betrayal, he said, were they not betraying themselves? He had a right surely, after 15 years as a professor at the world’s most conservative and possibly nepotistic academy to retire, to think, to write, to read. Why should such a decision be considered suspect or, worse, madness?

As we talked, lizards dropped through the foliage as if in a game where a child laser-zaps them to earth. Crickets made up the evening soundtrack. The aeroplanes, he said, for once were too distant to be heard. On and on the conversations went, back and forth. It didn’t seem important to discuss my own disbelief or dissolution, or the worrying over worrying. And though I hadn’t seen myself as a disbeliever or a madman, coincidences became more prominent. Both of us were trying to return to zero, both drinking mineral water, both silent finally and resolutely.

The house is simple. The kitchen entered via the brick steps. To the left a bedroom doubling as a private study, reading area with library and television. Off the kitchen, far right, a long generous corridor, which leads to the study and the two guest bedrooms. All three rooms are on the right, whilst running on the left a continuous bookshelf, curving somewhat under the weight of the tomes: travel, silence, cities and architecture in various languages. The kitchen I came to like the best. We prepare food together. All the utensils are exposed as in any country kitchen set against red ceramic tiles. All the stainless steel pots and pans rhythmically arranged, their tops resting. Spices, two bowls, a simple drying rack, whisky, brandy and a couple of bottles of wine on the top shelf. I felt myself back in the waiting room at the station.

The huge table – wooden – can take the food, the few books and papers that we may use but in fact never do, a hat, the mineral water. Here we sit and eat the salad. This we prepare together, directly, moving from one bowl to another, salting it and then oiling it. The cherries are kept in water. We dip our hands into the bowl. Never forced, nothing ritualistic, probably as near zero as we can get. I imagine the monastic side of this exile and this architect and probably exaggerate it, emphasising the simplicity. For someone who admitted to being an arrogant young prize-winning architect, for someone who now needs all the time he can get for his own project and reading, this seems as expected. Yet there’s more than I imagine, more to it than meets the eye. Something here challenges me, just as living in India challenged the last six years of my own life since returning from India. And to this day, years later, it’s the kitchen that still holds this challenge. And it’s the *India within* that continues.

At the supermarket I had bought the following: *I classici di Giovanni Rana, tortelli freschi ai carciofi, ai funghi porcini, Molino e pastificio de Cecco Fara San Martino dal 1887 no. 91. Orecchiette, i ripieni preziosi Alibert cappelletti alla carne,*

miscela di caffè torrefatto/macinato, Kimbo caffè Espresso Napoletano. We laugh again. He knew that I had written a book that contained more than it could ever contain. He knew it was a mimicry of a book on architecture. He knew and shared the ridicule of seriousness. Was this ridicule brought on by the exile or the circumstance? Was this questioning brought on by the possibility of ridiculing our own self?

I read Emil Cioran's words from the 1930s. So normal can his extreme words appear, so difficult it is to register astonishment. The time is out of joint. I look back and see the passengers emerging from the railway station. "At the edge of life," Cioran writes, "everything is an occasion of death. You die because all there is and all there isn't. Every experience in this case is a leap into nothingness." It's page 9, number 9, of the volume I am reading.³

The coincidences are clear. In calm, we can ridicule the exile that keeps pulling us away from each other. Until the coincidences are all we have left! From a piece of writing about the nature of pessimism, I note my worries once more and think of them, quite unrealistically, as a film script. With possible titles: *The Impossible*, *The Disappearance*, *The Dissolution of Self*, or *The Optimism of Exile*? We talk endlessly. He sits, I write. I read his writings. He reads mine. We swap books. I film with the small digital camera. He remains silent. He reads. He pauses. He pours a drink for me. Look at this. What do you think this means? We eat, cook together and sleep. Lazy mornings. Long nights. Notebooks filled again, journals written out. New chapters started, old chapters changed. His manuscript is almost 1000 pages. He laughs. We watch football on TV.

After four days I leave. I take my worries with me. I'll be back, I say. Whether he believes it or not I don't know. It's hard to emphasise such a thing. Unnecessary, we part with the same simplicity as we greeted each other. The record might exist elsewhere of our conversations but I doubt it. A life might be written out and architecture questioned. I began to understand this exile, the school within it, and this desire to leave it all behind, even the dramatic act of destroying all drawings of his work. Could I be so brave and burn just about everything I had ever written? And leave what: the wonder of nothing? We should have discussed the difference between "nothing" and "nothingness". We didn't. We shook hands just as quietly as we did four days earlier.

*

The train is stopped somewhere between Chiusi and Rome. It is as hot upon departure as it was on arrival. Sitting in the train I recall the dark, shadowed spaces of the house. *Eat the Heat* I remember seeing outside a Chili restaurant in Stockholm before I travelled to Rome. The house had adequately eaten the heat. The shutters remained closed during the important hours giving the house its meditative ambience. I remembered the three baskets on the wooden chest besides the open fireplace. They were strong baskets, would last for years. The

coffee was thick and black; nothing lightened its strength. Nothing tempered its slightly oily taste. Nothing extraneous was left. When I cleared out my bags from the twin bedroom, it looked as inviting, as empty as upon arrival. I had been there. I had not been there. No wear registered itself, no visit could be traced back, except possibly to the four-day soiled sheets and the blue towel draped over the metal bedstead.

I was driven to the Sinalunga station by a young boy in the ubiquitous Fiat. He attends Siena University and had just completed an exam in English. However, his English is studied, prepared for the written exam only and we struggle to make any real conversation. Little more than three days earlier with his grandmother. We didn't say much before I left. The passenger and the architect-in-exile. The last hour was spent with the architect reading Hermes Trismegustus and me leafing through Gianni Vattimo's book *The End of Modernity*.⁴ The idea of weak thought, weak thinking interested me and I made a mental note to follow it up. One comment before I left made me wonder whether he expected the impossible. Of every writer or book we had discussed, there were always failures. Was a writer to be found, I thought, a thinker, that could ever be agreed with? And why would this be necessary?

Was there a writer with whom the coincidences had to be near perfect, the passion the same? "Vattimo has some strange ideas on culture, believes it to be a contemporary structure of religion." His look upwards over glasses slightly suggested I should agree with him. I was emptied. I had no knowledge to agree or disagree. I could not find it strange nor worry whether this was a contemporary structure of religion. Instead I remained silent and then offered to prepare our last pasta salad for lunch before the driver arrived.

I quickly threw the pasta salad together: oil, pesto, tomato, mozzarella and some local sausage meat. It took no more than a couple of minutes whilst I attempted to think about the "end of modernity" from what little I knew. "I've learnt something from you," he said. And I looked up. How was that possible? A man writing a 1000 page manuscript on philosophy and architecture! What could it possibly be? What could I possibly have added to this school of exile? "I'd never thought of using cold pasta this way," he continued. The humour and warmth of this revelation added with the half smile that I was getting used to. "Of course, besides the other things I have learnt from you." Added later after a pause it could only sound a little artificial and forced and we both laughed. What schooling? I preferred the possibility of being remembered however briefly for the pasta salad rather than the confused notions about nihilism, existentialism and worried thoughts about a misunderstood and incomplete modernity in architecture that had filled our days.

(2)
Thought in the Wild
12.6.1996 Evening

I am no populist. I do not urge anyone to compromise on professional responsibilities. But I am of the opinion that we should look upon other people as equals in any discussion. No outsider can take seriously any longer the claim that we have in our possessions an Eternal Measuring Stick with which building-related issues have always been measured and with which, therefore, they must also be measured in the future. By such an insistence we lose the small shreds of trust that still remain.

– Timo Penttilä, 1985

This evening, on arrival, I didn't even consider asking the professor to watch the UEFA European football championships on the small TV in his study. I thought of him as the professor, considering the last time I had met him was in Otto Wagner's room in the Vienna Academy. But of course he was Timo. I have these errors in my mind already. How can I not use them, enhance them into distortion? He speaks of the Vitruvius Line, the Hermetic Line and the Modern Line. This sets the tone; it is one of immediate chatter between us. Yet I begin by remaining quiet. His immediacy asks for nothing back, except perhaps the listening mind. How is it possible to meet up once again, neither in the Renaissance, neither in dialogue with the Ancients, but in this shocking ignorance of the Modern?

I would wander as he spoke, thinking I too could no longer keep up. I used to think there were such things as attractive errors, which we held onto. Later I would see this as the prejudice project, one which we hang on to dearly for our lives. Now, or was it then in 1996, I am not sure. Perhaps I was seduced by the idea that such errors were attractive in order to reduce the probable irresponsibility of them. Later irresponsibility would blur with the reprehensible; the reckless self would lead to the phoney island of the mind. But that's all later.

I decided to listen, to say very little. This, after promising to myself whilst attending an invited conference of the International Critics of Architecture in Los Angeles in 1993 to put my tongue away. I tried to follow his thinking but realised that I could not quite comprehend what was taking over 500 pages to write out. It was enough I felt, however, to encourage the project. Somewhere in all the analysis, unwound and internal, somewhere in the flow of tacit thinking and meandered precisions, I felt he must be saying something right. But what was the shape of this correction? Later he would give me all the floppy disks: *Summum Templum Architecturae*. It wasn't difficult to contemplate all the fakery I had been

involved in when listening to this erudition.

I imagined his argument went something like this and already invented what I would say to potential publishers, on his behalf. What if, after 2000 years, less or more, what if mankind had become so addicted to the metaphysics applied to architecture as to make contemporary architecture, and especially late 20th Century architecture, into a comedy of its own errors? What was this making of untold distortion, the errors of ways academically punished into a flawed precision? As he spoke about all this I was more inclined to believe his approach, which I imagined (did he?) was about to erase everything known and accepted about architecture, as we knew it. It was shudderingly vast. The difficulty was both enormous and compelling. I was hooked without knowing why.

How were we, across from each other on the large wooden kitchen table, me with whisky, he with water (he'd given up) to tend to our own carelessness? Others, he said, when called on to speak about architecture could of course make architecture from nothing, from the margins of its own discipline. From the margins of the texts of others, he added. They could also slip it into the centre where the margins cannot hold. All this we would see and go on seeing. Architecture of course could emerge from nothing, but have we not begun to see the error of this nothing?

That's how it began, within half an hour of arrival. And I was thinking of who was playing in the European football championships held in England and whether there was a match on that night. The night before, he would tell me later, Italy had beaten Russia 2-1. How could I interrupt and say, hold on, let's put 2000 years of architecture to one side and see who's playing tonight.

It's a privileged position, he went on to say. But what was this privileged position? He told me how he worked, read in German, English and Italian. He was learning Greek. His native tongue was Finnish, the language he was now writing this version in. But at the same time were there not English texts emerging, and what of these texts shaped in yet another flawed precision? Finnish, though analytic enough for his directives, would prove merely a sketch before language. Language proper perhaps! He needed to absorb himself, exile and school himself in that language that had its sovereignty in the world. The one that had re-written architecture from its Greek or Italian underpinning. For anyone to take me seriously, he said, it needed to be in English. Even a distorted English, I replied. The first of many smiles passes between us before they became laughter.

Finnish, he said, was a filter through which he had to take the enormity and madness of his own ideas. He used the Finnish word "hulluus" to describe this madness. We both knew what it didn't mean but we both also knew what it meant. We were paradoxicalists. Language, he says, misleads people who wished to be misled. Architects, for example, he added. It did not take long before the laughter emerged.

And would continue to build up. It was then I felt I had known this man for longer than I had, in secret perhaps.

Occasionally, the light changed enough that we both noticed it in the intensity of the pauses between speaking. Darwin had got it wrong, he said. Nietzsche wasn't much help. Schopenhauer a fraction better. Kierkegaard even closer and Spinoza forgotten. Dawkins had compounded it with further careless precision. He went on to explain, though he said, it's all in the book: Darwin didn't say much about natural selection. But what he did say was enough to assume serious error. Architects have survived by picking up on error. Error after error! Errors that had been going on since Vitruvius! Vitruvius had been, in today's jargon, a surfer. Courting philosophies and philosophers, known only through unspent concentration, it was possible he had no real understanding of them. It is in much more detail in the manuscript.

"How far back did this ignorance and error go?" I asked him. "How far back would you like to go?" he replied. We are the consequences of all these ignorances, wonderful and emancipating as they are. He spoke at length of ignorance: Vitruvius, Alberti and Plato, and the failure of 2000 years of metaphysics. The architect was taking himself out of the equation, taking himself out of architecture. He was becoming a man apart or then he had been this for a long time. If all was ignorance, and we had used this fraudulence played on history, what madness was this to try and reveal it and how far back could we go?

I could see where he was going but my naivety in all this crushed the innocence. This was not so much honesty as a searing wound that would have to lead to self-analysis surely. He acknowledged this. Accordingly, he said, architecture could not go on being practiced under such fraudulent conditions. It was impossible. He then went on to explain his reasons for abandoning, for taking himself out of architecture, and his country. He described a lecture he had given at the Vienna Academy. I was not sure whether this was in the early 1980s or later after he had been there some years. Prepared to take over the room of Otto Wagner, clearly the shock even in Vienna must have been palpable if somewhat expected. But he pushed on. This was all about disbelief. He wouldn't hold back. He was not in Finland. He would speak plainly and directly as he had always done. He identified three architects: the naïve architect, the pragmatist and the disbeliever.

This instantly set him apart. The Academy did not know how to take his words, or even understand what he was trying to do. Or then they did, and were fearful that he was exposing the very mechanisms of the Academy itself. He had entered the interior of the fraudulence he was trying to expose. The position he took, in front of the Academy, made their work, teaching and thinking either redundant or then, simply, if any of this was true, suspect. To continue then in an Academy under such conditions, with such a low morale, the only response would be to accuse the architect of betrayal, of madness. He paused. Against architecture, and again this laughter. The response?

It was instant confusion, something that should not have been allowed. He was adamant about that. Later, as requested, some students arrived to talk. Some even wanted to abandon the profession after hearing him speak. They were told

to think it over. He was not reckless. This was not a decision that could be made immediately after such a lecture. Two years ago, he said, students in the Academy came to him. He was by then not telling them much about architecture in his teaching. He didn't speak, didn't discuss, they said, didn't guide. He contemplated. Life lessons. Architecture was a school in exile. Was that not enough in an Academy? In fact what he didn't do, he said, was what was being done everywhere else. He could not lie. He provided no easy listening or tuition from which they would immediately know what to do or how to design. He wasn't interested in the superficial in any way. He refused to comment on any building designed by the students, in any style. It was meaningless, he said.

This clearly irritated some students. Without some indication of contemporary work and the thinking behind it, they didn't know where to start. But he was not about to make it easy. How could they return to zero, approach architecture as craft, building, as "production" in the face of such lying? They used such fashionable metaphysical props and nonsense as reasons for their work. Like blueprints, he went on. They were making Dawkins' mistake. Refusing to go through his own work, his own award winning buildings, or use it as a guide to his thinking, the students had also complained of this. Instead he offered a lecture to the whole school. It would be a Lecture on Disbelief. First, he said, he had been the naive architect. The young architect believing everything that his teachers had taught him. He had won prizes. From a small country like Finland this gave him privilege, it gave him what he called "small fame". He confessed to using this 'fame'. All the students he addressed were at this first stage.

Secondly, he said, he woke up and became a pragmatic architect. Attacked for his views in the 1960s and 1970s, he admitted to opting for some ease. He set up a practice in Helsinki. This was a practice without passion, he said. Efficient, respectful yes, but without any passion. He had already become a disbeliever in the architectural games played. Especially in Finland, he smiled. He became wealthy, to some extent. But along with wealth and comfort came dishonesty. If there was a copy of that lecture, if it still existed, he wasn't about to tell me. Or make one available. I took his word for it; and taking his word we passed further into this shared exile.

The evening continued. There was no thought of football. Was this a form of amateur hour, a psychoanalysis that he was practicing on himself? He recognised the honesty that he had invited and had to respond to it, he said. It could only turn in on itself, necessitating what some called this radical step. Radical step? What was this – a vineyard, a room full of books, a sanctuary if you like; a hermitage of his own making? He told me he would return to Vienna to complete one more semester. It was a requirement, a necessity brought on by the rules of the Academy in Vienna. Then he would extract himself permanently from this profession, from the Academy, from the history that had both applauded him and then erased him. There was no undue dismay at having to return to Vienna to do this. There was no rancour, no hint of anger. There was no anxiety in his

voice or mien. It didn't concern him, he said. The only thing that concerned him right now was this nagging, a cognitive nagging about a flawed world shaped by metaphysics, philosophy and architecture.

He didn't go into detail about the 1960s and the way he, like many architects of the other (expressive?) persuasion were attacked by what he saw as mindless orphans of a distorted Marxism. He didn't need to. Instead, he said, he went yachting and used what little fame and reputation he gained to enjoy himself. Any resistance was brief and misguided. He wasn't reading then as he was reading now.

Just before we paused to prepare some tea, it was late evening, the enormity of the condition outlined dawned on me. Was he right in thinking that architecture had continued in such a misguided way for so long? And if this could even be entertained as an idea, how would he go about writing it all out? And where should architecture return to; what was the back up point? How do you re-boot architecture? Where is the re-set button? Having no answers to replace this persistently flawed and errant world that had travelled centuries, this still didn't prevent him from beginning with Plato and taking any interested reader through the history of error right up to the late 20th Century. Which is what he was trying do with his 1000 page manuscript. I couldn't do it but it didn't lessen my opinion that apart from everything he had achieved so far, this architect just might be able to do it.

A man apart! And there was the third broad smile of the evening that had broken rhythm. Ah yes, he said, but how to do it with a lightness that can be taken seriously? I am not sure I can do that.

I couldn't help thinking of Penttilä as a fortunate man, to have decided early enough to rid himself of such wretched national, academic and professional intimacy, and retreat to Tuscany to think, read and write in whichever way he wished. If he had discovered a compounding madness, the *darwinism of error*, if he could make inroads into the heart of a distorted architectural history and discipline, then I for one would choose similarly, and opt for a way to test this madness. If out of this another set of momentarily and impossibly held truths could make the current truths appear ridiculous, then this too was reason enough.

The tea was ready when he got onto *iconoclasm*. Were the adjectives ready, was the language open enough, were the metaphors to be resisted and was this alienation not bitterness so available that such a thesis, such atheology, had the possibility of seeing daylight? If he collided with Eco or Naipaul, Milosz or Marquez, could he reinvent himself and would the re-workings of 2000 years of philosophy and architecture appear any more plausible and acceptable? And to whom? Or was all this part of the written universe, the constructed critical fictions that we all wish would be removed, and removed at all costs including any self-promotion, any self-enhancement? He would contest the self to the (not bitter) end. To the Academy, to all academies, he spoke carefully and said these ideas can be nothing but confusions. They might be confessions, but this would be seen as one more betrayal.

He took the first sip of the evening tea. I had been in the house little less than four hours since arriving at 6. We had reached this far. What is betrayal, I thought? What obligation is there for an architect to go on practicing if the reasons for this practice no longer made sense? What is a genuine decision under such circumstances? We all have a right to decide to err once more, he said. The madness that hung in the air brought more laughter to our faces. We would enjoy the next three days.

Why bother even trying to understand someone else's writings? Why bother trying to understand Derrida? he said. He clearly had a way of saying things direct. I had of course had many years of this in Finland, known for its stubborn laconic moments, known for a hermetic language you had to rescue yourself from. If this contributed to a situation where nothing need be embellished, then I was open to that. If this was the *persona lucida* not the *persona obscura*, I could listen to that too. Did he use those words or me? The delinquency of the unadorned. The naked sadhu unscrewing the mineral water bottle. To this directness we needed to balance cultural and philosophical fetish.

There were those in Vienna who would look from the vantage of incest and announce here resides "primitive man". This was not the "savage mind" of Claude Levi-Strauss though; this was, once again, the way Edmund Leach had restated it. It wasn't wild thinking. This was thinking-in-the-wild. This was the logic of unformed and informed ideas before they settled into dreadful and devastating sense. Wasn't Edmund Leach right? Hadn't I said it before somewhere: we would be spending the next century – the 21st century (the century this book will be written in) tracing the errors of the last. Was this impossible treatise that he was working on so systematically going to contribute to that? All philosophy since Plato and Aristotle had been wild thinking, he said. And architects are guilty of the wildest thinking. Carelessness could be part of the structure of language if they only understood this; we need to consider a new carelessness if we are to retrieve this discipline.

I knew where he was going and I was having no trouble going with him. Have we lost the capacity to use language in any other way but a careless one? Is not this desire to say things simply, a desire not necessarily to avoid ambiguity but to be as un-hermetic as possible in a language becoming more and more private? My own view of language as a disguise, as careless ancestry would be taken apart. It was possible but useless he said, to become a *scriptomaniac*, to live for nothing but writing. Again, was that his word or mine? Yet, he said, before we retired for the night, I want to do nothing but write now.

Had it always been so? I couldn't tell. There was a period when the architect had enjoyed the pleasures and gains of early success. Now, appalled at the Italian hysteria for hunting, for example, hunting everything that moves, including finches, he was not so much guilty at his own earlier hunting period in Finland but intolerant and impatient that this first life could not be erased. He had hunted deer, elk, wild boar and birds. His impatience with his first life was painful. So

much of the past is taken for granted, unremembered by memory. He was speaking right through me as if he could move the counter back to zero, and nothing would ever start again.

I went away to my room along the corridor with Witold Gombrowicz's *Diary No 1*.⁵ But I couldn't wait to hear what the architect had to say about Heidegger. That would be for another time. The traffic in Heidegger in architectural thinking over the last 20 years had been bewilderingly opaque and charismatic. The top level, the top lens. Not so easy to avoid the Western tradition. He had thrown out hints of more thinking-in-the-wild. Much careless talk, much idiocy had stepped through the sentences especially in poetry, dwelling and thinking. Much generalisation had reinforced that half-poetic intellect that Heidegger spoke about. He did speak about that surely. I would have to re-search and find it once more. I had tried to write about this myself but I too was guilty of the seduction of loose applications, and the practice of skimming master thinkers for a nugget that one could disguise as one's own narrative.

The scholar's mask was nervous. How absent it all seemed now. Did Heidegger really speak about architecture or about issues, about being? Being – wasn't that the top layer, a metaphysical probing and prop for the doubling and doubting self? Meanwhile somewhere else there were laid bricks chevron-like, for the car to come to rest on, bricks-on-end as a controlled edge, and all around for the wine cellar. On top, the blanket lightly spread over the bed of this Western tradition, metaphysics. And on the lower level, the ghosts returning; Plato and Aristotle. I went to sleep unable to read. I had this idea of St Perce and St Penttilä!

(3)
Switzerland v The Netherlands
13.6.1996

When I have, in recent times, presented some modest challenges to architecture, it has surprisingly been defended merely by pointing out my moral shortcomings. Over and over again people have stated that I am fouling my own nest and that I'm a despicable person harming a good cause. I have plenty of faults, but unfortunately revealing them does not at all help architecture out of its troubles.

–Timo Penttilä, 1985

It was probably inevitable that our discussions would turn to Alvar Aalto. I hadn't written the book that would later become *Aaltomania* at that time, but I am beginning to see where some of it might have come from.⁶ It was no surprise that a once famous Finnish architect would be invited to speak, to lecture, to reminisce. Often Penttilä was asked to speak of Alvar Aalto, and most times he refused. He had no interest to study the works or even try to make new comments, passing them off as the enthusiasm of a compatriot of the hero. I could tell by the way he spoke and what he didn't say that this issue of the Big Man, the double-breasted dandy of Finnish Architecture (a phrase I'd heard) had been part of a consistent hysteria going on throughout his life. Requests are unavoidable and, he said, as an Austrian professor, in Vienna, it was necessary to accept some of them. If only, he continued, to try and prevent more requests coming later.

One such invitation ended up as a lecture on the dissimilarities between Alvar Aalto and Hans Hollein. I didn't know Hollein personally, he said, but then I didn't know Aalto personally either. But it seems here were two like-minded talented individuals who, he suggested, I had a sneaking feeling, were ultimately opportunists. Why this bothered me I don't know, but here were two men with a special knowledge of turning the eggs into an omelette, an omelette to their own advantage. Strange word that, omelette! Men with charisma who could lend dubious authority to works of architecture, which by right (did he use the phrase 'by right?') did not deserve them!

How did it go? I asked. The lecture was treated with the usual applause. Some, mostly the younger students in the audience, appreciated the ideas and the heresy, others, mostly the members of the academy, the established conservative groups, looked upon it as scandalous. This was not how Academy professors were supposed to lecture. Clearly the culture of architecture, the guardians of the accepted history of Modern Architecture all assembled to pass judgment on their colleague. Such irreverence was, to them, professional suicide and such iconoclasm always came unstuck against such insecurity.

He achieved his objective. There would be less and less invitations after this lecture to speak on Aalto or any other architect. He'd already refused to speak about his own work, the Helsinki City Theatre, the Hanasaari Power Plant, the Domizil Project, the National Cultural Centre in Bahrain. Eventually invitations to speak dwindled to none. Which suited me fine, he said. Restoring the Viipuri Library by Alvar Aalto had become a touchstone for the Aalto fanatics (the "Aaltomaniacs" was my phrase, I think). He himself had been asked to preside over the Austrian Alvar Aalto Society. Nothing seemed to irritate him more. Had he accepted his time would have been taken up in those tedious fund-raising events, hand-shaking farragos for the library project. It was mummification, he said.

And he went on to reveal a distaste I also shared, with a comment on the library: "Why restore a building that belongs to the History of Modern Architecture, when the history itself is fake?" It was the first time he had outlined the fraudulence so clearly, yet so briefly. I understood this to mean those chance buildings that had, through pride and prejudice, been given an over-significance, which could never be withdrawn. But it would sooner or later be withdrawn, when the dogma was revealed for what it was. And to do this for the Russians, he said, madness indeed. He spoke of cultural promotion. He was best, he said with a growing quiet intensity, to be far away from it all. Another privilege of this exile I thought.

I wondered if exile was really the condition we were facing here. It was not the physical distance, the detachment, to be in Tuscany and not Vienna, to be in Ivalo not Helsinki or Tampere, in Finland. It was a schooled, interior exile that I was grappling with. Perhaps an intellectual detachment, constant contest but not an estrangement. But what did this exile mean to the architect: a renunciation, and if so, renouncing what – the original texts, the original interpretation of other original interpretations, or a re-reading of existing texts to return to other existing texts? In the last two decades of the 20th century this was more relevant than it is perhaps today. The hysteria and obsessions appeared ill-guided, sickening. This was a failure, a critical failure, but of what magnitude and how could we attempt to share it? This became a little clearer when much later I picked up a book by Roland Jaccard called *L'exil Intérieur (Schizoïdie et civilisation)*. I had come across Jaccard before, and read a small book of his called *Les Chemins de la Désillusion*.

I had no desire to over read the architect: here he was, sitting in front of me with a coffee, a glass of water, and whenever he paused I would check if the camera had picked up anything, or then I would move it. I tried not to speak too much, I tried not to prompt, to prod or probe. I had to empty myself to listen to him. Perhaps it was me in exile and he was the architect. It was enough: "The man of modernity is actually a weak man, disarmed, like a castrate. Isolated, too. He is the man of cold technology and fragmented effects; the man of interior exile. Schizoid outside the walls of the psychiatry hospital; a schizophrenic within these walls."⁷ That was about it, that would do for me. No further interrogation. In 1997 I was yet to travel to the Afghan border where my world opened up to

AK47s, arms smugglers and Charlie Wilson's War.

Somewhere we would speak of the autonomy of architecture and "authority" but not in any precise terms. It was only in 2012 after a part of my library had been flooded for the second time that I came across the catalogue on Penttilä's work produced for the RIBA in 1980. The book had been drenched and I remember discovering it along with many other Finnish books used over two decades for research and writing. This one I saved, and let it dry. Classified as "damaged" to any librarian, each page can, though stiffened by water damage, be turned. In the one text included, Penttilä has written about *Autonomy and Authority in Architecture*. What is clear today (probably back then too!) is the difference in his writing and approach from almost any other critical texts that were written at the time. Certainly in Finland.

Architecture is autonomous when it obeys only its inner authorities. But architecture has other authorities originating definitely outside it – in this case, too, I prefer the expression authority to law or principle, which sounds to me a bit too solemn in a very heterogeneous context like this.⁸

This was a constant concern, and Penttilä was scripting the authority that had guided – in his opinion – a critical misunderstanding of post-war Finnish architecture, one that conformed to accepted narratives offered from, and varied within, Rationalism and Constructivism.

Authority – without any specified hierarchies – means simply a power to enforce obedience either through positive orders or through prohibitions, which are in general not based on critical argumentation but on compulsion and persuasion.

I wasn't sure about the translation from the original Finnish of *positive orders* as in instructions or guidelines, nor was I sure about *prohibitions*, but it was clear what Penttilä was identifying. Critical argumentation in Finland had been consistently poor, compulsion was a partisan game, and persuasion was ripe fare. In sum, Penttilä was identifying the interior exile. This was the cathedral.

But was I misguided, and if so, how was I to know this? Whilst talking together Penttilä doesn't attempt to philosophise his own need for silence, and whether this contemplation emphasises any need to be alone. There were ways of looking at it which could differ from the Finnish. In English, solitude, loneliness, detachment, refuge, exile. In Finnish all these had a different resonance. The variations which exist within the subtleties of a language I had barely skimmed. Cultured nuances for what was happening perhaps. But the simplicity of the situation was not to be overlooked. To be able to work in peace, to be isolated beyond the distractions of the world and yet be distracted by the world through literature, philosophy and

spirituality; that library in waiting! This was the school in exile.

Around the small bedroom, books everywhere. And outside, air traffic or the sound of farm machinery. At first he said, it wasn't like this at all. Twelve years ago, less noise when he bought this house, more concentration, less consumption. The worst, he says, are the fighter planes, the training planes, flying so low they break everything. I knew what he meant. Back in North Wales in the Clwyd Valley, I would hear similar noises when the fighter planes practiced in the area from RAF Valley on Anglesey. The same intrusion, the same swipe of irreversibility as two planes sometimes thrashed each other across the rolling hills. It always feels as if they have just missed the house. And I agree with him. He now wears headphones, large ones and plays classical music whilst he works as a way to neutralise all possible intrusions. I do this to get asleep. He tells me this in a matter of fact manner. No attempt to embellish it. I am somewhat embarrassed by my fascination for the fighter planes, for the MIGS I saw in Pakistan as they seared the Khyber Pass.

Throughout the hours I tried not to speak for myself. But at times this proved impossible and his curiosity found me responding with tales of India. In a way we were putting aside any common experience in Finland. We had lives but different lives. We both required moments to empty out of those lives. He had done so by removing his architecture and archives, by destroying the past without ever really destroying it. I was doing the same by trying to put aside the period I had lived in his country. Hadn't I also been responsible for a fake history of Finnish Architecture by writing and worrying about such things? I found myself glancing over at the infinite book, *Writing Architecture*, which I had presented him, terrified that he would open it and actually find nothing written on the pages.⁹ In amidst all the writing architecture, ideas, drawings, footnotes and images, there would actually be nothing. I could see what Gombrowicz meant when he spoke about his own novel *Ferdydurke*. He had not read it for seven years, in an attempted to cross it out of his life. It was seven years since I had written the infinite book. "Now, I read it again, line after line," Gombrowicz writes, "and its words meant nothing to me. The nothingness of words. The nothingness of ideas, problems, styles, attitudes, the nothingness of art. Words, words, words. All of this solved nothing in me, this entire effort only sunk me deeper into my greenness. Why had I taken this immaturity by the horns?"¹⁰

The question was addressed to me too. I was profoundly sorry that I had even brought the infinite book as a gift, so ridiculously over-packaged. I planned ways of taking the book back before he got a chance to open it. I planned ways of sabotaging lines, hiding it somewhere where he would never chance upon it again. I probably need not have worried. The gift needed no glib acknowledgment. It was a boundless gesture.

Just as the air outside had climbed to 30 degrees Celsius, it rained, hard, intense, wilfully. Like crossing out everything we had said. We looked at each other silently. This was better. No talk, no words, nothing. During the rain, we

ate an afternoon salad. He was then restless to get back to work. He departed and went to recline in a large leather chair with his feet extended. He has his text, the text I assume he is passing to me; he is checking for further corrections, mostly clarifications. It is detailed and precise. His command of English is excellent. He has his headphones on. Like an airline pilot, or a fighter pilot! All else is shut out as I rinse the coffee cups, wipe the table and begin a general fidgeting in the kitchen as if I had been there for months. Later he will remark on this. A gentle gesture: appreciation. There was no further need to interrupt someone who was in complete control of the moment. I saw him from the door. Any questions, any conversation I might dream up in the name of continuity dissolved. Everything was superfluous to this combined silence and conditioned existence.

I leave for my own room along the corridor where I continue reading Gombrowicz and writing the notes that will become this book. The window is open to the Toscana vines and the rain continually trying to make an impression on a very dry earth. By evening, no impression will be made.

*

I know the lizards are moving outside as I hear the dead leaves to the right of the wood pile. There in the shade beneath this window. There is nothing mystic here.

Having spent over a decade with that other Finnish architect, Reima Pietilä, the differences with Penttilä could not be starker. Though these two architects were often put together, it really was a mismatch and emphasised the critical misery that already existed in the Finnish circles in the 1970s. It is true Pietilä attempted to explain, or rather in what were often entertaining ways, to over-explain both his buildings and his architecture. I always felt –perhaps misguidedly – there was an inner purpose to the digressions. Both men hit fame around the same time, Penttilä a little younger, and both were subjected to uncritical opposition. At that time, for a period of a decade, even more, there was a right architecture and by definition, a wrong architecture.¹¹

Pietilä used the autonomy of his work to manipulate ambiguity to create an authenticity. Defined from within, grounded by the built and the clarity of constructed thought, Penttilä opted for a different route. His architecture was thought out and thought through. Where Pietilä worked within the production of the architecture and he “produced”, Penttilä simply and concisely produced what he considered a clear architecture.¹² Confusions would be made between rationalism and expressionism; but to Penttilä it was always about constructing and constructing clearly; whether in built form or in argument. There is a comparative study about these two men and their works but I was no longer going to be the one who would do it. Cultural similarities and differences were of no interest.

To Penttilä, Pietilä offered the hermetic tradition; it would continue to create its own fiction, it would survive as architecture only if the built work fulfilled the fiction. But there was something in Pietilä’s late years, where he suffered periods

of disenchantment, that reminded me more of Penttilä at this moment. It was the measure of anxiety that was different; it was the constant recourse to answering the critics, to measuring the opposition. Pietilä was disappointed without always knowing why. Towards the end, the early 1990s, the sentences were not quite joined, they were constantly in revision, even sometimes before they came out. Many colleagues considered – unkindly – his own words and works were disjointed. He was to die later that summer in 1993. Thinking back to this, only three years ago when he suffered a brain hemorrhage, was there a significant difference between these two men and the solitude they opted for, the different exiles, one within the country, one without, one within the family, one without?

Pietilä would invariably stop and write something, always the scriptomaniac, always the thinking and worrying brain. Pietilä practised right up until the end, his death on his 70th birthday, after celebrating the topping out of the Official Residence of the Finnish President at Mäntyniemi in Helsinki. Penttilä was not prepared to continue swerving the opposition, and dodging any attacks; these had long gone. Where Pietilä used misunderstanding to create autonomy, Penttilä was unearthing the content of misunderstanding itself; of architecture's own and many myths. For both men this was no hobby, no extracurricular entertainment; life was architecture and architecture was life, whether the buildings still stood or not.¹³ They just exiled and schooled themselves differently. One remained in the country, the other chose Italy.

Why Italy I thought – a country of consummate talkers, actors and limitless braggadocio? The histrionics reaches into football, cuisine and opera. Politics is a carnival in a country of writers that have fabled both misery and joy, both honesty and cunning, from Pasolini to Calvino, from Moravia to Eco. From the gestural Italian chorus Penttilä could not be more different; the slight stoop, he was a tallish man, solid without being ill proportioned. His deliberation was as clear as his destination was constantly revised. Only Lapland would survive. There was a studied quietness, an intensity that asked for no gifts or favours. He probably could never have written the following words but he might never have read them either. Respectful of the logical chain of ideas, this errancy would make little sense to him. It was the carnival these words invite that he could not stay away from however.

“Incredulity doesn't kill curiosity; it encourages it,” Umberto Eco writes in his novel *Foucault's Pendulum*. “Though distrustful of logical chains of idea, I love the polyphony of ideas. As long as you don't believe in them, the collision of two ideas – both false – can create a pleasing interval, a kind of diabolus in musica.”¹⁴ Eco's words are contemptuously brilliant. We are in the all-win situation when any idea under the term “incredulity” confuses this incredulity and invites, to anyone vaguely interested in the theme, the obvious polyphony of ideas. To want to make sure we get the point, Eco tells us of course that we must not believe in them. But incredulity already rules that out. If not, then being distrustful should. I have no idea where that little section came from or whether we discussed Umberto Eco. It is likely we did.

The writer, like the architect, can hide behind the literature of the moment: the incredulity of two bad ideas. “Two false ideas, I could be interested in that,” he says. But that this can be a pleasing interval is tantamount to ridicule because the result can be whatever, in architecture or literature. Pleasing, annoying, irritating, these are the intervals and pauses off the main track. We were merely playing at this nonsense but we both enjoyed it. It took the place of an early evening drink. It was an aperitif. We both rejected the results but enjoyed the game. We laughed.

We went on to discuss the way publishers publish books. Or decide to publish books. His first manuscript, he says (large, unwieldy and unreadable but not without merit – his words) had been shuffled from one major publisher to another. I don’t know how this happened but it finally reached a less-known publisher without him realising. The latter publisher had been offended that it had been recommended for his notice. It was considered an insult, a slight. We could only laugh once more. The work was considered directly hostile, unreadable and mental. Neither publisher as we knew would have the readers who would give it the time. He was suddenly the writer of an anti-thesis and told, in no uncertain words, to go back and re-write it, simplify it. It was obvious, he said, that even this book could be arranged for publication. He used the word “arrange” like a pathologist plunging a hand, extracting a heart, the liver and stitching back a body without organs. If he were a swearing man he probably would have done at that moment. It was also obvious that if he so wished, support would be forthcoming for this re-arranged book. Reader’s reports could be written with a carefully selected posturing. Linked with the review process, this could set up a logical chain in authenticating and then accepting this book as a pioneering work of architectural thinking. It was unlikely, he said, that this will ever find a publisher.

Is this when I entered the cathedral of critical misery? Is this where it came from? Having already glanced at some of the work, I felt more positive. A small edition would create a bubble. This or that cardinal of architectural criticism, he said, might be invited to take it on. And if they did, what then! This was all speculation. He laughed and then said: anyway we’ll all go down in architectural history. And the stress on down meant the Titanic. Failure was unavoidable but to be celebrated. It was a joyous moment. Our aperitif had come to an end. We had reduced ourselves to nonentityhood. Words, words, words; we were nothing. But nothing together! Or nothing twice over.

His desire for quiet, to be apart, has been on the increase for years. It is now, he says, near extreme. What did this mean? He can manage with so little outside activity. He needs company so little and trips to any metropolis even less. Having travelled by plane so much he now prefers to take a train – from Vienna to Florence, overnight in a locked compartment, some books and privacy, he adds. In Lapland he lives 140 kilometres from the nearest shop, which means a trip once every two weeks by jeep for food. He has recently bought a jeep to enable him to pack things, for his stay in Lapland. He takes it from his home in Tampere, and it takes almost a day to drive up there. The last year I spent 4 months in

Lapland, he said. One of the coldest winters on record, he could not get the jeep to the house. He had to leave it at the neighbours and walk from there through a snow-ploughed path. Sledging all supplies.

The silence – and he never uses this word – is almost complete, at least for me. I wouldn't have it any other way. There is now a new road only one and half kilometre away and with no wind the traffic can be heard ever so slightly. Still the two hours of daylight add to the concentration. It is blacker than the blackest night in Tuscany, he says. Except for the snow. It's a big "except". It muffles all. Only in autumn does he fish with a net for food. He eats pasta, fish and the occasional reindeer meat. Without a project, without a grand scheme, he would, his friends said to him, go mad. Or then they think I am already insane. Some of them when hearing about this fantasy project to rewrite architectural history, think its main objective is to get published. They see this need first and the work, the passion second. They are wrong. I didn't do it for that at all. If there is a tenuous, arbitrary link between the physical realities of building and architecture and the metaphysics made out of it, couldn't we be made aware of it before condemning this Finnish lunatic to history?

There are times when I don't know who said what. It didn't matter. Neither of us had any agenda, no programme for what we were sharing. The evening was drawing to a close. Italy were not playing football tonight. My own props for nothingness had become nothing. I could not see any way to turn this into an architectural writing, even an essay. I would be punished for the frivolity. I had no interest in being objective, in thinking this through. He felt the same. It had all been accidental, whether writing or building, he said. My first buildings were accidents. Fine ones, I said. The City Theatre the best. He'd heard it before. There was no need to continue and explain why; the building was sited so perfectly, towards the bay and embedded into the earth, there was no comparison to Aalto's Finlandia Hall. The sequence was more subtle and seductive. It didn't need writing out at all. But how have we supported our own fictions that have become uncritical histories to keep us going?

I wasn't sure who was speaking now. Later I would propose, much later, a decade or so, a Prejudice Project – something to do with the willed misreading of just about everything that we chose to read. History becomes a measured series of accidents that can be turned into one's own story. This is the realisation of wonder, of reaching the limitations of one's own silence. If I suspected the nonsense in all the metaphysics and babble on architecture, then this man was going to spend years proving it. This "architetto gentillo" was going to comb the centuries, the philosophies, the betrayals and the heresies with a lunatic courage and a satisfying nihilism. I was on board. The nothingness was more comfortable than the blanket in the small bedroom along the corridor. We were building this cathedral too. Only in 2010, some 14 years later would he turn to the editor of the *Finnish Architectural Review*, Jorma Mukala, and say quite simply "Nowadays architecture is for me a past life."¹⁵

(4)
Italy v The Czech Republic
14.6.1996

I await the day when the official ideologists of our profession dare to engage in an open discussion. Then we will no longer merely ponder on what kind of good cause architecture is and how it is best promoted. Then we will also ask is architecture a good thing at all? A discussion about good building that leads to results will not only begin when we architects admit one thing: it is possible that architecture does not at all help people to live better. Or deadlocked notions about architecture and the blind adoration of it might on the contrary be the worst burden of human building.
– Timo Penttilä, 1985

Hot outside, over 30 Celsius and sticky after yesterday's rain. Today our talks seem to hover around the critics, the high priests of architectural hermeneutics, the right-sayers and the wrong-slayers, many of these in Finland he has argued strongly against for their hubris and immaturity. We share much of this and I now remember why I had visited him in Vienna. I had taken him a copy of my book *The End of Finnish Architecture* to give him in Otto Wagner's room in the Academy.¹⁶ I remember him laughing. He later read it. He said though as he looked at it; you must have as many enemies as I have. It always tickled us. I appreciated his smile, which never quite turned into broad laughter. We were both trying to dissolve the self in ways that we didn't quite share. But the end result, mixed with laughter, would be the same.

The critical police (everyone knows who they are in Finland's small circles but no one dares take them on) could never entertain his directness; for a country that prided itself on one-dimensionality and the careful unsubtle nature of saying what one thinks, Penttilä knew Finland was as circuitous and as hypocritical as some of the first nations considered more urbane and cultural. He had been hinting at secession in 1985. Actually by that time it was already in place.

He finds a reference to Hermes Trismegistus in an introduction to a new book on Le Corbusier by Charles Jencks. I promise to try and trace a particular book (Richard A. Moore, *Poem of the Right Angle 1947-53*) and send him a copy the following week.¹⁷ The enterprise of the author is clear from the outset: to construct a constellation of multiple meanings, in other words, a hidden code "and credit it to the unconscious of his media or, more particularly, the mythical language he was borrowing all the time." I had written a note that this was page 9. But I don't understand what is happening, who is the author, where we are going and

why Hermes Trismegistus? I had done much the same in the infinite book; I was guilty of setting up some sort of enigma code, variations for the reader to read and accept the mystic into architecture. Which architects were we now speaking of and who amongst them creatively lied to reveal the mythical language that was being borrowed and returned back to their architecture? We spoke of this confusion but in fact we agreed on one thing: we must read not to read into anything but to read on and out. We must exit all language.

I usually kept better notes than this, but this time it was all lost. It had drifted into nothingness. Any truths we considered might have emerged were unstable, constantly being revised. He had identified as much in his writings in Finland about the Eternally Good Cause and the critical police in a text he had written for the *Arkkitehti uutiset* “architect news” newsletter in 1985.¹⁸ But there in 1996, in a book in his hand, he had underlined the following: “Rather, the doubt arises because of the architect’s silence.” Alongside the next section he had written in pencil a huge exclamation mark. “We now have enough information and thought on Le Corbusier to reconstruct whole periods of his life week by week, drawing by drawing, even doodle by doodle. No scribble, it seems, is too insignificant for this voracious exercise.”

I was trying to hold on. Vertiginous. Such voracious exercise was already underway in relation to Alvar Aalto and it would gain pace. The critical police, the high priests of Finnish Modernism would construct the main chapel in the cathedral, erect a crucifix from I-beams and set up the lost son. The quintessential modernist, the little boy from the forest, the surveyor’s son who learnt how to use Oxford bags, double breasted jackets, and become the knight of too accessible meaning. By remaining silent on some things, by speaking loudly on others. And no scribble would prove insignificant, in the land that is not, to reclaim the little master.¹⁹

What use though was a coded exercise into chance scribbles and doodles? How impossible it was to take these words seriously. I had helped Reima Pietilä for nearly 15 years archive almost every sketch and doodle. It was as if within the merest line was an idea waiting to come out. Perhaps it was still there. It was infinite too, a game for decoders and Dadaists. I imagined in a near future (when would it be, his death?) that Penttilä’s scribbles, yachting menus, bar bills and construction drawings would be reconstructed to make a life from a life not wishing to make this life. There could be no right or wrong architecture. No wonder he wished to destroy his archive.

There was in this our third session a tiredness in what we had both done. I was already sickened by the effort that would go into these uncritical reconstructions and re-enactment for the next ten, twenty or thirty years. The revenge of any scholarship would be catastrophic. It was not a question whether my own work would be put in doubt, it already was. It was how we would see the reasons for constant revisions taken as the next correct procedure. Why was it important to catalogue a particular architect so deeply, so disastrously, so forensically, if not

to make more accessible the infinite? These were not his exact words, but it was close to that. This was another writing of a disaster that reminded me of Maurice Blanchot's book picked up in India in the late 1980s.

Either the tradition and traditional return and reconstruction of Plato, lonely numbers of the hearted soul, or then the hermetic line leading to nothingness! Don't they both lead to nothingness? I asked. Possibly, he replied, or then to Nietzsche and Heidegger and the western fascination with reclaiming language for our own catharsis as texts in the place of architecture. Inside our joyful sparing, with no rain, he was asking me to think again, and think again. Not to start over, but to empty, to revise, reframe. Never to re-enact a life but to renounce. But renounce what? The Nothingness that had attached itself to absurdity, linked to literature of course, via Sartre and Camus. This is what it means to come full circle, but there is never a full circle. Nor is there an eternal return if it does not recreate the condition for that return, which it can never do. Not the passion!

Reading history makes no sense, he says, unless you start it all over again, yourself. Is this what he was attempting to do? Whilst he read and re-read the philosophers and learnt Greek we discussed how we got into architecture. I told him it must have been an alibi for me. In 1971 I was told I would never look back. I was sent to Soho Square in London. With a degree like mine, my director said, anything is possible. It was the hottest summer on record, but nothing was possible. Not in that way. No higher life existed, and certainly not in architecture. What could one do but accept the books given by your teachers, he said. This is how we learn to unlearn. I do not remember any interest or passion. I remember something, which I can only call the infinite.

This was the day when we tried not to differentiate who had said what, who has thought what? I have so little recollection of my education, he said. I agreed. I remember more the clothes I bought, the trousers I dyed purple to look like the hipster older architecture students. What of passion, he asked, how do we recall it? Choices made, why this or that building is built, education teaching the codes of secret societies, closed circles, only to keep our own membership going. This was secession and we were agreeing on it as we paused to make another light pasta lunch.

We dressed up as ghosts, I said and told him about a story as students on a study trip to Ludlow Castle in Shropshire in England. We planted the youth hostel flag at the top of the castle at 3 in the morning. We were punished the next day. Night curfew at 10pm. Collective irresponsibility, we called it. Metaphysics, meanings, hermeneutics, semiotics; none of us at 20 years old knew anything about this, had heard about this, understood anything. Somehow it all changed. We took lunch.

How was it possible to allow oneself to be challenged, to attempt to take as hostage the world already invented? The seduction of literature and ambiguity kept the illusion going; the world enters through others as we re-write the parts played by ourselves in relation to others. But these are ghosts, which lead to a working

method, to jousting with the immaturity of ideas left vacant. Did I know more now than in my late teens by learning to become more artful about the wisdom that will never be attained? And what if the words of another demonstrate such a wasted life: a life of inaccuracy, struggling for inner integrity whilst reprehensible to all beyond. A life written out, written down, by words left so open, so ambiguous as to mean all, be all, mean nothing. The self was dissolving. And it was doing this as we finished the pasta, made coffee and sat outside for a moment.

He discussed his need to be direct. He used the word “rude”. He must leave no confusion about what his views were. In any higher world, in any world of constant fudging and hermeneutics, there must be no chance to misunderstand his views. He was bullishly clear about this. A conclusion must be made, the writing must be clear however naive and the goal must be achieved. For a moment I have nothing to say. Things surely can never be that clear, and if they are they dissolve too. It is difficult not to want to hastily agree with his admirable robustness, even at the expense of the looseness of one’s own life.

I am redundant in the face of these words and I remain quiet. It is possible that he thinks, as I have done for some time, that the history of his country’s architecture has been staged, if not faked. But we are on shaky ground here. All critical histories would be open to selective editing, willed stories, the emphasis of agenda and ideology, of continuity and chronology. Wherein lies the fake, when the edifice itself may be a fake? He insists on not entering this debate, it is too local, he says. Better to attend to the greater issue, the schism, which he begins to hint as a right or wrong architecture.

When I suggest he could have taken this on, he had the position to take it on, he replies that it would have defeated itself too quickly in Finland. It would have been taken as personal and, he added, it would have been interpreted as bitterness, as it was in the mid-80s when I tried to explain my views. He recalls an invited competition where his project was assessed in the report by the two-architect professional jury, as unworthy of receiving an award and of being built. In the report, he continues, mention was made of the work being “not (representative of) Finnish architecture”. It was a time when such ideas were strangely considered “international” and, by the jury’s own reasoning, were then considered “imitation international” work. This was such an utter betrayal and critical misunderstanding, he explained, the reasoning was so low that he didn’t bother at all with any answer. This was the result of naive censorship, the confused manifesto of those lapsed Marxists who believed that their existence was to protect the ideology of architecture, to define the style that suited or matched that ideology and to resurrect – at all cost – the absurd notion of a Finnish architecture more recently defined by their newly found adoration of Alvar Aalto. The Right Architecture!

There was a brief pause. Later, he went on to say, a more recent project was awarded first prize in the country with the jury supporting this on the grounds that the project demonstrated an “international” flavour. You could not fail to see what he meant and why he had to remain outside the very circles that attacked his

early works. The particular award he spoke of went to one of the architects who had rejected his entry 15 years previously. This was lunacy. That latter building, a media centre, was praised in the Jury Report by the previous jury member as being of an “international standard”. The history is not only fake, he said, the ideology is fake, the style used to demonstrate this is fake, the national project is fake, the notion of Finnish architecture is fake. He said “I could go on.” And he did. The amount of cultural promotion used to bolster this fake history was in proportion to the need not to reveal critical weakness and silliness. Miserable. It is difficult to take one’s own society seriously.

It was simple to understand why exile is both internal and external, and why revenge is not even contemplated. Too easy and far, far too miserable! He takes no walks in between periods of reading and working. He doesn’t tarnish the air with a period of rambling or mumbling to himself. When he stops speaking, he stops. He looks not for a response. There is no small talk in that way, even the hint of Italy playing football that evening, which we would eventually watch together. There is no idle or other speculation about the game. Admittedly at lunch I had tried, even to discuss some of the players. Quickly I realised that was futile. It could wait.

In everything he does there is an unhurriedness that cannot be called slowness. This is also tinged with heaviness, but even that for me has a paradoxical lightness with it. Here the unhurriedness asks of nothing but time to take its moment. If he delivers me a coffee whilst I am writing or making notes downstairs, he does so wishing that it will not take my time. But this is no mystic, no shaman attempting the magic in moments of the unspoken. He does not pretend that someone is waiting for him to speak, or take the role of the actor. Only then does it appear that whilst together he gives you the space and time to be respected as your own. He never asks what I am writing, what notes I am making, what parts have been filmed. Here one feels equal to the time spent with the architect.

I listen but don’t beg for comments or nuggets that I can go away with and write up. Everything he is saying, everything he is discussing will in some form or another appear in the book. Pauses are not moments to await the next revelation. They are genuine as far as they can be, moments of silence between us. He never waits for a question asked of him, as if he is in the role of the interviewed. There has been and still is no programme for this visit. That was the dignity of the time, the dignity of the man. That’s all.

We do not creep around this small house, with its kitchen utensils on the back wall, with the oven and kettle openly displayed and the fire behind. Field notes cross with this journal, this diary of four days. I do not draw the scene for memory to use, nor think of returning to the filmed material, which as far as I know may have been lost in the two floods that have affected me in North Wales. The internal courtyard where I take a chair and sit whilst he remains working in the upper room asks for nothing more. It was Gombrowicz with me, but it might have been Milosz, Steiner, Beckett or Auster. There are no unnecessary signs of

plastic in the flowerpots and the cooking utensils. I am not sure why I wrote that. There is a feeling of completeness that may come with pure contemplation, a meditation that seeks no further communication but triumphs in that silence. All that is necessary seems to be here, especially for the man who says he wishes to go back over 2000 years of philosophy and metaphysics and try and provide some clear ideas about what architecture was, is, or could be before it was falsified. Nothing else needed elaboration.

We did speak of a special idiocy, this polyphony of ideas, which I had turned into an infinite book. The seduction was immense and completed by the constant play of two images. He had finally taken a look at *Writing Architecture*. I had come to the same conclusion but agreement was not what was important. It is quite possible that the architecture of the person could not support the enormity of the project, the venture, he said, the constant revision and the writing of the infinite. Overbalanced, he recognised the book for what it was, it had written out architecture. Clever title, he said, "Writing Architecture". It makes a meal out of it, but that was your intention of course. Such deep scrutiny is however intolerable finally, and must erase itself, just as the book does. Like that library in Tampere, an uncomfortable if not ugly building. You should have gone on to the logical end of the carnival you described in architecture and define the full catastrophe of that type of architecture, the vulgarity. The subject, the society, he continued, the culture, it is too small to take such deep reading. Finland is too unintentional, too limited and too hysterical. Not bad, but you probably gave the society a fitting cultural promotion taking its expectations of itself too far. To be interested is enough, he said. He was right. To prepare such an esoteric doctrine, a cabala of irrelevancy and the infinite connections possible, is tantamount to cultural heroism, or, he paused and smiled, sheer lunacy.

I took the latter as a compliment coming from him. I had done what Eco had spoken about in *Foucault's Pendulum*. I had pulled various critical rabbits of the hat, dubious material had been re-defined and the brutal wayward sanctuary of a small culture (Finland) had offered yet another sanctuary for an arbitrary architecture, which now seemed very much part of the Cathedral.

We spoke of the revision of ideas, and did not dwell on this lunacy, our respected obsessions. We do not really respect the ideas of others without dwelling within them. We spoke of Eco, or then he must have read a passage from a book he was reading: "I had no respect for some ideas people were writing to stake their lives on, but two or three ideas that I did not respect might still make a nice melody or have a good beat, and if it was jazz, all the better."²⁰ And if it was nonsense we said: all the better! We would agree on that.

We shared experiences of symposia and conferences. He had been to more than I, even though he insisted later on rejecting them. He recalled one in Prague and laughed. It was on "Theatre and Theatre Architecture" and his invitation had come because of the Helsinki City Theatre. Of course he was younger then, or more arrogant, he said. No one knew what he looked like. At the reception he was

told to go straight away to the podium where a large panel of experts were about to present ideas. Before beginning he had time to look at the proceedings. For four days, he would be required to sit and deliver comments on the proceedings as one of the invited illuminati. He had very little time to decide. The chairperson was asking each panellist to introduce themselves and eventually his name was announced. "Is Mr Penttilä here?" I kept my head down and made no movement, he said. "No, it looks like Mr Penttilä is not here. We have to move on." I left immediately, visited Prague and turned up at all the cocktail events incognito!

We were coming to an end. There are too many diaries of a nobody, journals of the unknown, field notes of the scriptomaniac. Even a diary of anybody could not make the confusions we had been speaking about more interesting. Cognitive and ontological dissonance. I said I would try and help with the publication where I could. First I would need to read it. He promised to send the floppy disks, or did he give them to me in Tuscany to take away? We both knew it would be difficult if not impossible, by the end of the 20th century, to get such a book published anymore. Too much, too disastrous, had been published to allow another one to slip through. We discuss this briefly and my fear of a near 1000-page volume was removed; he had, he said, cut it down already and would continue doing so. It might end up anywhere between 250 and 400 pages.

Towards the end of the day, we decide on potatoes and a local sausage. I offer to do the potatoes. He hands me an implement to go and dig them up. "You do know a potato plant. Don't you?" he said. Mischief in his eyes, this farmer's son! But I had to smile. It was probably the one plant I did know since my own father used to plant them in his garden allotment. I set off for the vineyard in my Italian leather shoes and suit, having made the mistake of changing for the evening before realising the potatoes needed farming.

As we watched the Italian match, quick breaks and skilful acceleration by the Czechs meant they won the match against the odds, I remember wondering whether I could have got up in front of an audience and asked for a new approach. Forget the textbooks on ethics, on the right and the wrong, we need a politics of tolerance and a mapping of friendship, new studies on generosity and misunderstanding. So blind, so careless, so artful were we, had we become, in the disguise of any true meaning.

What nonsense to propose such a forgetting when I had no knowledge of these texts in the first place, when nothing attached me to Plato and Aristotle but the worlds of lost, critical lives. No knowledge of the ancients worthy to be called knowledge, but there was I, a person who knew only the potato, addressing small cabals in Cornell and Yale on a strategy for new arbitrary architecture. Was it any surprise that no invitations came, and had I not secretly planned this cul-de-sac, this slow suicide, by writing the infinite book and getting to the end of the century unscathed? A sorry state, you're in a sorry state, my father used to say after being crippled at sports. How right he had been. What work was not based on the arbitrary? And all this as the Czechs were beating the Italians and

he watched intensely, silently at the formations and accelerations.

It's a deceptive phrase thinking one is "worried to death". Architecture doesn't deserve this attention, he said as if knowing what I was thinking. He mentioned the paradox of his lecture in Siena. He showed pictures of buildings of arbitrary shapes and forms with a supportive metaphysics all his own and invented. Surrounded as we were by bricks, and bricks doing the job of many elements of the building, the city of Siena had been built around the continuing and consistent logic of the building material, brick. Or at least this is what he had told them. There were no comparisons. I began to see his point. This is the rightness, if I can use that word, the rightness of detail, craft and material. I remember immediately filming all the differences in brick that I could see in this house in Tuscany. This was the "narrative", though neither of us used that word then.

(5)

Day 3

15.6.1996

**The day after Italy lost to the Czech Republic
and the day England were to play Scotland**

Let us briefly look at the history of building. In the beginning when humans were still innocent, they built houses to their own liking. They were not aware of the tormentor hiding in the forms of building. But then a theoretical upper structure developed for building. Appearance became a moral problem. A deep chasm opened between building and architecture when a large part of buildings turned out to be 'dishonest'. The Finnish situation is not yet extremely alarming, but here too there is a threat of a split which in Austria and Italy already seems almost irreversible: at one extreme is the motley band of "economic" builders (experienced consultants, subjugated architects and greedy speculators), and at the other extreme is the 'elite'; a secret society, the membership of which no longer construct anything but cracked up theories of the universal moral laws that hide in the appearance of buildings.

– Timo Penttilä, 1985

We wake and talk briefly (again?) about shadows. We have forgotten last night's football match. We talk about a world no longer directed by names or naming these shadows. It is no longer necessary, seems of little importance. They blur into one, whether architects, artists or writers, these shadow lines are intractable. We leave it like that and enjoy the first coffee.

There is no cohesion here, no further layers of interpretation that can help us triumph when we speak of architecture, or even more disgustingly, more comically, of Finnish Architecture. Exile has taken over; even our thinking is exiled, schooled to this caution. It is this thought that has taken shape knowing misunderstanding will be more welcome than ever.

This is the last day of our talks. Already we exist in more "silence" with each other. A routine has begun which is comfortable with one another. Had I been staying this would have gone on uninterrupted. I rise later than he does, and so at nine o'clock I take in the espresso where he sits in the large black leather chair with his feet out on its matching footstool.

With the headphones on he takes it and acknowledges it with a single gesture and continues. I return to my room, call home like a detective reporting in and then go to sit outside in the courtyard. I place the table near the woodpile in the shade as the sun is already so fierce. The lizards continue to scuttle around, rustling in the leaves, fighting or playing unsure.

After writing up yesterday's talks and ideas, as the sun goes behind the "sauna",

the architect emerges with another espresso. I receive it without any comment. "I won't disturb you, I won't interrupt you." He returns to his study, his headphones and culling his text. I return to the writing. It is 10.30. At 12ish I repeat once more the coffee making. This time, I take it in and he receives it under the headphones in silence. He just nods. We continue like this. The next is a pause for lunch around 2 and as England play Scotland today we arrange the eating around this. It does not seem too odd that our exiles are similar. He, appointed 16 years ago at the age of 49 an Austrian professor, remains an Austrian citizen but insists he will "call time on life here in Toscana."

I, who had been considered for the Director at the Academy of Art and Industrial Design in Linz, always an unlikely appointment, might have lived later either in Linz or Vienna. Now, at his age, a little skip of the now and then, and the same reasons for exile appear. Would I opt for North Wales or the thatched, perched hermitage above the land, on the edge of the River Nam Khan in Laos?

There the coincidences end. I doubted my capacity to take up such a position, to teach architecture, guide an academy and sustain the shenanigans to cope with the administration and bureaucracy in German. Secession is all around. Did I admire how he had taken all this on and got to this point?

This third day we spoke continually about withdrawal, detachment, about solitude and silence. This was either a sign of trust between us, or a relief that our intensity was drawing to a close and we would both return to our different solitudes, our preferred exile. Later that day we spoke of the house, of the husband and wife who help him, of how they tend the land. This was a view, somewhat prejudiced in my own mind, of the Italian labourer which I knew nothing about. Or then this was due to too much Italian cinema. Angelino, the farm labourer, had planted the small vineyard from scratch. His whole life had been spent in or around the vicinity of Casa Professori.

The professor had no real desires or requirements as to how he would use the house and the land and let it be organised for him. Angelino, he said, used to come to him and say: "Professori, why do you not ask me to do more?" Instead he was content with the silent, unspoken organisation of the house and land. It was his house and land but did not concern him.

Nothing could ever be "out of place" he said. The cypress trees in a row were now the forefront of more densely planted trees, which shielded the road from sight. Young birds were protected by small cages, which Angelino would put back into the cypress trees preventing the owls from taking the young.

Momentarily I was in the pages of a John Berger book. Those with the harshly contrasted black and white images by Jean Mohr. Who indeed was the fortunate one: Angelino or Professori? He was full of admiration for Angelino's quiet, consistent and unspoken hard work. They worked the small vineyard and olive trees and vegetable garden: the two of them, man and wife.

The wine they took and made for themselves outside the contract of labour. Rare honesty, he insisted more than once, as if emphasising how fortunate he

was in being able to employ such people. It was Angelino's wife who would run me back to the railway station the following day at one o'clock.

He had been reading Vattimo's *The End of Modernity* and we spent some time hovering around it. I make a note: "A Sceptic's Life" without being entirely sure why. He directs me to a remark by the translator (Jon R. Snyder) in the translator's introduction: "One particular difficulty readers may encounter is the fact that *The End of Modernity* is principally a work of *theoretical* philosophy, offering little illustration of the main argument."²¹

I look for a pause. I had bought two copies of a New York tabloid architectural journal with me. I remembered them and got them from my luggage. It hadn't seemed necessary before. Having written for the journal some years back I was still sent complimentary copies. The two issues discussed the recent architectural competition for Tate Britain, with the other issue on tectonics. We were in silent agreement at the aggrandisement and absurdity of these issues. He dismissed them, gently, immediately. The language used, the metaphysical agonising and arguments, the loose reasoning and carelessness. Beneath contempt, though the issues did contain more than the occasional insight. Their starting points, he suggested, are so wayward.

I remember a long pause. He went away for a moment. I picked up Vattimo again and did what I usually do; opted for a random page. "The techniques of art, for example, and perhaps above all else poetic versification, can be seen as strata-gems – which themselves are, not coincidentally, minutely institutionalised and monumentalised – that transfer the work of art into a residue and into a monument capable of enduring because from the outset it is produced in the form of that which is dead. It is capable of enduring not because of its force, in other words, but because of its weakness."²²

This weakness was to form a discourse for at least a decade. But it was our own weakness that interested me at this moment. What ridicule we rehearsed without me knowing how to continue it, without me knowing quite how to empty myself from what was considered the leading critical writing of the day? This meant that the ridicule was merely postponed. This was the sort of writing his students devoured, he said. Meaningless. There was more instantaneous disgust, which we were wise enough not to continue. Self-flattery and the seduction of the flimsy made such issues easy to produce, he said. Progressing from etymology, returning to the Greek allowed everyone to take a personal trip into the architectural significance of "techné". This could only produce more saturation, more blindness. It will eventually collapse under its own weight, I suggested.

A silence supported this disgust and we got into a game of imaginary science, a pataphysics of our own making and idiocy. Inspired by Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke*, we analysed until we laughed. In order to read this dialogue, he said and I sparred, tilt your head to the left so that your left ear approaches your left shoulder.

If this position is uncomfortable you will enjoy the writing more until you realise the triumph when cramp arrives taking you out of this position and turning

you upright and perpendicular once more. Turn from the magazine clockwise 90 degrees so that the interview appears to read normally. Continue this mode until you wish to return to other texts by which time you simply reverse your existence and continue reading in a normal orientation. Relax, then and realise you have died.

Laughter. A lot of it! If we were to be sentenced in the penal sense of the word it would be now. We had some fun playing out the idiocy of saturation, as he called it. Cynical or “kynical”: a kick in the face, or the simulation of hypertext. This was not even worthy of Gombrowicz’s condemnation; this was not even an immaturity worth taking seriously. This was a laughter that would tighten the noose even more. In a way we were doomed. We had to take responsibility for this irritation. We had to know why sycophancy repelled us. We had to balk at terms like “radical montage”. If I were to choose another life, then and there, it would have been as far away as possible from everything that had got us to this moment.

I read this from Gombrowicz to him: “Because up to now the social side of art has been understood falsely and, as a consequence, you do not know how to treat the artists appropriately or how to talk to them, I wrote, don’t say anything to me.” He chose another section: “if you want to let me know the work appealed to you, touch your right ear; touching your left ear will mean a negative opinion, and touching the nose, a moderate opinion.”²³

What a moment to be disappearing forever from each other. We spent some time, or rather he did, explaining the contents of the book, Alberti, Vitruvius 1 & 2, Aristotle, Plato, Heidegger and on into the contemporary situation in what was relentlessly described as critical misery. He was even more sceptical; that this saturation would assume more importance for longer than it should. Hence it would skew our world even more.

I imagined the optimism of small challenges to this scenario of blindness and saturation, to the seduction of supreme fantasies. Perhaps his book and thinking could be one of these gestures. Perhaps he had the stamina for this impossible resistance. Rare it would be to expect the cardinals and high priests of architectural theory, history and critical thinking to plough through a book which set out however simply to revise 2000 years of architectural history, to revise the thinking and confusion, the saturated metaphysics that clots the architectural brain.

I could see the book cover now, with selected authorities praising the book for taking on the sovereign architectural world with a counter-current shot into the wind. This was the school of exile, one commentator would write, and if any of us can accept the argument, can we accept the changes it asks of our thinking, can we challenge an imagination so distorted as to find no way back?

Book cover or not, I would imagine someone making a higher bid for a life so lived, for the right to choose another life after the one lived, to disarm an openness and not a cynicism for another reality. “No, I have made a speciality of freedom,” Gombrowicz writes, “and the school of exile strengthened that which was in me from birth, the bitter joy of separating from that which separated itself from me. No, if someone is “without prejudice” it is I.”²⁴

(6)

The Last Morning

15.6.1996

After England had beaten Scotland 2-1
and a bomb had exploded in Manchester

A free man, when he fails, blames nobody.
– Joseph Brodsky²⁵

The visit was nearly over. I was also finishing Gombrowicz's *Diary* at the same time. I had had it with me since buying it on Haight Street in San Francisco, a day I remember: April fool's day 1995. The going had been easy but it had brought coincidences and confidences from that time on.²⁶

In San Francisco I had been interviewed and remember clearly committing a career suicide. The answer to the question addressed to me by the chairman of the committee, what is the future of architecture, was irresponsible if not reprehensible. I no longer remember what I said but I remember the faces on the committee seated around the table. And we had flown this person in from Europe!

I was leaving at one o'clock, a little skip in the voice as a way to delay the melancholy that usually came later in the day. I told him my plan. I would walk from the Hotel Villa Della Rosa near the terminal in Rome to the Colosseum. I knew nothing of the approach to the areas, nor its effect. But I saw it all in my mind before I got there.

Now, like everything else, it was important to cut myself off from any anticipation, to free oneself from anything connected to the future, even if only the evening in Rome. I looked around and made a note: "The noticeable: the books, the baskets, the table, the kitchen range, the telephone on a small barrel. The unnoticeable: no pens, no teapot, no flowers inside, no hatstand, coatstand, no pictures, no paraphernalia. It was time to leave."

There was no ceremony, just a handshake. And from the other ends of a planet, from exile to another solitude this was our agreement. I would look over this work as long as I kept in mind the question: Were we so sure that architecture should be as interesting as we fail to make it?

NOTES

1. Aldo Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1981, p. 23.
2. Adam Phillips, *On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored - Psychoanalytic essays on the unexamined life*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1984.
3. E.M. Cioran, *On the Heights of Despair*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 9.
4. Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity - Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-Modern Culture*. Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988 (1985).
5. Witold Gombrowicz, *Diary Vol 1: 1953-1956*, New York, Quartet Books, 1988, p. 140.
6. Roger Connah, *Aaltomania - Readings against Aalto?* Helsinki, Building Information Ltd, 2000.
7. "L'homme de la modernité est effectivement un homme faible, désarmé, comme châtre. Isolé, également.

Il est l'homme de la technologie froide et des effets morcelés; l'homme de l'exil intérieur. Schizoïde hors des murs de l'hôpital psychiatrique; schizophrène à l'intérieur de ces murs." Roland Jaccard, *L'Exil Intérieur*, Paris, Points, 1975.

8. Timo Penttilä, "Autonomy and Authority in Architecture", *Timo Penttilä - Finnish Architecture*, Exhibition catalogue, London, RIBA 12-18.12.1980, pp. 104-111.

9. Ibid.

10. Roger Connah, *Writing Architecture - Fantomas, Fragments, Fictions. An Architectural Journey through the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1989.

11. See the 2011 interview with Timo Penttilä by Jorma Mukala, the editor-in-chief of the *Finnish Architectural Review*, in issue 2/2011, reproduced in the present publication on pages 140-143. in which he refers to him taking a distance literally from the Finnish architectural body. Though some 50 years on this still holds some interest, there is a danger now that this merely repeats the accepted oppositions and clichés of the time without any deeper critical enquiry. Penttilä's own critical writing, and Pietilä's, though very different, were asking for detachment and a clearer understanding of the oscillations in Finnish architectural history and the very charge of the fakely constructed "correct" history guided by the *Finnish Architectural Review*, the Museum of Finnish Architecture and the main newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat*. Until younger researchers take this on seriously, and do their homework, there is no exit from the cathedral – it is likely that younger generations with no back history will just contribute – sincerely but naively – to more re-treading of history, promotion and cliché. If censorship remains sovereign, any "criticality" will remain hopelessly journalistic and miserable.

12. See Penttilä's text "Yksinkertaistettua ja tiivistettyä" published in the Finnish architects' professional newsletter *Arkkitehti uutiset* (AU 17/1985), reproduced in English as "Simplified and Concise", in *Finnish Architectural Review*, 2/2011. AU was one of the most dynamic small publications produced by the profession (fortnightly) which often contained, besides information about events and products, the more critical, personal and polemic texts which never reached the official review. It appears now that AU in many ways was treated as a secondary vehicle to the more promotional publication *Finnish Architectural Review* (ARK). Being in Finnish only, AU remained an important professional voice-box, just as a blog might operate today. To many professional and practising architects it was more immediate and relevant than the architectural review, which was subject to careful editing and, at times, censorship processes which governed inclusion and rejection.

13. For more on this period in the life of Reima Pietilä, see Roger Connah, *We Let the Goldfish Go – An anti-memoire* (forthcoming).

14. Umberto Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum*, London, Picador, p. 50.

15. See footnote 11.

16. Roger Connah, *The End of Finnish Architecture*. Helsinki, The Finnish Building Centre, 1994.

17. Charles Jencks, *Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1973. Richard A. Moore, "Alchemical and mythical themes in the Poem of the Right Angle 1947-53", *Oppositions*, 19/29, 1980.

18. See footnote 12.

19. This was 1996. Two years earlier I made an exhibition of Aalto's glassware at The Finnish Institute, Holborn, London, called *Waving not Drowning*, subtitled *An Eskimo Woman's Leather Breeches*. In 2001 after various requests from Bruno Zevi, *Dagens Nyheter* (Stockholm), and Iittala Glass for various texts on Aalto, I write *Aaltomania – Readings against Aalto* (Building Information Ltd, Helsinki). Later, in 2006, I would have written all this in quite another way in a drama called *Aalto-Ego*, Ottawa, Vertigo Press.

20. Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum*, *ibid*.

21. Jon R. Snyder, "Translator's Introduction", in Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, p. iv.

22. Vattimo, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

23. Witold Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*, Yale University Press, 2000. *Diary Vol 1: 1953-1956*, New York, Quartet Books, 1988, p. 140.8.

24. Gombrowicz, *Diary 1*, p. 141.

25. *Op. cit.*, p.192.

26. Joseph Brodsky, "The Condition We Call Exile", *The New York Review of Books*, 21.1.1988; cf. Marc Robinson (ed.), *Altogether Elsewhere: Writers on Exile*, New York, Harvest, 1994, p. 3.

27. The references used and unused to Gombrowicz were in my notebook: p.140 touch your right ear; 144-145 existentialism and confidences – to understand life on the run; 159 authenticity – to revisit books and destroy their loose hold; 165 literary publications; 168 no reference to the other's reason; 173 Kant & Gombrowicz and Weil – The Empty House and St Penttilä; 181, classical existentialism – TP: "I can't destroy my buildings." Would you want to? How? 195 a mystic disbelief can save a faith, or vice versa.



Salokunta parish centre, Karkku, 1962.

2 THE CATHEDRAL OF CRITICAL MISERY

Although completely destroyed by Allied bombing raids over Hannover in 1943, Kurt Schwitters' vast architectural construction, *Die Kathedrale des erotischen Elends* (The cathedral of erotic misery) or *Merzbau*, remains one of the most compelling artworks of the twentieth-century. Recent interpretations of the *Merzbau* have attempted to explicitly situate the project in terms of contemporary issues in art and architecture, comparing Schwitters' construction with works as diverse as the Francesco Colonna's late-sixteenth century architectural parable *Hypererotomachia* (*Love and Strife in a Dream*), also known as *Polyphilli*, Abbot Suger's Cathedral at St Denis, Sir John Soane's House and Museum, and Walter Benjamin's unfinished *Passagenwerk* (The Arcades Project).

– Elizabeth Burns Gamard, *Kurt Schwitters' Merzbau* (*The Cathedral of Erotic Misery*)¹

(1)
The Fortunate²

No ruined wall, no exile.
No sound of weeping in our streets.
– Psalm 144³

Ryszard Kapuscinski writes a chapter in his book *The Soccer War* called “Plans for a Book that could have started right here”. For some years now I have had plans and put out ideas for books and films, which could have started somewhere else. Anywhere but the place we might expect to start. One such plan began as an idea about exile and architecture, as a film or story, and it gained some momentum, even occasioned a trip north of Rome to Tuscany to visit one of the most famous, now possibly less known Finnish architects of the 20th Century, before it fizzled out. I imagined a cathedral after Kurt Herman Eduard Karl Julius Schwitters referred in 1930 to the first column of his work *Merzbau* as the Cathedral of Erotic Misery. But this cathedral was cold, uninviting. However, known to all those who know what it means to pretend to be writers or filmmakers, the book and film remain unfinished and un-filmed.

Set in Austria, Italy and Lapland, the film did not attempt to explore the social and political issues behind the higher art of architecture (philosophy) and the lower art of craft (building). Instead the director preferred to seek the reasons why some architects are over-eager to gain awards, build bigger and bigger and become Royal and not-so-royal Academicians whilst others remain solitary, reclusive, outsiders to themselves, their own society and pretty much everything else. Was this a fortunate condition? The Finnish architect Timo Penttilä was a Naïvist, Pragmatist and Disbeliever. All things I instantly admired in him. In the 1960s and 1970s Penttilä, one of the best of the younger architects in Finland to follow on from Alvar Aalto, produced work which was both challengingly Finnish in the way that Aalto’s was and challengingly classical in the way that few attempted at that time. But there were critical traps. Penttilä demanded care and detail in a way that should have resonated with a deeper critical understanding. His Helsinki City Theatre from the 1960s is arguably one of the subtlest public buildings and strangely civic spaces in the capital. Professionally, even spatially, it is a more accomplished work than Aalto’s Finlandia Hall that faces it, indirectly, across Töölö Bay.

The cathedral of critical misery had already commenced. In the late 1960s and on into the 1970s, as architecture was indiscriminately politicised, superficially hectored into sloganeering, those known internally as the Finnish Marxist architects gradually excommunicated Penttilä. The term may not be instantly recognised, but the self-censoring process was invidious and insidious. Penttilä’s own behaviour, his gruff reluctance to engage the young Turks whilst writing

uncompromising texts about what architecture could or should be, added to the scene. Eventually, in the usual uncritical attack dog mode, his work was written about as degenerate, expressive and individual. This was a cunning misunderstanding, made even more cunning in a country that blurred critical clarity with internecine wars.

The history is well known though often repressed. Attacks were personal and rude. Lutheran perhaps, the cathedral in Finland was draughty and unforgiving. Self-irony was rarely evidenced and self-censorship crushed the intellect and favoured thinly disguised opinion. Around the time (1960s and 1970s), tribal patterns, short tempers and “men/architects behaving badly” ruled. Any architects who did not conform to the fall-out from the Marxist-Leninist tabula rasa were condemned. Penttilä, amongst others, was the “subjective” animal the naive ideologues turned their dogma against. Condemned by naivety for doing naive expressive architecture, which allegedly represented naive nature and the dreaded “forest space”,⁴ the result was cultural confusion. The records, the documents, the history are all there for those who wish to research this.⁵

*

Born near Tampere in 1931, a son of an agronomist and small-holding farmer, Timo Penttilä claims he became an architect for pragmatic reasons; to know how to build the possible farm buildings necessary back home. Lightly apocryphal, it was a simple ambition with far from simple consequences. He studied in Helsinki, and learnt quickly. He entered competitions and as a young man soon won awards. It was easy, he said, to appear invincible and behave aloof. Most architects at the time in Finland and in Europe, he would say, thought the discipline could save their society if not the world. Like many others, he shared this “timely” arrogance of the Professional Architect in Finland. Aalto and world fame passed on to, or trickled down to, everyone with more or less some talent. Sitting in Tuscany in 1996, Penttilä admitted to the “game” whilst, he said, the same arrogance passed to those who condemned him in the salad days of Marxism-Leninism. He knew exactly where he came from, the exile he had invited. It was a matter of freedom; difficult, uncanny and irreverent.

From being one of the most promising of a new generation of Finnish architects, Penttilä, in effect, disappeared. Not that taking up a professorship in Vienna is necessarily a disappearance; but for all intents and purposes his presence and any influence he may have had in the architecture profession had been erased. Small countries do this. Since the time he left Finland in around 1981 hardly a mention of him was found in the architectural press in his own country. One might also think he was downplayed if not exactly airbrushed from Finnish architectural history. At the start of the new millennium, in a large volume titled *20th Century Architecture: Finland* the Helsinki City Theatre is only mentioned in passing as “perhaps the most significant theatre building of the decade [1960s]”, while the

only two works mentioned in detail are the Ratina Stadium, praised as “one of the most daring exploitations of the structural possibilities of concrete in a sports building in Finland”, and the Hanasaari Power Station, praised for “merging with the urban landscape”.⁶

In Finnish architecture, it was the Turku-born architect Reima Pietilä not Timo Penttilä who became the “aalto-ego”. Of those that remained in the country Pietilä stubbornly and individually attempted, fashioned and achieved an “essentially” Finnish architecture. It was deliberate, sometimes brilliant, occasionally heavy, but always a self-challenging strategy to represent Finland. Taking on the Marxists in their own country, Pietilä began an indefatigable one-man war. Albeit apparently gentle, albeit phenomenology and the talking hand, Pietilä constantly struggled against the dominant trends by producing witty texts against being labelled individualistic, subjective and degenerate. He did this by using landscape and nature as generators of an architectural vocabulary.

Timo Penttilä had none of this desire. He already suspected architecture’s metaphysical reach. He chose another way entirely. The mystical reach of intuition healthily avoided him; he thought through architecture. He was a cognitive worrier, reasoning out his engagement and clarity in his architecture. He saw disaster and catastrophe in the cathedral and continued to say so. Architecture and engagement, architecture and morality, Penttilä remains possibly the one, strong yet anonymous Finnish architect who might have furthered the vocabulary he was working on into an architecture of distinction. He was not interested in nature-metaphors or the alibis that flirtatious philosophy, post-Miesian rhetoric and phenomenology brought. Always oscillating between the higher art of architecture’s metaphysical reach and the solid, gentle art of good building, Penttilä looked elsewhere. He acknowledged his own critical self and the right to choose.

Yes, certainly he could have continued to produce an architecture that not only avoided the whims of architectural fashion in the 1980s, but could have been as distinctive and as important as, for example, Alvaro Siza. That is, if he had kept his office, attended seminars, conferences, given lectures perhaps and accepted invitations. In other words, if he had continued to “make his presence” felt as an architect and talk a good game on the circuit! Apart from Vienna, he chose none of this, he chose none of the clubs, wanted no membership of the gaming centres that controlled “world” architectural discourse. He chose differently. Instead he became, in his own words, a pragmatist. He travelled, sailed, designed, drank and dined.

But what do we mean when we say Penttilä had none of this desire? Suspecting architecture’s pretence and mystical reach, he recognised early on that a jealousy of (Finnish and world) architects would ensure their own survival. He anticipated the “game” of the last 30-40 years in (star) architecture ahead of its own pathos. He was aiming towards a poor architecture (*architettura povera*) – but he didn’t get there. Was this a fortunate condition?

In 1981 Penttilä accepted a Professorship in Vienna; an appointment stage-managed by the Austrian architect Roland Rainer. He left Finland to occupy Otto Wagner's renowned studio high up in the Vienna Academy. In 1997 after 15 years of teaching and less and less architecture, Penttilä retired. Tired and disenchanted with the profession, the Academy, the City and the jealousy of architects, he again chose differently. But this was not a tired man, or a tired thinker. Instead of a return to Finland as a Finnish citizen (he was an Austrian citizen: a condition of an Academy Professorship), he remained for long periods where he had always remained, a long, long way from Helsinki, whether in Tuscany or Lapland. This was the school of exile. Each year, for fifteen years, Penttilä spent his life in three places; Vienna in Austria, Sinalunga in Italy and Ivalo in Lapland. To Penttilä in 1997, spoken with the nearest thing to a glint in his eye, Helsinki was all that remained of an uncertain architecture, a betrayed past and this "jealousy of architects". It was a closed place and closed society. This was the cathedral. Keen on its self-congratulatory award structure and fame, Penttilä felt the society would continue to delude itself, recreating and reinventing its own fame in a brilliant but parodic disservice to architecture. The history of Finnish Architecture was all cognitive deception, as fake as the discipline of architecture was to become. He saw no reason to be in Helsinki. He did his best to by-pass the city wherever possible.

For a commemoration held at the Finnish Museum of Architecture in 1996 celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the museum, an institution where he had once been its Vice Director, Penttilä received no invitation, no notification of the event. Instead western commentators and illuminati were invited into the cathedral, as they had been ever since J.M. Richards formed an allegiance with Finland in the 1950s, to confirm this "fake" history and the "friends of Finland". The politics of architectural friendship made possible through the internecine circles of the Museum were all but obvious. Architects were cunningly vague and mutually destructive. Continually and consistently ignored, this is something Penttilä was both comfortable with and no longer needed to challenge. This exile, too, was, he indicated, a fortunate and planned condition. To all intents and purposes, Penttilä had become a *persona non grata*. The Finnish tax office officially did not recognise Penttilä, being now classed as Austrian. Meanwhile the profession he helped develop appeared closed to any of his achievements, to an open history or research.

To respect this exile (if we can accept the word and condition) and its seriousness, questions would need to be posed. What happened in 1980 and 1981 when Penttilä proposed quite the bravest (to some, foolhardy) high-rise project for downtown Tampere? Was he defeated by small-town politics or the cigarillo-culture? What happened to Penttilä's projects like the Nokia competition that seemingly were seen by some of the judges as ultimately too radical for conventional tastes?⁷ Or was his work strangely considered "not Finnish enough" by then? Was this a willed excommunication? What forced – or "invited" – Timo Penttilä to leave, if not the seduction of a European professorship? The Good Life? The

Reclusive Life? A Fortunate Life Apart? Why would a person of such distinction and talent want nothing to do with his own country? What in Penttilä's story is specific and what in the story is more generic?

Pessimism, melancholy and solitude can demonstrate strength and immutability. Why should these issues interest us, and not the society that, unable to dream, would prefer more mouldable heroes like Alvar Aalto and Reima Pietilä? Are not these precisely the heroes who can be turned into cultural property, awaiting sainthood, buried in the cathedral and walked over? Penttilä's triangular existence is extraordinary in its consistency. An outcast in the traditional sense of the word, Penttilä clearly remained a committed, impassioned and disciplined architectural thinker. As an outsider, a man apart though he was all too easily considered difficult, uncommunicative and taciturn. He was well aware of that. Rumour always has it that the cabal in a small society like Finland acts as protectively and as ruthlessly as any African tribe. Penttilä agreed with this.

In the 1990s Penttilä had been at work on a growing number of texts written in English that looked as if, through bravery, risk and luck, could just about challenge and insult everything and everyone considered dignified in contemporary architecture. Not only that, this text would attempt to re-write architectural history, since the first caves, dolmen and henges. Everything was wrong and the cathedral was about to be dismantled, deconstructed in ways that philosophy would never have imagined. It was an outrageous thesis and in 1996 I instantly warmed to the project. How could it fail? It was moving to over 1000 pages and took up at least 6 floppy disks. Yet architecture, if anything at all today, Penttilä stressed in 1996, is hardly dignified. A reformulation of architectural history and philosophy, he claimed, must challenge the slippery metaphysical claims and super vagueness made in the name of contemporary, radical architecture. In the name of all architecture history, thesis and hyperbole. A world-crazed, nihilistic view? Penttilä was well aware that with nothing to put back in place of cynical reason he was open to instant dismissal as a joker. Was he insane, bitter or cracked?

We thought about it together in 1996 and often found ourselves laughing. No academic was likely to consider his reinterpretation of the history of architecture for in so doing they would also have to entertain their own possible errors and positions, the immense cognitive delusions they too may have played on themselves. So who would ever publish or even read this manuscript? Penttilä knew any cabal is compromised by a professorial membership club that holds everything of its past to ransom. Being in that position, it can falsify events from the past in order that they conform to what is carried out in the present. Scarce friendship turns to steel, as the Finnish poet Paavo Haavikko put it in the 1950s. Helsinki differs only from Vienna in scale not provincialism or conservatism. There was and probably still is no love lost amongst the leading architects in Finland. There never was, at least in the latter half of the 20th Century, though it may have changed since with a more open younger generation. But in the gaming for name and fame, competition and congratulations, it is doubtful. Finland has always

been a parodic act of events elsewhere. We paused at that one, and then found ourselves laughing again.

The cathedral had already formed its own structural conceit. Traditional institutions of fair play and open speech were strangulated by the “charm” and politics of respect demanded by the cabal. Critical acuity was a solo act of kayak pretension. Outsiders, foreigners, were also charmed into acceptance of the very blindness they witnessed. Just as in many countries, as Modernism became the strength and weakness of its own pretence, in Finland too the blind led the blind. Penttilä knew this and wrote about it.

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It is impossible not to warm to the outsider, not to wish to change places with such detachment. In Finland, Penttilä once said to me, rudeness is a talent only if it can save itself from its own primitiveness, ego and destruction. The guiding professional spirit of Finnish Architecture, like Austrian Architecture, is paper-thin, he said later. At best it is enthusiastic, at worst undemocratic and frightened. The days when the cabal rebelled against Alvar Aalto’s tyranny or Otto Wagner’s hegemony were crudely repeated as other-minded architectural thinkers, younger talents, were forced to pay lip-service and play parodic games. The poetics of fear became as important as the poetics of silence. During that time, during Penttilä’s time, architects were exiled in their own country. They may still be.

Rudderless, as far as Penttilä considered, the architectural profession for a period of at least three decades was seeking comfort in the aching applause of its expected achievements in modern or after-modern architecture. Saying this, he knew too well he himself was once part of those expected and applauded achievements. As Finns and the society in general desperately tried to be European and understand what it meant to “integrate” whilst stay apart, as Government Ministers paraded in Italian high fashion to their own applause with few foreigners in sight, there might be some credibility in the oft-heard cry that the Finnish society cannot afford to be interested outside itself. If it was, it would drown, or disappear. This is not quite the logic of pessimism and un-dreaming that others will make out of it. But Penttilä was never far wrong.

Was Timo Penttilä, then, the healthy Anti-Finn that the society could not listen to? One more of them? Was he the insane Anti-Finn who could not truly be respected because he refused to play according to what he saw as the insipid rules of his own society? Did he become the fortunate Anti-Finn who really was relieved of such weight? As Witold Gombrowicz so accurately stripped the Polish society of its pretence and immaturity, might we so imagine a figure like Penttilä? Why then the resistance?

It is highly likely that Timo Penttilä was “fortunate” up to the end of his life. To remain outside, schooled or even re-schooled in exile, and to remain a thinker during such a closed period in the Finnish society, during such an orchestrated

period in architectural history, might now be seen as an achievement. Yet there is more to Penttilä's story than this. Was it not fortunate to remain outside such a society, shrugging off post-Marxist dogma and a misguided generation of fellow travellers unable to dream? Was it not fortunate to avoid being part of a culture, as Penttilä saw it, parading like manikins yet culturally and socially infantile, inept and upset at its core, as the sociologists, therapists and some of the poets claim?

Harsh words then, harsh words now? Formidable cathedral? If all this sounds like the machinations of a paper not banana republic in some wedge of the Northern Hemisphere that foreigners cannot even pronounce correctly, then we deserve a chance to sketch out the scene. We deserve a shot at understanding why fortune should happen to Timo Penttilä, the "exiled" architect, as he wished so adamantly and elegantly to remain outside the "jealousy of architects" and the "politics of friendship". The film on Timo Penttilä may not have achieved that.

(2)
Your Choice, Your Name Here

Exile accepted as a destiny, in a way we accept an
incurable illness, should help us see through
our self-delusions.
– Czeslaw Milosz⁸

Is it possible to claim that an inordinate amount of time has been spent in the last 40 years hijacking serious architecture with an applied language, an *archobabble* of thin theory and philosophical drift? Timo Penttilä would have thought so, even if he never bothered to read an essay called Archobabble.⁹ Why would he? Con artists and critics have moved closer over the last few years. Fashionable and seductive architecture merges critical talent and redefines history. Those exiled often feel like bringing up the rear with an unappreciated fresh jab at the future, with a stab at the next paradigm shift. Yet the very attempt to make a difference has to fight the clogged words of those self-perpetuating an aesthetic paradigm and an interpretational act which redefines itself regularly.

There comes a time, and that time was fast approaching in 1996, when clarity becomes cyclical and parody begins to offer a way forward. There is much pessimism in contemporary architecture despite some of its more recent spectacles. Criticality has had to jump hoops and ends up supporting thin works and instant spectacles. Boutique projects confuse the value of a critique outside architecture; historians belabour known but unchallenged narratives and art discourse discards the very scene it could contribute to. Thin triumphs, if we speak of our contemporary environment like this, might however be pessimism of the critic's own making. Confined to the cathedral of critical misery, such dark periods often invite us to re-appropriate and critically re-appraise architects from the past, as if their understanding can produce new contours, new critical insight and retrieve some of the waywardness of the present. This happens periodically with more or less well-known architects as their work goes in and out of favour, as it contrasts with or then can be cleverly used, to confirm the current critical paradigms around.

The Finnish architect Timo Penttilä is no exception. His death in 2011 brought the end to a remarkable career that saw him create unusual works of architecture, in an unusual country, faced with an acceptance that turned into an unusual, perhaps inexplicable opposition. His architecture was restrained, reflective, hard-nosed and critical. The images are available, the access difficult. To all intents and purposes around the early 1990s he disappeared. Or then went into exile as we have described this condition. However, we have to invite a critical stealth and avoid easy seduction to begin to understand this. As noted, in 1981 Timo Penttilä was one of the best known living Finnish architects. It was true he had not captured the world of architecture like Alvar Aalto or even Reima Pietilä

had. But then Aalto lived, we might say, in more fortunate pioneering times. Like most of the architects who were born later, in the 1920 and 1930s, many besides Timo Penttilä felt the programmatic agenda of Modern Architecture had been pre-scripted by Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright.

In Finland during the 1950s, the educated and educating circles around Nils Erik Wickberg, J. S. Sirén and Aulis Blomstedt began to remove Wright and navigate between “Corb” and “Mies”. An imposed education acted as a consultancy and began to advise the younger architects where to go, in no uncertain terms. Frames were framed before the architecture arrived; new departures had to be cunning, informed or then hysterical. Lacking a base for a critical intelligence and reasoning, the younger post-war Finnish architects found the future little more than socio-political modifications. Tectonic refinements could blur art and architecture and, admittedly, some elegant interpretations within the known programme. Often, in what developed into a post-war critical vacuum, it would be the quality of the elegant misinterpretations and opinions that would define the difference between the brilliant and the ordinary.

Reima Pietilä, for example, like many other Finnish architects, struggled in the 1950s to move on from what had become a singular and rather constricted modern agenda. At the same time of course the master himself, Le Corbusier, was moving on with buildings as “radical” – or as they say today “narrative-busting” – as the Philips’ Pavilion in Brussels in 1956 and the Ronchamp Chapel in 1957. It would not be instant but over a period of 20 years both Reima Pietilä and Timo Penttilä grafted their own ideas about nature, craft, building, culture and society on to those of the pioneers. Both of them came up with an architecture quite unlike any other. Penttilä opted not for Pietilä’s intermediate zones of forest space or an unfinished architecture. Instead the refinements, the criticality of the constructed world, the built form became a reflective response for Penttilä, inevitably challenging what an accepted Finnish architecture achieved.

We are now faced with new cunning, new – possibly impossible – critical honesty. Along with the predictable desire to assess the past and slip it conveniently into the present there often comes the tendency to soft-sentimentalise architects in relation to history and the present. A selected critical history both from the past and from the present can use the evidence and create from our heroes in the past, saints. Revision of history comes both in soft and hard versions. Selected strategies can confirm what we set out to discover, fooling us into thinking our critical adventures are helping rather than hindering a more accurate critical thinking. The result, one result, becomes more and more obvious: our willingness to return to the past can become an instrument of critical repression in the present. This usually means, in smaller controlled countries and societies, the more distance put between the politics of friendship and nepotism, the more acceptable saints keep emerging in their re-written and re-imagined forms. In Finland, Eliel Saarinen, Alvar Aalto and Reima Pietilä.

And now Timo Penttilä? After a period of quiet forgetting, after a period when

the present outweighs the past, the seduction and the enigma of architects like Penttilä and Pietilä is now, after a whole decade into the 21st Century, returning. What causes this return? And how can we do this return a critical justice, without trivialising the personal doctrine and ethical imperative of someone who revealed to conceal, who invented to re-invent or who disappeared to be free? Is it by recourse to the closed but open archive that we can offer a critical route as to why this is the case? Yet, as far as I know, and this needs corroborating, the architect Timo Penttilä destroyed his archive. Or then, as he said to me, he told someone to do that.

There is a very real *absence* within Penttilä as an *architect in exile* which might ask of us now – so earnestly – to redeem his life’s project. Yet how can we legitimate this idea of an absence? Rudi Fuchs in *Conflicts with Modernism (or the Absence of Kurt Schwitters)* considers that, unlike Mondrian, Kurt Schwitters was never fanatic about purity. He was a very “impure” artist. And, Fuchs continues, “when I speak of Schwitters’ absence, I also mean to say that the very idea of impurity (or the idea of compromise and aesthetic contamination as a source of inspiration) is largely absent from Modernist artistic consciousness.”¹⁰ This is not so far from the position that both Pietilä and Penttilä took up, though very differently. Pietilä remained within his own country and in many deviating ways he continued to foster an absence within which he could work, either more favourably or then more personally. Penttilä chose another route entirely.

Just as a laundry list is left gaping, an archive is seductive. Accidentally achieved but not accidentally left for the future, Reima Pietilä worked on and worked hard at the archive. It was a form of soft history. Penttilä, if we are to believe the position, actually erased it. The archive is loneliest at the precise time it offers untold riches. Penttilä was well aware of that when we spoke in detail of the death of drawings, stopping just short of the idea that an architect might return to remove or destroy creations and buildings he no longer felt were valid. The archive also offers an attraction we find difficult to avoid. Untold schemes for a fictional existence within another’s life become the Holy Grail. Penttilä was not going to give anyone the chance to make a fiction from the unimagined and destructive patterns within his own society that might then be unreasonably carried over to his life. The archive – whatever is left of it – may scream to be interpreted yet it longs for that scream to go ignored. For who really cares in the end? Timo Penttilä did, more than we will ever know. That is why the drawings were erased!

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Archives, like deaths and anniversaries, are responsible for much effort, but also much wayward critical and uncritical announcement. The society, scholars, architects, designers and commentators have for some years now been coming to terms with, and trying to re-assess the work of their slowly disappearing architects. There will be attempts to bring them back, appropriate their critical reasoning

and work. In a way this critical exercise is overdue but predictable. If Pietilä was, in fact, the Finnish architect who got away but stayed within, then we need to see Penttilä's narrative as a clearer, internal solitude. Not like Eliel Saarinen or even his unfortunate son Eero, coerced into a life of architecture that ultimately saw him "cuculised" as the French say, to die of a brain tumor at the early age of fifty. No, if Reima Pietilä is the absent Finnish architect, the one who stayed, who persevered, who wrote and survived an opposition of no small tempest and, at times, meanness in the cathedral, Penttilä would have none of this meanness.¹¹ Exile had triumphs of clarity and lightness to offer that few recognised. Penttilä to many might have been considered wayward, even deranged; but the oddness of exile and the keeper of the vineyard would never more be considered, more schooled to help him see through the self-delusions.

Is it only now, when it is imperative to take the architectural archive seriously in unserious times (what is in fact a digital archive?), that the architect in exile, the thinking and un-thinking in architecture, should be taken "seriously"? What is the consequence of the previous marginalisation, machinations and opposition the architect faced? Is it too late now, except to patronise the very archive he sought to question and marginalise? Penttilä was, we might say, wiser by acting to remove himself and his architecture out of the equation. Just as he said in Italy, as he drizzled his own olive oil over the cold pasta, he was removing Finland out of the equation. Is it too meaningless now to bring him back into the fold of Finnish interpretations and the Finnish fictions that make up a "formalist" Modern Architecture of national promise and pretence? Is this the future: the undisputed last master of Modernism?

Penttilä's life, his work with and without his partners in Finland and Austria, and the later exile made an obvious statement, and he went on making it as he worked through his 1000-page manuscript. He was literally re-scripting the whole "erroneous" history of thinking and architecture. At the same time he was in no doubt there was, and possibly remains, a critical misery that surrounds the architect, his work and his reception within his own country. To understand the critical misery, we might be better served as "critics" and "commentators" by inserting our own names and wonder whether we really have the interest to interpret once more an architect who did his best to resist interpretations, destabilise his own intentions and destroy the chance of being distorted and misunderstood.

The parallel once again with Pietilä helps us here. Pietilä's own relation to the archive, the archive of Modernism and his own developing archive of "soft history", was always ambiguous if not mischievous. He was sufficiently schooled in a wayward Dadaism and Surrealism to know how he could offer hermeneutic hints within his work along the way whilst (mis)directing people to the "wrong" – or in his words the "right" – direction. Time and again when interviewed Pietilä would turn and smile at the suggestion that Kurt Schwitters or Samuel Beckett designed his un-rational if not irrational 20th century masterpiece outside Helsinki, the Dipoli Students' Centre. Blurring fact and fiction was not the issue here; this

Pietilä did consistently. Penttilä would again take no part in that route; this was a self-gaming he had no interest in. He would not shamanize his own existence, enigmatically, and insert it back into his architecture. Instead he would take fact and fiction out of the equation; Penttilä would rather let silence re-shape life into the lies that will become truth than any talking cure would ever achieve.

Critics and commentators know how easily chance interests turn into a thesis as they fear stumbling into what Penttilä would have readily recognised as this *cathedral of critical misery*. Is this not what we do as we tease out the lonely ideas that come after the event, after life and death? Do we not submit our fears and anxieties, measure them across the work of others to announce that it is not us who dwell in such cathedrals? Is it necessary to ignore previous words by and on this architect in order to re-script new words, new acceptable worlds? Or do we choose those words and works, which so carefully need attention and those that can fit our predetermined interpretations or images? Just what then is that predetermined image of an architect like Timo Penttilä when he has removed the chance to be retrieved by image, and image alone? Was he one more architect of underachieving talent, or an architect who played with his dissonant critical talent to reach quite another inner space?

Those close to the archived subject are never as close as they think. If anything is known about Finnish architecture, it is not improbable that *alchemy* would prove a more fitting description of the apparent rational procedures that have passed for a normative, singular and heavily promoted Finnish architecture over the last half century. This architecture of rigidly controlled repressed framing, some would say, is the true *black magic* and Penttilä knew architecture was far too cunning, far too impermanent to remain satisfied with such propaganda. In many ways, Trappist monk or Sufi-poet, Penttilä was far too agile in mind and soul to be satisfied with the applause of earthly gods. Critical options or the redemption of a once wayward soul; beware the Soft History that will emerge from The Cathedral of Critical Misery?

Your choice, your name here! It doesn't now matter whether I can prove Penttilä said that to me or not; the words themselves, once they are spoken, are in flight. Exile for this architect was triumphant. You just had to look into his eyes!

(3) St Pentilä

It seems proper that those who create art in a civilisation of quasi-barbarism, which has made so many homeless, should themselves be poets unhoused and wanderers across language. Eccentric, aloof, nostalgic, deliberately untimely...
– George Steiner¹²

Soft history, shadow friendship, and a return to deep subjectivity. This essay cannot go in the way it should, or conform to the narrative that will prove acceptable to the subject. That is impossible. It must become unsteady as we debate this school, this exile. The 1970s into the 1980s produced throughout many cultures a period of scarce friendship. Architecture was brutal, dogmatic, frightening. Architecture gained the triumph of belated gestures that compelled architects later to conform to the expected image-repertoire of acceptable world architecture. Architects are always late-readers.

The Internet waited to form the shadow friendship of its own discipline. What that was precisely no one was too sure. But no less, a theatre of world images did exist. Journals, eventually blogs and websites began their own role in promoting architectural gaming. The role of the picture editor increased. But out in the periphery belatedness had its twists. The lessons of 1968 did not take the time necessary as some think to filter through to the suburbs of the globe. The lessons were hijacked. Short sightedness and a style of immediate radical will led to the instant semiology of unthinking outrage. Welcome to the 1990s.

This immediacy and critical short sightedness could do nothing but pass into architecture, innocently and rudely. This rudeness passed for a cultural terrorism. The smaller the society, the more terror practised with limited means. Architects lost out to cultural and fiscal speculation. The more opportunistic kinds were left wide open to exploitation and building speculation thrived on the minimal stripped of its aesthetic and ideological pomp. Thus the runaway 1970s scripted the operative myths of the 1980s into the naughty-but-nicely furious nineties. Then boom. The number 11 became mystic again and the year 2002 was not a useful palindrome. It is not difficult to see why theatricalised post-modern gave to the speculators, builders and contractors another way to do architecture on the cheap. It took but a moment into the first decade of this century to see how money itself was on a runway and converged on a carnival free-for-all.

Today there is not only a critical crisis in architecture but a crisis in hope, in optimism, in trust, in political and critical will. Confidence is lowered by inactive self-esteem. Architectural education has been overwhelmed by management strategies and design-build developer-controlled pedagogies. Retail architecture

has now taken over the pedagogies. The talk of yet another *end of architecture* no longer intrigues us and has nothing to do with the playful hermeneutic games that came from the new discourse centres that guide the academy and profession. There are increasingly thin and ungenerous situations in our educational institutions, which are impossible to ignore, but impossible to amend. This is the soft condition of history and the impossible.

There is an expectation that critical alterations will arrive and the corrections to history emerge and take us beyond this condition. This is fallacious. *Soft History* will be an enquiry useful for the moment and of the moment. Is such softness inevitable and what are the social structures and critical conditions that allow this process to be “historicised”? The issue is both detailed and held within, yet might be much wider than the historicising of a figure like Timo Penttilä. Pessimism can often be turned back onto any writing that attempts to seek deeper “truths” or multiple positions (not to mention the overused word “alternative”). For what would a soft history be if the history to be displaced has not been configured with rigour, misunderstanding and discipline?

We have seen how this move to re-appropriate and critically re-appraise architects makes these questions more important. The possible taming of a thinker who tried to interrogate the conditions that make up architecture’s potential is serious. Penttilä worked within an absence and then erased that position in the society in part due to the knowledge that any structure of dissent would be blocked. Penttilä always had a clear intelligence and critical reasoning but later, during his “inevitable” exile developed a necessary disruptive intelligence, a healthy contestation of ideas which interrogated himself as much as the profession.

It is not that we must rescue his work from rationalism or irrationalism or other generalised versions of this Last Modernist that could see him achieve totemic status, co-opted as a symbol of a radical conscience in Finnish architecture. St Penttilä, once architect, wannabe Trappist monk! How he would have smiled at that. Once attacked by his ideological peers on the Left and Right, we no longer need ask who those people were and why they don’t confess, but – a better question – why Penttilä matters today.

Once considered an alert and classical actual alternative to the narrow Rational Constructivism in Finland of the 1960s and 1970s, Penttilä’s eccentricity and self-confessed aloofness were considered redundant to Finnish architectural development yet, at the time, threatening enough to necessitate rebuff. The Nokia story in the early 1980s recounts this well enough. Understanding Penttilä’s own role in this soft history, in the soothing antagonism he would eventually have against the Archive, one cannot ignore the feeling that it was Penttilä who understood more about propaganda and thought-control than the Marimekko-Marxists from the time. These were the strays and mutts who would eventually come up against his thinking in the late 1970s. In serving to make his own architecture redundant, Penttilä utilised absence to make his work stronger. By not participating in the architectural game, he also loosened its social and cultural hold.

Perhaps all that is about to change with Penttilä's death. If Finnish critics and architects let go of any direct relationship to time and space, they will begin to dwell in the fictions and soft history they have for years brought up out of the archive! Combined with his suspicions about a rational architecture and the propaganda of his colleagues, Penttilä's reasoning would have to be taken seriously. What appeared for many in the late 1970s as a perverse level of argument and rhetoric, turned out to be searching prods. This was a criticality not without the humour and not without an opposition Penttilä knew he was inviting. This perverse nature of his critical honesty could suddenly offer a new logic.

This is where the estrangement of Penttilä's position, a little like George Orwell, may turn out to be correct. He foresaw in his own society and profession the aching critical silence, the result of familiarity and nostalgia and the lack of serious discussion about architecture. He foresaw the closing of the Finnish mind and his "doublethink" – this absence, this exile – cleverly allowed him his own intellectual space to work behind ambiguity and deception. The intricacies of betrayal and disappointment within the closed, polemical architectural profession were always secondary to Penttilä to creating a space within which to work. Thus in spite of some of the formal difficulties we are faced with when researching Penttilä today, his frankness, his energy and the willingness to join in (however much he was later cast aside) are qualities we cannot fail to go on respecting.

This critical pessimism expressed by Penttilä should not, however, be deflected by a period of apparent accommodation by the Finnish establishment. Penttilä at first shared with Orwell the illusion of generosity and social democracy whilst he wrote in direct texts of the hardness, realism and pragmatism necessary to avoid pretence and propaganda. Penttilä's school of exile, his perseverance should, if not already recognised, become legendary. But by so doing it will be in danger of being undervalued if his works turn out to be used as a comparable game in Finnish architecture's constant nostalgia for the Modern "gene" and new "saint".

We should be able to avoid this trap with Penttilä's exercise and life; it is purer in a way, less compromising. It is written and legitimised by the silence of his untimely arguments. We can surely then share Raymond Williams' comment on Orwell and how he put his life on the line: "... that is what makes him much more than a passive figure in this dominant structure of feeling. He shared it, but he tried to transcend it."¹³

If Pietilä never really managed to remain outside the very establishment that would award him commissions, Penttilä no longer wished to play that game after the early 1980s. The notion of "absence" can of course be misunderstood with tales of his presence in sauna parties or seminars, in hotel meetings or other junkets. The drinking years and the yachting years ask for forgiveness perhaps but only in small circles. The concept of objective truth may have long disappeared and we may be able to make no real inroads into the mind of the architect. But nothing could be more false than the generalised idea that Penttilä happily entertained his colleagues in a sauna-friendly manner and was part of their sauna-sausage debat-

ing circles with no real difference between them. Penttilä, and he was clear about this, saw this detachment years before it happened. It was only a matter of how soon he could get there, get away, escape the cathedral and get to the vineyard.

There is a much wider issue here though. Penttilä's fake canonisation could be used to identify the architect's quality of thinking and persistence. A mapping of his thinking might take us beyond the representation debate which will emerge from the infinite ways of interpreting Penttilä's highly accomplished if small oeuvre. Felix Guattari may be a clue here. An exploration into deep subjectivity, a serious recourse to understanding structuralist/post-structuralist references could be another way of revealing Penttilä's contribution. Penttilä might then join Pietilä in the critical annals of Finnish architecture; both might be explored for the way subjectivity is alienated and dependent on mental and institutional superstructures.

If Pietilä rejected the notion of the "genius" whilst of course romanticising it in other outsiders like Frank Lloyd Wright, he also explored "form" put together by chance and accident. Penttilä, however, moulded a quite distinct architecture from that growth. In delimiting and dematerialising his own architecture, Penttilä was always contrasting the individual with the society, which always informed his architectural role-playing.

Penttilä's constant polemic in text and building offer us fresh critical forays. Whether difference stems not from homogeneity, but by fragmenting and segmenting the illusory, both architects could dwell in the absence they created for themselves. If this shares joint modelling with Dadaism, Surrealism and the Situationists as they postulated changes in both infrastructure (economics and the production of architecture) and the superstructure (ideology) then let that drift into the cathedral air.

So St. Penttilä, the Last Modernist? Yes, if inner experience is the way he involved the individual and subjectivity, and architecture the way he collectively appropriated this so called "lost subjectivity". Approaching Penttilä in this way might just help us understand the changes currently under way in contemporary architecture and Finnish society. It is his movement of estranged, untimely thought that is the real study-in-progress of this man. It is the soft history, and the soothing memos against the archive that defy the category and definitions of mastery which the heroic critical vision still wishes to achieve. Such heroism does not chart adequately Penttilä's strategies of existence. But this is the crucial paradox of St Penttilä! He didn't iron out the contradictions he faced but began to fragment them and reassemble them into his own exile. No complex interpretations of his buildings are likely to do justice to the complexity and generosity of this architect's thinking. He was eccentric, aloof and, yes, deliberately untimely. Was he nostalgic?

(4) Inventing the Last Modernist

That the position of an outsider offers a cognitive privilege is well known and unquestionable.
– L. Kolakowski¹⁴

Mirror in mirror: a consensus of silence. Books like buildings needs time to reveal their complete and incomplete selves. We learn those lessons to make those raids on the inarticulate, as the Trappist monk Thomas Merton suggested. It is not necessary to live two score years in Finland to note that most Finnish architects are not, strictly speaking, intellectuals nor should they necessarily need to be. Most have a pragmatic and vernacular wisdom that leaves them indifferent to such gaming.

Many, though from rural beginnings, urbane settings of peripheral parishes, realise the joy of not trying, of not even wanting to be salon intellectuals. Philosophy and their own methodical versions made from it can then become alibis for a privacy that survives failure and despair. Most – and not only architects – adept at this can translate this privacy into their work, into their writing and into their films, and subsequently into their architecture.

Architectural concepts fool no one and become a sign not of impossibility but of not being voiced, of not being discussed. The cathedral goes mute; silence is revered. This conforms to institutes, movements, societies that need and seek no real inner discourse or dialogue, forbidden as it is by mutual politeness and censorship. Here where suspicious minds triumph, this also conforms to our contemporary society which needs more than a fair share of uncritical flattery to bolster low self-esteem and hidden transgression.

There is no better architect than Timo Penttilä to test these assertions critically and philosophically. He was clearly aware of the need to fall short of the fictions made from his work, whether some felt his work expressive, classical and/or rational. He also knew that no words would be enough to scaffold the work; architecture ultimately survives on its “presence”, on its evidence. And then becomes the ruin built within.

In Finland however, it would be a mistake to see this as a coherent culture of silence. Much of the subtlety demanded from a careful aesthetics of silence needs a confident culture to promote it. Philosophy and the runaway pluralism that emerged during the 1980s asked for similar panache. The confidence to operate within implied cunning as much as talent. Some speak now of the comatosed state being hidden by promotional verve. But with obvious mixed feelings!

The death of the Last Modernist will be useful for this. It will succeed in disguising any “negative” exuberance about the contemporary situation. There is, however, a clear indication of an induced coma within the cathedral of critical misery. In a period when more thankless building takes place, discourse and debate usually start

up furious and active and then fade quickly. During recessions, the opposite can be true. When building slows down or does not take place, debates and thinking should be open, newspapers full of rage and the visionary open to dissent.

The logic of respite ploughs on. A new immediacy supports a gentler, lazier fascism. For if silence in the last century was always partnered by censorship, by retreat, we have to redefine the stealth necessary to stay credible. Change coats and windmill new movements when the old are dumped. Architectural discussion, anything resembling a critical will, has remained mute. Debate has long been diminished, amputated in favour of appearing unassailable. Is this surprising, we might ask? Not at all, if we come nearer home, whether that home is Tuscany or Ivalo. Finland, whether it recognised it or not, used to be able to debate with the outside world through its design, art and architecture. Its visual culture became a language of its society, tracking relationships to greater issues. Predictably with such a difficult language, it has only rarely managed to participate in any debate through the written word, through books, journals or serious papers. Finland has not participated in defining the history of the last century, but it certainly has played a role within that history.

It might be that this role in Finland has been a visual one, a semiotic expectation. Though this visual semiotic role should not be played down, it is always the “other” that has written out the position of and in the world for Finnish architecture. Experts will be turned to, the foreign “authority” quoted and re-quoted, especially if slightly flavoured toward a more flattering insight, when authority confirms the strength and cultural coherence of this “semiotic” importance.

If this is the case, though, are the archives, the museums and the institutions stranded by these cultural gaming exercises? Trying to recycle heroes or invent the Last Modernist, whichever it is, plays on “persona”. There is little excitement except in the young who so far have no history to this stasis, who have no memory to silence and no taboo. How long it will last no one knows. One thing is certain: hyper-radicality is breeding probably in the privacy of one’s own screens because there is no sign of it anywhere else. No one will ever know the Last Modernist.

Take the architectural press, reviews, journals and blogs. Despite editorial innovation or visions, these rarely pulse with ideas, ferment with dangerous debate and lively, even non-sensical outrage. How has the architectural profession become so quiet when so many are dissatisfied at market manoeuvres? A politics of fear prompts a strategy of respect. Even interiors are designed beyond the profession of architects and designers. Space McDonald’s or Decor, McDonald’s! Where is the flexibility in the society that allows new work to be done by other professions? Why are the taxis of Helsinki not being driven by out of work architects and discussions going on in Taxi seminars?

Silence and the drive for consensus would demand a writing that is written instantly, a foaming at the mouth, an architectural ghost-writer; the Gonzo exercise. It would demand thinkers who can type as fast as they are thinking. Just as those architects who can now design as fast as they mumble and speak architecture.

Society forgets its own “outsiders” then discovers the shallow grave. The old Marxists from the “fundamentalist” era mourn the architects they could spar with, like Penttilä. These figures crystallised the opposition and defined their existence. They existed by defining their work against their opponents’ work.

Now we are left to define the impossible opposition! No one has had the “civil courage” to break wind, to break silence. If we are not careful, and Penttilä voiced this, architecture would keep exchanging their ideologies in different schools of resentment. When you begin showing the architecture you cannot bluff; the evidence is there. But that precisely is the point – you can bluff. How about letting Louis Althusser, the philosopher who strangled his wife, explain:

I do not believe in voluntarism in history. I believe, rather, in intellectual lucidity and in the superiority of mass movements over the intellect. On this basis, and since it is not of supreme importance, the intellect can follow the lead set by mass movements, prevent them above all from becoming the victims of past errors and help them discover truly effective and democratic forms of organisation. If, in spite of everything, we still entertain some hope of helping to inflect the course of history, it will be along these lines and these lines only. At any rate, it will not come about as a result of the eschatological visions of a religious ideology with which we are utterly bored.¹⁵

Visions of a religious ideology with which we are utterly bored? Silence, exile’s school and architecture? “But”, and here Althusser concludes, “we have now reached politics proper”. How was Brecht to know? How were the Marxists in the 1960s to know? How are the Essentialists to know? Silence in three languages. Finnish, Swedish and Architecture! The Last Modernist is well aware that the down side of silence is the impotence feared when critical thinking meets such cynicism and resistance.

The fight for brick against timber, concrete over steel, are to some questions of livelihood and safety. The politics of obedience has a nasty habit of respecting fear. The ensuing revenge that people take upon each other is frighteningly simple, frighteningly familiar. Revenge hardly lifts above kindergarten level. Incompetence is rewarded by further incompetence; in this case it protects the vulnerable. Positions are safeguarded by the ordinariness of those around. This not only ensures no further risk, no real challenge but guarantees that no one dare recognise the missed opportunities.

Silence then becomes the tactic of allowing others enough rope to hang themselves. There is little point discussing the fine merits of “silence” as a tectonic aid, as a phenomenological prop for architecture of a lost symbolic order, if we do not recognise the cultural downsides and the traps presented by the Last Modernist. The architectural profession will go on giving off careful, one-sided reports. To

speak with some architects it is as if lost in the past world of a salary and wellbeing, there is a real fear of seeing themselves without institutional cover. Creative lying and falsifying are prevalent. It is what is left out of the research that becomes important, not that which is written. And in any culture that games with its own history of silence, this protectionism becomes hallucinatory.

Let us follow the Last Modernist into the next stage in this hallucinatory reality. Culturally such desires, visions and narratives of coherence and identity become political instruments. Historically, this hallucinatory condition can begin to operate as “fact”, as reality. In Finland Alvar Aalto became a belated agenda for everyone’s wish fulfilment, a cipher for disguised hope and envy.

The Last Modernist enters the cathedral as an instrument to re-write and re-define history. He would speak about a fake history knowing that this is only valid if we knew one of the previous versions were truer than those about to arrive. No longer “untruth”, though, it is memory itself which is short. Hypnotic falsification on this personal and collective scale is necessary if one is to remain untouched by the change that is demanded from history. Recognising this is not as dismal as being part of the pathological slide.

For the Last Modernist, a fake history might be inevitable. Outsiders often wonder why they leave a country like Finland with so little knowledge of what is actually going on. Insiders, critics who write about their own society, are often heard complaining that the foreigner can and will never get it right. For this hallucinatory state to continue, this has to be so. Sophisticated culpability is unavoidable in the silence that allows others to make decisions in your absence.

Responsibility is always revocable. I wasn’t there. I didn’t know about it. It wasn’t my fire. The Last Modernist recognises instantly the censorship of the society inextricably bound up with the limits of silence. When it is admirably part of the ideals of higher architecture, the aphorisms sound so appealing, so seductive. The attraction seems to be “L’architecture phantastique”, as Aulis Blomstedt put it, “just this kind of architecture that requires the least fantasy.”

We think we know what Monsieur Blomstedt means. We think we now have the Last Modernist. French cultivates the very ideal of such a sentence. But when it is lonely language left lying around the summer seminar, it is doomed. And it is doomed because “fantasy” is just what the culture mourns and resists. Dulled into a symbolic order of minimalism, whether called “functionalism”, “constructivism” or a language of silence, one begins to see why the Last modernist will not be pulled into giving more importance to the architect’s inner speech.

A consensus is demanded from the Last Modernist, the mirror in the mirror, which flattens just about every eccentric and attractive feature of the “other”. People attempt often to say what they think. The attraction of directness works like silence. Exile, even inside the culture is usually all that exists. When language and theory go undebated and unchallenged, it is possible to hear the cathedral chatter; people saying what they “unthink”. In such unproductive “non-knowledge” lives are spoken without enough information to make the claims for the words.

Agreement controls itself then by the need for that agreement. Unhealthy as this is, it finds private obsessions extending generalisations into the preciousness of architecture. Arrogance and intolerance begin there. Finally, the Last Modernist knows, it is this silence that is redundant.

If the public indifference yet pull to spectacular architecture has any weight, the celebratory has become a cultural gaming strategy. In a way the Modernist orphans are wildly directing the new agenda to conform to even more hallucinations of national identity and cultural coherence. The comfort of the celebratory often goes unchallenged. Merit is confused with uncritical achievement. Our shallow graves might just have missed the whole point of where the society is at today and where architecture's gaming and methodology really lies.

How does a society understand such loss? Through the Last Modernist? Death and silence forces respect, exile enwombs the idiocy of future promise. Is it possible that we are right just to wait, outside the cathedral doors? Perhaps the Last Modernist would agree with Harold Bloom: is it only the creative misreading which identifies the stronger artists from the weaker?¹⁶ Interpreted this way, any nervous hysteria to be in exile would be, and should be, complemented by the strength of the local song.

The Last Modernist delighted in being distant from the centre and looking from afar. It allowed him not to make his own rules but to bend them sufficiently for an architecture of significance. Cultural gaming makes the mistake of trying to play its own game and still be part of the centre. The Last Modernist can strike back: this latter strategy allows the culture to think that exile reads the mistakes made in the centre but would never dream of correcting them.

The Last Modernist; an untidy invention, remarkable only when this local song becomes universal, when it frees itself from the parochial, parodic and derivative, and produces architecture of singularity and, of course, solidarity. As Bo Carpelan put it: "People of originality and genius are usually discovered by "the experts" after they have been laid to rest in the grave; then come the commemorative speeches. Their works survive."¹⁷

The Last Modernist will survive only if the contingency of the work, texts and lectures are monitored with indifference and detachment. The task is as expressed by Harold Bloom: "We need simultaneously to recognise the contingency of our perceptions, and yet find a new direction for those perceptions, as though no one had perceived and described them before us."¹⁸

Let us not confuse the Last Modernist with this serious gaming. Architecture may not be simply progressive. Our experience of space may not be forever novel and upset. What the architect was trying to do for himself or herself as a person by designing such buildings is also a question of re-formulating the knowledge available to us, and the role architecture might be expected to play. Exile, school of indifference or disenchantment? It is not a question of the Last Modernist's intention and either getting them nearly right or then leaving them for another, better day. Nor is it a question of fitting the architect into a grand theory, or meta-history

that suits the agendas and careers of current narrative busters. Current architectural urgency and dishonesty means we do not have time or patience for that. Do we have the necessary patience to re-invent the Last Modernist?

NOTES

1. Elizabeth Burns Gamard, *Kurt Schwitters' Merzbau – The Cathedral of Erotic Misery*, Princeton Architectural Press, 2000, p.1.
2. Roger Connah: From the notebook/fieldnotes: "A Moral to Be Going on With." 15.8.2001/26.5.2011/31.12.2013.
3. Psalm 144, Evening Prayer, Thursday after Ash Wednesday: <http://www.liturgies.net/Liturgies/Catholic/loh/lent/ashthursdayep.htm>.
4. Note, for instance, Juhani Pallasmaa's assertion that "We Finns tend to organise space topologically on the basis of an amorphous 'forest geometry'" Juhani Pallasmaa, "Tradition and Modernity. The Feasibility of Regional Architecture in Post-modern Society", *Architectural Review*, May 1988.
5. See Roger Connah, *The Piglet Years: The Lost Militancy in Finnish Architecture*, Datutop, 2006. The pattern repeats itself and it's unnecessary to go into detail here. The lost militancy in Finnish architecture began from sincere grief at history and expressed an unwavering talent for immediate and often superficial critical writing. Given the small society, its protected family and clannish activities, this often amounted to little more than opinion wars.
6. Marja-Riitta Norri, Elina Strandertskjöld and Wilfried Wang (eds), *20th Century Architecture: Finland*, Museum of Finnish Architecture, 2000.
7. In their report the competition jury discuss the difficulty in choosing between 2 of the 6 entries, that of Helin & Siitonen and Juha Leiviskä. Leiviskä's entry is praised as "An example of modern Finnish architecture at its best", yet the jury chose the former on the grounds that "while international trends are always reflected in Finnish building and it is very difficult to define what is distinctly Finnish and what is international... (Helin & Siitonen's) scheme contains various topical international elements adapted to local conditions in an enterprising way." The jury were fairly complimentary towards Penttilä's proposal, but state that "its overall form looks like an airport, the long strung out building making functionality difficult". Their final conclusion is particularly interesting: "In the text accompanying the entry the author states that the proposal is 'new without the Futurist or UFO-like associations'. In the view of the jury, the scheme represents precisely the aforementioned associations." Invited Planning Competition for Nokia Oy, Keilalahti, *Architectural Competitions in Finland*, 1/84.
8. Czeslaw Milosz, "Notes on Exile", in Marc Robinson (ed.), *Altogether Elsewhere: Writers on Exile*, Harvest, 1994.
9. "Archobabble", ch 4, in Roger Connah, *How Architecture Got its Hump*, MIT Press, 1998.
10. Rudi Fuchs, *Conflicts in Modernism or the Absence of Kurt Schwitters*, Springer, 1991, cited in Garmard, Schwitters, op cit. pp. 5-6.
11. A revisionism will alter this "meanness" and see the Finnish architecture circles of the 1960s and 1970s as a healthy world of solidarity within the architect's profession. For those who wish to read the subtext of Penttilä's absence, who wish to understand the opposition, and how the opposition developed and influenced both Penttilä (and Pietilä's thinking) see the footnotes of Roger Connah, *Writing Architecture - Fantomas, Fragments, Fictions. An Architectural Journey through the Twentieth Century*, MIT Press, 1989. It was my intention always to write two texts in that book. The body text goes through the Fragments, Fictions and even Fantomas that made up an intellectual community. In other words, the text does what it says "on the tin". The footnotes were always a different matter. These became a parallel text of the inner intrigues and the unacknowledged opposition that many architects, including Pietilä and Penttilä faced. There is no need to pretend this didn't exist; the interesting aspect for research and critical history now – given that so much is erased due to this absence – is how history is lost, and what role did closeness and an awkward intimacy between Penttilä and the major formalist-Modernists play in his "absence". Until of course all went silent.
12. George Steiner, *Extraterritoriality: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution*, Atheneum, 1976.
13. Raymond Williams, "Nineteen Eighty-Four", *Orwell*, Second Edition, Collins, 1974.
14. Leszek Kolakowski, "In Praise of Exile", in Robinson, op cit.
15. Louis Althusser, *The Future Lasts Forever – A Memoir*, The New Press, 1993.
16. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, Oxford University Press, Second edition, 1997.
17. Bo Carpelan, *Axel: A Novel*, Northwestern University Press, 2001, p. 151.
18. Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon – The Books and School of the Ages*, Harcourt Brace, p. 305.



3

ALSO SPRACH TIMO PENTTILÄ

It seems to me that on this occasion the god of dreams was pleased to make fun of my habit of beginning the day by ordering it and making it tolerable *for myself* ; and it is possible that I have sometimes done this too formally, as if I were a prince.

– Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*¹

What I liked was that the index was paginated. What I liked about it was the definition of each section. What I liked about it was the seriousness that the architect had already applied to this hopeless, impossible task. What I liked was that I had forgotten the enormity of this project. What I liked was the nerve, the sheer bloody nerve this architect had to set up in a Tuscan farmhouse, tend the vines whenever he wanted, speak to his helpers or not, and write and read from morning to night. I had located the three floppy disks in the attic of the Hotel Architecture. Fortunately, the invasion of water, which had flooded the random hotel in the year 2000, had not reached them hence they were preserved. Or I thought so.

They were those double-sided high density disks. They called them “diskettes”. From 1997 they had the immense capacity of 2 megabytes! They were black, the brand was Nashua, and they had nothing else on but the word SUMMUM (M) 19.7.97 in pencil. A previous legend had been rubbed out. They were obviously re-used. The other two diskettes were titled in the same scrawl SUBDOCUMENTS I and SUBDOCUMENTS II. No date, no name, nothing else. Had I ever really studied these documents? Had we abandoned this project before I could get to the editing? Had I kept my side of the bargain, or had something happened? Why had we lost contact? Why had our letters stopped? Why had Timo Penttilä abandoned this project?

Most computers today did not have the capacity to read these 2 MB diskettes. I had for this purpose bought a Compaq Presario some 7 years ago. Storing digital information had changed to the CD Rom, and there were no USB sticks at that time. Hard drives were not so big and the external drive at the time was in its infancy. In the attic of the Hotel Architecture I had nearly 200 diskettes. All of them sketches, texts, notes, correspondence from a life on the edge of architecture. One day perhaps someone would want to read them. Actually I had only one person in mind: my daughter.

Managing to retrieve the Compaq Presario laptop (it was the Toshiba laptop that had been destroyed in the flood), I gingerly inserted the diskettes. I remember

<< Sampola, school and adult education institute, Tampere, 1959-1962.

that they had a tendency to stick. The sliding metal shunt on the top of the diskette sometime lost its precision and the compartment didn't allow this tolerance. I prayed that it would work. Eventually the diskettes were loaded and from the diskette to the desktop to the 32 GB Verbatim Usb stick, the capacity of which was 1600 diskettes, Timo Penttilä's documents were rescued. So I hadn't destroyed them as he asked me later, in 1997 or was it 1998.

As they opened, the pages of this un-edited volume started to appear. The architect had in some way, I have yet to understand, linked all the documents to his index. Tied to the *Summum* were links that would open up every other inter-connected document. How had he done this? Who had done this? Maybe the son of the housekeeper in Italy? Suddenly the volume took centre stage; the pages opened one after the other. As I began to realize, since 1997 and these dated diskettes, Penttilä had either edited the manuscript as he said he would or then brought it all together. He had I recall asked me to ignore them. He had even asked me to destroy them. But how did I get these diskettes? I had no recollection of them coming through the post to Sweden. I have no recollection of ever opening them up inside a floppy disk drive on a computer. I couldn't explain any of this.

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I had always been fascinated by the index and Penttilä has sent a hard copy in the post. I had begun teaching using the index and bringing attention to what wasn't included within the index (within any index!). I could use it with first year students in architecture as well as graduates. I would hand out a random index and begin to study it. We would go from the letter B to C, and see who or what might be missing. We'd scour the index for lost names, lost buildings, lost pedagogies. We would continue working in between the stated and the unstated, between knowledge and non-knowledge. We searched always for the understated, the unrevealed.

In 2/1982 issue of the *Finnish Architectural Review* Penttilä had written an essay, "Ympäristöopin ensimmäinen sato" (The first fruits of environmental science) ostensibly a review of the sixth "Suomi rakentaa" (Finland builds) exhibition, and taken and interpreted by his colleagues as an attack on the current strategies within the Museum of Finnish Architecture.² The issues were deeper and subtler than will be revealed here. Recourse to the moment and the coincidence of the past and the present that culminated in that particular exchange would reveal much more about longer and stubborn patterns of singularity, consensus and narrowness in both the discipline of architecture and the society. But perhaps if we could strip away the internal wrangling and the specific issue, it was this narrowness that was at the core of Penttilä's "attack" – for why else would the "dog be released"?

The text was obviously toned, framed and verbalized in the directness that his colleagues has got used to but had resisted. The 4-5/1982 issue of the *Finnish Architectural Review* thus included three responses under the usual heading "Kes-

kustelua” (Discussion). The title of the three pieces were “Se koira on älähtynyt” by Pekka Kärki (The dog has howled, or “yelped” might have been a more appropriate translation for the untimely moment), arguing the point of the National Board of Antiquities in opposing Penttilä’s competition-winning proposal to replace the KOP bank building in central Helsinki; secondly, “Ei aionoastaan rakennuksista” (Not just buildings) by Maija Kairamo, also defending the position of building conservation; and thirdly “Also sprach Timo Penttilä” by Pekka Pakkala, defending the logic of the city planning authorities. These were comparatively long texts, concerned and considered replies to the architect’s original text. They were also symptomatic of the moment; Penttilä was really no longer one of them, he was either an attack dog that howled or Friedrich Nietzsche. The nuances were crude but then in Finland nuances generally didn’t lift off the ground any appreciable distance. Nothing really new was achieved. Positions were already set. Confirmation wrote its own response. The dog yelped! What is obvious even now is that when considering this exchange we are invited to enter into the middle of a protracted war of ideas, opinions, ideologies and, specifically for Finland, singularities.

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I realize when I met Timo Penttilä in 1996, when he was “retreating” from architecture though not life, that he was the age I am now. And now I am writing about his death and going through the same thoughts about retreat and exile myself. *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* is not as irrelevant to the situation as one might think. There was a period some years back when I was interested in Finland’s own silver prince, the architect and professor Aulis Blomstedt. By concentrating on the lost notebooks and journals of this influential Finnish architect and teacher, I felt it was possible to explore the spiritual development of the architect in relation to the choices he made, the talent that either held him back or then made him opt for a strict, idealistic even – later - dogmatic view of architecture.

When we consider Penttilä, now and then, this dogmatism was also the view of Finnish architecture that had continued to have an influence over most of the colleagues at the time. Blomstedt, along with Aarno Ruusuvuori, had been the Godfathers of the younger generation; those that appeared to see Penttilä as the attack dog. One might never have imagined from Blomstedt’s tortured self-confessional journal that he lived in a continuous ambiguity and quest for a definition of “real architecture”. Yet, taking a clue from J.W.N. Sullivan’s book on Beethoven for a wide-ranging historiographic study and a sketch of the architect’s spiritual development, the idea came to me to research and attempt a psychoanalytic analysis of an architect’s architecture and life.³ Using the “lost-now-found archive” of Aulis Blomstedt as a departure – the private journals – it had to be possible to explore the psychological make-up of Blomstedt and the way his importance was acknowledged yet also marginalised at the same time by those who came after.

I am not sure whether I then had Penttilä in mind when I knew more of his exile, but I remember discussing this attempted study – *persona lucida* was my working title – with Finnish colleagues at the time. I was put off this study in no uncertain terms. I remember then sharing this resistance with Penttilä when we met. Besides the obvious fascinating personal interest, the relationship of Blomstedt's ideas in the timing of architecture, relationships to other architects and thinkers (that politics of friendship), the critical and historical value of these notebooks was enormous. Yet in many ways they have even up until the present remained unexplored.⁴

To me this was an attitude and missed opportunity that would affect future studies of an architect like Penttilä, too. It is not that these characters are made secret or censored; the notion of secrecy and censorship in Finland is just a normal setting, as they say, on the dryer. More significantly however, and Penttilä's death will begin to reveal this, is how the emphasis and interest depends on how history has been looked at for us, in our place, by proxy; how the interpretations have been collected, selected and pre-edited for future generations to study.

Penttilä was having none of this. For some reason, he saw no contradiction in this. No one, he said, has seen fit to note the seriousness to the Finnish archive of lies such notebooks offer. Of course it was naïve to think I could have explored why this or that happens and what might be missed in the serious archive and cultural tradition if such work is ignored or passed over. And yet we are now presented with an even more telling "closed" set of circumstances with the death and forgetting of Timo Penttilä. History not so much suffers as loses the micro-histories that keep it alive.

How "we" choose to remain in ignorance of certain visions and ideas in order to support our vision and ideas of others was not going to go away. This was also the crux of Penttilä's manuscript - SUMMUM. There was no doubt, with convenient institutional support, this could be followed up by research on the role of a critical history and the core-worlds and micro-museums societies use to construct their history. But neither Penttilä nor I felt optimistic about this.

It is quite clear, though little acknowledged, that many of the younger Finnish architects influenced by Aulis Blomstedt actually rode the era and epoch, the icon and idiolect, and in many ways can be seen to have fulfilled "his" unattainable architectural oeuvre. This is where Penttilä knew when to stop or when to yowl. He knew the "fame" and "reputation" of late 20th Century Finnish architecture was established by the generation heavily steered and influenced by Blomstedt's reductive and obsessive architectural vision. Putting such a study into context might have allowed us to see Blomstedt's contemporary and historiographic relevance but what relevance was that now? Blomstedt the man and Blomstedt the teacher and architect are not unconnected entities or selves. I was mistaken. Aulis Blomstedt was no "persona lucida", Timo Penttilä said.

But I started to think I knew who was. The known and somewhat possibly limited history of the exiled architect served to close down his own architectural

ambition. Penttilä's developing and emerging obsessive analysis of ambition and failure would be ignored in favour of an intellectual continuity that conformed to the critical conditions defined by followers and critics. Often misread as an ascetic, there were no journals to tell of intense questioning, intense doubt and a creative pessimism, immense to the point of almost (*perhaps*) killing him. That may of course be going too far, but we do now have this unfinished manuscript.

This school of exile? Can we say this man apart chose a modified talent only to be compromised by loyalty to his own privacy and questioned ambition? It is also entirely possible that Penttilä's compulsive and lightly depressive attitude (somewhat shared with Blomstedt) formed and shaped a life extended over to architecture and may have come from root experiences in childhood and ancestry. Family, upbringing, birthplace are continually echoed as a kind of measuring device for ambition and talent. If Blomstedt's notebooks and journals suggest that these root experiences had a life of their own, unable to be controlled, one look at the index of Penttilä's *Summum* would see that he deflected all this into a creative and compulsive ordering, re-ordering, and a study of meandering but possibly brilliant waywardness stretching over 2000 years of architecture and building.

It appears Penttilä (and not Blomstedt or Pietilä) might have been a much more complex, restless and subversive figure than the history and critical framing have made out. It is also possible that Penttilä's own personal testimony, which we may have to re-construct, might not only be more ambiguous than is interpreted, but actually in conflict with the critical neatness potentially made from it by his friends and colleagues and the creative exile he chose out of it. But Penttilä asks not for this. As far as I could infer, admittedly from a brief but intense visit, he wished not for any critical accommodation to trim the untidy and erring anxiety in his thinking. Nor did he wish to be retrieved architecturally and cognitively in order to support any ideological schemes.

It is clear Penttilä demonstrated no such hysterical confidence in "established truths" in architecture, though at all times he may just have been too Nietzschean for his own good and was searching for a definition of architecture as revelation, in the way we might recall I.A. Richards' "revelation" theory of art. If others were in constant flux over their idealism Penttilä underscored the necessity of falling short in anything he created. Ultimately it is likely he discovered that in architecture and the academy he would never be able to build or represent the ideal he actually spent a lifetime sketching.

Can we speak of a depressive temperament here, and what would we need to make this case? And would it offer us anything in relation to understanding this architect? It is not the depressive nature however of any personal and cognitive development which might reveal constant self-doubt, contest and questioning. Again Penttilä demonstrated little of this anxiety; his was no divided self continually oscillating between architecture and life. Instead Penttilä would have veered towards a more inventive study of the person and architect. A study of creative cheating as in Geoffrey Payzant's interpretation of Glenn Gould,⁵ or innovative

lying which he saw as the basis for much critical history disingenuously passed on in the 20th century. There is I feel enough substance, resistance and quietism about Timo Penttilä to note the selected ignorance that has so clearly been at work.⁶

Naturally, too, there was a time I was interested in the “compulsive” nature of this architect’s own psychology, his drive and his critical-self. I had not heard of an architect being talked about in this way, nor of an architect who would monitor his own thinking in this way. Reima Pietilä was the only other Finnish architect, to my knowledge, who engaged exhaustively in an exercise of monitoring his ideas and thinking, and their translation into architecture. Penttilä came out of a totally different kennel!

NOTES

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, New York: Vintage 1974. pp. 95-96.
2. Timo Penttilä, “Ympäristöopin ensimmäinen sato”, *Arkkitehti*, 2/1982, pp. 28-32. Pekka Kärkki, “Se koira on älähtänyt”, Maja Kairamo, “Ei ainoastaan rakennuksista...”, Pekka Pakkala, “Also sprach Timo Penttilä”, *Arkkitehti*, 4-5/1982, pp. 72-75.
3. J.W.N. Sullivan, *Beethoven - His Spiritual Development*, Sullivan Press, Morgantown, PA, 2008.
4. The most significant book to date on Aulis Blomstedt was written by a scholar with a background in music theory and art history. Helena Sarjakoski, *Ratioanalismi ja runollisuus – Aulis Blomstedt ja suhteiden taide*, Helsinki: Rakennustieto, 2003.
5. Geoffrey Payzant, *Glenn Gould – Music and Mind*, Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1993.
6. Persona Lucida: the original proposal (Helsinki 1998). In Part One we assess ‘silence’ and its ambiguity in relation to architecture. This allows us to consider how the official archive has used Aulis Blomstedt to construct its legitimacy and narrate a self-feeding and confirming architectural strategy. In Part Two we approach the journals of Aulis Blomstedt as a way to test whether there is any truth in the reductive notions of ‘silence’ within his work. We finally go beyond this archive to explore Blomstedt’s own life. In it we ask ultimately, is this a lost archive of some value especially as we begin to notice the traces of piety and tragedy about Blomstedt’s life where indeed architecture may ultimately have had no choice but to overwhelm life itself?

>> “The wrong architect gets his honour back”, *Aamulehti* 31.8.13.
Timo Penttilä stands over the Tampella urban development plan, Tampere, 1989.

Väärä arkkitehti saa taas kunniansa

Aamulehti 31.8.13

Teemaviikko:

Tarvitaan aina joku, joka uskaltaa olla eri mieltä

JUHA LEHTINEN
Aamulehti

Kun arkkitehtuurin historiaa taas kirjoitetaan, tamperelainen arkkitehti ja professori Timo Penttilä laitetaan aivan kirkkikaartiin.

Näin ennustaa *Arkkitehti-lehden* päätoimittaja **Jorma Mukala**.

Mukala nosti Penttilän hyvin korkealle Tampereen arkkitehtivirkkoon päätöksenaiassa Sampoassa perjantaina.

Mukalan puheenvuorossa on osittain kyse maan pöytäkirjasta – Penttilä kun ajautui Suomessa ammattikuntansa valtaviran ulkopuolelle ja sivuraitteelle.

Tai ei Penttilä ajatunut sivuraitteelle vaan suomalaisen arkkitehtuurin Penttilän työt ovat paljon parempia kuin hänen vastustajansa, Mukala sanoo.

Penttilä unohtettiin

Mukala itse muistelee, että kun hän opiskeli arkkitehtuuria, Penttilän töistä ei puhuttu. Mukala käveli sitten itseksensä Tampereen katuja ja huomasi, kuinka hieno arkkitehtuuria esimerkiksi Sampoassa edustaa.

Mukalan mielestä Penttilä oli poikkeuksellisen lahjakas, ja esimerkiksi Hanasaaren voimaa Helsinkiin on omassa sarjassaan arvoitettu huipputyö.

Kun Penttilä lähti 1980 Wienin professoriksi, suomalainen arkkitehtuuri menetti tärkeän osittajattelijan ja poleemisen keskustelijan.

Joka alalla pitäisi aina olla joku, joka on eri mieltä valtavirran kanssa. Penttilä uskalsi.

Penttilä joutui paitsioon osittain poliittisista syistä 1960-luvulla nuusavammistolaisuus tyylissä, mutta Penttilä ei menenyt muiden muiden arkkitehtien tavoin siihen mukana.

Kyse oli myös arkkitehtien sisäisistä välittömyistä.

Fakta

Timo Penttilä

Syntyi 18.3.1931. Kuoli 25.2.2011. Ylioppilas Tampereen yhteiskoulusta 1950, arkkitehtia Teakolista korkeakoulusta 1956.

Tunnettuja töitä: Tampereen työväenopisto Sampo. Tampereen kauppaoppilaitos. Ratina-station Tampereella. Helsinkiin kaupungintaloksi. Hanasaaren voimala. Merihotelli Espoossa. Suomen Soketin pääkonttori. Salmisaaren voimala.

Penttilän ajatuksista ilmestyy syyskuussa postuumisti kirja nimeltään *Oikeat ja väärät arkkitehdit*.

– Penttilä mietti aina myös rakennuksen käyttäjien tarpeita. Ei sitä, onko neljä ympyrää parempi. Teoriat ja puhumien eivät kiinnostaneet vaan tekeminen, varmaankin tamperelaisista jaurustaan johtuen. Hänelle arkkitehtuuri on käytännön taidetta, Mukala sanoo.

Väärät ja oikeat

Mukalan mukaan Penttilä ja Reima Pietilä laittettiin Suomessa väliin arkkitehtien joukkoon.

Oikeat arkkitehdit pitivät Penttilän ja Pietilän töitä suomalaisen arkkitehtuurin vaihtotavaksi väliin.

– Vasemmistolaisille arkkitehtuuriin piiri olla demokraattista ja tasa-arvoista. Se tarkoitti laattikokaisuutta, esimerkiksi vaikkapa Tampereen yliopisto, Mukala sanoo.

Välirikko kulminoitui, kun Penttilä oli Helsingin kaupungintalossa myöskin saanut melkoisen maineen. Dipolissa pidettiin keskustelutilaisuus, jossa Penttilän kaupungintalosta haukuttiin lyhyesti.

Mukala on mieltänyt, onko laattikokaisuus 1960-luvun tapaan taas tulossa arkkitehtuurin.

– Toivottavasti siitä ei seuraa 70-lukulaisuus, joka oli mustin vaibe suomalaisessa arkkitehtuurissa, Mukala nauraa.

Eläkkeelle siirtymisensä jälkeen arkkitehtuuri ei kiinnostanut Penttilää. Hän vietti paljon aikaa Italiassa ja yksin Lapissa.

– Talvi 2011 oli kylmä ja Laissa Penttilä viilusti itsensä. Sairaus vei miehen hetken.



Timo Penttilän arkkitehtitoimiston suunnittelema Tampellan alueen alkuperäinen malli julkistettiin Helsingissä 4.8.1989. Pienoismallin kanssa professori Timo Penttilä (oik.) ja Tampereen valtuuston puheenjohtaja Alpo Korkeala.

Timo Penttilän talot nostivat tunteita Tampereella

JUHA LEHTINEN
Aamulehti

Tampereilaiset muistavat arkkitehti Timo Penttilän parhaiten hänen hursasta ideastaan. Penttilän mielestä Tampellan alueelle olisi voitu rakentaa neljä 40-kerroksista taloa.

Tämä sai monen ihmisen ystävyyden pullertamaan Tampellan alueen rakentamisesta liitetiin parkkimäntä vuotta sitten yhtä kielteistä kuin nyt Rantaväljän tunnelista.

Silloin tällöin viitettiin, että Tampereella on hyvin vaikeaa saada läpi rohkeita ideoita. Tampereella vallitsee kuulemma hieman sellainen ajattelutapa, että korkeat ja näyttävät talot eivät sovi työläiskaupunkiin. Ehkä se on päätöittä **Jorma Mukalan** kritikoimaa tasa-arvoa arkkitehtuurissa.

Päätoimittaja Mukalan mielestä esimerkiksi kiistely Ratinanranta on kyllä ammattitaidolla suunniteltu, mutta ei mitenkään laadukas. Aika ta-

vanomainen ratkaisu itse asiassa. Arkkitehtikilpailu pidettiin, mutta sen jälkeen voitaja unohtettiin.

Eteläpuisto varjeltava

Yksi tamperelainen arkkitehti sanoi tiinan jutun tekijälle, että jos Ratinanrantaan olisi uskallettu tehdä triokystistä korkeammat rakennukset, siitä ei olisi tarvinnut tehdä niin abstrakta.

Monet kaupunkilaiset pelkäävät, että Ratinanrannan idea kopioitaisiin joskus Tampereen

kaikkien hienoimmalle alueelle eli Eteläpuistoon Pyhäjärven rannalle.

Mukalan mielestä Eteläpuistosta täytyy ehdottomasti jättää arkkitehtikilpailu eikä voitajien ehdotuksia ole syytä laittaa ö-muuriin.

– Viitettiin, että arkkitehtikilpailut vain hidasravat turhaan rakentamisen aloittamista. Rantatoukosen kellokorin valitettiin kun on mennyt enemmän aikaa kuin kilpailun järjestämiseen.

SUMMUM TEMPLUM ARCHITECTURAE

Timo Penttilä

The following is a set of extracts from Timo Penttilä's immense manuscript, *Summum Templum Architecturae*. With the exception of correcting a few obvious typos, no attempt had been made to edit, refine or tidy up these extracts. The selection reflects both the density of his work and reading, and the meandering and questions he constantly brings up as he shifts from the ancient to the present. From language to language, from discourse to discourse. The very apparent "unwieldiness" of the manuscript is what is of interest here – it suggests a mind and thought-in-movement. For further comments and an exchange about this, see Correspondence: Letters 4 and 7.

*

Summum Templum Architecturae approaches the problem of metaphysical anxiety in a way that differs radically from the view of Heidegger as well as that of architects. It does not discuss which kind of material properties the architecture of the luxury villa ought to be given in order to have therapeutic effects; it defends rather the view that the relation of a vexed mind to architectural forms does not obey any discoverable laws. Consequently it does not try to predict whether mortals have any possibilities to learn to dwell authentically before the deprivation of physical shelter destroys their physical health and finally kills them.

The *Summum* concentrates on the questions: What is the "architecture" that creates around itself the above described atmosphere of heated intellectual activism? Why are the philosophers of the idealistic tradition, who are farthest away from the material reality of building, the most important ones for architects? The relevance of philosophy at the level of practical building may be denied altogether: human existence may be a philosophical problem, but how a beam is joined to another beam is not. If the relevance of philosophy is nonetheless affirmed, why not seek help from some sort of realism that relates itself to material houses without excessive speculation?

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1

CRUCIAL QUESTIONS

[From section III.1]

Architects tend to set every problem of building in the universal frame. Unlike other professionals of today, they consider “philosophizing” an integral part of their work. The present book tries to clarify what kind of metaphysical presuppositions are hiding behind architects’ thinking, what is the philosophical origin of these beliefs, and how they influence the practice of building. To give the reader a rough idea about what sort of inquiry is in question, one of the many underlying themes of the book is summarized here as an introduction. Prominent architectural theoreticians are recently seeking underpinning for their most elevated building thoughts from the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. This gives rise to three questions. First, does Heidegger speak about the same architecture as architects? Second, how can architecture be demarcated from non-architecture? Third, what does metaphysics mean in this book?

Does Heidegger Speak about Architecture?

Heidegger’s essay *Building Dwelling Thinking* has quite particularly been an object of theoretical attention. Curiously, enthusiastic architectural readers have mostly been inattentive as for the significance of the following warning with which Heidegger begins his poetic piece of literature:

In what follows we shall try to think about dwelling and building. This thinking about building does not presume to discover architectural ideas, let alone to give rules for building. This venture in thought does not view building as an art or as a technique of construction; rather, it traces building back into that domain to which everything that *is* belongs.¹

Heidegger distances his philosophy in a determinate way from the ideological questions of building. He emphasizes that architecture, or, as he more exactly says, art of building [*Baukunst*], is not an ontologically valid term. Its application is incorrect at the highest level of investigation, where the clarification concerning the difference between “what is” and “what is not” takes place. It is plausible to assume for the relatively straightforward purposes of this book that architecture gains meaning only in the area of everydayness [*Alltäglichkeit*], though Heidegger is not explicit in this matter. He might even deny the validity of such a simplification, for the opposite of “being” is not “everydayness” but “non-being.” Nevertheless, he says in his main work *Being and Time*: “Everydayness is a way ‘to be’ — to which, of course, that which is publicly manifest belongs.”²

Everydayness also is a way to be, but it is open to social and political dispute. It deals with the relative and context-dependent values of various practices and utensils. This means that architecture is for Heidegger rather an ideological than an ontological term. He avoids the German word *Architektur* altogether, and prefers to speak of building [*Bauen*] or, in relatively rare cases, about the art of building [*Baukunst*]. It is obvious that Heidegger did not read what architectural theoreticians say about architecture. He knew about architecture in the same way as any culturally conscious person does. He paid some attention to disputes in newspapers, and was perhaps informed about the top names in architects' latest ranking list. He knew that Walter Gropius is a prominent representative of the Modern Movement, but he hardly could imagine that architects place Architecture as high as he places Being.

On the other hand, it seems that few architectural theoreticians have read *Being and Time* in spite of the fact that this laborious enterprise is a necessary condition for understanding Heidegger's philosophical approach in general, and particularly when the vagaries of his short mystico-poetical essays are implemented in the everyday practice of building. *Being and Time* is included in the bibliography of Mark Wigley's *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt*, but the author does not seem to suspect any discrepancy between architects' architecture and Heidegger's *Bauen* when he proclaims:

Heidegger is perhaps the most rigorous thinker of the relationship between philosophy and architecture... Derrida's work is itself an incessant stepping back into Heidegger, and perhaps more than anything else, it is a stepping back into Heidegger's account of the necessity of such a stepping back, an account that is itself presented in architectural terms.³

Wigley is taking for granted that Heidegger speaks of architects' architecture. And even more: he is certain that Jacques Derrida reconfirms the validity of his bold claims: philosophizing itself takes place "in architectural terms" — whatever this means. However, Heidegger's exclusion of architecture cannot be explained away. As has already been pointed out, he starts *Building Dwelling Thinking* with an explicit warning. The unison of building, dwelling and thinking is possible only if the influence of the everyday is bracketed.

Heidegger asks what dwelling means when uncompromisingly related to Being [*das Sein*]. He inquires into the mystery of why a thinking being must live on the earth in a body, seeking shelter from a house. House [*Haus*] is for Heidegger a more important concept than architecture that does not fit in with his ontological scheme. But even house becomes ontologically meaningful only in the context of the trinity of building, dwelling and thinking. As an object of social disputes, a house, or a work of architecture, is, if the terminology of *Being and Time* is applied, only a thing [*Ding*], a useful tool or means [*Zeug*] — something detestable

rather than ontologically interesting.

If architectural theoreticians insist on agreement between their own and Heidegger's conception of architecture, they must ascend to the level of Heidegger who cannot be brought down. The difference is thus reduced to a terminological one. Decisively important is that both parties want to speak of building ontologically, and relate their inquiry to the largest conceivable whole. However, architects' ascent toward Heidegger has fatal consequences. When an architect, who uses the Heideggerian *Bauen* as the synonym of architecture, is walking along Oxford Street, he cannot point to a house saying: That is architecture! and to another: That is not architecture! If Heidegger is taken seriously, the work of architecture is no more an observable everyday object. Architects tend to forget that when rising to the high level of ontology, a high toll is due. Let Derrida put it:

To say that architecture must be liberated from serving the ends that are assigned to it, is not to recommend inhabitable constructions, but interest in the genealogy of an ageless contract between architecture and dwelling. Is it possible to produce works without being concerned with dwelling? All this entails turning to "Heideggerian questions"; to what he believes to be able to say about what we translate with the Latin "habiter"⁴

Elevating architecture to the ontological level is nothing else than stripping building of the ephemeral, incommensurable and contradictory values that human dwellers — and architects! — attach to it at the level of everydayness. In the "ageless contract between architecture and dwelling" all questions of value are deleted. To take an example, Derrida supports Peter Eisenman in an attempt to get rid of the "metaphysics of scale".⁵ Getting rid of the metaphysics of scale does not mean getting rid of metaphysics altogether. It means rather an attempt to move from a too concrete and practice-laden metaphysics toward a more abstract and autonomous one. There is only one ontological house and it is neither big nor small. It is the house that "is," or the House of Being. Dwelling in the sense of Heidegger is thus a very reduced form of "being-in-the-world." Accordingly the plight of dwelling has nothing to do with the shortage of physical houses. It is caused by the fact that mortals are unable to relate their dwelling to Being in a way that would be acceptable to our philosopher:

However hard and bitter, however hampering and threatening the lack of houses remains, the proper plight of dwelling does not lie primarily in the lack of houses.... The proper plight of dwelling lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the essence of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell.⁶

Nobody denies that a person living in a luxury villa that is equipped with all possible comforts may have psychological problems that have something to do with dwelling. They may be interpreted to be of a metaphysical nature because no explicitly physical causes can be detected. It is even plausible to speak of the plight of dwelling in the sense of Heidegger. The dweller has an annoying feeling that he does not know the essence of dwelling and is therefore unable to dwell authentically. It is an ineluctable fact that people have strange feelings and intuitions. Nothing can be ignored as inexistent. Man undeniably has what can very inclusively be called a “metaphysical dimension.” Nevertheless, a question inevitably arises: how is the horrifying feeling of inauthenticity related to the physical properties of the luxury villa? How does this relation rise above the merely arbitrary? It is not yet time to try an answer. It is enough to indicate some possibilities of parallel cases and connections. Heidegger speaks in *Building Dwelling Thinking* about the plight of dwelling [*die Not des Wohnens*], and in *Being and Time* more generally about metaphysical anxiety [*Angst*] and about care [*Sorge*] that aims at its removal. He does not make any links between the two writings, which seem to have their own self-sufficient conceptual structures. Anyway, it is plausible to assume that the thought of a philosopher who claims to be able to deduce every being from the Being has a certain unity, so far that the “plight of dwelling” and “metaphysical anxiety” are for the purposes of this book identical. Architects’ thoughts are not characterized by any comparable consistency. They are not transparent enough; they are too poorly defined to be subjected to detailed analysis.

The first link between Heidegger and architecture must be created by launching a new concept. The plight of dwelling is replaced in architects’ minds by the anxiety concerning the future of architecture. Architects are convinced that if people neglect architecture, their chances to dwell authentically are reduced to zero. With the loss of the chance to “be oneself” one’s mortal life is jeopardized in its totality. Ascertaining the future of architecture means less anxiety, in the best case the final disappearance of all uneasiness. In a word, the awareness that architecture “is” reduces good building to a remedy against metaphysical anxiety.

This book sees the problem of metaphysical anxiety in a way that differs radically from the view of Heidegger as well as that of architects. It does not discuss which kind of material properties the architecture of the luxury villa ought to be given in order to have therapeutic effects; it defends rather the view that the relation of a vexed mind to architectural forms does not obey any discoverable laws. Consequently, it does not try to predict whether mortals have any possibilities to learn to dwell authentically before the deprivation of physical shelter destroys their physical health and finally kills them. This book concentrates on the questions: What is the “architecture” that creates around itself the above described atmosphere of heated intellectual activism? Why are the philosophers of the idealistic tradition, who are farthest away from the material reality of building, the most important ones for architects? The relevance of philosophy at the

level of practical building may be denied altogether: human existence may be a philosophical problem, but how a beam is joined to another beam is not. If the relevance of philosophy is nonetheless affirmed, why not to seek help from some sort of realism that relates itself to material houses without excessive speculation?

2

MATTER AND FORM

[From section IV.1.4 - Aristocratic Ideal of Erudition]

We remember how Plato dropped in *Gorgias* rhetoric from the communion of *tekhné*. Cicero presents himself as an Academician, but he does the very opposite. He gives the orator's art the highest status, the one Plato gave to *politiké tekhné*:

...in an orator ...we demand the acuteness of a logician, the profundity of a philosopher, the diction virtually of a poet, the memory of a lawyer, the voice of a performer in tragic drama... a first class orator is one of the rarest things in the world.⁷

We hear as an echo: ... a first class architect is one of the rarest things in the world. It is repeated many times in the history of architecture. Is it more important for an architect to be a good orator than a good architect? Stoic ethics emphasizes that a person must always act according to his own nature. Doesn't this also concern the architect? Or is the capacity to persuade the very nature of the architect? Cicero does not admit that an orator persuades against facts. He says that an orator "has to acquire knowledge about a formidable quantity of different matters. To hold forth without this information will just mean a silly flow of windy verbiage."⁸ We again hear reverberations: a bad architect is accused of a "silly flow of windy verbiage." This time reference is to the form language of his works. Orator and architect seem to have much in common. But Cicero does not see the similarities when he speaks in *De Officiis* of various professions and their profits [*de artificiis et quaestibus*] dividing them into intellectual [*liberales*] and manual [*sordidi*]. He agrees with Plato that butchers, cooks and dancers belong to the lowest category. But there are some illiberal professions which are tentatively and hopefully lifting themselves above the merely manual. Cicero makes a concession to them:

Instead, all those arts which require more knowledge and the gains of which are more than modest, as medicine, architecture and teaching of liberal arts, are honourable for their practitioners.⁹

In spite of this concession, Cicero has no high regard of architecture. It barely rises above the banal. Architecture may be a honourable profession for its

practitioners, but surely not for people like Cicero's son Marcus who is sent to Athens to study philosophy. If one wants to be good in rhetoric, one must know philosophy, and vice versa. Cicero dedicates his ethical main work *De Officiis* to Marcus, and addresses him at the beginning of the book:

I sometimes suspect that certain excellent persons find the whole idea of philosophy distasteful and cannot understand why I devote to it such a very great deal of my energy and time. My answer is this... Surely to be wise is the most desirable thing in all the world. It is quite impossible to imagine anything better, or more becoming for a human being, or more appropriate to his essential nature. That is why the people who try to reach this goal are called philosophers, because that is precisely what philosophy means, the love of wisdom. And wisdom, according to the definition offered by early philosophers, signifies the knowledge of all things, divine and human, and of the causes which lie behind them.

There was much fine architecture in Athens, but Cicero could never have sent Marcus there to study architecture. Cicero surely liked architecture. He owned several villas and we know from his letters that innovative building projects were one of his favorite hobbies. Did he write philosophical letters to his architect? No, he concentrated on matters which he in philosophical contexts classified as *sordidi*, or low and trivial. He asked his architect to seek such and such marble plates and statues, to design a new row of columns around an old porch. On philosophical questions he disputed, as the numerous dialogues of his books demonstrate, with friends who belong to the same social class.

Did Marcus naturally follow in his father's footsteps and join the Academy? No, he was sent to the Peripatetic School. Its head Chrysippus was, however, a convert. With his teacher Aristus and other students, he left the Academy when Aristotle's philosophy suddenly gained a new standing. Whichever of the many schools one chose, Athens was all right for philosophy. Rhodes also had a good reputation. Cicero himself had gone with his friend Atticus in 79 to Athens where he studied rhetoric as well as philosophy, in the latter subject hearing the Academic Antiochus and probably his brother Aristus, and, with Atticus, the Epicureans Phaedrus and Zeno. The party went later to Asia and Rhodes, where Cicero listened to Stoic Posidonius and the rhetor Molon.¹⁰ Atticus was an Epicurean who had scholarly and antiquarian tastes. This highly cultivated and extremely wealthy *eques* was, according to Elizabeth Rawson, probably one of the most influential figures in the cultural life of his day. He was not a philosophical mind. His interests were primarily linguistic, literary and historical. Even his slaves were given a literary education. Cornelius Nepos testifies that Atticus spoke Greek like an Athenian.

Cicero also belonged to the class of *equites*, or knights. Equestrians held important offices, like consulship, and were generally honoured and wealthy people. The late republican Rome was an aristocratic society in which publicly upheld institutions were not numerous, and in which patronage therefore was perhaps the most important social link. There were, depending on the social ranking of parties, many forms of private relations from reciprocal friendship to servile clientship and slavery. The leading class was conservative. Seen from the top, every change was a change for the worse. Quite particularly, new cultural trends, which had their origin in Greece and the East, were viewed with prejudice. New philosophical ideas were considered a menace to domestic religion and national unity. But the situation changed slowly when it was realized that there is much to be learned from the Greeks. It is not known exactly when the Stoic Panaetius came to Rome and how he joined a circle which was headed by Scipio Aemilianus, the famous statesman and military commander who destroyed Carthago. To the erudite circle belonged, besides prominent Romans, the Greek historian Polybius who may have invited Panaetius. It is known that Panaetius followed Scipio who in the years 140-139 BC made a long journey in the eastern part of the world. Panaetius learned Latin perfectly. He became an admirer of Roman power and statesmanship, which also left its traces in his philosophy. His Stoic ethics was influenced by the Roman way of life, but its influence on Roman life was yet more conspicuous.

Panaetius' main work in ethics *On Duty* was published after he had taken leadership of the Porch in Athens. Cicero's *De Officiis* is modeled on it. Another important work of Panaetius has the typical Stoic theme *On Providence*. The providence of Panaetius thinks before it creates. Panaetius is thus much closer to Plato and Aristotle than Zeno, Cleanthes and Chrysippus. Posidonius, who was born in the Syrian Apamea, studied under Panaetius in Athens. Later he founded his own school in Rhodes. As we already know, Cicero attended Posidonius' lectures in 78 BC. Due to Panaetius' contacts, the cosmopolitan Posidonius had easy access to the aristocratic circles in Rome. He had interests which went far beyond the traditional limits of Stoic philosophy. As one of the greatest travelers of the ancient world he worked on geography, but also on meteorology, astronomy and astrology. *Physical Reason* [*Phusikos logos*] is his main work in physics. The very title is revealing. *On the Ocean and Adjacent Lands* covers the discipline of geography and related subjects. Like Panaetius, Posidonius was closer to Plato and Aristotle than earlier Stoics. He also believed that Rome was destined to rule the world.

Panaetius and Posidonius enjoyed in Rome a privileged status as the representatives of Greek culture. Some of the native philosophers, or philosophizing amateurs, were socially influential and wealthy persons. Varro was one of these. Jurisprudence, as closely linked to political power, was exclusively for the upper class. Its practitioners were *equites* of origin and had often excellent general education. Cicero is a conspicuous example. But, Rawson tells us, generally speaking "the position of the philosopher at Rome was a tricky one, half mentor and half

servant as he was.” In many cases a philosopher, who was not economically independent, was “reduced to his mistress’ pregnant lap-dog.”¹¹ Nothing is known of Lucretius’ social standing. We know of his life only that he became insane and committed suicide at the age of 44 . It was Cicero’s task to complete the *De Rerum Natura* after the poet’s premature death. On the other hand, a poet may be born to any social class. Poetical creation is limited by external factors even less than philosophizing, for a philosopher who works systematically and wants to be up-to-date is in need of professional contacts and must have access to texts.

3

VITRUVIUS

[From section IV.2.3 - Architect’s Science]

After the rhetoric of the preface, Vitruvius opens his theoretical argument with a loaded statement. But before going into its detailed analysis, we shall say a few words about the difficulties we have to face when we try to understand it. As far as the mysteries of architecture are concerned, we are no longer mere uninitiated novices. Quite particularly, we have our own hypothesis on what *ratiocinatio* might mean. The terminology of any standard translation tends to confuse our ideas which are still in the uncertain state of formation. We try therefore to ground our analysis on the original text as much as is possible for laymen. We reproduce first Vitruvius’ statement from the *Harleianus 2767* manuscript:

A Architecti est scientia pluribus disciplinis et variis eruditionibus ornata, cuius iudicio probantur omnia quae ab ceteris artibus perficiuntur opera. Ea nascitur ex fabrica et ratiocinatione.

B Fabrica est continuata ac trita usus meditatio ad propositum deformationis, quae manibus perficitur e materia, cuiuscumque generis opus est. Ratiocinatio autem est, quae res fabricatas sollertiae ac rationis pro portione demonstrare atque explicare potest...

C Itaque architecti, qui sine litteris contenderant, ut manibus essent esercitati, non potuerunt efficere, ut haberent pro laboribus auctoritatem; qui autem ratiocinatiobus et litteris solis confisi fuerant, umbram non rem persecuti videntur. At qui utrumque perdidicerunt, uti omnibus armis ornati citius cum auctoritate, quod fuit propositum, sunt adsecuti.

To say only the most essential, Vitruvius speaks in (A) about architect’s science [*architecti scientia*] that is characterized [*ornata*] by many disciplines [*pluribus disciplinis*]. This science is born [*nascitur*] from *fabrica* and *ratiocinatio*. In order

to avoid wrong associations, we leave these key words untranslated. We already have an opinion about what *ratiocinatio* might be: *fabrica* comprises those parts of building which cannot be included in it. Vitruvius seems to make a difference between the components – *ornata* – and the origin – *nascitur* – of architect’s science. But we don’t know whether he really means it. Because of the shortness of his statement, interpretation is pure hazard. In spite of this, scholars make very delicate distinctions in order to unveil the mystery of Vitruvius.

Just to take an example, Granger claims that there is in the manuscript an “erroneous punctuation which puts the period after instead of before *opera*.” He reads “... *perficiuntur. Opera ea...*” and translates *Opera ea* as “His personal service.” Granger avoids thus the following twofold difficulty: (a) if architect’s science is born from *fabrica* and *ratiocinatio*, it comprises both, and it is not possible to limit *architecti scientia* to *ratiocinatio*, and (b) if *fabrica* also belongs to the scientific part of the architect’s work, what is its non-scientific part? Granger surely makes sense of Vitruvius, if we are satisfied with modern sense. But does one really gain something by the analysis of such delicate distinctions? We maintain that Vitruvius is not at all using words with the accuracy that is required by these interpretations. The sense of Vitruvius can therefore be found only by the analysis of attitudes, approvals, refusals and other features which run through the whole book in different disguises but essentially unaltered.

Anyway, one thing seems to be incontestable. Vitruvius characterizes *fabrica* and *ratiocinatio* in (B) so that the former is non-scientific and the latter scientific, irrespective of whether one understands science in the ancient or modern way. To concentrate again on the most essential, *fabrica* is what is done with the hands [*quae manibus perficitur*], while *ratiocinatio* is pure intellectual busying with *ratio* and *proportio*. In (C) Vitruvius condemns architects who believe they are able to build without writing [*sine litteris*] as well as those who believe they are able to build with writing alone [*litteris solis*]. Architects who are able to build well are equipped with all arms [*uti omnibus armis ornati*].

Translating *sine litteris* and *litteris solis* as “without writings” and “with writing alone,” sounds primitive, but our intention is again to avoid contamination with alien meanings. Words like culture, literature, scientific education, theoretical approach, and so on, are used by various translators, but there is always the danger that the losses are bigger than what can be gained. When we simplify matters and assume that “writing” refers in the first place to Vitruvius’ own book, we keep the import of alien concepts to a minimum. The author wants to say that, if left alone, his writing is nothing; nevertheless, in the context of *fabrica* it is the necessary condition of “good building.” Without books like *De Architecture Libri Decem* there cannot be architecture in the very sense of the word. This is, in the strictest sense, what is left of Vitruvius today.

Vitruvius is often thanked for his balanced view of building when he says that the two halves, what is not done with writing and what is done with writing, are equally important. But does such talk make sense? Are building and writing

about building conceptually commensurable so that they can be measured as being equally important? Flying and writing about flying, weeping and writing about weeping, are hardly comparable. There seems to be only one way to make modern sense about the alleged balance of Vitruvius: one half of architects' summed time and resources is dedicated to writing, and the other half to activities which have nothing to do with writing.

We have referred several times to making modern sense. What is it? It is for us being explicit enough to be exposed to criticism. It has nothing to do with being true. There are many statements which make sense, by being explicit enough, but cannot stand any criticism concerning their truth value. It should be obvious that the "fifty-fifty division of resources" belongs to those interpretations which make sense without being defensible. The average architect who dedicates fifty per cent of his time to theorizing surely jeopardizes his chances as a practical builder. It should be clear that Vitruvius did not mean anything like a "fifty-fifty division of resources."

4

MUMMY AND ITS DOUBLE

[From section IV.3.4 - Defining Architecture]

When a modern architect designs a church, he may find out that the dictates of architecture and the dictates of religion are contradictory. To his chagrin it is architecture that must yield, unless he is able to distract the clerical client by having recourse to some quasi-theological theory. In the case of Egyptians' religious buildings, from which architecture according to Giedion and many others began, such conflict was not possible: the fundamental dictates of religion and architecture were the same. The same astral theology and the same ontology of mummified "things" and bird-like "spirits" were the foundation of both. We could exclude Egyptian religious building from the communion of architecture saying that it has no characteristics that would distinguish architecture from religion.

We could maintain that it is meaningful to speak of architecture only if such a dichotomy exists, if architecture has its own intrinsic laws that are different from religious commandments. But we choose another explanatory approach. Because we have as the object of our study the universal architecture, of which architects speak with great authority, we try to choose from many alternative conceptions, ranging from very strong to very weak, a definition of architecture that is as inclusive as possible, without being completely devoid of meaning. The pivotal point of our definition is that when architecture was born in Egypt — it could have been born in Mesopotamia as well — there was no discrepancy between religious and architectural beliefs. They were in full concordance. Believing in architecture was believing in gods who circle around the polestar as indestructible stars.

Later even great discordance between religious and architectural beliefs may be detectable. However, it is of crucial importance to keep in mind the following. The reason for the discordance is not that architecture has repudiated its religious origins and made a new, more scientific start. In such a case architecture would no more be architecture. It has only chosen another course from the common starting point. Such divergence is easy to understand, for architects' ideology has been under the hard pressure of practical requirements which have compelled it to deviate from the narrow road of pure religion. Divergence has, indeed, been inevitable when we think of the very different cultural roles of the said activities. It is a small wonder that architecture has for about 3000 years been able to remain as faithful to its mythico-religious origins as it actually has.

There are today no longer worshippers of Osiris, Ra, Ptah and Imhotep, nor have buildings the same outlook as 3000 years ago. But our thesis is that architecture can still be characterized as astral theology in new, more sophisticated forms, without direct reference to a god who is visible as Sirius or Orion in the winter sky. In other words, astral theology is today reduced from concrete to abstract verticality. If old terminology is used, every important relation still obtains between an earthly and a heavenly thing. Horizontal relations that obtain between earthly things are bypassed as uninteresting, as far as praxis allows. Whenever possible, reference is made directly to celestial architecture. A door, for example, is a good door because it is a piece of "good architecture," not because it turns smoothly on its hinges or shuts tightly and securely. Giedion says:

The first architectonic space conception is an architecture of volumes in space. From the beginning to the end, the Egyptian inner court was oriented toward the cosmos. Neither the Greeks nor the Egyptians ever developed interior space with the same intensity they expended on relating their architecture to the cosmos.

We haven't found from our Egyptian documents even the faintest justification for speaking about an Egyptian "space conception." Instead, we notice an interesting thing: Giedion admits that Egyptian architecture is based on verticality. Amazingly, the unity of architectural thought does not prevent him from flatly denying all traces of verticality in modernity:

The entire structure of present-day knowledge requires that it reject all mystical connections between cosmic and earthly happenings.

It is according to Giedion true that "many observations from earlier times live on without context. Among them is a belief that there is a relationship between the phases of the moon and the best time to sow seeds or breed animals." But these relics of verticality have nothing to do with modern architecture that is closely

related to modern science. Giedion fails, however, to be consistent. Let us see why. It is evident that a certain kind of verticality can be posited in physics and biology as a corollary of gravitation. It is impossible to build a wall as a stack of loose blocks which deviates even a little from the vertical. Similarly, the human body is constrained to an upright position around its vertebral column. All movements of the body are effectuated within a certain vertical balance. Giedion's verticality is something quite different:

Our attitude to the vertical has become automatic and anchored in the unconscious. From a limitless range of directions and angles, one was chosen and became the standard to which all others must be compared and to which all must bear some relation.

Giedion does not tell who was choosing and on which grounds. It is anyway clear that gravitation is not a matter of "choosing." Gravitational verticality connects any element of a building to the centre of the earth. Giedion's verticality that points "from earth to heaven" is verticality in the sense of astral theology:

The origin of verticality is deeply anchored in mytho-poetic thinking. It is the most obvious symbol pointing from earth to heaven — from earthly existence to the abode of the gods.

But is verticality limited to mytho-poetic thinking? No, it is not, nor has it anything to do with high buildings:

The supremacy of the vertical is by no means always connected with an emphasis upon or a striving after height. It is a universal organizing principle.

As can be expected, the "universal organizing principle" has in Egypt a concrete expression. It can be identified with the Sacred Tree and the Sacred Column [*Djed*]. The latter is further identical with the vertebral column of Osiris, the god of resurrection. *Book of the Dead* speaks of "the erection of the Djed in Djehu in the presence of the Divine Judges who are on the road of the deceased." If "universal" means something, it means that the Sacred Tree and the Sacred Column are included in Giedion's principle of verticality. Universal organizing principle and universal architecture cannot conflict. They are the same thing. Giedion closes his last way of escape when he states:

Styles change, verticality remains.

Houses can be built in Italian, Persian, Babylonian, Egyptian and other styles which have little in common at the level of empirical properties, but only in

the sense that all architectural thinkers — whatever their nationality — think vertically. Every national architecture must remain faithful to its own zodiacal constellation and star. Ptolemy says that Italy has an affinity to Leo and Sun, Persia to Taurus and Venus, Babylonia to Virgin and Mercury, Lower Egypt to Gemini and Mercury. If this universal organizing principle is observed in Egypt, it must also be observed in other countries which have architecture. Because the above quotations of Giedion are from *The Eternal Present: The Beginnings of Architecture* there might still be some excuse for the imprecise use of the word “universal.” But *Mechanization Takes Command*, which is limited to the modern period, attests to the same conviction:

The history of styles follows its theme along a horizontal direction; the history of types along a vertical one.

Giedion says that “both are necessary if things are to be seen in historical space,” but this does not prevent the history of types, or the history of architectural ages, from being by far the more important one. Every age is balanced around the vertebral column of its Spirit. Architects are horrified by the naive idea that architectural history is merely a history of superficial styles. It is rather one of the most valuable parts of “intellectual” history. Le Corbusier puts it succinctly: “Architecture has nothing to do with the various ‘styles.’ The styles of Louis XIV, XV, XVI or Gothic, are to architecture what a feather is on a woman’s head; it is sometimes pretty, though not always, and never anything more. Architecture has graver ends...” We add that it has vertical ends, instead of horizontal ones. Even when verticality seems to be absent, it is present in some less obvious disguise.

Analogical design... seems to have started with Imhotep in designing the Step Pyramid complex at Sakkara; given the problem of building, for the first time, in large blocks of stone, he drew visual analogies with existing brick tomb-forms, timber-framed and reed-mat houses, for the overall building forms, with lotus buds or flowers and snakes’ heads for the decoration, and so on.

Geoffrey Broadbent borrows the idea of “deep structure” from Noam Chomsky’s well-known linguistic theories. We don’t comment any closer on the applicability of such theories in the structures of buildings. We merely substantiate Broadbent’s vague claim by adding that when something is very deep, it is beyond reach in the same way as a thing that is in heaven. The horizontal copying of lotus buds in stone has as such nothing to do with deep structures. But it becomes “deep” and vertical when it is mystified. The difference between Underworld and Heaven was ambiguous in Egypt. Sun-god Ra’s bark crossed the dark primordial waters in the night, in the daytime the blue sky. Broadbent speaks of “deep” verticality

in the same sense. Alberto Pérez-Gómez is aware that eternal architecture and modern science are incompatible:

Two hundred years after Galileo and Descartes, architecture lost its metaphysical dimension, and the relation between theory and practice reached its critical state. After Durand and Viel, architecture could no longer be a privileged form of reconciliation between man and his world, between the fluidity and evanescence of everyday life and the immutable and eternal dimension of ideas... But symbolization is a profound human need and is indispensable for the perpetuation of culture. Man's humanity depends on nothing less than his ability to come to terms with the infinite in terms of the finite precisely through symbols, whether totems or magnificent churches.

Architecture is by its very nature a privileged form of reconciliation between the heavenly and the earthly, but the evil science of modern times tries to deprive it of its right to help man to maintain a connection to gods. Pérez-Gómez prefers, like Plato, to look up [*anó blepein*] without needless excuses. He is, as far as the attitude toward modern science is concerned, the very opposite of Giedion. He repudiates the architectural tendencies which have since early 18th century been “lacking references to the transcendental justifications of technical action.” Today architects “fail to understand the transcendental dimension of meaning in architecture.”

The difference between transcendence and verticality is only one of nuance. Giedion's and Pérez-Gómez' conflicting views concerning modern science do not disturb us. It would be absurd to present architecture as a consistent theory to which all architectural theorists contribute. We have to distinguish between two things:

1. “theory” which logically derives from clearly formulated premises clearly formulated conclusions, and
2. “doctrine” which derives from intuitively approachable premises conclusions without any compulsory logic.

Architectural theory belongs to the latter group. Architects' intuition is often amazingly good: they impeccably indicate the “architectural point of view” in all things, demanding that it must be taken into account. But when a consistent theory must be developed from some basic insight, intuition is impotent. There is what we could call Vitruvian syndrome: an incapacity to argue for one's claims in any consistent manner. As an example, we return to Giedion's interpretation of Senmut's masterpiece:

To perceive a horizontal axis at Deir el Bahari and derive it from the temple of Karnak, as has been done, runs contrary to Egyptian mentality. A rational connection from point to point was far from their way of thinking. Even in Hatshepsut's temple the first court is surrounded by a high wall. Like all Egyptian architecture, Deir el Bahari is oriented vertically upward. What appear to us as horizontal planes are mere pauses on an eternally upward-moving path. This is expressed with great daring by embedding a finely articulated human structure within the immense verticality of this great rock amphitheater, which draws the eye up to its summits.

We are invited to believe that Giedion is developing a consistent theory of architectural verticality. Even when something looks horizontal, it is in a deeper analysis discovered to be a vehicle of the "universal organizing principle." Despite visible "horizontal planes" there is "an eternally upward-moving path" toward the intelligible reality. We could read Giedion's words to mean that the physical horizontality is subordinated to the metaphysical verticality not only in Egypt, but everywhere as far as true "universal" architecture is concerned, but such expectations are soon frustrated. The dimensions of Giedion's confusion are exposed when he continues by comparing Deir el Bahari to baroque architecture:

The existence of the baroque depended on the subordination of the environment to the horizontal axis: the plane was master.

While Egyptian architecture was vertical, baroque architecture was essentially horizontal. But this makes no sense. Like Vitruvius, Giedion is unable to distinguish between a principle and things that obey this principle. As water is for Thales both "principle" and "drink" at the same time, verticality is for Giedion at the same time both the universal organizing principle and one of the three dimensions of physical buildings. When dealing with "architectural thought" or "theory of architecture," which determine the content of metaphysical architecture, we must be prepared for frequent encounters with similar confusions.

5

ASTRAL THEOLOGY

[From section IV.4.2 - Metaphysical Presuppositions]

Cicero's ethical adversary is Epicurus, who lived earlier; respectively, Epicurus' main adversary is Aristotle, who lived earlier. *Protreptikos* underlines the necessity of philosophizing. Theoretical or contemplative life [*theóretikos bios*] must be given precedence over practical life [*praktikos bios*]. But there is yet one differ-

ence. Though *Protreptikos* is an exhortation to philosophize, it does not address its message to every potential lover of philosophy. It speaks exclusively to the young [*tois neois*] who still have the whole life before them. The hidden logic of this segregation is the Pythagorean view that old people no longer have the time and intellectual potential to realize the enormously vast program of encyclopedic knowledge [*egkuklios paideia*] of which the architect's educational program in its Vitruvian form is a reflection: only "architects who from boyhood have mounted by the steps of these studies and, being trained generally in the knowledge of arts and the sciences", have hope to have access *ad summum templum architecturae*.

In his early *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle strongly polemizes against debauched life [*apolaustikos bios*], which is an even more radical opposition to contemplative life than practical life.¹² He intransigently identifies morality with rationality and intellectual avant-gardism. Aristotle's followers, who were contemporaries of Epicurus, coined for their ideological purposes a derogative word: too-late-learned [*opsimathés*]. He who starts philosophizing too late has not enough time to ascend up to the temple of knowledge but perishes in the steep steps. Ironically, Vitruvius is, despite his encyclopedic educational program, a typical example of this category of losers who are exhausted too early. Our military engineer started philosophizing so late that he did not have time to learn even the basic distinctions between philosophical concepts and schools.

But the derogative epithet too-late-learned had already three hundred years earlier been attached to Epicurus, whose ignorance seemed evident to the Aristotelians. They believed that their high claims concerning the power of knowledge were in themselves a proof of superiority. What could a too-late-learned pauper put against the wisdom of his magnanimous adversaries?

However, appeal to encyclopedic knowledge was powerless against Epicurus whose point was just that such knowledge is worthless, even obnoxious. In his *Letter to Pitocles* he strongly persuades his pupil to give up liberal studies [*eleuthera paideia*], for even though they seem to give some superficial satisfaction, they are a decisive obstacle for reaching real peace of mind.¹³ The ideological nature of the contestation is reflected in the incredible stories which were told about Epicurus' debauched life and drunken revelry. His second epithet, after too-late-learned, was the master of wantonness [*asótodidaskalos*]. This was, however, nothing else but calumny. Epicurus was a pious man who because of his ill-health was unable to participate in the Bacchanalia, even if he had wanted to. Epicurus says in *On Choice*:

Peace of mind and freedom from pain are pleasures which imply a state of rest; joy and delight are seen to consist in motion and activity.¹⁴

Diogenes Laertius explains this in the following way. Epicurus "differs from the Cyrenaics with regard to pleasure. They do not include under the term the pleasure which is a state of rest, but only that which consists in motion. Epicurus admits both." The Cyrenaics, who were known in antiquity as the most radical hedonists,

“hold that pains of body are worse than mental pains... whereas Epicurus holds the pains of the mind to be the worse; at any rate the flesh endures the storms of the present alone, the mind those of the past and future as well as the present.”¹⁵ Peace of mind [*ataraxia*] and absence of physical pain [*aponia*] are for Epicurus the most fundamental and permanent of pleasures, while different sorts of joy and delight are secondary as those which are active and in motion. The followers of Plato and Aristotle were shocked by the incredibly arrogant claim that happiness [*eudaimonia*] is not dependent on intellectual perfection, or capacity to know and judge rationally, but merely on the presence of a feeling of pleasure, or rather of the absence of pain. In concordance with this view, Epicurus said that no age is too high for the beginning of philosophical studies which, according to him, aim exclusively for a happy life. The highest obstacle to a happy life is Aristotelian astral theology, which must therefore be discredited as the first step toward peace of mind:

...we are bound to believe that in the sky revolutions, solstices, eclipses, risings and settings, and the like, take place without the ministration or command, either now or in the future, of any being who at the same time enjoys perfect bliss along with immortality.¹⁶

Stars are nothing more than “globular masses of fire.” Because of their great distance they cannot have any harmful effects upon human life. On the contrary, there are very harmful effects in the form of metaphysical anxiety that follows from spurious speculation on the possible effects of stars. In *De Rerum Natura* Lucretius praises Epicurus as the great liberator from this burden of superstition. Before him men lived under the oppressive burden of religion that from heavenly regions turned its horrible and menacing face toward mortals.¹⁷ Epicurus freed mankind from the terror of soul [*terrorem animi*] by making clear that nothing is born from non-being through a divine gesture [*nullam rem e nilo gigni divinitus umquam*].¹⁸

The astral theology of *Alexander's Cosmology* is the diametrically opposite position to Epicurus' and Lucretius' view. To enhance the credibility of the claim that stars are not merely “globular masses of fire” Aristotle adds to fire, water, air and earth, or the traditional four elements [*stoikheia*] of Presocratics, a fifth one, or ether [*aiithera*]. He calls ether the substance of which heaven and stars are made. Anything which is beyond the moon, or higher than it, and which is god's abode, is called heaven. Heaven is filled with divine bodies [*somaton theion*].¹⁹ The whole sky is an enormous visible god [*tosouton oraton theon*]. Cicero confirms that above the moon all things are eternal [*supra lunam sunt aeterna omnia*].²⁰ For Epicurus all this is banal daydreaming. Vitruvius believed that he can ground his study of building materials on Epicurean atomism, but Epicurean physiology [*phusiologia*] has only one aim: to refute the Aristotelian astral theology. Epicurus is quite unambiguous in *Main Doctrines* [*Kuriai doxai*]:

If we had never been molested by alarms at celestial and atmospheric phenomena, nor by the misgiving that death somehow affects us, nor by the neglect of the proper limits of pains and desires, we should have had no need to study physiology.²¹

Physiology is not a theory of physics in the modern sense of the word, but it is crucially important to note that Epicurus did not try to find for astral theology a substitute with the same level of sweeping claims. Physiology just wants to serve as a foundation for a new, radically differing view of ethics. This revolutionary ethics does not descend from the heavens, and it has no existence outside individual minds. Epicurus' amazing claim that we need physiology only for the repudiation of metaphysics may be criticized as extreme acquiescence, but his attack on astral theology is not a sign of atheism. Epicurus was a pious man who believed in gods and went as far as seeing them as anthropomorphic. Their precise images [*eidōla*] which consisted in atomic formations were accessible to human senses as a sort of emanation. Instead, Epicurus denied that gods can interfere with human affairs. Cicero ridiculed him for inconsistency: "Because you have no courage to deny the existence of gods, why can't you count to the company of them sun, world and immortal soul, too?"²² This is a relevant question, and Epicurus' position is vulnerable in other respects, too. He claims that all sense perception is absolutely infallible because it consists in deterministic movements of atoms. The first error would entail the collapse of the whole system: we couldn't expect to know anything. Curiously, sceptical Cicero exposes his ethics to easy critique by stating with similar ingenuity:

Either this point must be firmly maintained, that Moral Worth is the sole good, or it is absolutely impossible to prove that virtue constitutes happiness. And in that case I do not see why we should trouble to study philosophy.²³

If gods had been merciful enough to allow Epicurus to read this statement, he could have retorted: That's just my point! We shall forget astral theology, because there is no Moral Worth as the "sole good" that can be derived from the eternity of heaven. It is indeed absolutely impossible to "prove that virtue constitutes happiness." Human acts cannot have any metaphysical legitimation. Such hubris just leads to continuous confrontation and metaphysical anxiety. We have no reason to present Epicurus as an early forerunner of nuclear physics, but his physiology is, despite its obvious shortcomings, a worthy rival for Aristotle's astral theology.

Vitruvius sought support for his architectural theory from Aristotle as well as from Epicurus, being thus sadly incapable of isolating the contrasting alternatives, offered by these two philosophers, from the big confusion of philosophical material, which was offered by the Hellenistic eclecticism. For him all philosophers state basically the same thing. No important philosophical view is incompatible

with architecture. Every view supports architecture in its own way. However, if we forget the multitude of contradictory and trivial details, and take *De Architectura Libri Decem* as a whole, only one conclusion is possible: Vitruvius is – despite his incapacity to make the mentioned distinction – an Aristotelian theologian, not an Epicurean physiologist. No meaningful conception of architecture – or universal norm of good building – is possible within the limits of “physiology” or other “empirical science” which lacks the vertical dimension. In this sense it is indifferent whether we call architecture “god,” “principle” or something else, for anxiety concerning its future makes sense within all theological and teleological frames. Because such frames are mostly set inadvertently, we may speak of tacit metaphysical presuppositions which are today basically the same as they were in Vitruvius’ time.

6

CANONIZATION

[From section IV.5.1 - Ideal Numbers and Ratiocinatio]

Vitruvius begins the preface to the ninth book by wondering about the excessive public praise the winners receive after the games at Olympia, Corinth and Nemea. “When I observe this — he says — I am surprised that similar or even greater distinctions are not assigned to those authors who confer infinite benefits on mankind throughout the ages.” As candidates for major awards he mentions Pythagoras, Democritus, Plato and Aristotle. Because in question are the mathematical preliminaries of the astrological ninth book, he has nothing to say about Aristotle and Democritus who are not mathematically oriented philosophers. Instead, Vitruvius presents to his readers one of Plato’s very useful calculations [*Platonis e multis ratiocinationibus utilissimis unam*]. He does not refer to any particular place in Plato’s dialogues, nor is it possible to identify in them such a place. In question is probably a secondary source, perhaps a technical manual. Anyway, the problem that Plato, according to Vitruvius, solved for mankind’s benefit is the following:

A square space which is ten feet long and wide makes 100 feet. If then it is necessary that it should be made double — of 200 feet — and also to make it of equal sides, we must inquire how long the side of that square is to be made, so that it may produce 200 feet, corresponding to the doubling of the area. No one can discover this by arithmetic. For if the side be 14 feet, then the multiplication gives 196 feet; if 15, then 225 feet.²⁴

The modern reader may ask what makes this exercise of producing an exact double so thrilling. If one needs a square of 200 feet square, one just calculates

the length of the side. One is not worried that one's calculator gives an irrational value 14,14213562373, not the round figures 14 or 15. If one does not need so many numbers, one just cuts them off, if one needs more, one asks the calculator to produce further digits. The Greeks did not have electronic calculators. The handling of irrational figures was clumsy. But this technical difficulty is not why the problem arose. The nature of the problem was metaphysical: numbers were "concrete" and had thus an ontological status as the most real "things" of the world. Concreteness entails that they were individuals, which have their own qualities and identities. Such individuals cannot be mistreated like soulless "fractals." Plato inherited the mathematics of ideal numbers from Pythagoras, who according to Vitruvius:

... demonstrated how to make a set-square without the help of a craftsman. And whereas the craftsman with great labour making a set-square can scarcely carry it out accurately, the exact process is explained in accordance with Pythagoras' instructions. For if three straight rods be taken, of which one is 3 feet long, the second 4 feet, the third 5 feet, and let these rods, being jointed together, touch one another at their extremities in the form of a triangle, they will make a perfect set-square. Moreover, if single squares with equal sides be described along the several rods, when the side is 3 feet, it will have 9 feet in area; the 4 feet side, 16; the 5 feet side, 25.²⁵

This is an example of the two-level *tekhmé* that we already know from Plato's *Statesman*. A craftsman does not master the *logistiké tekhné*, but it is at the disposal of an architect who is familiar with the Pythagorean mathematics. But we must beware of a misunderstanding. In question is not the difference between "concrete" counting and full-fledged "abstract" counting in our earlier sense. The mathematics of the *logistiké tekhné* also belongs to the sphere of concrete counting. Determining the right angle with the help of the Pythagorean triangle, the sides of which are 3, 4 and 5 units, has been used for thousands of years by artisans and builders. The measuring instrument, which is depicted in many Mesopotamian and Egyptian documents, consisted in a string with 12 knots: $3 + 4 + 5 = 12$.²⁶ Its use does not presuppose any number theory or mathematical proofs, say, in the sense of Euclid's theorems. Therefore, *logistiké tekhné* did not differ from craftsmanship because it counted "abstractly." A dichotomy was born when practical procedures of counting and measuring, that had been used from time immemorial, were given a metaphysical expression by priests and magicians who began, as the first architects, to build temples, altars and tombs.

*

Vitruvius was not aware that, as far as practical building is concerned, the difference between *ratiocinatio* and *fabrica* is a mere illusion. The same we must say of Pythagoras, even of Plato, despite the apparent sophistication with which they developed the mathematics of ideal numbers. They were not aware that no form of arithmetic or geometry has the capacity to bring the ideal numbers to the practical level. As “intelligible” entities they are not “sensible” or measurable by physical instruments. Pythagoras and Plato did not see the problem because they thought that if a refutation of the Ideal Number Theory is attempted, it must necessarily take place at the intelligible upper level. Lower-level refutations are invalid because the upper level determines the lower level. Plato’s indefinite duality [*aoristos duas*], that opposes the One [*en*] as a sort of material principle, is in a certain sense a predecessor of “fractals” in modern mathematics. Yet he did not see physical measuring as an important problem that might affect cosmological speculation. But because any quantity can without end be divided into ever smaller “fractals,” no measurement can be expected to have perfect results.

In the present case we really have a justification to make the distinction between intelligible and sensible. It is easy to conceive in the mind a perfect triangle the sides of which are exactly 3, 4 and 5 feet, but in the builder’s practice the lengths of measuring and measured rods are always approximations. If a modern scientist is asked to help, the approximation may be a good one, but a yet better one becomes available with a yet better measuring instrument: extra decimals are added infinitely! Somebody might now retort: This is intolerable pedantry! No architect is interested in the last decimals in the width of a window. Architects just want the golden section with the accuracy of a good eye. In a sense it is true that they don’t want anything more. However, there is a contradiction. Architects still believe that when their keen perception catches a golden section, it catches an “essence,” not merely an arbitrary relation that happens to please them. Everybody loves the golden section, but only an architect’s eye catches it perfectly. Vitruvius was better aware than his modern colleagues of the crucially important fact that architectural proportions are in the last instance judged, not by the eye, but by the intellect: therefore what the eye cheats of us, must be made up by calculation [*ergo quod oculus fallit, ratiocinatione est exequendum*].²⁷

7

CULTURAL TECHNOLOGY

[From section IV.7.3 - Making Modern Sense of Vitruvius]

Caesariano sees Vitruvius as one of the greatest hermeneutical theologians, something like Aristotle, Hermes Trismegistus and Thomas Aquinas. Further solidification of Vitruvius’ position takes place later. Carlo Amati says in the introduction to his translation and commentary of *De Architectura Libri Decem* which was published in 1830:

Classical authors, Greek as well as Latin, are usually regarded with certain respect <but there is no> classical author who could be compared with Vitruvius, perhaps with the exception of Euclid... Vitruvius must be seen as the uppermost logician, as one of the best natural scientists of his age, and as an excellent mathematician. As far as architecture is concerned, he must be understood if not as the creator, at least as the legislator of this science... finally as the Architect who founded the principles that have ever since been followed by great Architects and theorists.²⁸

As far as the honour of being the uppermost logician [*sommo logico*] of antiquity is concerned, Amati does not see any menace from the side of Aristotle. As a mathematician Vitruvius is in the same category with Euclid. His position as the founder of the principles [*fondatore di principi*], which architects have followed ever since, is challenged by nobody. His work is characterized by noble method [*nobil metodo*] as well as by sublime and sound philosophy [*sublime e sana filosofia*]. It is true that all architects do not confirm these claims by restating them word for word, but it is equally true and significant that no important architect has ever openly opposed this vanity either. It would be unwise to give up the reputation of wise man voluntarily. There have been radical revolutionary tendencies in architecture. However, not one of them has attacked architecture itself, laying bare the emptiness of its claims. Antonio Sant'Elia, a representative of the early 20th century Futurism, proclaims in his *Manifesto* that he fights and despises “all classical, solemn, hieratic, scenographic, decorative, monumental, good-looking and pleasant architecture.” But when he a little later with indignation condemns “decoration, as something that imposed upon architecture,”²⁹ he clearly demonstrates that he has nothing against architecture itself, quite the contrary, architecture — the basic metaphysics — must be upheld at all costs. As a prisoner of Vitruvius' antique fallacies, architects' science is condemned to remain outside the progressive tendencies of other sciences. However, it would be wrong to say that architecture is inert. There are in architecture at every historical moment internal developments. In other words, there are developments within the frame of canonized Vitruvian metaphysics. Architectural revolutions are notoriously noisy, but they are gales in a water glass. They are careful enough not to break the glass — the metaphysical frame of avant-gardist ambitions. We must therefore make the following distinction: on the one hand, Vitruvius' principles are still today obsequiously observed; on the other hand, Vitruvius' more meaty and juicy ideas have grown old within the frame of his own limiting principles. Let us take the well-known statement from the beginning of *De Architectura Libri Decem*:

Architecti est scientia pluribus disciplinis et variis eruditionibus ornata, cuius iudicio probantur omnia quae ab ceteris artibus perficiuntur opera. Ea nascitur ex fabrica et ratiocinatione.

Giovanni Florian's Italian translation from 1978 reads:

A formare la preparazione dell'architetto concorrono
gli apporti culturali di molte scienze e l'esperienza
delle altre arti. Esiste infatti una pratica ed una teoria
dell'architettura.^{30*}

Vitruvius' words have remained a puzzle to our days, and we do not, of course, present Florian's translation as the fulfillment of our expectations. It does not at all belong to good interpretations of Vitruvius' thought. We present it as an attempt to make modern normative sense of Vitruvius' words, without being worried over the possibility that the Vitruvian sense is lost with the operation. Let us repeat it once more: Vitruvian sense is here lost, staying, however, inside the metaphysical presuppositions which underlie Vitruvius' thought. This is what we mean when we say that architecture is not inert, that there are internal developments within the limits of Vitruvian metaphysics.

The details of Florian's translation are not important. We are interested only in one expression, namely, *apporti culturali* which means "cultural contributions." Every particular science contributes something to the cultural meta-science into which architecture is now metamorphosing. Architect's science is *pluribus disciplinis et variis eruditionibus ornata* because the architect must take care of all cultural phenomena. In the architecture of the 20th century, Cesariano's *che cosa fusse il mondo* must be replaced by the phrase *che cosa fusse la cultura*. To know what culture is does not belong to architects alone, but because of their great erudition they have by far the best chances to understand it. Culture — as a quasi-synonym of architecture — is the final beneficiary of the architect's work. Everything is seen from the cultural point of view, not from that of clients or inhabitants. Every act and every form is valuable or not depending on its cultural contribution. Enhancing culture over anything else is "cultural technology." *Colere* and *cultura* are Latin words which mean originally taking care of fields and gardens. Cicero says that philosophy is the culture of the soul.³¹ In spite of this, it is certain that there is in Vitruvius no comprehensive conception of culture. It was not one of Cicero's main concerns; for Vitruvius it did not exist. Architect was for Vitruvius the boss of other builders, but not a cultural technician who understands cultural problems better than other people for the reason that he observes them from the meta-level of symbolic interpretation. Even in Alberti and Cesariano, culture is not present as an active protagonist but only implicitly: the architect is just vaguely seeking his final destination as an all-round cultural hero.

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* Editor's footnote: Cf. "The architect's professional knowledge is enriched by contributions from many disciplines and different fields of knowledge and all the works produced by these other arts are subject to the architect's scrutiny. This expertise derives from practice and theory." Translation by Richard Schofield, *Vitruvius, On Architecture*, Penguin Books, London, 2009.

Today famous architects make their superiority felt within their vicinity. Such a strange combination of naivety and arrogance may be tolerated as a curious relic of archaic behaviour, but it is positively appreciated in ever fewer cases. An exception is, first of all, the various cultural feasts which still need their jongleurs. For example, every national airline is proud to present in the pages of its luxury magazine to its passengers the nation's best architect, together with the nation's best cheese and football player. Sadly enough, architects do not realize that they are about to lose the status they in the Renaissance gained as wise men, creative geniuses and gurus. This lack of perspicacity is, however, natural, for even though architects have since Alberti been used to feeling superior, they have never understood where their magnanimity comes from. They are used to placing architecture above everything else, but they only instinctively conceive of architecture as a meta-science that with its symbolical method puts all other sciences and human practices in their correct cultural contexts. But like everything else, this distinction between science and meta-science has its historical origin. It is not exactly the same distinction in all cases, but it is always a distinction between those who know and those who do not know the deepest truth. Historically, symbol watchers are in most cases those who do not know. What Pythagoreans called acousmaticians are already by definition ignorant listeners who observe the rule of silence. Watchers and listeners are inferior to the practitioners of apodictic and demonstrative sciences.

8

ALBERTI

[From section IV.8.2 - Does Sirius know when to fell timber?]

We compared earlier Virgil's *Georgica* and Vitruvius' *De Architectura Libri Decem*. The former is a manual of agriculture with the same right as the latter is a manual of building. Vitruvius is making preparations for timber felling when the west wind [*favonius*] begins to blow in the autumn; Virgil repairs his plough when the west wind [*zephyrus*] stops blowing in the spring. Some readers may have thought our comparison unjustified, but to their chagrin we have to return to the same theme now, for Alberti, too, is fond of it:

Vitruvius prefers that timber be felled from the beginning of autumn until *favonius* blows. Yet in the words of Hesiod: Reap the crops when the sun hangs over your head with raging heat and gives men a dusky tan; but do not fell trees until their leaves begin to drop.³²

Alberti does not turn to Virgil but to *Works and Days*, Hesiod's hexametric poem on agricultural works. Even if there is something useful for builders in the original words of Hesiod, who lived 2200 years before our renaissance theorist, it is lost

in the above inaccurate paraphrase. Hesiod in fact says: "...when the star Sirius passes above the heads of men who are destined to die, only a little in daytime, mostly in the night." We don't know what justified Alberti to replace Sirius by the sun. But clarity is not much better when Alberti says:

In Pliny's view, the best time to fell trees is when the constellation of the Dog Star (Sirius) is at its highest and in conjunction with the moon, the day called interlunar, and he recommends waiting until nightfall of that day, after the moon has set.^{33†}

The translation by Rykwert and his colleagues cannot be correct. "The day called interlunar" is the day of the new moon, or when the moon and the sun — not Sirius — are in conjunction, when the moon is invisible because of the brightness of the sun. Sirius is not "at its highest" but rising in the east [*oriente*]. Because of the conjunction, the moon sets with the sun. If we take Alberti literally, one single moonless night is reserved for timbering. During the next conjunction, a month later, Sirius is no longer rising in the east, and timbering is unfavourable. If we interpret that as the first day of timbering, we have reason to wonder why not a few days earlier or later. However, we are not going to burden our argument with these minor flaws. We are dealing with *tota res aedificatoria* in the context of which demonstrations of erudition play an important role. In Alberti's case attempts to be convincing with sources reveal a double aspect: our author knows little about astrology, but is anyway inadvertently under its influence. In fact, reliance on *docti veteres* as source of knowledge entails necessarily the infiltration of astral theology.

Before continuing on the universal line, we have to clarify two concepts. Parapegma [*parapéγμα*] is the name given in ancient meteorology and astronomy to fixing the date of a practical activity. Parapegmas instruct peasants and builders about the moment at which they have to start harvesting and timbering. Another concept we need is heliacal rising [*epitolé*]. It had in antiquity a great prognostic importance.³⁴ One speaks of the heliacal rising of a star when the sun is simultaneously in the horizon. The sun is either rising in the eastern horizon with the star, or setting in the western horizon. When an astronomer says that Sirius is just rising in the east, he does not mean just any rising of the star; he means the heliacal rising, the moment when the star and the sun are simultaneously in the horizon. In other words, when Sirius, the brightest star on the sky, rises or sets simultaneously with the sunrise or sunset, the event has in the archaic mind a dramatic effect. It is an omen. If Sirius rises or sets in bright daylight, the whole event is invisible; in the middle of night it is uninteresting. The heliacal rising of Sirius depends on the latitude. According to Geminus, it takes place in Rhodes 30

* ...δη γὰρ τότε Σειριος ἀστὴρ βαιὸν ὑπερ κεφαλῆς κηριτρεφῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐρχεται ἡματιος, πλείον δε τε νυκτος ἐπαυρει.

† At Plinius optime caedi arborem putat cane maxime oriente lunaque coeunte, qui dies interlunium vocatur; et noctem ducit expectandam eius ipsius diei, quoad luna sub terra sit.

days after the summer solstice, or in the latter half of July.³⁵ Meton tells that at his observing latitude Sirius is visible at dawn on the 20th July, while Euctemon and Eudoxus fix the date on the 22th. Dositheus reports, still according to Geminus, that Sirius is visible in Egypt already on the 18th of July.³⁶ The heliacal rising of Sirius announced for the Egyptians the beginning of the Nile flood, which was the most important event of the year. The Sothic calendar, one of the many calendars of Egyptians, counted the beginning of the year from the heliacal rising of Sirius, or the Greek *Sothis*.

In his *Introduction to Phenomena* Geminus takes upon himself the task to eradicate the old superstition, according to which Sirius is the cause of the excessive heat of late summer. He is never too tired to underline that one star among millions of others cannot have such extraordinary powers. The sun is the only source of heat.³⁷ Quite particularly, Geminus criticizes intellectuals who have with their careless expressions helped the propagation of the myth: "...all those, poets as well as philosophers, who grant Sirius the power to provoke intense heat, are thousands of miles from the truth and the physical science." Of philosophers Aristotle and Theophrastus allude to the influences of Sirius. Homer says that the heliacal rising of Sirius is the sign of evil [*kakon de te séma tetuktai*].³⁸ More generally speaking, the event coincides with what is known from the earliest times in the Mediterranean area as *caniculum* [Gr. *pigé, opóra*]. The heliacal rising of Sirius is the *parapegma* or sign for the beginning of the hottest period of summer. Sirius is known as the Dog of Orion, the Great Hunter. In Minoan Crete palaces were oriented toward the Dog-star, and, more importantly, the heliacal rising of Sirius was, like Egypt, celebrated as the beginning of a new year. The festival was closely related to honey, wine and light. An intoxicating drink was prepared from honey before the invention of wine. The preparation of a honey drink also was connected to the heliacal rising of Sirius. Pliny tells that water is boiled until it is reduced to two thirds, one third of old honey is added and the mixture is exposed to sunlight for forty days. The operation must take place in the period of Sirius' heliacal rising [*canis ortu in sole habent*].³⁹ This had further to do with apiculture. Columella tells: "From the rising of the Pleiads to the Solstice, which takes place at the end of June in about the eight degree of the Crab, the hives generally swarm... Then, when the solstice is passed and until the rising of the Dog-star [*ad ortum Caniculae*], a period of about thirty days, the harvests of the cornfields and the honey-combs alike are gathered in... Now Democritus, Mago and likewise Virgil have recorded that bees can be generated at this same time of year from a slain bullock. Mago indeed also asserts that the same thing may be done from the bellies of oxen."⁴⁰ The leather bag into which the rotting corpse of an ox was turned in sunshine had from Minoan times an important role in the Dionysian cult in which transcendence equalled intoxication by honey drink and wine. The heliacal rising of Sirius also meant arrival [*epiphania, epidémia*], particularly the arrival of Dionysios at Eleusis in the beginning of the Mysteries, and the yearly arrival of Apollo at Delphi.⁴¹

The myths around Sirius are an inexhaustible “source of knowledge.” But it becomes bottomless if we enlarge our investigation to enclose other stars which are used as parapegmas. Plato, for example, in *Laws* links the harvest to Dionysios and the heliacal rising of Arcturus.⁴² It is also typical that Geminus, in spite of his vehement repudiation of all superfluous meanings that were attached to stars by priests, philosophers and poets, quotes many times with affection Aratos, the poet who converted Eudoxus’ famous astronomical work into a hexametric poem: “... every night six twelfths of the zodiacal circle are setting, equally many rising”.⁴³ What about Alberti? Is he, 1700 years after Geminus, guilty of the superstitious belief that Sirius and the quality of timber have something to do with each other? The question may sound provocative because Sirius appears only in one of his quotations. But we have to keep in mind two things. First, Alberti puts very much weight on the wisdom of the old ones [*maiores*]. His identifiable sources are thus, with a few exceptions, mythical. He refers to historical authors, but these draw from mythical sources, not from personal experience. Second, Alberti has the habit of placing every tempting but somehow dubious or too bold statement into the mouth of others. When Vitruvius and Cesariano try to answer in their own names the intriguing question *che fusse il mondo*, Alberti lets the old ones answer on his behalf:

In the eyes of the wise men of antiquity the moment of initiation had so great an influence on the future, that, according to Julius Firmicus Maternus, some were able to plot the exact time at which the world came into existence, and to describe the event in great detail, by studying its history: Aesculapius and Anubis, supported later by Petosiris and Necepsus, maintained that it happened as Cancer was beginning to rise, and the moon was in mid-course, the sun in Leo, Saturn in Capricorn, Jupiter in Sagittarius, Mars in Scorpio, Venus in Libra, and Mercury in Virgo.⁴⁴

Firmicus does not belong to the old ones in the strictest sense of the word: he just informs Alberti about them. How old Firmicus is, cannot be said with certainty, but according to Jim Tester the earliest manuscripts of Firmicus are from the eleventh century. His *Mathesis* was regarded as an authority in matters of fate. He mentions in his book Aesculapius’ *Myriogenesis*, a work that was concerned with “expounding all birth-charts by the single minutes of the zodiac without adding any planet.” Asclepius, who is in our architectural myth identical with Imhotep, was known for his astrological medicine, or *iatromathematica*. In the same context Anubis, the Egyptians’ guide to the afterlife, is mentioned. One of the many books of *Mathesis* is called *Sphaera barbarica*. The term referred in antiquity to any non-Greek description of heavens, and usually to the Egyptian pattern of constellations. Here Petosiris and Nechepso, a mythical pharaoh and his high priest, are mentioned. According to Tester, Greek writers “refer to Nechepso and

Petosiris, or simply to ‘the ancients’ whenever they feel the need for the authority of the centuries.” The Egyptian astrologers say in a preserved fragment: “When Mercury is in Gemini at the time of the rising of Sirius, the rising of the Nile flood will be a proper one, there will be rejoicing among the people, and the king will be victorious.” However, the fragment is not from Firmicus, whose source on Petosiris and Nechepso is the hexametric astrological poem of the Roman Manilius. More generally speaking, Firmicus is unable to make any distinctions between Roman, Greek and Egyptian sources. He says, for example: “The Egyptians call these planets by different names from those used by us and the Greeks: what we call Saturn, the Egyptians call Faenon, our Jupiter is the Egyptians’ Faethon.” But Faenon and Faethon are the old Greek names of the mentioned planets. Tester concludes: “It must be stressed that although Firmicus’ work is long and very detailed, if confusing, nobody could actually have practised astrology with only the *Mathesis* to hand. To use the book at all one would have needed to be expert, to sort out his muddles; or unprincipled or stupid enough to ignore them.”⁴⁵ We don’t try to guess to which category of readers Alberti belonged.

In spite of his uncritical attitude, Alberti preferred to appear as a skeptic. He was particularly fond of Cicero, who had a similar inclination. Therefore, it is impossible to determine on the basis of textual facts which claims he himself is ready to sign. Architectural writing is for Alberti a literary genre which reserves for itself big liberties in the interpretation of its subject matter, and which is not much concerned with the reliability of sources. As we already have seen in the case of Cesariano, it is more important that sources are used in some interesting way, that there is an air of great erudition, than that theories in some concrete way match the reality of building. Therefore Alberti does not feel committed to Sirius alone. Many other celestial bodies are equally interesting. The moon has a quite particular relevance from the point of timbering:

...all experts recommend that timber should be felled when the moon is waning: for it is then, they say, that the thick gum that exudes from trees, and that is likely to bring on rapid decay, is quite exhausted; certainly any wood cut at that time is never infested with rot... Columella thinks that the correct time to fell trees is between the twentieth and the thirtieth day of the old moon. Vegetius, however, prefers the period from the fifteenth to the twenty-second day of the new moon; this has led him to suppose that the ritual celebrating eternity was performed on these days alone because anything cut down then would last for ever. They also advise us to wait until the moon sets.⁴⁶

It is clear that Columella and Vegetius are Roman authors, not Alberti’s contemporaries. They are not great philosophers. Their wisdom is practical, fragmentary and

often contradictory, but there are poetic spells also. The absence of the universal theory is anyway obvious. The Tuscan peasants observe still today similar rules when they, for example, from time to time pour the new wine from one recipient to another, in order to remove the sediment. But the rules are subject to very liberal interpretation. If the inconvenience is not very big, people use the moon's phases as parapegmas. In timbering, too, the old rules may be known, but they are no longer observed, because the effective working time would be limited in an awkward way. Alberti's attitude is similarly ambivalent:

For my part, although I would not go so far as to believe that those who practice this art or who read the seasons can ascertain the destiny of everything, I would nonetheless concede that they ought not to be ignored when they argue that, on the basis of heavenly signs, a particular time is favourable or not.⁴⁷

9

HERMETIC REVIVAL

[From section IV.10.1 - Eyes Which Do Not See]

In 20th century architecture, houses look as if they were the last word in philosophy, science and technology. Tom Wolfe says that in the Bauhaus “the buildings became theories constructed in the form of concrete, steel, wood, glass, and stucco.”⁴⁸ According to Otto Wagner “the architect with his happy combination of idealism and realism has been praised as the crowning glory of modern man.”⁴⁹ Architects are still invested with the Imhotepian magical powers: their works are “completely new creations.” Modernism does not cut the umbilical cord to astrology, alchemy and cabbala. However, the vital arteries are now mostly underground. This esotericism is understandable: when houses are condensed Einsteinian and Heisenbergian theories, their architects cannot openly swear in the names of Zoroaster, Hermes, Zosimus and Abraham Abulafia. The antique tradition of wisdom, to which architecture belongs, is esoteric by its very nature. *Secreta Secretorum*, a series of letters in which Aristotle allegedly reveals to his pupil Alexander the Great the secrets of medicine, astrology, physiognomy, alchemy and magic, is said to have been the most popular book of the Middle Ages.⁵⁰ *Picatrix*, an astrological manual of Arabian origin which was highly valued in the Renaissance, thanks in its opening pages God who has revealed the secrets of science to his predestined scientists [*Ad laudem et gloriam altissimi et omnipotentis Dei, cuius est revelare suis praeordinatis secreta scientiarum*].⁵¹

Reveling in secrecy is always exciting, but there is also a more serious explanation: difficult availability was earlier considered to augment the value of knowledge. In modern science the very opposite is the case: the new ideal of openness to criticism and attempts of refutation prevail. Secrecy is seen as a weakness.

Ironically, architects must protect their alleged “modernity” by extreme secrecy. Wagner’s “proof of creativity” does not contain any references to ancient authorities, even though they are the only available ones. Are they unknown to him? Or does he perhaps arrive at his conclusions independently of every authority, as his proud conception of creativity actually suggests? An outsider, who wonders over the weirdness of this Saturnian temperament, says cautiously: Well, the Hermeticism of architects is a tempting hypothesis, but there is no evidence. The architects of our century never speak in explicit terms about astrology, alchemy and cabbala. It is easy to explain away this anomaly by saying that magic has gone underground, but it is just as easy to maintain that the race of magicians has gone extinct long ago. Architects’ mystical expressions are said to be merely metaphorical remnants, which have even less relevance than they had in the case of Copernicus’ heliocentric theory. But we want to investigate deeper. What is evidence in this context? Let us read what Charles Jencks says in the beginning of *Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture*:

Most bizarre and suggestive is the interpretation Richard A. Moore gives of Le Corbusier’s supposed interest in alchemical and mythical themes. In analysing several late paintings and buildings, and particularly the *Poem of the Right Angle* (1947-53), Moore produces a convincing ‘Alchemical Corbu’ who quite systematically transformed a series of esoteric symbols, including those of Mercury, Hermes Trismegistus, the sun god and moon goddess, the zodiac, the philosopher’s stone, the minotaur and, of course, the *corbeau* itself (which turns out to be an alchemical symbol of change that operates between the material and spiritual realms). All of this is entertaining and revealing, especially because Moore makes his alchemical key fit so many locks: the *Taureaux* paintings of the 1950s and Ronchamp and Chandigarh among other late work. If one is sceptical about this detective work, it is not because the new interpretation does not elucidate the evidence. Rather, the doubt arises because of the architect’s silence on the subject. If he had systematically used hermetic signs, he would probably have left behind explicit written and visual evidence. After all, he was the most didactic architect of the century and most careful about preserving every sketch and idea, however daft.⁵²

Jencks admits that Moore’s new interpretation does elucidate evidence. A number of esoteric symbols can be found from Le Corbusier’s paintings, sculptures and buildings. However, something is wrong. Or, to tell the truth, not just something: the decisively important evidence is missing. Le Corbusier is not “explicit” on the matter. He is “silent on the subject.” He does not solemnly announce that he is

a disciple of Hermes Trismegistus. There is no formally valid confession with Le Corbusier's autograph on the dotted line. How is it possible that Jencks, the tireless preacher of "architecture as a language," assumes this kind of sceptical stance? He seems to represent the view that the earlier so portentous "symbols" are meaningless, unless there is behind them a written confirmation of the author: Yes, in my works X really symbolizes Y. If an architect remains "silent," his works are unable to utter a meaningful word. There is in this sceptic stance a striking contrast to the ubiquity of "natural" and "intrinsic" meanings, which is positively stated by all sweeping theories of language and information. Even "conventions" are absent. The testimony of the author is the only way to know what X symbolizes in his works. Jencks seems almost to be ready to sacrifice "architecture as a language" in order to save Le Corbusier from accusations of magic.

But as an avowed postmodernist, Jencks cannot love the modernist Le Corbusier so much. A more convincing explanation must be found. Jencks is perhaps the most open-minded of all contemporary architectural theorists. He is ready to respond to new challenges even though they do not fit in with the traditional scheme of architecture. Now he has, however, come to the ultimate border. His tolerant conception of architecture encompasses the weirdest tricks an architect can invent, but in one respect it is uncompromising. If Jencks would argue for the limits of his tolerance, the argument would run something as follows: Postmodernism is more modern than modernism in the sense that it is culturally and intellectually in a more advanced position than its predecessor. It is the pinnacle of a long progressive development. However, in spite of big differences between the two ages, postmodernism is only the next architectural step after modernism.

If modernism is fully obsolete, postmodernism cannot be very up-to-date, either. It is nothing else but a manifestation of architecture. Jencks allows that a postmodernist plays with Hermes and Zosimus provided he makes it "consciously," that he sees the play as "amusing" or "ironical." But Jencks is absolutely horrified by the insinuation that magic, astrology, hermetism, cabbala and alchemy are adopted ingenuously and dead-seriously by architects. He knows that if one wants to save postmodernism and its post-post affiliations, one has first to save modernism. This is why Jencks nonchalantly works for Le Corbusier. He is ready to revise architecture to any imaginable degree, but only on the condition that *architecti scientia* is acknowledged as a contemporary science which is up-to-date "in its own independent way." If any differences are made, it must be considered the more advanced, for it is the cultural meta-science that foresees the future developments in other sciences.

It is important to state that architecture is a meta-language, but it is impossible to use its works as vehicles of important truths of any particular kind. We know this vicious splitting already from *ratiocinatio* and *ars combinandi*. It is easy to present the theoretical claim that all big truths are calculable from a principle, but in practice attempts to perform exact calculations are ridiculously simple and confused at the same time. We have to keep in mind that all these "calculable" re-

lations, analogies, bonds, sympathies, connections and dependencies are vertical.

If meanings are not calculated from “principle,” they are derived from the hypostasis called “culture.” The point is that Jencks rejects in the present case his habitual verticality. He is calling for horizontal evidence. He implies that the only way to verify the existence of an arrow of influence from Hermes to Le Corbusier is to demonstrate that certain strings of words in Hermes’ writings correspond to certain strings of words in Le Corbusier’s writings, or, at least, to certain lines in his pictures and buildings. However, in any other context he would, like all other practitioners of the cultural meta-science, vehemently oppose insinuations that architecture has to do with such philological pedantry. Architecture is the sovereign interpreter of ages, cultures, sciences, technologies and arts. As such it presupposes the existence of vertical connections. Therefore, the connection between Hermes and Le Corbusier cannot be horizontal; a long tradition testifies vigorously that it is vertical. Mail circulates between the two prophets “via heaven.” Our meta-scientists do not communicate with each other using material vehicles; both contemplate the same heavenly harmony.

Are we ourselves guilty of the obscurantism we are chasing? What does “communication via heaven” mean? Most ancient philosophers surely believed in vertical communication in the sense that every wise man can derive the same immutable truths from the celestial principles. But if we do not believe in such nonsense, how do we justify our term “communication via heaven”? We do it in the following way. The idea of distinct upper and lower reality permeated ancient thought from Egypt to Greece and Rome, and further to the Renaissance. It was restated, reconfirmed and rephrased as innumerable versions from poetry to prose, from religious to scientific and philosophical texts. It became a handy means of explanation when commonsense reasoning was helpless. It was applied in fine arts, poetry, medicine, natural science, politics, sociology, cultural history. It persists today as an unanalyzable deposit in most “universal” explanations.

We shall later see that even Darwinian theory of evolution is parasitic upon it. When a lay person, even an empirical scientist, who has no contacts with the critical and sceptical traditions of philosophy, needs a model of universal explanation and looks around, he invariably ends up with picking the astral model, but usually in some unrecognizable disguise. This is what we mean by “communication via heaven.” Le Corbusier, who had an initial inclination toward spiritualism, could find hermetic elements from almost any book he considered worth reading.

We don’t claim that the possibility of historical connections, which are uncovered by philological comparison of texts, must be totally excluded. It is always possible that Le Corbusier has read Hermes or some author who has read Hermes. It is well-known that Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* (the Zoroaster of Greeks) belonged among the favourite books of the young Le Corbusier. Although philological research can indicate real connections – this text is based on that text – it is in the present case destined to play a secondary role. Unveiling secret connections

between Hermes' words and the forms of Le Corbusier's buildings helps even less. Such comparison is an illusory affair. Any non-arbitrary link of influence between metaphysical theory and physical form is bogus.

Even Le Corbusier's own testimony is unable to cancel the arbitrariness of the link. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that when Le Corbusier worked with the Ronchamp Chapel, he was assiduously reading Hermes in order to learn about mystical light. After the great success of the completed building he frankly announced his great debt to Hermes. Even in such a case the connection between Hermes' theory of light and the light openings in the wall of Ronchamp is bogus. There is between metaphysical thought and built forms absolute incommensurability. A piece of red granite and a piece of red sandstone are different but commensurable; a piece of red granite and the thought "a piece of red granite" are incommensurable. Referring to the "difference" between them makes no sense.

When two builders are selecting a "red stone" for some purpose, one of them thinking "red granite" and the other "red sandstone," their thoughts are commensurable, though there is a misunderstanding between them. Therefore, we are ready to agree that Hermes' thought may have influenced Le Corbusier's thought. Two systems of thought are not always – for example when the temporal distance is 2000 years – commensurable. But there are good chances that they are, if not perfectly, at least to a certain degree, so that the basic outlines have a verifiable affinity.

Because we have no possibility to know what Hermes and Le Corbusier "really thought," our only way is after all to compare texts. But as we have agreed earlier, our method cannot be the strictly philological one. Let us try to explain what this means by using as an example the important case of hermetic light. If Le Corbusier never mentions Hermes in his writings, the reticence of Hermes is even more conspicuous. Hermes wrote, according to Manetho, 36,525 volumes, but he never refers to any book as his source. However, there is no mystery in this. Silence is the pivotal point of the hermetic learning process. All questions, particularly the nosy ones about "sources," are totally irrelevant for the following reason: when Hermes speaks of intelligent wisdom in silence [*sophia noera en sige*],⁵³ he refers to the absolute purity of the learning process: light is the only source of knowledge.

Now, our point is that one can never find this light from the light openings of architects' buildings; one can only hope to find it from their thoughts, to which their writings give a glimpse. Because this light is always presented with a few sweeping lines of metaphoric poetry, we have to pay more attention to the recurrence of themes and expressions than to single cases of precise linguistic match. When we start searching for hermetic light from architects' writings, we have to remember that what is in question is in the first place intellectual, not sensual light. It can be seen as well as heard, but not with the eyes or ears. If we insist that light is always seen with the eyes, Hermes would accept this, however, only remarking that this is a question then of the soul's eyes or the heart's eyes.

He demotes sensuality by saying that we have sockets but no eyes in them.⁵⁴ Let's make an attempt to get started with this sticky business by reading a few selected lines from Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture*:⁵⁵

Engineers fabricate the tools of their time... Nevertheless there does exist this thing called ARCHITECTURE, an admirable thing, the loveliest of all. ... Architectural emotion exists when the work rings within us in tune with a universe whose laws we obey, recognize and respect. When certain harmonies have been attained, the work captures us. Architecture is a matter of "harmonies," it is "a pure creation of the spirit."

The universal "harmonies" of architecture are vertical connections. We know them as "sympathy," "love" and "bonds" from Empedocles, Plato, Hermes Trismegistus, Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Giordano Bruno, and many others. Hermes could very well call Light "an admirable thing, the loveliest of all." When we say that Light and Architecture are the same thing, because they have the same attributes, we do not illude that we have demonstrated the existence of a real link. We just want to start by giving a few keys for possible interpretations. One vague example has little evidential power, but the recurrence of vague themes may be significant. Let's be patient! "When the work rings within us in tune with a universe," we see this work with the eyes of the heart and soul, not with the sensual eyes. Nobody can check the match between a thing and the whole universe with the lenses of the eyeballs that are in orbits in one's head!

When Le Corbusier says that Architecture is "a pure creation of the spirit," he probably means that every work of architecture is a pure creation of the spirit. As so often happens in architects' discussions, he does not care to distinguish clearly between architecture and its works. The general tendency of his writings is anyway unambiguous: Spirit, Intellect, Light and Architecture are the same thing, namely, the cause of architectural work. When Le Corbusier says that "Architecture has nothing to do with various 'styles,'" he emphasizes its ontological rank as the highest hypostasis. The exaltation of the following words is unanalyzable. We try to grasp it with our souls' eyes:

Architecture has graver ends; capable of sublime, it impresses the most brutal instincts by its objectivity; it calls into play the highest faculties by its very abstraction. Architectural abstraction has this about it which is magnificently peculiar to itself, that while it is rooted in hard fact it spiritualizes it, because the naked fact is nothing more than the materialization of a possible idea.

Only Intellectual Light can have such grave ends. But objections are already awaiting. In the following excerpts the question is surely about physical light:

Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light. Our eyes are constructed to enable us to see forms in light...

We are told that “masses,” “forms” and “light” are all strictly physical. But who guarantees this? According to us, what’s unambiguous is only that Le Corbusier refers to works of architecture, not to physical things in general. However, regarding works of architecture we know already that they are “pure creations of the spirit,” which could justify us to say that for Le Corbusier “masses,” forms” and “light” never refer to things which can be defined in terms of modern physics. He never sees a work of architecture with the eyes of an empirical scientist, to whom he feels superior. Let us illustrate this with a new example.

There are in *Towards a New Architecture* three chapters which are titled *Eyes which Do not See*. The chapters deal with the three themes of transatlantic liners, airplanes and automobiles. Only a fool would maintain that we do not see these products of modern technology with eyes which are in sockets! But this is a hasty conclusion. The issue is not yet settled. Let us agree on two easy points: first, everybody who is not blind sees ships, airplanes and cars; second, it would be irrelevant to state in Le Corbusier’s context that blind persons do not see physical objects. Le Corbusier means something else.

The eyes which do not see are eyes which do not see in the liners, airplanes and automobiles the spirit of the new age. Le Corbusier bitterly accuses people who lack the hermetic vision and obstruct thus the victorious propagation of New Architecture. Seeing works of architecture is not observing with eyeballs which are in sockets in the observer’s head. Nor is it analytic reasoning. It is pure Contemplation, touching things gently with the Flower of Intellect.

10

MODERN AVANT-GARDE

[From section IV.11.2 - My Mother’s House]

Did you notice it? We have just with one tremendous leap moved from the modern age to the postmodern age, where everything is different, the very opposite of modern, whenever possible. But one thing must be cleared up immediately: because the objective meta-criterion of opposition cannot be turned upside down, we are still in the kingdom of architecture. The refrain is thus: very different, nonetheless almost identical. The move from modern to postmodern is, to put it more correctly, from modern to more modern, from naive to sophisticated avant-gardism, from unlearned to erudite speculation on the principles of architecture. We begin by presenting the postmodern challenger of Villa Savoye. Postmodern theoretician and historian Heinrich Klotz, the opposite of ingenuous Giedion, has the word:

With the house for his mother, built between 1960 and 1962, during his new theoretical reappraisal of architecture, Venturi created the building that realizes and demonstrates most effectively the postulate of complexity and contradiction... <In this house> Venturi's concept of a complex and contradictory organization of interior space found a telling realization. That the unambiguousness of modern architecture's spatial definition was abandoned is evident from a single detail: the obstruction of the staircase by the chimney of the living-room fireplace. But even the elevation visibly demonstrates the contradictions that arise from the collision of the different forms.

We are somewhat embarrassed to violate the privacy of a mother, but we cannot bypass the paradigmatic house of postmodernism. It is absolutely essential for our theme since it abandons "the unambiguousness of modern architecture's spatial definition." We have to ask what does it mean that you just move a chimney a little, and you are out of petty four-dimensionality! We have concluded that a four-dimensional house is cryptic, pointless, ludicrous, whatever. Now we hear that it is not ambiguous enough. Then, what does postmodern "complexity and contradiction" mean? This very successful coinage was launched by Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, which was written four years before it was published in 1966. It is for postmodernists what Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* was for modernists. Its juxtaposition by Vincent Scully with Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture* in the preface to the first edition is yet more demanding. Postmodernity is an age with the same right as modernity was. Venturi, the most respectable and authoritative of all postmodern theorists, says in the pioneering book about the house he built for his mother:

This building recognizes complexities and contradictions: it is both complex and simple, open and closed, big and little. The contradiction between inside and outside, however, is not total.

How does one make a house that *is* and *is not* at the same time? A magician, in the sense of Pico della Mirandola and Giordano Bruno must be at work. In spite of unimaginable inventiveness and novelty, there is a small flaw: the architect forgot to copy outside and inside from two different buildings. Our policy has been to refrain from judging houses by appearance, but now, when the paradigmatic house of modernism is set against the paradigmatic house of postmodernism, we cannot avoid the temptation to be a little provocative. If four-dimensionality is excluded, there is in Villa Savoye nothing extraordinary. However, there is in its simplicity a certain quiet elegance that cannot be displeasing. Instead, My Mother's House, with its awkward chimney, is simply untidy and banal. Theorists like Klotz see it differently because they believe that there is a one-to-one cor-

respondence between My Mother's House and the *Gentle Manifesto*, that opens *Complexity and Contradiction*:

I like complexity and contradiction in architecture. I do not like the incoherence and arbitrariness of incompetent architecture nor the precious intricacies of picturesqueness or expressionism. Instead I speak of a complex and contradictory architecture based on the richness and ambiguity of modern experience, including that experience which is inherent in art.

Few people cause universal upheavals in such a casual manner. Venturi simply tells us what he likes and dislikes, and his words become the postmodern constitution. Architects immediately grasp the enormous potential for architectural expression that is contained in the condensed formulations of the *Gentle Manifesto*. However, "expression" is in Venturi an ugly word. We promise not to mention it any more in the context of postmodernism, unless the content is unambiguously negative. We have to be very careful with Venturi's delicate terminology. Neither "complexity" nor even "contradiction" mean "incoherence" and "arbitrariness." They allegedly mean something definite that can at the same time be big and little, open and closed. The "incompetence" that is the cause of vices like incoherence and arbitrariness is just mute and inexplicable absence of postmodern competence.

Vices like "picturesqueness" and "expressionism" are worse still, since they are products of a condemnable capacity to please, flatter and cheat. Depending on the stubbornness of the reader, after ten to one hundred readings of the *Gentle Manifesto* the desolate ugliness of My Mother's House turns into a totally new kind of architectural experience. One discovers that distastefully pleasing and needlessly practical things are diametrically opposite to the "richness" and "ambiguity" of genuine postmodern works. If there is no possibility of intruding a fireplace, a "contradictory" column is placed in the middle of the five square-meter kitchen in order to enhance postmodern cooking, or the two bedrooms are organized in a "complex" way in order to instigate postmodern sex. Irrespective of whether this or some other equally spurious interpretation is right, one could expect that now, finally, after two thousand years of speculation, complexity and contradiction puts an end to architects' obsessive longing for wholeness. One's unrealistic expectations are frustrated:

An architecture of complexity and contradiction has a special obligation toward the whole: its truth must be in its totality or its implications of totality. It must embody the difficult unity of inclusion rather than the easy unity of exclusion. More is not less.

The whole is not given up: it is just made more difficult to attain. Or shall the "difficult whole" be taken seriously at all? We could be accused of dwelling exces-

sively on one obstructing chimney, but the accusation has a wrong address: we have not been offered anything better. In other words, we have found nothing that would be unambiguously ambiguous. We would be ready to accept “ambiguity,” but only on the condition that it really means something. The cheap trick of an obstructing fireplace gives the impression that the first duty of the postmodern architect,— i.e. to make of every building problem a revolutionary confrontation with complexity and contradiction — is nothing more than an obsession to be more modern than modern. Let us analyze what Venturi means when he writes:

Orthodox Modern architects have tended to recognize complexity insufficiently or inconsistently. In their attempt to break with tradition and start all over again, they idealized the primitive and elementary at the expense of the diverse and sophisticated.

Modernists create unambiguity, which they consider a virtue, by dishonestly suppressing the inherent ambiguity of all building programs. As a confirmation, Venturi quotes Paul Rudolph, his enemy and an eminent representative of modernism:

All problems can never be solved... Indeed it is a characteristic of the twentieth century that architects are highly selective in determining which problems they want to solve. Mies, for instance, makes wonderful buildings only because he ignores many aspects of a building. If he solved more problems, his buildings would be far less potent.

Selectivity can, according to Rudolph, be justified by accepting the natural fact that every architect is “committed to his particular way of seeing the universe.” Venturi protests: such a justification is bogus. An architect cannot be permitted to isolate himself “from the experience of life and the needs of society” only because he happens to have his own weird way of seeing the universe. Venturi wants to say that any building problem, even a small one, consists, without important exceptions, in a complex and contradictory set of requirements. If each of them is given, as always should be the case, its just share in the whole, the result is unavoidably a complex and contradictory building, a “difficult whole.” Now modernists recklessly violate this rule, disregarding the obvious fact that it obliges all architecture, independent of time and place. They select a few problems, which they believe they are able to solve elegantly, leaving all others unsolved.

For Mies van der Rohe architecture is merely the elegant play with steel profiles. A genuine postmodernist, to the contrary, solves all problems, or leaves only a few secondary ones unsolved. Therefore it is natural that even the smallest and simplest postmodern building looks complex and contradictory. We don't know whether this is self-deception or something more serious, but we know that architects have hardly ever repudiated the important problems of building

with such consistence and determination as in the postmodern period. Klotz demarcates in the beginning of *The History of Postmodern Architecture* technological, social, economical and ecological problems outside the main theme, which he characterizes with the slogan: Not function, but fiction.

No earlier architect has had the courage to present anything like the foolhardy claim that the problem of “good building” can be solved by dividing houses into the two classes of ambiguous and unambiguous. If modernists are one-sidedly selective, postmodernists are even more. They invariably select the solution that is farthest away from the modern. We believe therefore that the postmodern truth is concealed in the following words of the *Gentle Manifesto*:

Everywhere, except in architecture, complexity and contradiction have been acknowledged, from Gödel's proof of ultimate inconsistency in mathematics to T. S. Eliot's analysis of 'difficult' poetry and Joseph Albers' definition of the paradoxical quality of painting.

Giedion's principle of “simultaneity” obliges postmodernists too. If poetry, painting and mathematics become complex and contradictory, so too must architecture. Moreover, it must do it independently. Why? Because poetry, painting and mathematics also made it independently of each other. The only valid dependence is that on the Postmodern Spirit. As a curiosity, it can be mentioned that if a watershed really separates ages from each other, Albers, Eliot and Gödel all belong to modernity rather than postmodernity. Albers was one of the original teachers of the Bauhaus. *The Waste Land* of Eliot was published in 1922, the *Theorem* of Gödel in 1930. But we let them be postmodernists who for personal reasons preferred to live in the modern age, instead of their own. Ezra Pound and Ernest Hemingway were not less American for the secondary reason that they happened to live long periods in Europe. Instead of such petty and forced issues, our target is the very essence of postmodernism. We claim that Gödel's *Theorem of the Inconsistency of Mathematics* is for postmodernity what Einstein's *General Theory of Relativity* is for modernity. The universe is no longer four-dimensional — that would be much too simple — but complex and contradictory.

11

UNITY OF MATERIAL EVOLUTION

[From section V.1.2 - What is Evolution in This Book?]

Heidegger says that “Anaximander, Parmenides and Heraclitus are the only primordial thinkers. They are this, however, not because they open up Western thought and initiate it. Already before them there were thinkers. They are primordial thinkers because they think the beginning.”⁵⁶ Heidegger makes an important

distinction between “outset” and “beginning,” and says: “In the course of the ages of Western history, later thinking is not only distant from its outset – i.e. chronologically distant – but also, and above all, it is removed from its beginning – i.e. distant with respect to what is thought.”⁵⁷ The thinking of Anaximander, Parmenides and Heraclitus is “thinking of Being.” It is a “retreating in face of Being.” This means: “Being is the beginning.”⁵⁸

The goddess Truth [Alétheia] says in Parmenides’ famous hexametric poem, which Heidegger calls “didactic” and a “dictum” [*Spruch*]: “There is... a need that you experience everything.”⁵⁹ This “total experience” cannot be empirical, for sensual experience is always a piecemeal collection of data, which even in the best of cases represents the totality in a very deficient way. The claim, which Heidegger elaborates in his *Parmenides*, is, indeed, diametrically opposite to collecting data. It concerns the “unconcealedness of the truth,” which means that truth is not, as Western tradition claims, a matter of “correspondence,” of *adaequatio*, of *iustificatio*, of *certitudo*, but of mystical “revelation.” We cannot have in our possession anything that “corresponds” to the truth of everything, but we can, Heidegger implies, experience its holistic “unconcealment.”

How far Heidegger is from the largest empirical closure is demonstrated by the following words: *Alétheia* is the essence of the true: the truth. Truth dwells in everything that comes to presence; it is the essence of all essence: essentiality [*Diese west in allem Wesenden und ist das Wesen alles* “*Wesens*”].⁶⁰ However, Heidegger implies in this context, perhaps very exceptionally, that the “total experience” of primordial thinkers has its origin in the environment. It is not a matter of pure contemplation, but rather an intuitive summary of life-long observing and thinking. This is the essence of essence in three versions:

Anaximander: limitless is the principle of everything.

Parmenides: thinking and being are the same.

Heraclitus: everything flows.

We could discount these summaries, saying that they are merely condensely formulated insights, and that there is nothing very exceptional in them: man has up to our time had a similar aphoristic talent. To use Heideggerian terms, the statements of these old philosophers have a particular value only in the sense of “outset,” not in that of “beginning.” They open up a historical perspective, without any mysticism of “primordially,” “authenticity” and “originality.” They give us an idea of archaic modes of thinking and formulating thoughts, but they are not closer to the “essence of truth” than Plato or Aristotle were, or we ourselves are.

Heidegger intensely disagrees: “Plato and Aristotle and subsequent thinkers have thought far ‘more,’ have traversed more regions and strata of thinking, and have questioned out of a richer knowledge of things and man. And yet all these thinkers think ‘less’ than the primordial thinkers. The problematic circumstance that a modern thinker needs a book of 400 or more pages in order to express

something of what he has to say is an unerring sign that modern thinking stands outside the realm of the primordial thinking.”⁶¹

For reasons which are not very clear, the unconcealment of the essence of truth takes place exclusively in this realm. Therefore even the most brilliant modern thinkers, of whom Heidegger mentions Kant and Hegel, are unable to grasp the truth of Being. Though they are much more attentive than Darwin, they too obfuscate the relation of Being and beings. But Heidegger is unwilling to admit the corresponding weaknesses of primordial thinkers. When they busy themselves with everything, their only available possibility is to assume that some kind of unity prevails everywhere. Anaximander may have believed that he instead of one single *arkhé* could have composed everything of several separate “systems” and “subsystems” with their own principles or laws. He just chose the “correct” alternative. But this is an illusion. Dividing everything first into parts, and uniting them then in order to show that they are parts of the same universe, is a counterintuitive procedure. Even worse: it is destined to lead to irreconcilable strife. After various attempts, the insight that everything is an indivisible whole, comes as a great relief. This is the beginning of idealism to which we have referred earlier.

There is another important reason for the rejection of multiplicity. If one adopts the opposite approach and departs from details, one is destined to end up with many systems which contradict or are not at all commensurable. One is never able to build of them a hierarchy that culminates in the One. Starting from multiplicity leads, irrespective of from which extreme one departs, to the same average wisdom, or commonsense muddle. Consistent metaphysics, like that of Heidegger, accepts the fact that it can contribute little to knowledge about houses and organisms.

Modern natural science rejects the approach that means proceeding from bold intuitions or insights, which are given an ontological status, to the physical level. It starts from the empirical multitude, without any ambition to arrive at the complete and consistent empirical description of everything. Darwinism is a curious exception: it approaches its subject matter indiscriminately from both directions. The question is: shall we take the Darwinian evolutionary theory, with its digressions into the cultural sphere, at face value or not, when we continue? On the one hand, its incompatibility with the empirical method, though seldom explicitly stated, is a fact.

On the other hand, it is a fact that discussion about evolution, which exceeds the limits of all empirical closures, will go on, and must go on. We have appeared as adversaries of metaphysics, but we don't think that metaphysics can be eradicated from human thought. Einstein's general theory of relativity predicts, according to Stephen Hawking, that all physical theories, including itself, break down at the beginning of the universe.”⁶² Is it only the beginning of the metaphysical universe? We admit that we also have our own metaphysical presuppositions, of which we are not fully aware. However, we believe that it is

necessary to clarify what can be done, and what cannot be done, in each type of closure, and what sort of compatibility between them is possible. The growth of empirical data has practically no limits. Although all empirical treatises put together do not make a consistent whole, they can comprise hundreds and hundreds of pages without being redundant. A most pressing problem is, instead, whether we can, starting from the whole, say more than repeat what Heraclitus said 2500 years ago – *panta khórei*.

It is indeed so that at the most fundamental level we don't have much more choice than the primordial thinkers of Heidegger. Anaximander says that "limitless" is the principle of everything. We assume that everything is a whole that is governed by one single principle – that of "evolution." If "flowing" means change, and change differentiation, sometimes perhaps in a novel and more complex way than before, we must assume that evolution, as the principle of differentiation, precedes all differentiation. This is consistent with Descartes who says in the *Principles of Philosophy*:

...first of all they should be so clear and evident that the mind of man cannot doubt their truth when it attentively applies itself to consider them: in the second place it is on them that the knowledge of other things depends, so that the Principles can be known without the last, but the other things cannot be reciprocally be known without the Principles.⁶³

The sense of evolution is – if there is any sense in it – that it is not structured *a priori*. Evolution is – however tautological its clarity and evidence may sound – the unfolding of structures, beginning from a structureless state of affairs. Hence, there cannot be any "scheme," "plan," "model" or "mechanism" that is preferred by evolution. It is very tempting to give intuitively convincing accounts of evolution as a "selective" process, but from the present point of view there is a serious problem. Selection consists in "selector" and "objects of selection," which just leads to the rejected view that evolution has an *a priori* structure. As pseudo-empirical, universal selection automatically loses its status as "principle." How "selectors" and "objects of selection" constrain evolution must in such a case be determined by some yet more fundamental principle.

We must therefore be contented with the meager formulation that evolutionary differentiation is "somehow" selective by its nature. This means that the potential to evolve is not, as Darwinians claim, in certain already evolved things, like organisms, cells and genes, but in matter itself. Any existing thing, even a chair, must have evolved from basic matter. We must posit the unity of all material evolution, but, of course, only in a metaphysical evolutionary closure. Immanuel Kant says that "to assume the existence of a matter which is universally distributed, all-penetrating and all-moving, and which fills cosmic space, is a hypothesis which, indeed, is neither sustained, nor can be sustained

by experience.”⁶⁴ The “transition” from the metaphysical to the physical is a critical moment:

Matter (natural material) can be termed neither organic nor inorganic. Such a concept is in contradiction with itself. For, in this concept, one abstracts from all form (figure and texture) and thinks in it only a *material (materia ex qua)*, which is capable of various forms. Thus, it is only to a *body (corpus physicum)* that one can attribute one of these predicates. And this division [into organic and inorganic] necessarily belongs to the transition from the metaphysical to foundations of natural science to physics, as a system of the empirical science of nature, which can never become a completed whole.⁶⁵

In empirical closures, in contrast to the metaphysical one, a great number of greatly differing mechanisms of selection can be found. Cultural and biological selection are two different things. Empirically, the two evolutions of osprey and chair have little in common. Metaphysically, there is no difference between “culture” and “biology” at all. The crucial question, that still remains, concerns the possible “transition” from the upper to the lower level, or the compatibility of metaphysical and physical closures. The former is useless for us who are studying building if it cannot contribute anything to the understanding of evolutionary phenomena at the physical level. Without adding anything more, this is how evolution is understood in our book.

12

THE LAST PREDICATE

[From section VI.1 - Heidegger's Contribution to Architecture]

Ontological and Linguistic Hypokeimenon

In geology “tectonics” is a term that is used to refer to the movements of the Earth’s crust. In the largest closure, the theory of plate tectonics explains the movements of continents over the Earth’s surface, why most volcanoes and earthquakes occur along curved belts of the sea floor, why mountain belts tend to develop along the edges of continents, and so on. It is very probable that geologists have borrowed the term “tectonic” from building, the terminology of which is much older, to refer to processes which seem to have, unlike most geological processes, “constructive” effects. They are responsible for the most conspicuous “forms” which are first seen from a spacecraft approaching the planet Earth: the Andes, the Himalayas. The Greek verb *tektainó* means to build; *tektón* is carpenter; *tektónikos* is said of skilled carpenter; and *tektóniké tekhné* is carpenter’s art. Aristotle says that mat-

ter can surely not move itself; *tektoniké* must move it [*ou gar é ge ulé kinései auté eautén, alla tektoniké*]. Does the geologist mean with “tectonics” something like this, or has he just borrowed a word, giving it a new meaning that has little to do with the original one?

Before answering, we must see what “tectonic” means in architecture. Kenneth Frampton rehabilitates the important but neglected concept of “tectonic” in his essay *Rappel à l'Ordre: The Case for the Tectonic*. He says “the tectonic reemerges as a critical category today because of the current tendency to reduce architecture to scenography. This reaction arises out of the universal triumph of Robert Venturi’s decorated shed, that is to say, from a prevalent tendency today to treat architecture as though it were a giant commodity.” Frampton’s own thesis is that “building remains essentially tectonic rather than scenographic in character.” He concludes:

Thus one may assert that building is ‘ontological’ rather than ‘representational’ in character and that built form is a presence rather than something standing for an absence. Following Martin Heidegger’s terminology we may elect to think of it as a ‘thing’ rather than a ‘sign’.

Frampton seeks support from Heidegger, without giving any exact references. We may assume that he gets the concept of “thing” from the mystical essay *The Thing* which deals with the “thingness of thing,” without taking into account that in *Being and Time*, for example, the thing [*das Ding*] corresponds to the Greek *pragma* and is deprived of ontological status altogether. “Things” are everyday objects the value of which is a matter of everyday disputes. Their meanings are derived from social and cultural activities, not from Being. But Frampton wants to liberate tectonic from “scenographic” connotations, making the claim that it “does not seek to derive its legitimacy from science, literature, or art.” Thus, there seems to be a conflict with Heidegger when Frampton ontologizes the work of architecture as “thing.” It is still worsened when Frampton refers to tectonic as the “material base” of architecture.

In Heidegger “ontological” and “material” are by no means identical. There seems to be in architectural theory an almost total confusion: new misunderstandings are continuously built on some more fundamental misunderstandings. The only philosopher who can shed light on this puzzle is Aristotle. There are two particular reasons. First, the clearest formulation of architecture that we know from classical philosophy comes from Aristotle. Second, Heidegger adopts and reinterprets *upokeimenon*, the substratum of Aristotelian metaphysics, when he defines *Dasein*, the most important concept of his most important work *Being and Time*. Let us first hear what Aristotle says about *upokeimenon* in *Metaphysics*:

Now the substratum is that of which other things are predicated, while it is itself not predicated of anything else.

Matter is the first substratum [*upokeimenon próton*]. This ontological substratum must be clearly distinguished from other substrata, the nature of which is linguistic. Frampton chooses the former inadvertently but all the same as unambiguously as one can when he says that tectonic “does not seek to derive its legitimacy from either science, literature, or art.” Tectonic belongs to the ontological, not to the linguistic. It “derives” its meaning from Architecture, the universal principle of good building. Moreover, because Frampton seeks support from Heidegger, and this further from Aristotle, the tectonic must necessarily be predicated of a *hypokeimenon*, and, because in question is ontological predication, the *upokeimenon próton* is the only available possibility. It shall not be confused with the *hypokeimenons* of everyday linguistic usage. Because we maintain that architects’ concept of “tectonic” is plagued by this confusion, we have to inquire deeper into linguistic predication. Aristotle formulates the concept of first *hypokeimenon* in *Metaphysics*. In *Categories* he is dealing with a multitude of linguistic substrata:

Whenever one thing is predicated of another as of a substratum, all things said of what is predicated will be said of the substratum also.

Aristotle gives examples: “man is predicated of the individual man, and animal of man; so animal will be predicated of the individual man also — for the individual man is both a man and an animal.” In linguistic schemes any imaginable thing can function in both ways: once as a substratum and once as a predicate. Individual man is the substratum of man as well as of animal, because all individual men are men and animals at the same time. The hierarchical order of predications is the only limiting factor: it makes sense to say that an individual man is animal, but not that animal is an individual man. But it is an extremely important one. Porphyry says in his *Introduction to Aristotle’s Categories* that the basic idea of categorizing is to “lead the multiplicity back to the one [*sunairein to pléthos eis en*].

The highest genus [*genikótaton*] corresponds to the *arkhé* of ontological terminology, the lowest species [*eidikótaton*] represents the lowest limit of the categorizable. In Porphyry’s scheme the individual [*atomos*] remains outside this limit. As “body” it is too obscure to qualify as an object of classification. The levels of the scheme are related to each other analogically [*kata analogian*]. In Boethius’ Latin translation of Porphyry’s *Introduction*, which was much read in the Middle Ages, *secundum proportionem* is the corresponding term. In scholastic philosophy *denominatio* is further substituted for this term, but the basic idea of analogy retains its value. For Thomas Aquinas analogy is the very tool of divine creation. Porphyry warns in the beginning of the *Introduction* of the confusion between linguistic hierarchy and causal chains, probably because he thinks that Aristotle does not guard his linguistic elements from starting an insidious causal shift. We can confirm that neither Porphyry nor Aristotle is able to prevent this shift from happening. In question is a phenomenon that is very common in ancient Greek thought. Aristotle says:

When things have only a name in common and the definition of being which corresponds to the name is different, they are called homonymous... When things have the name in common and the definition of being which corresponds to the name is the same, they are called synonymous...

And finally,

...when things get their name from something, with a difference of ending, they are called paronymous. Thus, for example, the grammarian gets his name from grammar, the brave get theirs from bravery.

Of the three linguistic relations, “homonymy,” “synonymy” and “paronymy” we are interested mainly in paronymy [*parónuma*], because in it the insidious causal shift is more easily detectable. Curiously, the most dramatic examples come from building. And we have to note that the examples come from the physical and ontological contexts of *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, not from the linguistic ones of *Categories*. In the following translations we have tried to retain the paronymy of the original as much as possible, without worrying about the resulting clumsiness of expressions. Because the question is in both cases about the same *tekhné*, builder and art of building could be translated as architect and architecture as well, but the paronymy of the Greek text would be lost. We read with amazement:

...*oion tou oikodomeisthai oikian* <*> *oikodomos é oikodomón oikodomos.*
...thus the building of a building <*> a building-builder or a builder who builds.

The verb to be caused [*aitazomai*] does not appear in the sentence, probably because the paronymy as such is convincing enough, but we must add to the brackets <*> “is caused by” in order to guarantee modern intelligibility. In the latter part of the following excerpt Aristotle says explicitly that architecture is the first cause, basing his claim on the evidence of the former part which has a strong paronymous character.

...*oion anthrópos oikodomei oti oikodomos, o d' oikodomos kata tén oikodomikén* — *touto toinun proteron to aition.*
...thus a man builds because he is a builder, and a builder builds in accordance with the art of building — the art of building, then, is the prior cause.

In fact, the ubiquity of paronymy in linguistic usage justifies Aristotle to generalize that each substance comes into being out of synonymous substance [*ekasté ek sunónumou gignetai ousia*]. He also says: Therefore it is incontestable that a

building's form (is caused by) architecture [*oikias eidos é oikodomiké*]. As we already know, matter cannot move itself; *tektoniké* must move it. Boethius' translation of *paronumos* is *denominatio* which means "derivatively named." In other, words, a thing gets its name from another "with a difference of ending." From whiteness becomes white, from grammar grammarian, from architecture architect.

Some scholars underline that ending [*prósis*] must be understood in the widest sense of the word. However, most modern scholars want to keep their interpretations within the limits of logic and linguistics. To the contrary, many antique commentators, say, Porphyry, Simplicius and Boethius, are convinced about the ontological bearing of Aristotle's formulations. A good justification for this is given, for example, when Aristotle says in *Metaphysics*: That which *is*, is said [*legetai*] in several ways, but with reference to one thing [*pros en*]. In this context Aristotle gives as an example that "healthy" is said with reference to "health." We may add that "tectonic" must be said with reference to "architectonic." Because tectonic is "derived" from metaphysical architecture, it is not the "material basis of architecture."

If Frampton wants to give "tectonic" the status of the "material base of architecture," he must abandon Aristotle, and with him Heidegger too. And, worst of all, he must contradict architecture as the *pros en*. He must turn to something like the geologist's conception of tectonics. A geologist does not predicate "tectonic" of any *hypokeimenon*. He needs no "material basis" for the material phenomena he is dealing with. Only immaterial form, which is separate and immutable, needs it. A "material" *hypokeimenon* is from the geological point of view a useless and contradictory term. It leads to the absurd situation that some geological "strata" constitute a *hypokeimenon*, while some other "strata" are predicated of this "sub-stratum."

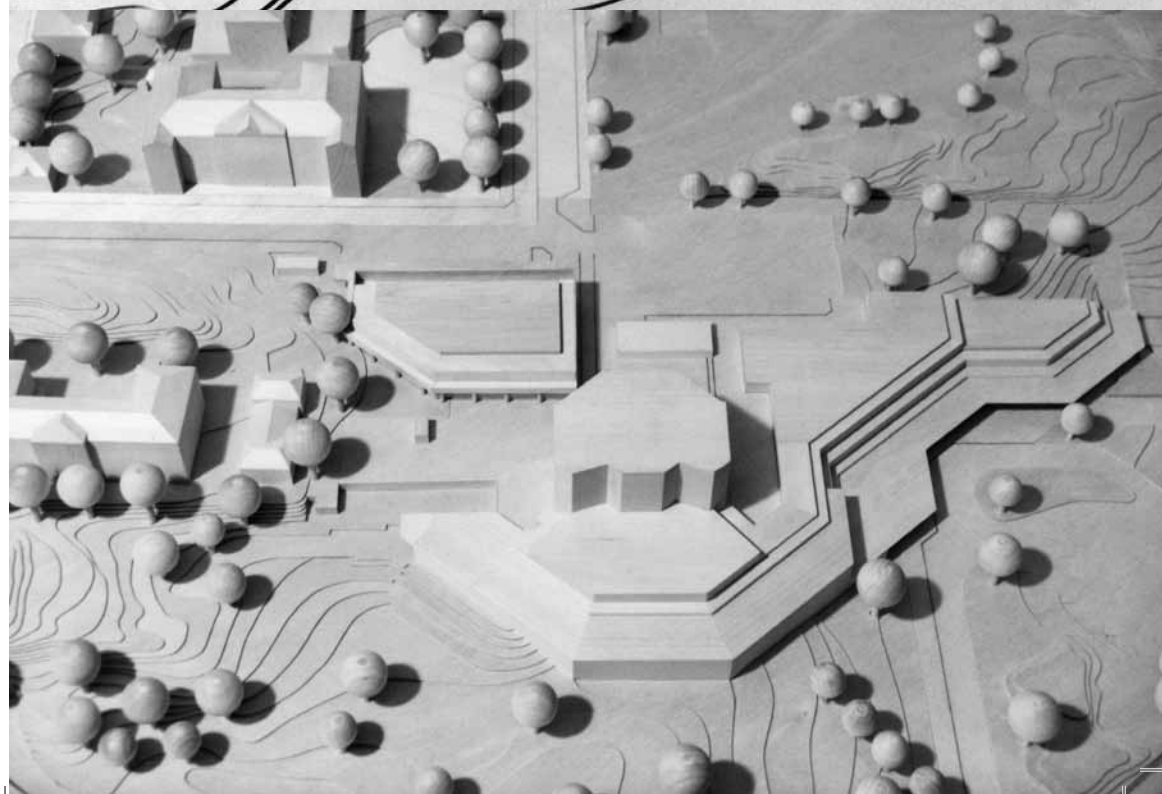
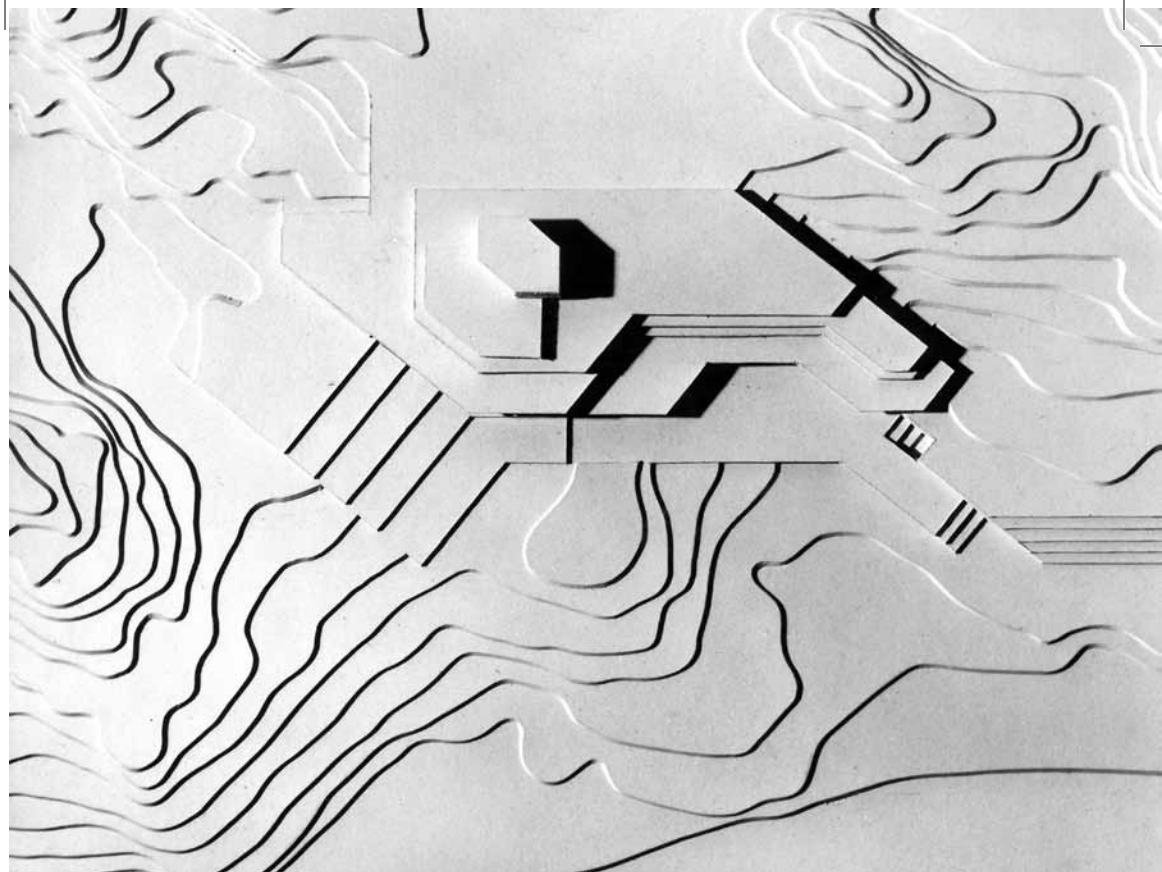
It is impossible to find from modern physics any such dichotomy. Tectonic seems to have in geology a constructive meaning. But because no constructor, with his projects, is present, geological processes are, strictly speaking, neither constructive nor destructive. There is no good justification to say that plate tectonics, which causes magnificent mountain ridges to come about, is a positive phenomenon, while erosion, which loosens rock and moves the pieces downhill, is a negative one. Both are just meaningless physical processes which have contributed to the present state of oceans, continents and mountains, irrespective of whether such developments are considered good or not good. Although buildings result from man's intentional action in small closures, building processes do not in large evolutionary closures differ from other geological processes. Erosion plays in building a much bigger role than we are used to admit. Extracting a block of marble from the flank of a mountain and its shaping into a Doric column is a case of erosion as much as one of tectonic formation. Nature does not make any "qualitative" distinction between a column drum and waste material.

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>> Helsinki City Theatre, competition model (1960) and realised building plus extension (1987).



5 DOCUMENTS

(1)

Good Building is not an Occult Science **An interview with Timo Penttilä**

Jorma Mukala

On a visit to Helsinki in summer 2010 Timo Penttilä gave an interview to the *Finnish Architectural Review* (ARK). On that occasion it was agreed that the text would be published in one of the 2011 issues of the journal. As it happened, the interview turned out to be a farewell to the architect, when in February 2011 the sad news was received that Penttilä had passed away. The interview was published in the 2/2011 issue of ARK. It is reproduced here with permission.

Jorma Mukala: During your career you have designed numerous public buildings as well as commercial and office buildings. Which of your works have been closest to you?

Timo Penttilä: My first important work was a school, Sampola, built in Tampere. Tampere is my home town but I settled in Helsinki during my student days and also at that time my father's job was transferred to Tikkurila. I didn't particularly miss my home, but then a competition victory took me back there. I had an office in Tampere for some time. I designed schools there and my final work there was the Ratina Stadium.

The Helsinki City Theatre is probably my most important work. Perhaps the closest one, too, because, it required so much energy. I got to realise an important cultural building at a very young age – I was 30 when I won the competition. The task probably went slightly beyond my capability and knowledge at that time. There were, of course, several experts in the design team as well as adequate information. In retrospect I have often thought how with little experience I nevertheless completed the Helsinki City Theatre. Well, it was done the way it was. The Finnish architectural competition system is, by the way, really excellent. Young architects and even students can participate in them and when they win they can also realise their ideas.

JM: In Sampola and the City Theatre it is possible to see a similar sculptural quality as in the works of Alvar Aalto.

TP: I'm not able to name detailed exemplars. The direction in my architecture

has also been compared to the works of Frank Lloyd Wright, and it is indeed possible that Wright's architecture may have influenced me, but not in a radical way. I've never had just one mentor. On the other hand, I've also never had completely independent ideas. I believe that all buildings come about from a tradition, from what has been done previously. The architect looks at the world, become fascinated by certain features and applies them in his own work. He doesn't create anything from nothing. The talk of the architect's creativity is pointless bragging.

The right and the wrong architects

JM: In the beginning of your career you worked in Aarne Ervi's office. Did he guide you in how to be a professional architect?

TP: Ervi was for me the most important older colleague. I got to know his work and persona very closely. He paid attention to me and I got to do quite interesting work. Ervi was very social, he always let others design, too, and was no dictator who wanted to control everything. I participated in competitions quite often and did quite a lot of work on the Tapiola Centre. There was a very good atmosphere in Ervi's office. He called me Timosenko.

JM: What was the attitude towards Alvar Aalto in the 1950s and 1960s?

TP: Aalto was regarded higher than anyone else. I met him personally only a couple of times. As the vice-chairman of the Finnish Association of Architects, I once had a very embarrassing task. Aalto had spoken badly about some colleague and as a representative of the board I had to go and ask him: What on earth did you mean when you said those things? I could not even get started because Aalto did not take the issue seriously at all, but let me understand that well, for goodness sake, don't be ridiculous on the board. Aalto took out a bottle of Vermouth and we began to discuss architecture. The task I had been given was therefore not taken care of.

JM: When the young constructivists wanted to renew Finnish architecture in the 1960s you and Reima Pietilä were visibly on a different trajectory, and you also polemicalised against the constructivists.

TP: Reima's architecture has never attracted me. I find it too confusing, but we were regarded as similar in the 1960s. For example, Kirmo Mikkola considered Reima's and my works as an unfortunate intermediary stage in Finnish architecture. I replied to Mikkola just as strongly and I guess I even upset his feelings a bit. If we divide architects, paraphrasing Vitruvius, into the right and wrong ones – the wrong ones do not know what architecture is or present architecture in the wrong way – then in the 1960s I belonged quite clearly to the wrong architects. At least Kirmo Mikkola and Juhani Pallasmaa belonged to the right ones. I remember a

debate held in Dipoli where the theme was theatre design. The Helsinki City Theatre had been completed and I was going to lecture at the University of California at Berkeley, but I had time to participate in the theatre debate before my trip. The whole event was just chastising the city theatre... Finally I said, I'm leaving now for the USA, bye bye!

JM: Of your works from the 1970s the best known and most visible is undoubtedly the Hanasaari Power Station in Helsinki. Also the Salmisaari Power Station has a very important role in the cityscape of central Helsinki.

TP: In power stations architecture is merely a protective envelope for machines and engineering structures and an architect cannot start off in the same way as in the design of, for instance, a theatre. The proportions and basic materials are decisive. In the design there is not much leeway. In both power stations the limitations were rather strict also with regard to costs, so it was not possible to play around. The starting points had to be utilised as best as possible to achieve an impressive building and a good cityscape.

As a professor in Vienna

JM: In 1980 you began to teach architecture.

TP: I was on the jury, together with Keijo Petäjä, for the Tampere City Library competition, when I received a phone call from Vienna. The caller was architect Gustav Peichl. He inquired about my willingness to become a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. The academy had two architectural professorships. One was Peichl himself and the other was Roland Rainer, who was about to retire, and in whose place I was asked to take over.

JM: How was the teaching?

TP: I had similar views on architecture as Rainer. He considered those practical matters close to life as being important and had a very negative view towards theory. My principle was to accept any style as long as the practical, technical and other factors had been taken into consideration in the design and that solutions had been found for them. I also, naturally, told the students my views on the student project as a whole, including the appearance, but I did not exclude in advance any particular stylistic approach. When I presented my viewpoint, Peichl became enraged. My viewpoint was completely against the tradition of the *Meisterschule*, according to which the students, from the time of Otto Wagner onwards, had produced similar architecture as the professor and this principle was considered important. I felt this practice was odd in modern times.

JM: In Finland there is no such corresponding tradition.

TP: During my own study years, Professor Jukka Sirén was a rather strict personality. In his design work he kept to classicism but on his courses students could design projects over a very wide range. I myself designed an art museum for my diploma thesis under Sirén and he did not limit my approach in any way.

JM: *Could a Finn adapt to Vienna?*

TP: Yes, the Finn did adapt, but I must say that the Austrians are rather unusual people. I did not make many friends there, but we got along. Vienna is a great city, where it was pleasant to live.

Theoretical analysis

JM: *In your texts you have criticised architecture theory.*

TP: When I taught in Vienna I noticed what an enormous draw theory had on students. Everyone wanted to theorize. As I see it, architecture is primarily a practical field. Theories usually lead one astray, which is the reason I have criticised theorising in itself. When I had time, I began in Vienna to delve into the development of architectural theory from Vitruvius onwards. Le Corbusier had always been seen as a rationalist but by reading his texts I understood he was a veritable mystic. Philosophy has always enchanted architects. In the end theories pulled me in as well. I have in fact written a book about architectural theory and its history. The manuscript is now complete and I have sent it to a publisher.

JM: *What kind of contemporary architecture interests you?*

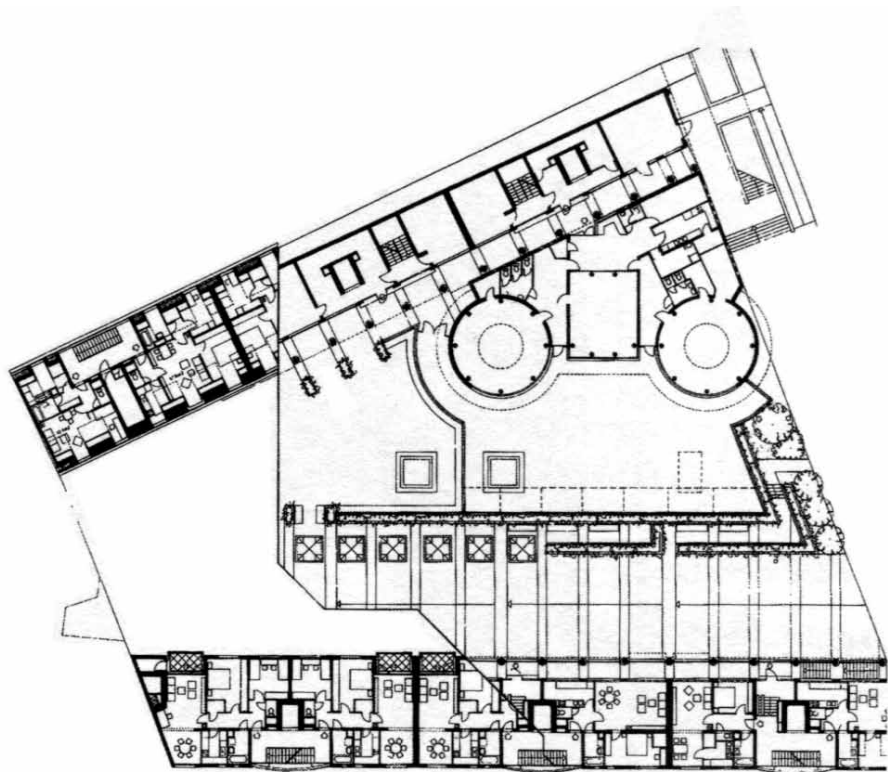
TP: Previously I used to follow very intensively what happens in architecture. I also travelled worldwide acquainting myself with buildings and phenomena. Nowadays architecture is for me a past life.

JM: *You live in Lapland and visit Helsinki only once or twice a year.*

TP: For a long time I had a house in Italy, in Tuscany, and I spent a lot of time there. A couple of years ago I gave up the house. I will live in Lapland as long as I can. It is really wonderful in Lapland, even though there are mosquitoes in the summer and its cold in winter. It is a good place to be.

JM: *Is nature better than the city?*

TP: Yes.



(2)
**Timo Penttilä - A Discreet
Master of Modernism?**

A conversation with Alfred Berger

Roger Connah: Timo Penttilä spent nearly 20 years in Vienna, Austria, teaching architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts as the head of one of the two “Meisterklassen”. During this time, he influenced many young students and architects-to-come in the course of their studies. How did your relationship begin with Penttilä, as a student, and then as a colleague?

Alfred Berger: I went to the admission exam at Timo Penttilä’s “Meisterschule” in October 1983. At this time there were two Meisterschulen: one with Timo, the other with Gustav Peichl. Peichl was quite famous in Austria and I knew nothing about Timo Penttilä. So I stood in the corridor wondering which door to enter. Suddenly a friend from older days showed up and asked me why I was hesitating, and that I should join him at Meisterschule Penttilä. So I did and was fortunately accepted. Entering the academy was an adventure. I was amazed by the atmosphere, the personalities of the teachers and the young art students. I had been raised in an Austrian family with a strong link to French culture through my mother’s family. I was interested in art, philosophy and politics, and I loved endless discussions. Meeting the silent Finnish Master was an interesting contrast to this. I was intrigued and attracted at the same time by how Penttilä developed an aura of a Zen master, where my intellectual capacities were challenged from day one, just because communication with him followed different patterns and rules. With Peichl communication always had an aspect of negotiation (very Austrian), and I sometimes wondered how my architectural life might have developed if coincidence hadn’t pulled me to Penttilä’s door.

Working with a ‘master’ over 6 years meant a strong influence of the master on the student. Sometimes this became more symbiotic, sometimes more a contradiction, but never indifferent. Even today some former students complain that Timo did not explain his philosophy clearly enough to them, and that he was not giving them enough instructions on how to become a successful and accepted architect. But this complaint is usually paired with the idea that he had a personal “architectural theory” that he refused to share. I think this was the result of a misunderstanding; because it seemed hard for his students, and even for fully educated architects, to conceive to what degree Penttilä questioned the role of theory. The fact that he spent a lot of his time reading and writing was often misinterpreted in the sense that he was aiming to develop a new ar-

<< Housing and kindergarten, Gumpendorferstrasse, Vienna, 1988.

chitectural theory!

Giving lectures was not the usual task of the masters; teaching happened in individual dialogue between master and student. This gave room for enormous speculation as to what his principles were and how he would see predominant theories and fashions. But the students kept asking for lectures by the Meister. So, on just a few occasions, Timo gave in, though these were very well prepared lectures. Unfortunately there is no documentation about these events, but I remember that he persevered through some major historic theories, trying to communicate his scepticism about 'theories' to us. But students wanted to hear 'theory' from him, and hardly accepted his rejection of theories. At the end of such a lecture, he answered a student's insistent questions somehow like: "you think there is a spirit in this wall, but I tell you there is no spirit in this wall, it is just a wall of bricks."

Meeting Timo personally wasn't effortless; he was not easy to approach. The first semester we worked with other teachers, and the programme he gave us immediately made a difference. While Peichl's Students had to design a villa, our first studio with Penttilä was like this: "*You are stranded on an island. There are trees, you have an ax, some basic tools and ropes, and you are alone. You need a small observation tower. Design this tower so that you can build it under the given conditions.*" We felt the message: don't look at architecture books, but try to make a design by using your mind and all the parameters directly related to the task. At this stage we did not see the whole picture, but the direction was set. And this was enormous. We were in the mid-1980s, in a world dominated by Postmodernism. Other Professors at the time in Vienna were important representatives of Postmodernism: Rob Krier at the TU, Hans Hollein at the Angewandte and others.

Timo followed Roland Rainer at the Akademie. Rainer was a modernist architect who specialized in flat atrium housing (Puchenau) but also in big event halls (Stadthalle Wien, Bremen). It was Rainer who had first invited him to Vienna. He liked Timo's approach, and maybe he had a somewhat bad conscience since he had got to build the Vienna Stadthalle even though Alvar Aalto had won the competition in 1953. Thus Timo had double legitimacy; he was elected by Rainer, who still had an enormous position in Vienna, and he came from Finland! We were happy to be his students. He was our "Zen master", and we felt a little bit like in the "Asterix village", surrounded by a majority of Postmodernist schools. He remained enigmatic – asking questions instead of giving instructions.

I will never forget a review for my 4th project – a university library in Linz. I had worked on this project already for 2 or 3 months, when I finally went to present it to the professor. I was fully persuaded that he would be impressed. So when it was my turn, I put my drawings and model in front of him and started explaining my ideas, emphasizing the greatness of the concept. He did not interrupt me, but when I was finished he made no direct allusion to my words, neither had he commented on any specific point in the design. He only asked: "Do you

think this is a good library.” First I thought that he had not understood, and went on explaining. But his reaction was the same. When I finally left I was puzzled! It took me some beers before I could go back to work, but then I dropped the initial design, and started with a completely new proposal.

You asked about the input he had on various persons: this is a topic we try to tackle today in the Timo Penttilä Society, by asking for reports from former students. Another project is to ask former students to present a recent project of theirs and explain how they might link it to the “Penttilä School”.

RC: Can you say something about the early years, the office in Vienna? How was the office organized, how big did it become and what did you work on?

AB: Timo occupied a marvellous atelier on the second floor of the north-west tower of the Academy. The room was about 120m² and with approximately 8m clear height; it was very impressive and delightful. He used this room from the beginning until till he left the Academy in 1998. First it served him as a bridgehead for his Helsinki office. He received clients there and did some project presentations (I was not involved and have no details of this period). The room was used as an office, and served for the entire design of the housing complex on Gumpendorferstraße 40-44, Vienna, between 1986 and 1988. The room was furnished with two lines of architects’ drawing tables and a marvellous sitting area with fauteuils from Kukkapuro, Mies and Aalto in black leather.

The professional collaboration as architects with Timo Penttilä started in 1992 and lasted until summer 1994. We founded the Partnership Penttilä-Berger-Krismer with Timo, myself and Werner Krismer. Werner and I had been his students. I worked with Werner after completing the diploma in 1989, and we then won our first international competition, for the new Vienna Ice-hockey Stadium. I think this early success was an additional link between Timo and me. Since the Hockey stadium did not start immediately, we were looking for new possibilities, and we discussed this with Timo. In his eyes, I think it was an interesting possibility to found a new practice with two of his best students, independent from the Helsinki office.

Our first project was a competition entry for a school in Vienna, with a diagonal X-shaped layout and half sunken gymnasiums. The project received second prize. Only after opening the envelopes did the jury discover that Penttilä had signed the project for the Team Penttilä-Berger-Krismer. Since the two younger members of the team were not registered at the Austrian architects board, the jury discussed whether or not the work should be excluded. They did not really dare to do this to an Academy Professor, so they finally decided to award us the third price, which I still find rather bizarre.

Next we entered a proposal for the competition for the Austrian Cultural Institute in New York. This design was our first cooperation with Ove Arup, and our first competition with computer-rendered perspectives. In these first projects

Timo was relatively discrete, leaving the two of us to handle the design, a little like he did when we were students, without taking part in a massive way. This was also due to the fact that he was not present regularly in Vienna, and could not follow the work on a daily basis.

The main competition in 1992 was the open competition for the “Spreebogen” in Berlin for the new Regierungsviertel government quarter. In this competition, which received 835 entries, Timo was fully involved. He liked the scale of the project, and I think the result was quite remarkable. In 1993 we did two more competitions, although the work for the Vienna Ice Hockey Stadium had by then begun, and took up a lot of our time. We entered a proposal for an urban planning competition for Süssenbrunn, a huge new housing development in the eastern part of Vienna. Dietmar Steiner once said it was one of his favourites among the entries. Also in 1993 we made a proposal for a competition for an ice rink in Dornbirn / Vorarlberg for which we received an honourable mention.

In spring 1994 Penttilä received the invitation to take part in the competition for the “Bundeskanzleramt” German Chancellery on the Spreebogen. Fifty architects were invited. Timo invited Werner and me to do this project with him. It was decided to meet in the Casello in Tuscany in summer 1994. Tiina Parkkinen also joined us. When we arrived in Farnetella, Timo, with the help of his housekeepers Angelino and Zelinda, had prepared perfect work tables outdoors for all of us. Everything was set when we arrived, and this time Timo took the lead from the beginning.

The design prescriptions were quite narrow and followed very tightly the geometries of Axel Schultess’ project, allowing no real other approach. The project had to comply with Schultess’ “Spange” and his design for the Regierungsviertel government quarter on the Spreebogen. Timo did not like this very hermetic and symmetrical layout too much, and he was quite critical about the design ideas that emerged on our tables. After lunch he used to retire to his room, and came out again after the siesta. In the meantime we went on trying to find the solution to this exclusive problem. It was on the third day, appearing on the stairs after the siesta, that Timo declared without any preamble: “We stop this competition”.

Looking back, I’m sure he was right. The game could not be won if you were not Axel Schultess or at least an architect very close to his ideas and designs (by the way, it was Axel Schultess himself who won the competition). But in the situation it was quite shocking for us to see him so firm in his decision, not open to any further argument. This side of his personality is the base of numerous charges against him and also responsible for the “Penttilä myth”. For us this “stop” to the work on the competition design for the Chancellery also put an end to the short history of “Penttilä-Berger-Krismer”, named “Atelier X” at the time.

Returning to Vienna, I went on with the work for the completion of the Ice Stadium. In October 1994 I started working in Penttilä’s Meisterschule as an assistant. Our close cooperation then entered again a new stage, with me being his right hand at the Academy. This period at the Academy was the third period

of my relation with Timo Penttilä. It was already Penttilä's fourteenth year as head of the Meisterschule. He may have been a little bit tired from the teaching routine, and his health was not too good at the time. But we were an excellent team, cooperation with the second assistant Pietro Caruso was very good and we had a lot of fun. The students were quite happy, although there was not any more that tight link between students and professor as we experienced in the 80s.

Timo wanted to stay on, and at the same time prepare the Meisterschule for the future. We invited guest teachers from Austria and abroad (Rüdiger Lainer, Dominique Lyon). When Timo decided to take a sabbatical year from 1996 to 1997, we convinced Massimiliano Fuksas to be his replacement for the year. Fuksas was around fifty and extremely vital and full of revolutionary energy. In that sense it was a break from Timo's more conservative position. But Fuksas is a builder, and in that sense he perfectly matched the profile of the school. Our aim was to maintain this direction. Unfortunately, soon after Timo left a wide gap opened at the Academy between the teaching of pure architecture and the "hostile and alien" domain of building.

In the 90s a new university organization law had put the Academy on the status of a regular university. This required a completely new set up and form of organization for the Meisterschulen. In the years I assisted Timo he put a lot of effort in shaping the future of the school, by developing concepts for a new internal organization. But the input was limited by the fact that Timo had no real network in the Academy, since he did not take the time for informal politics, as others did. In this situation his uncorrupted way of living and thinking was very noticeable and a huge contrast to the general picture.

RC: How much were you and Timo in touch with colleagues – what was his or your relationship to colleagues at the time, both Austrian and Finnish? Can you also say anything about his life in Vienna? Did he share this with you? How did he spend his time? What was his community of friends and colleagues whilst he lived there?

AB: As to my own personal relationship to the Vienna Architects, I sometimes tended to feel a similarity with Timo; since our huge early success with the Nordic Embassies in Berlin was not openly accepted by the local architectural establishment. But, maybe learning from Timo's isolation, I tried not to cut ties, and rather kept building up relations over the years. After finishing the Berlin Embassies, we gained much success abroad. We have also been invited to design projects in Germany, France, and Italy as well as in the Austrian provinces. It was only our home town, Vienna, where we didn't have a single public commission until 2009. As to Penttilä's relation to Austrian colleagues, I quote him once saying to me in Lapland: "You are the only Austrian I ever let into this house here." But Timo was not an easy communicator. Hans Hollein once said to me: "We have invited him many times, but he showed little interest." This expresses a little how Viennese architects saw him. They were respectful and curious, but usually it remained at

that level. In the early years he was in closer contact with Roland Rainer. For a long period he was good friend with Carl Pruscha, but they split in the 90s over academy politics. It was also obvious that Timo was quite firm in his opinions. He did not talk about things he had not premeditated. Therefore, although he loved the debate, he did not appreciate when it was carried out with a lack of knowledge. With students he often remained above the debate, in a sort of mediator's position, often preferring to stimulate it with questions rather than arguing directly. He was never aggressive towards people in my presence, neither for what they did, nor for what they said. On the contrary, he generally handled people very respectfully, which even appeared distanced to some.

In Vienna he had a nice apartment on Johannesgasse and tried to build up social relations. I think due to the difficulties with the Viennese mentality, and also the fact that he was in Vienna only a few weeks per year, yet unusual at that time, he did not integrate fully and remained somehow more like a guest. This happened at a time when I was still a student and he did not share this with us. In the 80s he had a very active friendship in Italy with a group of architects and designers from Milan, who also had houses in Tuscany, who helped him to buy the Casello. Timo made an entry for the "Les Halles" competition in Paris with these friends. Out of them, I only saw Professor Menghi once in Vienna briefly.

RC: He could be directly polemic – was this something he was forced into or did it come natural?

AB: It was part of his personality, but was intensified by circumstances. He had a difficult relation with his father, who tried to make him a good farmer. So he had to break out from that. When he had his first triumph with the Helsinki City Theatre, instead of congratulations he received hostile denial from his colleagues. You may have heard about the public presentation after completion of the theatre, where instead of applause he earned heavy critique from colleagues. Suddenly he stood up and said loudly something like: "I have had enough – I am leaving to Berkeley, California, now – have a nice evening." I think that he built up shields against aggression from power-groups or single persons. And one such shield was his independence. He cultivated this independence, and made it became an element of his personality. He arranged things to allow his personal and economic liberty to shape life as he wanted it, in Tuscany, in Lapland, in Vienna or Helsinki or wherever, but always far enough from displeasing people.

RC: How did he write his texts in the 1980s and were you involved in that process at all? If not, did anyone in the office work with him, or did he work alone? Did he read and did you share any of his reading?

AB: He worked alone on his texts, but I had long hours of discussion with him over the years. He even gave me a pre-print to read in the early 90s. I must admit

that it was not easy to read, and later he asked me to destroy it because he had reorganized the text completely. It was only after he began writing in Finnish that it became impossible for me to look into his writing. I very much hope his book [*Oikeat ja väärät arkkitehdit*] will be translated into English or German to make it accessible to non-Finns.

He read constantly. When we met and talked in some quiet place like Cassello or Lapland or my home in Vienna he told me a lot about what he read. When he came to visit us here in Vienna, he picked books from my shelf and borrowed them for reading; some of my Le Corbusier books and some French philosophers. It was a real pity that he left the Tuscany house to a Russian buyer without taking out anything other than his most personal belongings. The whole library (you must have seen it on your visit), with handwritten comments in every book, was left there.

RC: Can you describe, from your point of view, his integrity and passion for ideas, life and architecture – how did he organize his library, his books, his reading?

AB: Timo Penttilä was a person of total integrity. I never saw him take advantage in a situation or of another person. The correctness and generosity demonstrated to people working with him was rewarded by the loyalty shown to him. He appreciated a straight way of communication, which caused him some difficulties in Vienna, especially at the Academy. More than once he complained about fellow teachers who “smile at you while lying in your face”.

His library was in Tuscany, in Lapland and in Vienna. All books were full of his personal marginalia, with also underlining of words or phrases or complete passages and adding short comments on them. I had the impression that he knew where all the major books were on his shelf, and which passage he had quoted in his writings. The books were in a personal and systematic order by categories: philosophy, history, science, practical books on plants, sailing and travel guides and books. Originally, the first categories were in his study, the travel books on the shelf in the corridor, and practical books in his room. The order suffered as he kept buying books and the shelves could not contain them all. But he did not appreciate novels. Unfortunately the library was left with the house, because when he left he had no place to put it.

RC: During the last decade did you ever discuss the indifference he felt towards architecture or the personal direction he chose? Do you have any recollection of this? Did you know he destroyed his archive of drawings and photographs?

AB: This was a big concern sometimes. But when we went looking at projects in Vienna, Brunn, Berlin or Italy I felt no indifference. He just had no interest in average things, and despised ambitious architecture without character and power. For example, on a tour in Vienna we visited the Gasometer Project. There he liked

the “shield” from Coop Himmelblau. He was also impressed by the Günther Domenig building on Simmeringer Hauptstrasse. But I think a full-blooded architect like Timo, excluded from the possibility of doing further projects much too early, starts to see things differently. I never heard about him destroying his archive. This may also be a misunderstanding. In fact, during his whole life he never collected or kept objects. He was a wanderer with a small suitcase – maybe a nomad in his heart. And had the bad habit of trashing his sketches as soon as the plans were drawn.

RC: Given that Timo Penttilä spent the last 20 years in a way dissolving the work he had achieved, and possibly destroying it, given that he had questioned his own intellectual legacy and started to re-think Finnish and world architecture, how do you think this society should go about archiving his ‘destroyed’ works?

AB: The apparent exclusion from Finland’s official Architectural Olympus was not beneficial for the concept of building his own museum during his lifetime, as others do. But what makes you think he actively dissolved his work? I would suggest not. Timo Penttilä was never like many of his peers, who archive any small sketch for eternity. Timo used his sketches to explain his ideas, but did not take care to keep them. His aim was to build – and drawings seemed to be just an interface for him, without too much value in itself. This neglect towards sketches has nothing to do with anything that might have changed his attitude towards his work later. In the early days he was just like any ambitious architect breathing and living for his work in architecture.

The extreme frustration he must have felt after the refusal and even aggression he encountered from his revolutionary colleagues at home in the late sixties and ongoing till the end of his active career certainly was traumatic for him, and must have caused changes in his attitude towards the profession, and by consequence his work and his conception of his personal position in general. After his office crashed he must have undergone the deepest crisis, since this event deprived him from the possibility of challenging his adversaries on his favourite ground – designing significant even great buildings, and taking part in shaping our environment. This double trauma, first the refusal, and later the crash, must have had a deep influence on his way of seeing things. I strongly believe that it would be an adequate move, if ‘official’ Finland would produce a posthumous exhibition or something similar to raise Timo Penttilä back to the position he merits as a great architect and an inconvenient thinker.

If there is any explanation for the wish to annihilate his legacy at a certain time this can only be seen as momentary despair, maybe after some heavy talks and a bottle of wine. The question whether he destroyed something of his material or not in my opinion has no influence on the responsibility to save as much as possible today, and to repair as far as possible the consequences of the brutal schism that changed Timo Penttilä’s life and career at a very young age. The lit-

tle that is left needs to be archived in the right place. Many of his buildings are threatened – even main ones, like the Helsinki power plants. The chief of the Helsinki City-Planning recently asked me at a meeting in Jyväskylä if I would agree to demolish the power plants to make room for new buildings, ignoring success stories like the Tate Gallery in London or similar possibilities of using the cultural heritage of the modern period.

Furthermore, many of his buildings need refurbishment today. Renovations bear the danger of alterations or even destruction of the initial architecture. Who oversees this? Who is paying attention to this? Is there enough awareness of the value of these buildings? I am convinced that there is much to do in terms of archiving and taking care of the legacy!

RC What do you suggest?

AB: I will itemize this:

- All drawings, models and historical photographs should be collected in one place – perhaps the Museum of Finnish Architecture – and made accessible to any architect or historian interested.
- Photographic documentation of the buildings in their actual status, good or bad, would be necessary, to help documentation, discourse and communication, and eventually to trigger activities.
- An increased awareness of Timo Penttilä's buildings means that they should be handled with the highest care when being renovated.

RC: Did you ever visit him in Casello, Tuscany? When did you last have contact with Timo?

AB: The Casello was a magic place. My family loved it. Timo invited us over many years in summer. Usually we stayed together with him for a week, doing some small excursions, going to restaurants and a lot of talking, and stayed more time after he left to go to Finland for the annual crayfish dinners. As to the last meetings, he came to Vienna and we had a party for his 75th birthday in our new house in March 2006. We were in touch regularly, and he came a last time to Vienna in 2008. Our next meetings were scheduled for 2011.

RC: What did Timo mean for your own practice in architecture? Could you offer some personal history of this? What distinguishes, in your opinion, Timo Penttilä from others? Is he the Discreet Master or the Last Modernist? Or both?

AB: I think he is rather the 'discreet master' who deserves to be discovered by a broader public. The Timo Penttilä Society has been founded with this aim. And I think that it is a good time for that – for example, many young people in Hel-

sinki think that the City Theatre is one of – how shall we put it - the ‘coolest’ buildings in town! Timo was my Professor for six years and he accompanied my professional career for a long time. There is a lot I learned from him, or which I have developed in some relation with him. The main topics are:

- The ideal to design any project out of its very precise and specific conditions, including cultural, climatic, urban, topographic and other related conditions as well as technology, the programme and the later use of the building.
- Strive for a powerful and clear identity in any project.
- An affinity for free geometries, sometimes expressive shapes.
- No need to follow predefined architectural canons, and instead establish a logic within the project.
- A strong relation to landscape and to nature.
- Maintain a fearless and free approach to any new design.

Roger Connah – Alfred Berger, February – September 2014

>> Salmisaari power station, Helsinki, 1985.





(3)
Master and Friend
Some kind of genius and hero

A conversation with Kari Lind¹

RC: Kari Lind, as one of Timo Penttilä's close friends and as a colleague, can you say something of your personal history before you began your working relationship with him in his office?

KL: I graduated from Helsinki University of Technology (TKK, Otaniemi) in 1971 at a time when both Pekka Helin and Tuomo Siitonen began on the same course in 1965. Aarno Ruusuvaori was one of my professors and Juhani Palasmaa was already his assistant in architecture. For me, I felt their teaching was too categorical and constrained us to one kind of 'allowable' architecture. Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe were their 'heroes', not to mention the early Bauhaus-school movement. This perhaps inspired me to get a job in Penttilä's office. Some friends already working there told me they needed more help with new large projects. I had started my training in architecture as early as 1962 during my high school vacations in Niilo Kokko's office. While studying at TKK there were periods in several offices: Helge Railo (hospital planning), Juhani Katainen (competitions) and after graduating Olli Parviainen (city planning and shopping-centres).

RC: When did you join the office?

KL: Timo hired me in 1973 to assist him with planning the new headquarters for Suomen Sokeri (Finnish Sugar Company) in Tapiola Garden City. That was a big challenge for me. The office in those days was at Itäinen Puistokatu in Kaivopuisto. Very soon after, on the onset of his illness, Aarne Ervi invited Timo to move the office to Ervi's studio in Kuusisaari. We thus moved to Kuusisaari, slightly out of the centre of Helsinki, in the spring of 1974. Timo had several demanding projects ongoing: amongst them, town planning for the centre of Tapiola Garden City, including two office buildings, the headquarters of Imatran Voima (today Fortum) and the Hanasaari Power Plant. At that time Timo still had the energy to enter all major competitions. We gained first prize in 1975 for the Kansallis-Osake-Pankki Headquarters (the block currently between Aleksanterinkatu and Esplanadi, today the Hotel Kämp block) and in 1976 the Bahrain National Cultural Center. The number of employees at its maximum in two separate offices was 43.

RC: How did he manage that size?

KL: It was obvious that Timo needed some dependable assistants to divide the demanding responsibility of the projects. He started to ask young architects to join as partners to ensure the stability in the office. I was offered a junior partnership in 1974. Up to 1980, when Timo was invited to take up a professorship at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, there were all in all 6 to 7 partners. But in 1980 of course he had to decide to give up his single majority ownership. He then offered me a senior partnership and appointed me the General Manager of the office in Finland. The earlier General Manager, Heikki Saarela, was then appointed as Design Manager in Finland. The office had to move to Töölö when Ervi died and his heirs took over the premises in Kuusisaari.

RC: Did you ever have your own office?

KL: Yes, my own studio was founded in 1994 when some new clients had asked me to be their architect. Old buildings with special values were close to my heart. I specialized earlier in this genre when Project Manager on the KOP-bank renovation in Helsinki. My first projects were on buildings originally planned by such well-known architects as Lars Sonck (The Helsinki Telephone Company, today Elisa) and Viljo Revell (Nokia). Timo also recommended me to be the architect for the Helsinki City Theatre when they started the first technical renovation in 1997. I have been retired now almost two years, but of course there are still some minor jobs which keep me going.

RC: Who was Timo Penttilä and what did he represent in your life?

KL: For me Timo was some kind of genius and hero. He was a person of outstanding culture not only in his own line of work but in everything that interested him. At any moment he could and would give 'lessons' in navigation, astronomy, zoology (birds especially), history, ancient culture (Asia, Egypt, Persia, Greece, the Incas, the Mayas), not to mention other world religions. His memory was unbelievable.

RC: Did he travel much?

KL: During the 1970s he had numerous long journeys to the USA, Mexico, India, Persia, Bahrain, China, Japan and, of course, Europe. He travelled mostly alone accompanied only by a local guide. That was obviously one way to absorb new ideas or thoughts from different cultures, which later could be utilized in future architectural creations. The ideas spread out intuitively from his mind. Later, during our common excursions or journeys, he became a walking encyclopedia.

RC: How did he work?

KL: At work he always used 110% of his energy and expected the best out of himself as much as the team. While working he concentrated on competitions or actual projects on the drawing boards. The way he did it was always effective and creative. His leadership was more pragmatic than theoretical and his basis for planning always stemmed from the demands of the site, the surrounding environment and the function. The form of the design came mostly intuitively. This is my impression. His focus was always to create something of high quality. He often gave open hands to the team to study and develop the ideas he had instigated. Then possible further emerging ideas would be checked through in meetings before any final resolution. In the office he was always number one and for me the only master.

RC: What was special or different in your opinion about his way of working?

KL: Discussions of profound issues around architectural theory or theories never took place in the office and – as far as I know – nor in connection with the actual design work. His thinking might have developed elsewhere with his colleagues around the world. His opinions could be read in Finland in what became his rather provocative style and his polemical writings. Items about contemporary architectural or philosophical issues were very seldom discussed in our leisure time. During dinners he never started to talk about work. His topics concerned mostly daily political news or recent events, especially during the visits in Italy. For the most time he was, however, absorbed in his books which were the daily and constant passion in his life.

RC: You have said that Timo became part of your family... you remained one of his closest friends right up until the final years.

KL: Yes, he enjoyed crayfish parties and summer cottage surroundings when he visited us in southern Finland from Supru in Lapland. Remarkable, however, is that he never demonstrated his sovereignty as an architect or big boss when we met out of the office on private occasions. Together with my family, we formed a deeply trusting friendship, as simple as it could be. We enjoyed our mutual small talk and shared a sense of humour. In the ‘family’ he was to me more like a big brother than some kind of ‘chief’ or headmaster. Maybe the point is here: his personality had the ability to accommodate to the existing conditions depending on the actual context around him. He appeared to be relaxed with us, and our daily concerns. And we had one mutual great passion. That was gourmet cuisine, dining with fine wine and occasionally an afternoon glass of whisky. For me it was a pleasure and great honour to act as a master chef, preparing something special for him to eat when we met in Tuscany or at our home in Finland. Earlier, when we had more time, he was willing to show me fine restaurants in the neighbourhood towns and villages but, probably about ten years ago, he began to suggest

dining at home. His hearing had weakened drastically and the noise in public places could disturb him enormously. He was eventually provided with a modern technical hearing device, but he never got accustomed to use it. This is probably also one reason why he also often refused to join big parties or meetings. Some people naturally may have experienced this as an antisocial act – a total misunderstanding, however.

RC: Can you say more about his own solitude, his relation to nature, life in Tuscany and Supru?

KL: I have a feeling that he never felt lonely, though he lived in solitude most of his time. On the other hand, he had quite a large social circle around him in every country he was resident. In the course of years the very closest friends were the neighbours (the housekeeper Zelinda and her husband Angelino the wine master) in Casello, Tuscany, and in Supru, the Lapp neighbours Kalle and Soili (original northern inhabitants) to whom he left in his will his properties in Supru. Instead of one family he had many. He seemed to be at home among ordinary working people whose everyday skills he continually admired. He must have felt it very relaxing between his absorbed scientific studies. He was never bitter nor felt mistreated. One cannot talk of resulting exile. In fact, solitude was something he felt to be a natural choice and was in harmony with his personality. He loved to be surrounded by the forces of nature.

RC: What was his relationship with his colleagues like?

KL: In Finland he had contacts at least with colleagues such as Aarne Ervi, Reima Pietilä, Keijo Petäjä and Antero Markelin. Both Petäjä and Markelin with their families visited Casello in Italy, too, and their friendship was important. During the late 1960s and into the 1970s there were of course random exchanges with, amongst others, Juhani Pallasmaa. Arguments and differences continued in the early 1970s when the boom of the ‘rational’ style was the only style and direction acceptable to the leading Finnish ideologues like Aarno Ruusuvuori, Kirmo Mikkola and Juhani Pallasmaa. The Helsinki City Theatre for them was absolutely too ‘elitist’ in those days. All the same, Timo Penttilä and Juhani Pallasmaa continued their dialogue through the decades. Pallasmaa had achieved fine results through the years as a visiting lecturer around the world and had made himself acquainted with some publishers. Timo had respect for this. In the beginning of 2005 Timo sent him an early edition of his new-coming book for comments. Later on Pallasmaa informed him that the manuscript was interesting, but it was to be regretted that the book was written in Finnish, when the readers could be reached better in some “world language”. He also gave some critique: he did not like or understand Timo’s sarcastic or ironic style in general and the direct, critical writings on phenomenology even less. In the book *Oikeat ja väärät ark-*

kitehdit - Kaksituhattavuotta arkkitehtuurin teoriaa (2013) one can find a quite comprehensive personal history of Timo written by Jorma Mukala in context to the 1960-1970's debate in Finnish architecture.

RC: What did you think when he left for Vienna? Did he share with you his decision to take up the Vienna professorship?

KL: The decision to take up the invited chair in Vienna was made alone after thinking it over for a few days. He was in Tampere judging the competition for the Tampere City Library when he received a telephone call from the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Reima Pietilä was awarded the first prize in that competition, as you know. Vienna also asked Timo to arrange an exhibition of his architecture in the Academy, to be ready before his inauguration into the Academy. Timo authorized me to build the exhibition and collect all the material needed from our archive. It took several months, but this work was of the utmost interest as I could use my practical and team leader skills, which had been well trained under Timo's leadership over the course of the years. The exhibition then moved to Graz, Zurich, London and Stuttgart.

RC: Your friendship continued? What relations did you have with Timo whilst he was in Vienna?

KL: The time with the exhibitions and his moving to Austria deepened our mutual friendship. It was obvious that our meetings would become more and more private as we no longer shared much office time together. He had his own studio in Vienna and that world was separate from mine. It was also there he made his early plans for Tampella, with the final drawings and models produced in the Helsinki office in Töölö. My time was spent running the office in Helsinki and reviewing everything with him in Vienna, Tuscany or Lapland. In fact, by the end of the 1980s even in Finland we still managed to produce together many large town planning and block development projects. Unfortunately many remained unrealized due to the economic depression in the early 1990s. At that time all our clients abandoned those major development projects that had been on the drawing boards. We had to lay off all the employees when the cash flow dried up.

RC: What happened towards the end of the 1980s, the Nokia competition (1983) and the Tampella (1989) project?

KL: Looking now retrospectively at those two works, one could consider that both were at least two to three decades ahead of their time. Significant though at the time was the comment given at the results event by the selected professional member of the Nokia Competition jury, Kristian Gullichsen. He went through all the entries. Then he came to Penttilä. "This work is a karate blow on the neck of

Finnish architecture,” he proclaimed pointing at Penttilä’s entry. Now, ironically of course, we see more or less sculptural architecture of a similar type all over the world. And today we also know that Tampere has new high-rise building plans going on without any dissenting critical voices.

RC: What was your last work together?

KL: The last major international invited competition we made together was for a huge new City Centre for City Prag near Stuttgart in 1990. Later, when nothing dynamic seemed to emerge, Timo suggested to the partners that it was time to put an end to the business and close all activities. The decision was made unanimously. As you know, all the archives were destroyed on the demand of Timo. Don’t ask me why. However, I had enough courage to save – without permission – all the original detailed City Theatre drawings and photographs of the main projects, which are all now in the Museum of Finnish Architecture in Helsinki. Obviously another reason that led to the closure of the office was his desire to totally concentrate on writing the book he had been planning. He did not want any disturbance. Over time he also grew tired of travelling, and he began to realize that his residence in Tuscany, Casello, was also too much for him after the housekeeper, gardener and wine maker, Angelino, had passed away and his wife could not manage the work needed. So he decided to sell. The last trip we made together to Casello was in the beginning of 2008, when the deed was signed.

RC: Contemplation and solitude appeared a major part of his life during and after Vienna and Tuscany. What happened then?

KL: Timo bought then an apartment close to our home for future accommodation, where he visited infrequently and only for short periods, when he had appointments with doctors and dentists. In fact he liked to stay overnight with my family rather than stay in his own flat. Most of the time he wanted to stay in Supru, in Lapland, where he could enjoy the quietness and tranquility in solitude, continuing his passion for reading and writing. There he also started a new pastime in order to exercise his body, whilst having to spend so long sedentary at his computer. He began building quite massive statues and mobile constellations from the dried-out trees found in Lapland, carving, sawing and lifting the trunks up into the air with help of winches and cables. His neighbour, Kalle, helped him with the heaviest pieces and together they made unbelievable art. After working for hours they would sit by the log fire drinking coffee and discussing the future.

RC: Did you ever see Summum Templum Architecturae? Did you know the range of book he was writing?

KL: Timo spent nearly 20 years in Vienna, Austria, teaching architecture at the

Academy of Fine Arts as one head of the “Meisterklasse”. During this time, he influenced many young architects in the course of their studies. I knew about the developing manuscript, first in English and then in Finnish. Timo had developed this book over many years and there were even several editions from the last decade. I also knew that he had already started negotiations in spring 2010 with the Finnish publisher Gaudeamus. They had already decided to proceed with it when Timo died suddenly and unexpectedly in February 2011. To get the book finalized for publishing was for me a final tribute to the great master. Editing was hard work, with all cross-checking with translations and over 500 references. It was natural to continue cooperation with Gaudeamus and their experts. I managed to gain a scholarship from the Finnish Cultural Foundation in February 2012 for the editorial team with Ulla Markelin and Jorma Mukala. After almost two years work the book was then published in late 2013. One page is now finally closed. Timo can at last get his total freedom at the behest of liberty. This was something he always had in mind when our discussions touched on the meaning of life.

NOTE

1. This conversation was based on a brief series of emails between Kari Lind and Roger Connah, January - February 2014. Kari Lind: “I have been thinking what kind of information could be informative for your work. After giving serious thought I became convinced that the best way would be some kind of general presentation of my feelings and relations concerning Timo Penttilä as an architect and a friend. Giving short answers to your quite profound questions or detailed analysis dealing with Timo Penttilä’s personality or his ambitions are not possible. Not in that context and architectural environment you wish. However I’ll try to open this matter slightly from my point of view by giving you some information as follows.” I have, however, edited the texts to make it more accessible to the reader. RC.

>> Helsinki City Theatre, 1960-1967, and extension, 1987.



(4)
THE FORTUNATE
Taking Finland Out of the Equation

Film Outline Notes on Timo Penttilä

Roger Connah (1996)

1
THE FORTUNATE

A JEALOUSY OF ARCHITECTS

A story in fragments, from Sinalunga, where the wine is prepared to an ancient tradition, to Vienna, Otto Wagner's studio, where the wine is spilled, over jealousy – and then to Finland where the wine no longer accompanies the recluse, now an absolutist. Anything but an odd figure! This is more than a story; it happened and is still happening. Fortunately!

THE FORTUNATE

The Naivist, the Pragmatist, the Disbeliever: in the 1970s Timo Penttilä was one of the best of the younger architects in Finland to follow on from Aalto. His work was challengingly Finnish in the way that Aalto's was challengingly and romantically Finnish. His City Theatre in Helsinki is still arguably one of the subtlest public cultural interior spaces in the city. Professionally it is probably a more accomplished work than Aalto's Finlandia Hall which it is often compared to.

THE MARXISTS

In the late 60s and during the 70s, the Marxists "excommunicated" Penttilä. His work was written about as degenerate, expressive and individual. The attack was personal and rude. Anyone who did not conform to the Marxist-Leninist tabula rasa was condemned. Penttilä, amongst others, was the "subjective" animal the naive ideologues turned their dogma against. The result: condemned by naivety for doing naive expressive architecture which represented naive nature. Confusion.

SON OF FARMER

Born in 1931 in Tampere, a son of a farmer, Penttilä became an architect for pragmatic reasons; to know how to build the possible farm buildings necessary back home. He studied in Helsinki, entered competitions and as a young man instantly won awards. It was easy to appear invincible and behave aloof. Most architects thought the discipline could save their society if not the world. Like so many others, Penttilä had the requisite arrogance of the Professional Modern Architect. World fame passed on to everyone. It was an arrogance passed on from Aalto. The only difference now is Penttilä admits to the "game" whilst this arrogance

has passed to those who condemned him in the Salad Days of Marxist-Leninism.

DISAPPEARANCE

From being one of the most promising of a new generation of Finnish architects, Penttilä, in effect, disappeared. Since the time he left Finland around 1981 hardly a mention of him can be found in the architectural press in his own country. This, despite the fact that he has worked, built and taught for the last fifteen years in the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna.

AALTO EGO

In a way Penttilä became the Aalto Ego. Those that remained in the country stubbornly and individually attempted, fashioned and achieved an essentially Finnish architecture. It was a deliberate strategy to represent Finland during the Soviet period. Penttilä would have none of this. He already suspected Architecture's metaphysical reach. Taking on the Marxists in their own country, he began an indefatigable one-man war, albeit gentle, against being labelled individualistic, subjective and degenerate. He didn't do this by using landscape and nature as generators of an architectural vocabulary. He chose another way entirely.

ARCHITECTURE & MORALITY

Penttilä remains the one architect who could have furthered the vocabulary he was working on into an architecture of distinction. He was not interested in nature-metaphors or the alibis that flirtatious philosophy brought. Always oscillating between the higher art of architecture's metaphysical reach and the solid, gentle art of good building, he looked elsewhere.

THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE

Penttilä could have continued to produce an architecture that not only avoided the whims of architectural fashion in the 1980s, but it could have been as distinctive and as important as, for example, Alvaro Siza's work. That is, if he had attended seminars, conferences, given lectures and accepted invitations. In other words, if he had continued to "make his presence" felt on the circuit and in the one or two clubs that controlled "world architectural discourse". He again chose differently. He became a Pragmatic Architect. He travelled, sailed, designed and dined. He already suspected that a Jealousy of Architects would ensure their own survival. He anticipated the "game" of the last 20 years in architecture ahead of its own pathos. Fortunately?

HERR PROFESSOR

In 1981 Penttilä accepted a Professorship in Vienna; an appointment stage-managed by the Austrian architect Roland Rainer. He left Finland to occupy Otto Wagner's renowned studio high up in the Vienna Academy. In 1997, after 15 years of teaching and less and less architecture, he retired. Tired and disenchanted with

the profession, the Academy, the City and the jealousy of architects, he chooses again differently. Instead of a return to Finland, he is now an Austrian citizen: a condition of an Academy Professorship. He will remain where he has always remained, outside Helsinki whilst living in Tuscany.

A JEALOUSY OF ARCHITECTS

Each year, for fifteen years, Penttilä has spent in three places; Vienna in Austria, Sinalunga in Italy and Supru in Lapland. To Penttilä the world's cities are all that remains of an uncertain architecture, a betrayed past and the "jealousy of architects". Closed places and closed societies; keen on awards and fame, the profession recreates these in a disservice to architecture. To Penttilä, the history of Modern Architecture is as fake as the discipline of architecture today. He sees no reason to be in London, New York or Paris. He does his best to by-pass these cities wherever possible. In a recent commemoration of the Finnish Museum of Architecture (1996), where he was once its Vice President, he received no invitation, no notification of its celebration. Foreign "luminati" are invited to confirm this "fake" history whilst he is continually and consistently ignored. It is a logic he is both comfortable with and no longer needs to challenge. This is the fortunate condition.

PERSONA NON GRATA

To all intents and purposes, he has become a persona non grata. The tax office officially does not recognise him as he is now classed as Austrian. The Profession is closed to any achievement, history or research. Questions could be posed. What happened in 1980 and 1981 when Penttilä proposed quite the bravest project for downtown Tampere? Defeated by small-town politics? Cigarillo-culture! What happened to the projects like the Nokia HQ that were "appreciated" but sidelined? Defeated by the jealousy of architects? His work was considered "not Finnish enough". The same architects are now winning prizes with buildings equally "non-Finnish" but international enough!

EXCOMMUNICATION

What forced him to leave, if not the seduction of a European professorship? The Good Life? The Reclusive Life? A Fortunate Life Apart? Why would a person of such distinction and talent want nothing to do with his own country? What in this story is specific, what in the story is more general? Pessimism, melancholy and solitude? Immutability and nostalgia? The untimely architect? Why should these issues interest us and not the society which – unable to dream – would prefer more mouldable heroes like Aalto and Saarinen? Heroes they can turn into cultural property. Another choice Penttilä has taken differently.

THE OUTSIDER

The man apart? Difficult? Uncommunicative? Taciturn? Aloof? Rumour always

has it that the cabal in a small society acts as protectively and as ruthlessly as any African tribe. Penttilä's triangular existence is extraordinary in its consistency. An outcast in the traditional sense of the word, Penttilä in exile remains a committed, impassioned and disciplined architectural thinker.

PHILOSOPHY

At present Penttilä is at work on a manuscript that looks as if, in its bravery and risk, it could just about challenge and insult everything and everyone considered dignified in contemporary architecture. Yet architecture, if anything at all today, is hardly dignified. More, Penttilä's reformulation of architectural history and philosophy, challenges the very slippery metaphysical claims made in the name of a contemporary, radical architecture continually more and more misunderstood and flirtatious. A nihilistic view, he is aware that with nothing to put back in place of the cynical reason, he is open to instant dismissal as a joker. Insane? Bitter? Cynical? No Academic is likely to consider his re-interpretation of the world history of architecture for in so doing they may have to entertain their own possible errors and positions. So who will publish or even read his manuscript?

CABAL

Any cabal is compromised by a Professorial membership club that holds everything of its past to ransom. Being in that position, it can falsify events from the past in order that they conform to what is carried out in the present. Scarce friendship turns to steel, as Paavo Haavikko put it. Helsinki differs only from Vienna in scale not provincialism or conservatism. There is no love lost amongst leading architects. The traditional institutions of fair play and open speech are strangled by the "charm" and politics of respect demanded by the cabal. Outsiders, foreigners, are also charmed into acceptance of the very blindness they witness.

RUDENESS

Rudeness is a talent only if it can save itself from its own primitiveness. The guiding professional spirit of Finnish Architecture, like Austrian Architecture, is paper-thin. At best it is enthusiastic, at worst undemocratic and frightened. The days when the cabal rebelled against Alvar Aalto's tyranny or Otto Wagner's hegemony are crudely repeated in the present as other-minded architectural thinkers, younger talents, are forced to pay lip-service. The poetics of fear become as important as the poetics of silence.

EUROPA

Rudderless, the professional institution seeks comfort in the aching applause of its expected achievements. And in Finland, Penttilä was once part of those expected and applauded achievements? What happened? As Finns (and the society in general) desperately try to be European and understand what it means to "integrate" whilst staying apart, as we see Government Ministers parading in Italian

high fashion to their own applause with few foreigners in sight, there might be some credibility in the oft-heard cry that the Finnish society cannot afford to be interested outside itself. If it was, it would drown, or disappear. Or so the logic of pessimism and un-dreaming goes.

THE ANTI-FINN

Is Timo Penttilä the healthy Anti-Finn that the society cannot listen to? Is he the insane Anti-Finn who cannot be respected because he refuses to play according to the insipid rules of his own society? Is he the fortunate Anti-Finn who really is relieved of such weight? As Witold Gombrowicz so accurately stripped the Polish society of its pretence and immaturity, so might we imagine a figure like Penttilä. Why then the resistance?

THE FORTUNATE

It is highly likely that Penttilä was and remains fortunate. To remain outside and to remain a thinker during such a dismal stage in society, and during such an orchestrated period in architectural history (where the “Architectural Bull” strangles discourse) is indeed an achievement. Yet there is more to this story than this. Is it fortunate to remain outside such a competitively self-censoring society, shrugging off post-Marxist dogma and a misguided sense of inner exile?

2

SEQUENCES

PART 1 – THE UNCHANGING NATURE OF PESSIMISM

Site A/Sight A – Toscana

WORDS/SITES

The ARCHITECT (A) – Gentile Architetto – in Castello, Sinalunga, Toscana (Site A)

- 1 The Discussions (The Architectural Bull): NAIVETY
- 2 The Right to Choose – Why Architecture? Farmer’s son/build the barns!
- 3 Life’s Decision (with a capital L) From the barn to a profession. To belong, to participate, to win awards. The NAIVE architect
- 4 A Metaphor Apart: The House in Toscana, the sauna and wine cellar. Craft, building and tradition. Vitruvius and Alberti.

IMAGES/SIGHTS

The PASSENGER (P) arriving to and in Sinalunga

- 1 Pre-arrival: The naivety of choice – why architecture – The NAIVE Student
- 2 Airport(s): Rome Airport/ Flight No. AZ 0137.
- 3 Arrival : The Toscana Countryside from the Train. The Roman Empire’s residue: Architecture’s next Degree Zero after Greece.
- 4 Destination: The Site. Castello: The arrival from Sinalunga Railway Station

to the house on the mountain road.

PART 2 – THE UNCHANGING NATURE OF MELANCHOLY

Site B/Sight B

WORDS

Site B-Vienna

The Architect (A) – Herr Professor in The Atelier, The Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna

1 Discussions: The Architectural Bull 2: Le Corbusier, Wagner, Vienna: the centre of Modernism?

2 The Right to Choose: The Arbitrary choice – students, fashion & disbelief! The confusing end of the 20th century.

3 Life's decision: The morale of servitude – The Academy Cabal and the Melancholy – A Jealousy of Architects – The PRAGMATIC Architect

4 Metaphor: The drawing board, couch, CD player & portable TV. Freud & The Atelier of Otto Wagner – Chez Penttilä/Herr Professor

IMAGES/ Sight B

The Passenger (P) approaching the Academy

1. Pre-arrival: Central Europe, via Paris or Copenhagen: the Pragmatic Student. The Hijack of Knowledge

2. Airport: Vienna - Harrods.

3. Arrival: Taxi/Tram – The Empire streets of Vienna

4. Destination: The Academy: The Atelier via the lobby, the stairs and the “decaying” unchanging conservative corridors of the Academy.

PART 3 – THE UNCHANGING NATURE OF SOLITUDE

Site C/Sight C

WORDS

Site C/Lapland

The Architect (A) – Arkkitehti – in Ivalo, Lapland

1. Discussions: The Architectural Bull 3: The Logics of Disenchantment From Le Corbusier to Virtuvius via Hermestrismegistus.

2. The Right to Choose: Apartness; the privilege of solitude

3. Life's decision: The Fortunate Architect: Nature, culture, roots.

4. Metaphor: The Fishing Lodge, Supru, near Ivalo, Lapland

IMAGES/Sight C

The Passenger (P) arriving to Ivalo

1. Pre arrival: 20th.C. Joke Knowledge; from disbelief to re-enchantment?

2. Airport: Rovaniemi Airport. Hi-tech meets Reindeer tourism.

3. Arrival: Rovaniemi to Ivalo; Jeep travel. Beyond the Arctic Circle.

4. Destination: The journey on foot from the jeep to the lodge. (snow/winter)

PART 4 – THE OPTIMISM OF EXILE

The kitchen in Sinalunga. No words.

3

PRODUCTION NOTE

The film is based on the merging and colliding ideas, sites and sights of The Architect (A) and The Passenger (P). It begins with NAIVETY and traverses through THE PRAGMATIC to DISBELIEF. The film does not attempt anything special to alter the pessimism encountered in the two characters. There is no speech in sync except the arbitrary, accidental. WORDS (voice over – narrator) are narrated backwards starting with 1. An older voice, 2. A mid-range voice, 3. A child's voice. WORDS accompany yet challenge the IMAGES shown; they are not descriptive of what is seen. The voices are apart from the writing. No attempt is made to turn the architect Timo Penttilä into the actor he is not or ask him to perform for the "screen".

A SPECIFICATION to be going on with the MORAL and the INFORMATION:
3 parts approx. 15-20m. each. Plus 4/5 m.

I. PRE-PRODUCTION:

1. Sinalunga; Research trip. 3 days. RC. June 1996. (Completed)
2. Ivalo. Winter 1996. 3-4 days. RC. To be completed.
3. Vienna: The Academy. Spring 1997 (last chance before retirement - RC + crew).
This material used in the final film.
Material. Sony Digital Tape. Video Cam.

II. PRODUCTION:

(RC plus prod. Assistant, Camera and Sound)

(In collaboration with Yle TV1/Werning)

1. Sinalunga 1997. Summer/Autumn. 4 days. Via Rome
2. Ivalo, Lapland. Winter/Spring 97/98. 4 days
(Material Betacam or Sony Digital)

III. EDITING

- Narration/Script RC. Voice recording. 3 days
- Sound Planning, Music etc. 2 days
- Editing 10 days

Proposed Broadcast: 1998

(5)
Correspondence 1994-96

1

Dear Professor Penttilä,

I am writing to you after a brief meeting with Margarethe Cufer whilst I was recently in Vienna invited by The Architektur Zentrum. I have just completed a couple of films for the Finnish Television (YLE TV1). The first was "Take Five" and explored the five young students who won the Finnish Pavilion entry for the Seville, World Expo 1992. The second film, "27 White Lies", recently competed after Reima Pietilä's death, is a personal fictional documentary that includes an alphabet on architecture and a discussion in heaven with the Indian philosopher Rabindranath Tagore. I plan a third film, already shot in Venice and Saarijärvi, and a fourth one this summer around the Venice Biennale called "Wildly Oscillating around Zero."

I heard from Ms. Cufer that you had a manuscript in English on architecture. Having published my own books on architecture in both Finland and for MIT Press, and also in my capacity as a publishing consultant in Finland at Painatuskeskus, (we collaborate with MIT also), I would be very interested in reading the manuscript. I am sure having followed your work whilst in Finland, and also since your teaching abroad, that the manuscript would be of interest to a wider audience. Naturally I would not do anything unless you wished it but would hope that you could – in complete confidence from my side – allow me to read the work.

I hope that you find this interesting and that if upon agreement and after a possible reading of the Ms. we could meet up. Perhaps next time I am in Vienna. My opinion of the discourse in architecture and especially Finnish architecture is that it badly needs opening up. I am sure that a text such as yours might help indicate a way. I look forward to hearing from you and hope you could send me a copy of the work to read as soon as possible.

My sincere regards,

Roger Connah

Helsinki 22.11.1994

2

Dear Timo,

Thank you for your letter and I am looking forward to seeing the manuscript when it is ready. I look forward to helping or collaborating in any way possible. As to jeopardising my present relation with architects, I don't think I could do it any more. I have just finished a long poem about the carnival-seminar circuit in world architecture called *Welcome to The Hotel Architecture* and an architectural

novel called *Put your Tongue Away*. I think I will have difficulty publishing these but I will persevere. I will bring/send you a copy of the poem later in spring when it is finished.

Can I ask your advice? I have been invited to apply for a Professorship (Ordinary: Master Class) in Linz University of Artistic and Industrial Arts. It began with a request by the student's representative and I am now down to the last six. I have been invited for a presentation lecture/interview. What chances do you think I have? I would like the post and could offer, I feel, much to students at this level. But is there a realistic chance of getting it amongst the politics of selection? Hope to meet up if I do get to Austria this March for a lecture.

Yours,

Roger Connah
Helsinki 6.2.1995

3

Dear Timo,

I hope you received my last note. I will be in Vienna arriving Tuesday 21st March (probably afternoon). Would it be possible to meet during Wednesday 22nd March at your convenience?

I leave for Linz and the Professorial interview on the 23rd.

I look forward to meeting.

Yours

Roger Connah
Helsinki 17.2.1995.

4

Helsinki 29.6.1995.

Dear Timo,

I am sorry not to have written earlier. I have been through the manuscript so far and eagerly await the remainder. What follows are immediate comments and need to be reconsidered and refined upon reading the whole manuscript. I feel – without doubt – that you are asking the right questions, and also with the right amount of directness, frontal outrage and understatement. It may be that you do it in such a surprising and unrelenting manner that it frightens the publisher(s). Perhaps this is as it should be with such a text.

Though I feel myself unable to keep up at all times with the philosophical sparring, even the wonderful irreverence, I find it thoroughly enjoyable. As with many pleasurable things, I go in and out of meaning in your text; something I find immensely rewarding in itself. The pathetic condition of today's architectural science you describe so well; often I heard echoes to the type of sentences that Gombrowicz used when distancing himself "frontally" from Poland and Polish émigré literature.

(Cf. Witold Gombrowicz, *Diary*. Vols. 1,2,3 Northwestern University Press). I sense the same desire, too, as my own, though in a completely different form, of finding ways to poke out the falsely reverent, the servile idealism and mediocre admiration for all things architectural, metaphysical and philosophical. I suspect the problem with the publisher(s) is that they too do not know how to validate such a text; which again should be so if it is to be so challenging. But I am sure one will be found eventually.

There are sophistications in the text that I am sure too, I only catch from a distance. You may not be a friend of the subdivided text with more subtitles and interval titles, but I think this would help the accessibility of the text; it would also help the reader identify immediately the range of the text and the issues taken up. Of course, this is just a device and the “readability” still remains that of each person. At this stage though I won’t say more about editing; the text might gain by some tightening methods (word choice/word order etc.) without damaging the flow and the general brilliance of the approach. But that is only something to be discussed when the text is finished and read(y) in its entirety.

I like very much the parts where you admit to a difference (Builder’s Realism challenging Idealism etc.) with the mainstream and also where you lead the reader into sentences such as: “At this point we are ready to attempt our first provisional definition of architecture...” (11) and also important lines like “Moreover, it is not clear why building ought to be an interesting activity for a metaphysician.” (12). Another point worth stressing is the wide range of reference; from Lieber & Helmer, Wolfe, Rowe to Copleston on one page. I don’t know why, but I think this challenging reach brings something that other writers would like to achieve but often fail.

The continuous questioning inside the text is important: “What does such a strange vantage point mean in (the) Architect’s practice?” Such lines invite the reader into the same questioning as the writer. They also invite other questions without resorting to continuous doubt and more fashionable undecidability. Quietly and cleverly, absurdity builds and starts turning back on itself, like the use of Kahn’s words turning back on extravagant claims for architecture by Kahn himself.

I also enjoyed the way you were able to show how writers like Frampton have been able to colour the balls for their own game. Philosophy in architecture seems to have allowed so many writers and critics to move the goalposts for their own unpredictability (and undecidability). Your pieces on Derrida amplify this. Much of this suspect eminence passing as serious architectural thinking needs deflating. To squeeze out the errant wisdom has become as trivial today as it is spectacular to some; all relying on the scaffold of the scaffold, the same “falsified and falsifying” metaphysics. Much of this needs saying and needs risking the obvious

consequences, as you intimated, of further ostracism, exile and even oblivion.

The aspect of fit in spiritual and philosophical explanations is well approached: I feel you are reading “in between” Rowe for example and not necessarily counter; this has more convincing power to reveal the catastrophic wishful thinking throughout most architectural thinking. I could go on: Tschumi, Derrida, Pérez Gómez, Giedeon, Rowe, Venturi – these are my initial and unstructured reactions – it is refreshing to read someone handling the contemporary fudging in architectural philosophy without the reverence and further guilt of an “archobabble”.

I await the development into the “normative” discussion hinted at in the text so far. For me, too, there is a similar dulling triviality and monumentality of words and ideas that have enthralled and seduced a whole generation(s) of architects and students that interests me. My own problem is how to approach this and describe this?

The text so far has a seductive vista about it. Claims are lucid, even brilliant, especially when they open up exaggeration to its potential as many of the writers you discuss have done so blatantly. The sections on post-modernism, the renaissance etc., can be taken – frankly and refreshingly – literally or then as dismantlers of the cant and scaffolds of thinkers who have arranged for themselves inter-textuality and inter-architextuality (and other such frightful phraseology). Even better I feel is how you admit to being part of it, yet often through the dryness, your understatement is worth more than endless pages of Derrida’s haunt or sky-hook academy (Post-structural and Post-humanistic sentiment).

The call for a personal definition of architecture goes on and I await the text development. I’ve probably misunderstood more than I should. Though your words parallel much of my own thinking on the irrelevance and falseness of much philosophy in architecture, I feel your approach more consistent and far-reaching than mine. Certainly more important! I will re-read the text so far when I have time and look forward to further discussion. As I said, I offer my help in any way should you need it. I definitely think it should be published sooner rather than later.

I wish you a good summer. I feel at an end with things-Finnish and am looking for that move – Linz remains undecided though I am the student’s candidate for the professorship (no final threesome has been delivered to the Ministry as I understand the inner squabbles continue). In the meantime – more as a final attempt – I have applied for the Editorship of *Arkkitehtilehti* (which is in a financial and critical mess). I am not sure they will consider my application (foreigner, outsider, non-architect etc.) but I think it would be good to open it up. It is desperately in need of a fresh approach and critical seriousness but I secretly wonder if I am

wasting my time.

I look forward to hearing from you and receiving more of the text. Take these comments for what they are: immediate responses.

Yours

RC

5

Helsinki 27.7.1995

Timo – hope you received my recent letter. As I said, I look forward to receiving the next part(s) of the manuscript. I am at present here in Stockholm preparing lectures for Cornell and putting together a new book at the same time. Delightfully, perhaps also surprisingly, after all the students' support and assistants' work, I have reached the final three as one of the Candidate-Professors in Linz. The three names now go to the Minister, Dr. Sholten, in Vienna for selection. The other two candidates are Wolfgang Pauzenberger and Roland Gnaiger. I do not know the names at all, perhaps you have heard of them? Would you recommend I do anything at this stage, or should I rely on discretion? I am not sure how the process goes on from here and how and when the candidates are represented to the Minister. Naturally I would like the position, especially after getting so far. But I also think I could bring an energy, depth and openness to the School and its educational development. Something I think it urgently needs after seeing it on my last visit.

I hope we have an opportunity to speak or meet before this.

Again my best wishes for your summer.

Sincerely,

RC

6

Timo Penttilä

c/o Farnetella,

Rigomagno,

Siena, Italy

Stockholm 15.11.1995

Dear Timo

I hope you received my last note. I would like to continue as you suggested with the manuscript reading with a more helpfully constructive and critical approach to the text and its use of English. And I think we might do that better by meeting, say, in Italy away from both Vienna and Finland if it suits you. I also find myself no longer wanting to remain much involved with Finland; the Arkkitehti Editorship was such a dismal, dishonest and "internal" process that credibility drops further. I have been told that both Osmo Lappo (ex officio) and, possibly,

another person we both know well, made it clear, when the committee was near to an appointment, that I should not in any way get the job. Apparently I was very close to being considered seriously for it by the committee, but a late-evening vote was hijacked, for the next day. Then a mysterious new candidate emerged overnight and was brought in. Despicable as it sounds, it is something I have come to expect. I also begin the detachment and must now move on. In a way it, too, is a matter of honesty. Another exile beckons. I think we should pursue our idea of meeting in Italy and talking over things; perhaps for me with the idea of writing something or then filming something, though that would not be a priority. Of course, I only suggest this if you feel you could be comfortable with the idea and we could share an honesty. I am off to Vienna next week, then Graz where my second film is in competition. The professorial "carnival" continues and much lobbying is going on. I have little taste for such lobbying and I suspect the two Austrian candidates are doing their best to persuade others for them. I await the outcome with dispassion. At home my wife and I have a wonderful 15 week old daughter whose unbearable seduction removes all (or most) pain. I wish you well and hope you drop me a note when, and if, you think we could get together in the New Year sometime.

Best
RC

7

Timo Penttilä
c/o Cortonesi
Sinalunga (Siena) Italy

SF© 34240 Kämenniemi

Dear Timo

Thanks for your letter from Supru, 18.1.1996. I am glad you are getting on with the text. And, ultimately, a good translation is no problem; you are probably right to get on in Finnish. Things Finnish for me have in so many ways come to an end or are then winding down. Yet there is a nagging to do one more thing. It might be something we could work on or it might be something else entirely. I have no desire to coerce any project in any predisposed direction. I feel, ultimately however, as an outsider that either I end up wilfully misunderstanding the society or then, in a way to remain sane, patronise the society with hollow interpretations and dubious privilege. Things never "righted" themselves after my period living in India. How could they? Today I read St. John Wilson, Frampton, Quantrell, Curtis and others and I feel I have no longer any interest in the critical merry go round. Frampton asks me to call in the next time I'm in New York and I don't seem to have the energy or the interest. I knew I was predestined (I have always known, indeed preferred) to remain outside but I wanted to test the waters with

the recent *Arkkitehti* editorship post. Since the obvious closing out I have no desire to attempt any further integration.

Yet still the nagging. When I write texts on and around Finnish architecture things come quickly and easily. I recently completed a working essay for an American journal. The text came so fluently, so rapidly and yet I felt I was merely “miming” the knowledge I had gained so far. A sort of re-working of that knowledge, nothing more! I was rehearsing some ridiculous notions of privilege in relation to the subject and the culture. Naturally I was aware of insight amidst the error. I was putting generalisation into error purposely to make the point of estranged knowledge. (I think Naipaul refers to this somewhere as “joke knowledge” in *The Enigma of Arrival*). It felt wondrous though, to race through the text like Samuel Johnson did for his writings in *The Idler*. I seemed to be disgusted at the same time as elated. Still, I believe there is something worth saying in it. Perhaps this is the last illusion; beyond this the reality begins. If the Archive is so predisposed in Finland to remain closed, then I would wish to make a last attempt, perhaps about that very archive. I feel it has relations to what we might talk about, loosely, to the privilege and organisation of knowledge and the favoured architectural discourse(s).

Anyway, I will send a copy of the paper for what it's worth in the near future. I desist for the moment because I wouldn't want to disturb your own work. Alternately I could bring it with me sometime to Italy. I would like the possibility of visiting you. Either May or then autumn would suit me as we must move to a larger apartment in Stockholm during the months June and July. Are you back in Vienna already in autumn for a semester or two?

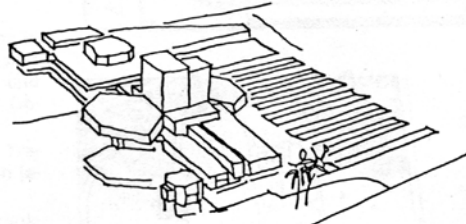
For the moment we will remain here in Stockholm. I propose to stay at home and write whilst my wife Elisabeth continues her work as a curator. To look after my daughter Naja, watch her through the first and second year of learning to speak and write up my Indian Journals. I couldn't wish for anything better. I, too, feel free. The Directorship of the Linz Academy is still undecided and I suspect the delay may be a ploy to remove me from the shortlist (the students have hinted that the Dean was attempting something like this by the delay). None of this matters anymore when there's new work to get on with in freedom.

Hope your own work now is going fluently (and hopefully not as self-disgustingly as mine).

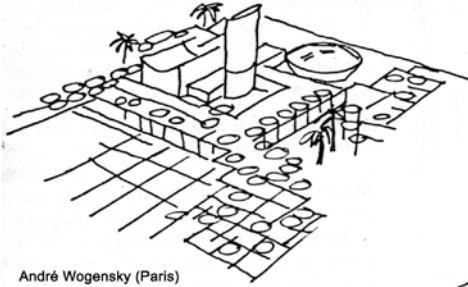
Best,

Roger C.

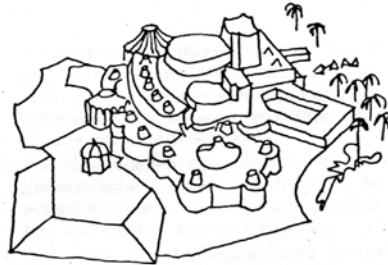
Stockholm. 28.3.1996



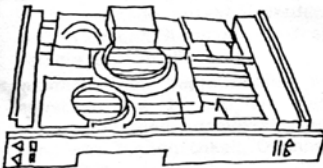
Roland Rainer (Wien)



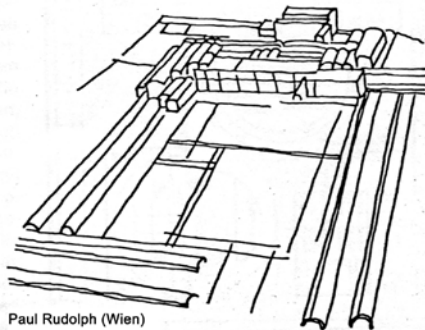
André Wogensky (Paris)



Basil Spence (London)



Timo Penttilä (Helsinki)



Paul Rudolph (Wien)

Entries to the Bahrain Cultural Centre invited architectural competition, 1976. Penttilä's entry received 1st prize, but the project was terminated during the working drawings stage (*Bauen + Wohnen*, 7-8, 1976)

(6)
PRISONER BY CHOICE*

Antti Nousjoki

SCENE 1: Heidelberg, West Germany, 1970

Two men and a woman are being bounced around in a Citroën 2CV as it rattles down the highway. Twilight is falling, and the coolness seeping through the canvas roof is a welcome relief in the car, where the air is thick with cigarette smoke. A tense discussion in Dutch competes with the snarly whine of the car engine.

Man 1: How long is it since he designed something that was actually built?

Man 2: Twenty-five years. But he was a young man then. At the height of his career.

Man 1: Do you think he'll want to talk about it?

Woman: He said in his letter that he's writing a book... but I understand it's not about architecture. He's obviously prepared to talk about the past. Why else would he have agreed to meet us?

Man 2: He's only 68, although it seems ages ago that he...

Man 1: What are we going to ask him? I hear he has a temper. I wouldn't like to turn right back after driving all this way. The petrol alone cost a fortune.

Woman: Let's ask him whether he'd do anything differently if he were now asked to design something similar. Would his architecture be fundamentally different now that the world has changed?

Man 2: Well of course it would! Come on... what a stupid question.

Woman: I'm not so sure...

The argument continues in the car as the driver pulls up outside a traditional farmhouse with a steep pitched roof standing at the top of a hill. The gateposts are rendered and painted white. Above the sign bearing the name of the street and the number 50 is the name A. Speer, carefully crafted in large letters.

SCENE 2: St Gallen, Switzerland, 1414

Two characters in monks' habits are lighting candles on an enormous cast-iron candelabrum. They are talking in easy-going, quiet and low voices in the echoing hall.

Monk 1: The man from Florence is still here, isn't he?

Monk 2: His name is Signor Bracciolini. I was helping him all day: moving ladders, opening cases and dusting the mouldy old things that he's taking such an interest in.

Monk 1: One would have thought that an amanuensis to the Holy Father would have better things to do in these troubled times than pollute his lungs with ancient relics.

The monastery is in dire straits, and he refuses to take our petition to Rome. Why don't you try talking to him again?

Monk 2: I can try. He's in a good mood because he's just found something he likes.

Monk 1: Some more dirty French poetry, I reckon.

Monk 2: No, this was much older, and in ten volumes. We never found any illustrations, although there were supposed to be some. It dates back to the reign of the Emperor Augustus, before the birth of our Saviour. And it's about...

Monk 1: Astrology?

Monk 2: Well, that too, apparently, but the principal topic – if you can believe it – is construction... or 'architecture', as it's called in the book. Signor Bracciolini read out to me in his quavering voice what this ancient Roman author had written. He was some kind of a soldier, I believe. He described in solemn terms how there are true and false architects in the world and how only a true architect can attain the skill of construction that stems from universal truths.

Monk 1: You mark my words, these pagan ideas should be buried even deeper in the cellars.

SCENE 3: Supru, Inari, 1977

Two Sámi men are standing beside a pile of dead-pine logs holding axes. The landscape is flat, and the sun is shining low in the sky. Beyond the stunted trees we see a glittering lake. The silence is broken only by the persistent hum of mosquitoes.

Sámi man 1: Well, now we've got plans. Dammit, as if we couldn't put together a silly little cottage without instructions...

Sámi man 2: At least the plans make sense, though there's some fine architect's name there. Let's just do what the man asked.

Sámi man 1: I don't fucking understand the point of these scribbles. There's no ornaments... no nothing! We could have done a better one without a piece of paper. I've built dozens of cottages, I have.

Sámi man 2: Well, now we don't have to fight about how to build it. We'll brew some coffee and then get down to it. You know that architect owns this plot himself. Why he'd want a cottage like this I don't know. I should've thought he could have afforded a better place somewhere else.

Sámi man 1: Maybe he needs a hidey-hole from his family. You know gentlemen from the south come up here with their fancy women...

Sámi man 2: I hear there's no family. He's a lonely sort of geezer, even if he's had some success.

Sámi man 1 (suddenly serious, with a flash of anger): So what's it to us? He can bloody well please himself. What the fuck are we sitting around for? Let's build the man a cottage.

SCENE 4: Venice, Italy, 1961

Two architects are dining at a restaurant on Campo Santo Stefano. The younger, 25 years old, is dressed in a crisp black suit and wearing elegant, black-rimmed spectacles. He has a prominent boxer's jaw with his hair modishly shaved to a stubble on the sides. His companion, 30 years old, is a little round in the face, and his somewhat overgrown hair reveals a receding hairline. The older man orders wine and a multiple-course dinner in fluent Italian.

Younger architect: You speak Italian really well!

Older architect: It's easy for a Finn to pronounce. I've been reading up on it in my spare time. I bought a really old edition of Alberti's book in that bookshop today. Do you know the book?

Younger architect: I thought you said you weren't interested in theory?

Older architect: I'm attracted to serious discussion – especially in older books. But yeah, I think that theories are of no use in design work.

Younger architect: So tell me what you've found.

Older architect: Alberti says: "A brick wall laid with mortar mixed with principles may fall at the slightest nudge."

Younger architect: Should I be reading this too? Couldn't I just concentrate on design work?

Older architect: What makes me envious of Alberti is that he seems to have been good at everything: he was a builder, a poet and a hell of an athlete. Whereas I feel that I'm going to be a prisoner to architecture for the rest of my life. I suppose these books help me fight that feeling. But now let's eat and drink, and tomorrow we'll go and see the San Marco basilica.

SCENE 5: University of California, Berkeley, USA, 1968

An Austrian-born British professor who enjoys a cult reputation thanks to his idiosyncratic theories and books has just finished his lecture and exchanged a few words with his students. He is now caught up in a slow-moving crowd that is heading for the exit from the architecture department. Suddenly, shouts and rifle shots are heard outside – the sound of large, dry branches breaking. The crowd turns back at the door and charges along the hallway. Some people are thrust against doors as the shouts outside escalate into a roar. A visiting professor, a dozen years older, tackles the British professor deftly into a side corridor. They untangle themselves as the crowd continues to rush past them in the main hallway.

British professor: Thanks – I think. What on earth's going on out there?

Visiting professor: The anti-war demonstrations have turned violent. The National Guard has been called in.

British professor: I – I know nothing about this. Who are you?

Visiting professor: I'm a Finnish architect. I'm visiting here for a year. I've been to

your lectures. I find your thoughts interesting. Your design models amuse me, I'll have to admit. But you're openly intellectual yet practical, and I appreciate that. Other people are content just to...

British professor: So you're the one who designed that theatre? You may be surprised to know that I happen to love that building. I visited it last summer. You've met many of my challenges, and that hasn't been very common in recent years, I can tell you. I'm working on a more detailed model, a book... we should talk about it.

Visiting professor: Thank you. Back home I'm ridiculed for designing an old-fashioned, elitist monument...

The British professor stands up and looks down the empty hallway. The roar of the demonstration can still be faintly heard outside.

British professor: I feel old.

Visiting professor: Just imagine how I feel...

SCENE 6: Vienna, Austria, 1984

A spring evening. A student is leaving the drafting studio with a working model. There is a light in the principal professor's office at the end of the corridor. The student, encouraged by words of praise he received earlier, collects himself and knocks on the door. No answer. Another knock. A sigh and the rustling of paper are heard inside. Was that sketching paper, the student wonders. If the professor is drawing something, it would be best to beat a quiet retreat. Suddenly, there is a flood of cursing in a foreign language.

Professor: Incredible crap.

The student is startled. What to do now? Did he even hear the knock? Were the curses directed at him?

Professor: This is the last straw.

The professor seems to be talking to himself. The student hears the heavy chair swivelling. He steels himself and looks inside. It is more like a studio or a business office than a teacher's study. The furniture, impressive as it is, is piled high with books, some of them very old, heaps of paper – sketches, exercises and correspondence – and models. There are several half-unpacked suitcases. The professor is seated with his back to the new arrival, motionless in his heavy chair, staring out of the window. A half-empty bottle of Chianti stands on the desk beside him. On the floor, flung there by an irritated hand, is a sheaf of papers – the source of the outburst just now.

Professor: They can stuff their pathetic little sandbox.

This is obviously not the best moment to ask about an internship at the professor's office back in his home country.

Student: Professor, I'll help you pick these up.

Professor: What are you doing here?

Student: I was going to ask you...

Professor: No, no, I mean what are you doing at the Academy? You should be studying something more sensible, architecture is just not worth the bother...

The student grabs the papers off the floor and parks them on the edge of the desk and then scuttles towards the door. His gaze finds a curious logo that is printed on every sheet in that sheaf of papers: Nokia Oy Ab.

SCENE 7: Helsinki, Finland, 1986

After the rest of the jury has left, the mayor (National Coalition) and the deputy mayor (Social Democratic Party) are left alone in the meeting room at City Hall.

NC: This is exactly why I have no patience with these design competitions.

SD: Times are changing, fortunately. We just happened to be landed with a maestro of the old school on the jury.

NC: Who is he exactly?

SD: Well, believe it or not, he's a sort of businessman-architect. His colleagues consider him very right-wing. He's from Tampere. He designed the Helsinki City Theatre.

NC: I thought that was Aalto?

SD: Watch it...

NC: We were getting on so well except for him. Töölönlahti has been a wasteland for too long. What we need now is pragmatism, not complicated visions.

SD: Of course we do. No one person could be entrusted with the design of such a key area in the city. Civil servants work through analysis and reason. A shared first prize would give a good foundation for further work.

NC: He threatened to enter a dissenting opinion in the minutes! Doesn't he care about the implications for his office? He doesn't seem anything like the businessman-architects I know.

SD: He has a teaching position somewhere abroad these days. I'm very much afraid that he'll do what he said. And he has a sharp pen too. I have a feeling we haven't heard the last of this. But even more than that, I'm afraid that...

NC: That he may be right?

SCENE 8: Manama, Bahrain, 2014

A young sheikh looks on as assistants hired by the construction company are arranging models of design proposals around the landscape mock-up. The Jordanian project manager looks nervous, as always.

PM: It's still going to take a while to get ready, but I can assure you, Your Excellency, that your father and yourself and your whole family, and the nation, will be satisfied with our offering this time.

Young sheikh: Calm down. This project was being planned long before you were even a twinkle in the eye of your merchant father.

PM: My father was a consultant... but, you mean there are other plans for the cultural centre?

Young sheikh: Yes. We have a brilliant plan dating from the late 1970s. The model is still in my father's study.

PM: Really? I mean, why hasn't His Excellency built it?

Young sheikh: My father's father, Allah rest his soul, vetoed the building at the last moment. I don't know why. My father refuses to discuss the subject.

The young sheikh sits down and motions the Jordanian project manager to sit down beside him.

Young sheikh: My father won't be joining us today. We may begin. Call in the first architect.

SCENE 9: Paris, 1923

A small art publishing house on the ground floor in the 7th arrondissement. The name of the company is painted in a curved design on the window: Les Éditions G. Crès et Cie. On the street side, a small shop displays neat rows of books on the very latest French art. Two moustached publishers are studying a manuscript.

Publisher 1: I'd never heard of the magazine in which these writings were published. I don't believe anyone else has either.

Publisher 2: No wonder. Ozenfant is a strange fellow, but his friend, now he's a really strange character... I was about to turn them away before they even got the papers out of the briefcase. But here we are.

Publisher 1: What do you think?

Publisher 2: To tell you the truth, I was just going to skim through it and return it to Ozenfant with my regrets. But I ended up reading one paragraph after another without even taking time to sit down. We're used to spending time with artists and publishing their catalogues, standing up for Cubism or what have you, but a book like this...

Publisher 1: Should we ignore it? Could we? Just bury it somewhere? Buy up the rights and then smother it with silence? Let's see if they mean business.

Publisher 2: *Oh, they mean business all right. And you know we've talked about a book that could change the world, you and I. I believe this is it... what I don't know is whether it could change the world for the better.*

Publisher 2: *Perhaps Ozenfant could teach him how to paint fashionably and how to drink absinthe? It's worked with others.*

SCENE 10: Vattula, Teisko, 1949

The door of a summer cottage slams. The mother lifts her eyes up from her magazine and tries to tell whether both of them have come back. No, just the father.

Mother: Where's the boy?

Father: On the dock. But we didn't argue. Don't worry.

Mother: Good. I know he's a sensible boy at heart, and he'll understand that we have his best interests in mind.

Father: That's not how it went.

Mother: What?

Father: He's going to become an architect. There's nothing we can do about it. The world is changing.

Mother: But we agreed that he would become an agronomist! Or an engineer at the very least!

Father: He's made up his mind. Or it's like someone has made up his mind for him. I understood that just now. I tried to warn him. I told him that with his temperament such a career could sweep him along so fully that he wouldn't have time for anything else.

Mother: How will he do down there in Helsinki?

Father: That's not what I'm worried about. He's talented, very bright and has a sharp way with words. But he's too hard on himself. I'm afraid that such a profession will engulf him.

NOTES

Scene 1:

Joost Meuwissen, Hélène Declodet and Hans Berger, architecture students at the Delft University of Technology, visited Albert Speer at his home in Heidelberg in May 1970. His career as an architect, like that of Penttilä, came to a premature end: Speer was imprisoned and eventually released to his old home; Penttilä was a professor in Vienna but then ended up a recluse in his cottage in Lapland.

Scene 2:

Poggio Bracciolini, a man of letters from Florence, discovered a copy of Vitruvius's work *De architectura* at the monastery of St Gallen in 1414. In his book *Oikeat ja väärät arkkitehdit* (True and false architects), Penttilä discusses Vitruvius's theories at length and critically.

Scene 3:

Timo Penttilä had a cottage in the middle of nowhere in Supru in the Sevetijärvi area of Inari in Lapland.

Scene 4:

When design work on the Helsinki City Theatre had begun, Penttilä took his key collaborators and his young project architect Pekka Salminen on a fact-finding mission to several major theatres in central

Europe. Penttilä and Salminen continued to Venice.

Scene 5:

Penttilä was a visiting professor at the University of California, Berkeley in 1968–1969. During that time, there was a series of violent demonstrations against the Vietnam War on campus. The young Christopher Alexander was a professor at Berkeley and at the time working on his principal work, *Pattern Language*. Alexander visited Helsinki in summer 1968.

Scene 6:

While Penttilä held a chair in Vienna, he continued his design work and regularly visited his office back in Finland. In 1984, Penttilä's office lost the invited design competition for Nokia's headquarters in Keilaniemi outside Helsinki.

Scene 7:

Penttilä was a jury member in the design competition for the Töölönlahti bay area in Helsinki in 1986 and entered a dissenting opinion on the decision in the jury minutes. He also wrote a scathing article on the outcome in *Helsingin Sanomat*.

Scene 8:

Penttilä's principal work in the 1970s was the design for a massive cultural centre in Bahrain. The design work progressed to an advanced stage, but the building was never built. Even today, the Gulf States commission many sketches from foreign architects, Finnish ones too, but it is never certain whether any of these projects will ever see the light of day.

Scene 9:

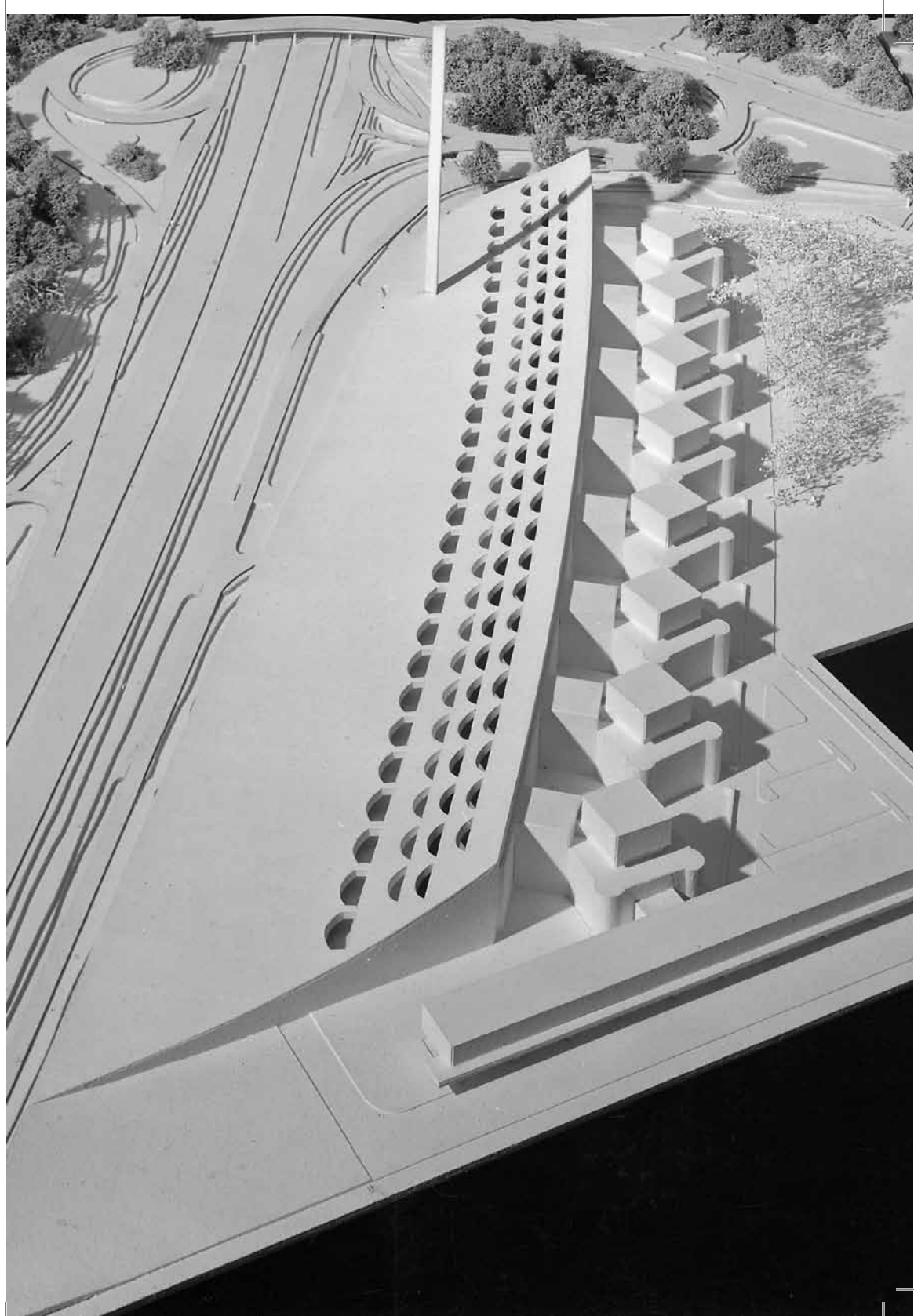
Le Corbusier was a relatively unknown architect when he published his breakthrough work *Vers une Architecture* in 1923. Penttilä's book *Oikeat ja väärät arkkitehdit* (True and False Architects) was published posthumously. In the book, he discusses Le Corbusier's theories, among others.

Scene 10:

This conversation refers to the epilogue, titled 'Vattulan laivalaiturilla' (On the dock at Vattula), of Penttilä's book *Oikeat ja väärät arkkitehdit. 2000 vuotta arkkitehtuuriteoriaa*. [True and false architects. 2000 years of architectural theory], Gaudeamus, Helsinki, 2013.

*Inspired by the book *Oikeat ja väärät arkkitehdit* (True and False Architects), Antti Nousjoki wrote a play showcasing the architect's life. The settings and people are based on actual events, but the dialogue and other details have been created by the author.

>> Nokia Headquarters, Espoo, competition entry, 1983.



(7)
AN ARCHITECTURE OF
ADAPTION*

Jorma Mukala

Timo Penttilä's first buildings were completed at the beginning of the 1960s and the last one in 1988.¹ His oeuvre can be divided into two periods, though there is no sharp difference between them. The works from the first period – from the end of the 1950s until 1967 – are mainly public buildings. The architecture can be characterised as sculptural in form and the totality as the “organic” transformation of form.² Materiality was from the very beginning an important part of the expression, as was a clear building structure. The second period began at the beginning of the 1970s, and the design tasks were mainly industrial buildings and office buildings. Their character was dominated by broad brushstrokes. The architectonic totality was now built as a system of orthogonal units, and the organic sculpturality of the forms became less important. Works from both periods are indeed dynamic and dramatic, but minimalistic modesty was never one of Penttilä's objectives.

At the beginning of his career Penttilä worked in collaboration with his architect-friend Kari Virta. They were students in the same year in architecture school, became friends and also undertook together a long study trip through Italy. As young architects, after spending a day at work in an architect's office – they were employed in different offices – they participated together in architectural competitions. The cooperation worked well and within a short time they achieved much success: in 1958 they received second prize in the competition for the Seinäjoki town hall, and first prize in the competition for the Sampola adult education centre and school, and in 1960 first prize in the competition for the Tampere Business School, first prize in the competition for the Helsinki City Theatre, and third prize in the competition for the remodelling of Helsinki City Hall.

When Penttilä took on the task of implementing the Helsinki City Theatre their working partnership came to an end. Kari Virta oversaw the construction of the Tampere Business School and then continued as an architect with his own office. In 1968 he won the architecture competition for the design of the University of Oulu campus. The design, with its structuralist layout, together with the later extension, became Virta's most well known work.

The distinguishing features of Penttilä's architecture from the 1960s can be illustrated in four buildings. In each building a different material dominates and also the architectonic structural composition differs. The character of the Salokunta parish centre is typical of the 1950s. The white surfaces and vivid

modernism of Sampola, as well as its main entrance hall with its sculptural plasticity, can be seen as having a family resemblance with Aalto's architecture. The character of the Ratina Stadium is derived from its structurality and rough materiality. The Helsinki City Theatre adapts beautifully to the topography of the surrounding park and is unique in its organicness. The buildings tell of the development of the architect's expression towards a new position in one work to the next.

The Salokunta parish centre (1962) in Karkku was Penttilä's first individual work. Circumscribing an inner courtyard, the redbrick ensemble repeats favoured themes of the 1950s. Säynätsalo municipal hall (Alvar Aalto, 1952) and the Otoniemi Chapel (Kaija and Heikki Sirén, 1957) had made well-known the composition of a courtyard-redbrick-wood structure. These two well-known buildings were undoubtedly role models when Penttilä executed his own interpretation of these themes. The originality of the young architect is evident, however, in the robust wood structures and wood benches.

The Sampola adult education centre and school (1962) in central Tampere was a result of the cooperation between Penttilä and Virta. The basic design solution stems from the orientations of the street lines of the site. Situated in the wedge-like or fan-shaped spaces between narrow blocks are the auditorium and entrance hall. The sculpturality of the auditorium and entrance space, along with their lighting solutions, show the influence of Aalto. The white facades, with their strip windows, and the 3-storey classroom wing lifted up on pillars repeat the principles of Le Corbusier from the 1920s. The low classroom wing frames the peaceful courtyard space.

The concrete-construction Ratina Stadium (1966), adjacent to the slow moving waters of the Tammerkoski river, is in a central location in relation to the Tampere cityscape. The tall rectilinear floodlighting masts establish a landscape connection to the old factory chimneys of Tammerkoski. The handsome main stadium structure and fair-faced concrete as a material define the stature of the architecture. The Brutalist concrete aesthetic – the concrete having no surface of its own – suits well the building's use. Fair-faced concrete was part of the renewal process of the 1960s. Aarno Ruusuvuori developed the concrete aesthetic as an austere minimalism (Tapiola Church 1965; Weilin&Göös printing house, nowadays the EMMA Museum of Modern Art, Espoo 1965). Penttilä's approach is more prosaic and one of broader brushstrokes compared to Ruusuvuori's minimalism.

The Helsinki City Theatre (1967) was the synthesis of the early period of Penttilä's career. The organic and sculptural handling of form that occurs in all of Penttilä's designs from the 1960s is at its strongest when adapted to the landscape in the City Theatre. The theatre is a monument close to nature, in which the landscape qualities extend also to the rhythm and outlook of the foyer space. Right down to the individual details, the carefully designed building continues in its architecture Aalto's approach, without in the least copying it. Notable

buildings in the same spirit, which offered an alternative to the prevailing rationalism of the 1960s, were the Tempelliaukio Church (Timo Suomalainen, Tuomo Suomalainen, 1969) and the Dipoli Student Union building (Raili and Reima Pietilä, 1967).

Penttilä participated continuously in architecture competitions. For instance, his entry in the competition for the Bergen Concert Hall in 1965 received a purchase. The architecture of the proposal is more sculptural and dramatic than that of the Helsinki City Theatre.

The Helsinki City Theatre had been very demanding, and perhaps the architect's ideas and thoughts of the 1960s received their ultimate form in that particular building. On its completion, Penttilä took up a visiting professorship at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1968-69. On returning to Finland, while working on a few projects, his architectural expression developed a new direction. During the 1970s the totality of design was built of separate parts and generally rectangular-shaped blocks, forms were cut away from these and composed in a system of orthogonals. His departure from the "growth" of the organic shape of the Helsinki City Theatre is explicit. Sculpturality became tectonicity, the structural parts and simple blocks became the composition.

On the other hand, building technology had changed by the beginning of the 1970s; the handcraft working methods up to the 1950s had made way for industrial-based construction. Due to rationalization, the prefabricated element technique became more widespread. Penttilä responded to the technology very practically. He did not develop any constructional systems nor did he emphasise technology as a component of his architecture, but rather applied technology in accordance with the situation. Technology was a tool. Penttilä's architecture grew firstly from functional objectives, and location and context had a large influence.

Of the works from the "second period", the first to be completed was the City College (1975) in Espoo. It consists of three different buildings, which are gathered together at right-angles around a courtyard. The low main building, including lecture spaces, demarcates the courtyard on two sides, while a four-storey, red-brick dormitory shelters the space. The glazed facades of the main building overlook the courtyard, creating a place that draws together the whole. At the opposite side of the courtyard is a long sauna building with its own swimming pool. The City College is a peaceful totality, well suited to the functional objectives. Missing from its architecture, however, is a gesture or drama typical of Penttilä's works from the 1960s.

The Hanasaari and Salmisaari power stations became the most significant buildings of Penttilä's second period. Both of the large industrial buildings are visible from afar in the Helsinki cityscape. The redbrick building blocks, the concrete flues further stretching the height and the muscular architectonic totality make these important landmarks in the city. Both of them superbly continue the tradition of industrial architecture. Perhaps it was due to the time spent during his childhood and youth next to the redbrick factories of Tampere that the

architect was naturally able to find his own expression of industrial architecture.

In terms of its operations, the Hanasaari power station (1976) comprises different spaces grouped in an orthogonal system and with different sized parts arranged like children's building blocks. The vertical blocks and structural lines generated by the vertical subdivision of the facades give the power station a lively vertical expression. The facades comprise tile-clad concrete elements and steel profiles. The building is easily recognisable. The large entity, notably varying in appearance from different directions, creates a fixed point in the cityscape.

Despite its large size, the Salmisaari power station (1985) coherently complements the area of old industrial buildings. Alko's central depot and offices (Väinö Vähäkallio, 1940) and the city's steam power plant (Hilding Ekelund, 1952) together established a strong industrial milieu that the new redbrick power station both continues and renews. Two horizontal brick masses dominate the totality. The horizontal axis is emphasised by concrete strips which also lighten the expression of the large concrete surfaces. The facades comprise tile-clad pre-fabricated concrete elements. The vertically-oriented masses are finished with dark steel-sheet profiles. The vertical lines culminate in the concrete flue. The architecture succeeds concisely in regard to the basic issues: the contrast of horizontal and vertical axes as well as the contrasting materials of brick and metal.

The office buildings that form part of the extension to the Tapiola centre demonstrate the ability of Penttilä's architecture to adapt to the surroundings, and which are very different from his redbrick power stations. The Finnish Sugar (1980) and Makrotalo (1986) buildings settle into their locations as horizontal, sturdy and white elements within the central business district of Tapiola. Tall columns and highlighted protrusions on the upper floors add further expression to the buildings.

Penttilä continued to participate in architectural competitions throughout the 1970s, and yet again achieved some success. The three most significant competition victories were the KOP bank building (1975) on Aleksanterinkatu in the Helsinki city centre, the Bahrain Cultural Centre (1976) and the head offices for a German lock manufacturer, Domizil (1980). The competition successes were no more fortuitous, however, than in previous decades. These three important competition winning works should have brought Penttilä's architecture to a whole new phase, but each of them remained unbuilt. In all three proposals the spherical or curved form established a new original theme. In the Bahrain Cultural Centre the main spaces, the large halls, receive a grand cylindrical form and the rounded volumes otherwise make the expression more solid. The main facade of the Domizil head offices was a twelve-storey rectangle in which the windows formed a single colossal concave glass surface at its centre.

What is particularly evident in Penttilä's oeuvre, however, is the paucity of housing projects. He did not design a single free-standing block of flats and realised only a few other dwelling types. His first dwelling was a terraced house on Pellonperäntie (1967) in Tammisalo, Helsinki. The building comprises a group

of three rhythmically intertwined redbrick houses, each house receiving its own secluded garden. The red brick suits well the robust meandering orthogonal row of houses.

His next housing scheme was realised at the beginning of the 1980s on a magnificent shoreline plot in Kuusisaari in Helsinki. The group of five adjoining houses winds around the entrance forecourt. The houses, following the shoreline, offer a blank facade towards the entrance forecourt but open up dramatically towards the sea. The architecture is generous: columns, balconies and curved forms help structure the predominantly white marble-clad totality. The theme of the Hirviniemenranta houses (1981) – light-coloured surfaces and particularised columns – is done in a similar spirit as the Finnish Sugar office building (1980) in the centre of Tapiola, but here it is architecturally more expressive and in its handling of forms a stronger totality.

Even during the 1970s, when housing production in Finland was most active, Penttilä did not design any apartment blocks. Why was that? When Penttilä was commissioned by Heikki von Hertzen to make a preliminary plan for the extension to the centre of Tapiola he was in fact offered the opportunity to design apartment blocks for the area. At the initial stage of the project, representatives of the building companies arrived at the negotiations with portfolios containing model solutions for balconies and other individual details. Penttilä listened for some time to the building companies' presentation of their model solutions, then he stood up and asked them to take their portfolios and leave.³ In Penttilä's opinion, the architect's task involved a wide-ranging responsibility. He would not agree to act unilaterally as the draughtsman for the building companies. Penttilä's refusal to take on the project demonstrated his exacting professional ethics, which differed from the prevailing ways of operating in Finland at that time.

Penttilä did eventually, however, design and build one apartment block, in Vienna. The two 7-9 storey apartment blocks on Gumpendorfer Strasse 40-44 (1988) take up half a city block in a dense urban setting. The architecture clearly adapts to the urban space. Its slight postmodernism is uncharacteristic for Penttilä; the viewpoints of the city planners had steered it in that particular direction. Inside the inner courtyard is a kindergarten, the plan of which is laid out as a square and two circles. If one could imagine the kindergarten as a completely separate building, one might surmise in what direction Penttilä's architecture could later have developed. The solid plasticity of the cylinder shapes distantly brings to mind the design for the Bahrain Cultural Centre. The Viennese apartment blocks were to be Penttilä's last building ever to be completed.

In the 1990s Penttilä designed plans for large urban blocks and city districts, each of which remained unbuilt. In the plan for the Tampella area (1989) of Tampere the project's centre of gravity was provided by four 40-storey towers, which were placed within the outline of a square on either side of a motorway. The park-like central axis is emphasised by a colossal circular apartment block and adjacent to the nearby lakeshore is a low linear building mass. In turn, the

competition proposal for the City-Prag area of Stuttgart (1990) is dominated by two approximately 100-storey towers, while the two large circular building masses, roofed with glass domes, brought together the centre on the street level. The plans demonstrate Penttilä's change of approach to still broader brushstrokes.

Penttilä managed already while still quite young to realise his ideas by winning architecture competitions. The 1960s was an intensively creative period for him. During the 1970s he moved close to the mainstream of rationalist building and his architecture did not differ from the general trend in the more personal way it had previously. Towards the end of the 1980s there were fewer building projects and instead he became involved in designs for city-scale urban blocks.

From the very beginning, function, material and location were the basic elements of Penttilä's architecture. Its expression changed a lot in relation to the individual project. A comparison to the architecture of, for example, Juha Leiviskä, is enlightening. Leiviskä's designs repeat the same recognisable form language from one building to the next, even though the uses and materials change. Penttilä's approach changed in accordance with the task and the time. The works may have a different character, but what they all have in common is a sense of drama and strong form.

The architect himself said that his designs take off from the individual case and the solution grows from the circumstances and possibilities. Adaptation was more important than overall rational control of the situation. Architecture had to adapt to the whole, the scope of which one could only estimate: "The leading thought in my architecture after all – including the imperfections and failures – has always been adaptation."⁴

NOTES

* This text is a translation of the chapter "Sopeutumisen arkkitehtuuri" from the article "Timo Penttilän arkkitehdin työn ulottuvuusia", published in Timo Penttilä, *Oikeat ja väärät arkkitehdit - 2000 vuotta arkkitehtuuriteoriaa*, Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2013, pp.254-260. This translated version published with the permission of Gaudeamus. Translation by Gareth Griffiths and Kristina Köhli.

1. See Pictorial Biography, pages 232-248. Regarding Penttilä's works, Finnish architecture historians mention most often the Ratina Stadium, Helsinki City Theatre and Hanasaari power station. See Vilhelm Helander and Simo Rista, *Suomalainen rakennustaide / Modern Architecture in Finland*, Kirjayhtymä, 1987; Asko Saalokorpi, "Arkkitehtuuri vuoden 1940 jälkeen", in *Ars Suomen taide 6*, Otava, 1990; Marja-Riitta Norri, Elina Standertskjöld, Wilfried Wang (eds), *20th-Century Architecture Finland*, Museum of Finnish Architecture, Deutsches Architektur-Museum, 2000; Riitta Nikula, *Suomen arkkitehtuurin ääriiviivat*, Otava, 2005; Roger Connah, *Finland - Modern Architectures in History*, Reaktion Books, 2005.

2. The word "organic" is used in architecture to refer to free-forms, the paradigms of which are nature and the diversity of natural forms. The basic geometric forms (circle, triangle, square), which have been in general use in architecture since antiquity, do not have any primary position in terms of organicness. Organicness emphasises form, function and unity of structure, a harmonious integral totality. The overall form of a building, grows as it were from the premises of the design and not a combination of independent basic geometric forms. Nature, the form of the topography, the place and locality are important alongside the free form. The most well-known architects whose architecture has been referred to as organic are Frank Lloyd Wright, Hans Scharoun and Alvar Aalto.

3. Kari Lind interview, 22.5.2013.

4. Timo Penttilä, "...am einsamen Lagerfeuer in der lappländischen Einöde kreisen die Gedanken..."; in the exhibition book *Timo Penttilä - Finnische Architektur*, Ausstellung, Universität Stuttgart, 27.11.-7.12.1979.



Imatra Voima operational centre ("annexe"), Vantaa, 1979.

(8)

Ostensive original Timo Penttilä versus architectural theory

Gareth Griffiths

Ostension – an act or process of showing, pointing out, or exhibiting.

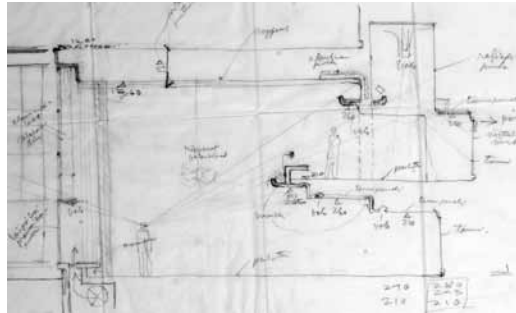
– Oxford English Dictionary

The essence of architecture lies not in theory and verbiage. Architecture operates with myriads or practicalities and particulars, which make the formulation of clear concepts impossible.

– Timo Penttilä, 1980¹

If we construct a rational world afresh there is no reason to believe that it will be a happy world. There is no reason to believe that the blue-printed world will be any better than the world in which we already live.

– Karl Popper, 1963²



L: Timo Penttilä pointing out something to his assistant Pekka Salminen in a working model of the Helsinki City Theatre (1961-67), while assistant Jukka Siivola works on.
R: The foyer balcony; one of only a few still existing working sketches by Penttilä for the theatre.

Even before its completion at the end of 1967, Timo Penttilä's Helsinki City Theatre received a single mention – but no illustration – in *Space, Time and Architecture*, Sigfried Giedion's canonical book of architecture history and theory. For the fifth, revised and expanded edition of the book (1967), Giedion added a section titled "Jørn Utzon and the third generation". Coming in the book immediately after the section on Alvar Aalto, Giedion was concerned with defining the emerging dialectic and zeitgeist (for him profoundly determined by the state of human knowledge and science) and what differentiated it from previous architecture. Thus, for instance, Frank Lloyd Wright might go on about how the "prairie

style” of his houses was inspired by the long lines of the American prairie, but such talk, Giedion argued, fails to understand how the buildings are just as much products of the anonymous industrial aims of the period as well as contemporary ideas about space-time being developed in physics and its representation in art.³

Still, for Giedion, Utzon offered a natural continuity of thought from Aalto, yet what he felt defined this new generation was a different relation to the past, whereby beyond the key canonical works was an interest in the lessons learned from anonymous structures “which are everywhere living bonds with the past”. The architects of this generation, he argued, ask the questions: *What* did the builder want to achieve and *how* did he solve his problems? That is, the architect is concerned with “searching through previous architectonic knowledge, so that he can immediately confront contemporary architectural aims with those of a former period.” Giedion even suggested that travel provides the best possibility for such questioning.

Giedion’s prime example was the much travelled Utzon, culminating in the Sydney Opera House, with influences not only from the world history of architecture and anonymous building but also from nature and formal geometry. But he picks a different Utzon project, his unrealised 1964 competition winning scheme for the Zurich Theatre, to demonstrate the third generation’s empathy with any given situation, “entering the puritanical atmosphere of the city without loss of artistic vision”. In the middle of his description Giedion gives what he feels is a parallel example:

In his combination of empathy with a given situation and an unrelenting maintenance of his own expression, Utzon is not alone among his generation. For instance, there is the horizontal layered City Theatre of Helsinki (1959) [sic], where Timo Penttilä (then only 28 years old) cut the stage area partly out of the living rock.⁴

Giedion says no more about Penttilä. Might this early brief endorsement allow us to ascertain a future trajectory for Penttilä’s works? Horizontal and embedded? Empathy for the given situation? In retrospect his body of works might even be compared to that of Eero Saarinen, so very diverse in design depending on the client, brief and site. In his assessment of Penttilä’s work, Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani suggests that Penttilä’s “modesty and his willingness to accept sensible compromises are akin to those of Heinrich Tessenow, who kept aloof from the avant-gardes, engaging himself in patient renewals of conservative typologies” and concluding “This attitude does not lead to spectacular but to substantial solutions.”⁵ And yet an early oft-repeated characterization of Penttilä’s work is one from Kirmo Mikkola, put forward acerbically and polemically in a “radicalist” defence of his own preferred Constructivism and striving for an anonymous architecture, part of an ongoing debate among Finnish architects at that time and to which also Penttilä made significant contributions:

...Aalto moved to his present baroque line, and he was followed by a particular expressionistic school of thought such as Reima Pietilä and Timo Penttilä, whose work is characterised as a new national romanticism.⁶

Mikkola's comment was meant to show how the above architects were concerned primarily with formalistic matters.⁷ As such they were seen to be alien to society's real needs and its problems such as growing urbanisation and the general "housing shortage", not to mention the "alienation of labour".⁸ But even attempts to deal with it, such as the "forest towns" and Tapiola garden city, were seen by the radicals simply to endorse the anti-urban "close-to-Finnish-nature" myths. Penttilä would respond, equally acerbically, accusing his accusers of lacking the very rationalism they themselves endorsed, and instead being swayed by elitism and moralism.⁹

While no doubt most architects would have been flattered to be mentioned in such a canonical book of architecture history as *Space, Time and Architecture*,¹⁰ in his own writings Penttilä is critical towards Giedion's preoccupation with the Hegelian zeitgeist terminology and what he sees as doctrine masquerading as theory, what he also terms the vertical (religion, metaphysics) versus the horizontal (science).¹¹ So how might we explain Penttilä's own works in regard to theory? Despite his criticism, he would seem to have shared certain points with Giedion regarding architects searching through previous architectonic knowledge. It is one of the oldest stories in architecture: architects are influenced by precedent, they are "maximalists" in borrowing or synthesising all they see. Giedion might have called it *dialectic*, Penttilä would have called it *living tradition*. Penttilä's own dense writings give a highly critical examination of both the sources of these assumptions and the attempt to construe theory from them. So the aim here is to position Penttilä in regard to architectural theory, perhaps as "anti-theory" theory.

1. Architecture and metaphysics are incommensurable

For an architect who argued that architecture is primarily a practical art and found fault with all architectural theory, intellectualising and metaphysical speculation, Penttilä took up much time reading and writing about it. This was partly instigated by his own students in Vienna badgering him about the topicality of theory as a starting point in architectural design, though he resisted their efforts to propose a working theory of architecture. From the 1960s to the 1980s Penttilä had turned out occasional texts, often vociferous responses to topical issues of the moment or times. These were marked by the same rational-analytical viewpoint with no marked changes of direction in standpoint over time. When one considers his anti-theory stance, one paradoxical change, however, was that he ended up relinquishing architectural practice for a solitary scholarly life of reading and writing.

Penttilä's readings in theory culminated in the production of two manuscripts; the English-language manuscript *Summum Templum Architecturae*, the

themes of which were later rewritten in Finnish in a more succinct form and published posthumously in 2013 as *Oikeat ja väärät arkkitehdit – 2000 vuotta arkkitehtuuriteoriaa* [True and False Architects – 2000 Years of Architecture Theory].¹² In terms of temporal trajectory, the *Summum* begins earlier, discussing the actions of Palaeolithic man before picking up a similar trajectory as *Oikeat ja väärät arkkitehdit*, getting into Imhotep and the Egyptians and moving via Vitruvius, Alberti, Palladio, Sinan and Cesariano before hopping a few centuries to Le Corbusier, Peter Eisenman and Jean Nouvel, interspersed with discussions of such thinkers as the pre-socratics, Hermes Trismegistos, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Kant, Darwin and Wittgenstein before a final assault on Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida.

If I had to sum up Penttilä's viewpoint, I would say that he speaks out against the myth of genius and authoritarian elitism, in the sense that he puts forward a modern rational argument against all teleological explanations, about ultimate causes, ends and destinies, be it in nature or mankind (and hence architecture). He also speaks out against the authority of an original source, challenging the claim of the primacy of theory, encapsulated in the neoplatonist thinker Proclus' claim that "Every productive cause is superior to that which it produces." This same attitude, he argues, pervades contemporary architectural theory.¹³

At the time Penttilä was writing his critical commentaries on the history of western architectural theory, Heidegger and phenomenology, as well as Derrida and post-structuralism or deconstructivism were much favoured among architects and students – though often mediated through the writings of contemporary architectural theorists such as Christian Norberg-Schulz and Mark Wigley – in defending their phenomenological or deconstructionist inspired design viewpoints. It is not clear when precisely Penttilä completed his final manuscript, but the most topical reference in *Oikeat ja väärät arkkitehdit* is from 2003, that is, the views of Jean Nouvel.¹⁴ He had not picked up at all on perhaps an even more influential intellectual figure in architectural theory, Michel Foucault, nor the then lesser known Henri Lefebvre, and he mentions Maurice Merleau-Ponty only in passing. He also did not pick up on the emerging interest among architecture theorists at that time in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. However, Penttilä's discussion of Nouvel luckily gives us a glimpse into his views of the emerging so-called "post-theoretical" scene, albeit that he lambastes it as yet more of the same "astral theology", obscurantism and mysticism that architecture theory has been plagued with since Vitruvius.

So, just as hard as Penttilä had wished to avoid theory, the "trap" was soon set which he himself then knowingly fell into (i.e. justifying one's negative views leads one necessarily to philosophize):

What is architecture theory? How can it be universal? What is its purpose? Doesn't it just set architects' heads spinning? What qualifications should architects generally possess in order to delve into the ab-

stract problems of philosophy? Isn't building a practical skill in which beyond technical knowledge and an understanding of building regulations you don't need anything else than sharp eyesight and artistic talent? In investigating these questions I am forced to philosophize.¹⁵

At the core of Penttilä's problem with architectural theory is the question of what it actually entails. It is one thing for a folk building tradition that imperceptibly changes over time (e.g. vernacular), another for an expert-given normative set of instructions arguing how architecture should be built on the basis of exemplars (e.g. typology), another for creativity to be argued for on the grounds of "cosmological determinism" (e.g. normative theories of beauty, the unfolding of historical destiny, architecture as lines of invisible control, architecture as language, or architectural design as contiguous with the building blocks of mathematics, nature, and evolution), and another to believe that architecture is a freely creative activity bounded only by the design brief, context, budget and the fact that architects are already part of the world. Philosophy in itself, in particular "metaphysical speculation", is yet another matter because, he argues, it is ultimately incommensurable with architectural design. Even when philosophers write about architecture it is so abstract that all it can do is reduce architecture to a metaphor for ontology – all those architectonic terms philosophy needs to build its foundation, structure and edifice! – and then the only benefit of philosophy is as a formalistic generator of metaphors or tropes, as was the case with Derrida's philosophy and deconstructionist architecture in the 1980s, as in the works of Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi.

Thus, for instance, in discussing Tschumi's Parc de la Villette (1982-87) in Paris,¹⁶ Penttilä notes that its architect poses typical "Vitruvian questions": "Is the Parc de la Villette a built theory or a theoretical building?" and "Can the pragmatism of building practice be allied with the analytic rigor of concepts?"¹⁷ Tschumi is even supposed to be admired, Penttilä suggests, in taking the risky step from theory to practice, in letting architecture "deal with body and matter". Without his reference to the body and building construction, one would easily be misled to believe that in the park design everything is symbolic. But, Penttilä argues, symbolism plays there no greater role than it played in early Egypt. It's all just more esoteric magico-religiosity and determinism, with the determinism of religion replaced by the pseudo-determinism of psychoanalysis (cf. madness = the demonic). Further, "Construction and deconstruction are for a postmodern magician equally conceivable procedures; the difference is that deconstructing is the interesting part of the job, constructing – *fabrica* – is the uninteresting one." So bothered was Penttilä about architects such as Tschumi creating their hermetic intellectual architecture that at one point he comments that during an architecture excursion to Paris with his students from Vienna, he refused to go to see Tschumi's then recently completed park scheme – and sarcastically states

that he would prefer to spend the time in a bookstore.¹⁸ As we shall see later, it was not right of him to stay away from the park.

A good example of the incommensurability between architecture and philosophy Penttilä finds in oft-quoted passages from Martin Heidegger's 1954 essay "Building Dwelling Thinking":

...residential buildings do indeed provide shelter; today's houses may even be well planned, easy to maintain, attractively cheap, open to air, light and sun, but do the houses in themselves hold any guarantee that dwelling occurs in them?" (...) However hard and bitter, however hampering and threatening the lack of houses remains, the *real plight of dwelling* does not lie merely in the lack of houses.... The real plight of dwelling lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they *must ever learn to dwell*.¹⁹

"The problem of the housing shortage" becomes a datum by which to mark the incommensurability. Elsewhere on this same question, Penttilä asks:

How could the more-than-difficult speculations of Heidegger, Derrida and other wise men help architects to remove the "existential housing shortage"? [...] "in no way"²⁰

His point is put polemically, or again even sarcastically. One might think that in the former quote Heidegger is referring to functionalist architecture, and Penttilä held a similarly dismissive view towards the anonymousness of Constructivist and Functionalist architecture propounded in Finland during the 1960s and 1970s. But here Penttilä wishes to make a completely different point: "There is between metaphysical thought and built forms absolute incommensurability."²¹ As he sees it, Heidegger is making a metaphysical statement not an empirical observation, and his point has ultimately nothing to do with architecture *as* design. That is, his words cannot provide a guide for the architect in producing architectural form – a point Heidegger himself seems to suggest.²² Or, more strictly speaking, quoting the philosopher David Hume, if one reasons "a priori" anything may appear to produce anything.²³ Furthermore, and perhaps with greater ramifications, architects' own buildings cannot be used to illustrate any metaphysical claims they may make. A good example of that would be Le Corbusier's discussion about light, which Penttilä critiques as follows:

Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that when Le Corbusier worked with the Ronchamp Chapel, he was assiduously reading Hermes in order to learn about mystical light. After the great success of the completed building he frankly announced his great

debt to Hermes. Even in such a case the connection between Hermes' light theory and the light openings in the wall of Ronchamp is bogus.²⁴

The same might be said of any thinker and concept employed in order to conjure form, such as *genius loci*, dwelling, alterity, complexity, atmosphere, surface, depth, and so on. And further still, he argues, the appeal of Heidegger's words to architects is ultimately to be found in support of their *own* cause, not that of, say, the "housing shortage"; that is, they are convinced that "if people neglect architecture, their chances to dwell authentically are reduced to zero." The paradox here was that some avant-gardist theoretical architects, borrowing from other fields (primarily literary studies), asserted the impossibility of affirmatively intervening in a world dominated by capitalism and/or metaphysical oppressors (i.e. spatial divisions determined by class, ethnicity, gender, the discursivity of expertise, etc.); what remained was avant-gardist architecture as a form of refusal, resistance and criticism, safe within the hermetic of intellectualism, even as it might posit the primacy of the *a-conceptual* (i.e. non-linguistic) body. But what at least Heidegger and Penttilä have in common is the view that it is people themselves who resolve the problem of dwelling. For Penttilä this means that a "good community" does not make sense as the objective of urban planning; that is, a community is not a result of urban planning in the same unambiguous way in which a house is the result of architectural design.²⁵

Though to no avail, I think Derrida would have attempted to "deconstruct" Penttilä's hostility towards theory, showing how architecture is already premised on theory, that it is not derivative of or a supplement to some originary practice. In a similar vein, though more prosaically, Hanno-Walter Kruft argued that "as long as he operates within the norms of his day, the individual architect has no need to advance theories of his own."²⁶ To take an example from Penttilä's own works, in the required text accompanying his proposal in the open architecture competition for the Vantaa Science Centre (1985) he writes:

...many architects are convinced that there exists... a building whose forms reflect honestly the 'open, critical and self-correcting' - that is, science. Such a belief is completely unscientific. // In terms of the theory concerning the "expression" of the Science Centre, it *should* also belong within the realm of science. This means that its expression can be freely chosen. It is a matter of creating an entirely new, easily remembered "character", "image" or "symbol". People have to learn that in this case this kind of expression refers to the science centre. The author aims for pure geometric (scientific) forms using a stimulating (commercial) expression.²⁷ (my italics)



View from above of the model of Timo Penttilä's entry "LOGOS" for the Vantaa Science Centre architecture competition, 1985.

From the one and only picture of the proposal currently known to exist, we see cubes and a sphere (becoming a dome?) embedded on a truncated square pyramid. So the "theory" here is not Form Follows Function, but form as didactic message – something which has pervaded architecture's history, including Vitruvius, Gothic cathedrals, and Bentham's Panopticon prison. In the competition many of the entries, including the eventual winner, architects Heikkinen & Komonen's "Heureka", used that same didactic method. Might we even detect some "truth speaking" sarcasm in Penttilä's attitude to the brief? He writes: "The Science Centre is about the popularization of science. The threat of the 'moral erosion that lurks everywhere' is not, however, likely to be large." It would seem that such popularization is also evident in the didactic design.

2. True and false architects

Just about all the architects and philosophers Penttilä mentions in both *Summum Templum Architecturae* and *Oikeat ja väärät arkkitehdit* are what he terms the "true" or "right" sort, by which he usually means ultimately "false" or "wrong" in his own mind. The main idea of what constitutes the "right" kind of architect is one who postulates a theory that necessitates that *opposition to it is necessarily wrong*.²⁸ The idea of the "true" versus the "false" kind of architects Penttilä appropriates from Vitruvius's concept of *décor* from *De architectura*; usually translated into English as *appropriateness*, and one of his six principles of architecture. *Appropriateness* is achieved by following a rule or convention (e.g. triglyphs should only be used in Doric entablatures – the logic being that they are remnants of the wooden structure on which the stone-built system of the orders is derived, and so one must be honest to their origins) or nature. Penttilä notes how Jean Nouvel describes Vitruvius's *De architectura* as "a book of recipes ... he tells you exactly how to construct a building", while he himself describes it as "didactic poetry", and thus, as he sees it, something that hardly fulfils the demands of a building manual, even though that is exactly what Vitruvius thought he was writing.

So for Penttilä ultimately "true" or "right" refers to those intellectualising architectural theoreticians who see architecture and philosophy as the same thing –

and where any building begins with theory, often based, in his mind, on spurious scholarly research. Meanwhile the “false” or “wrong” type follow an approach more in line with what he refers to, following the philosophers Ludwig Wittgenstein and Willard Van Orman Quine, as an “ostensive method”, as well as philosopher Karl Popper in his discussion of “tradition”.

If there were ever philosophers for Penttilä to take support from, it would be Wittgenstein and, moreover, Popper, albeit that the latter was adamant that the former was wrong in his thinking. What Penttilä had in common with both these thinkers was a disdain for niceties and consensus for its own sake. A belief in rational thinking implied speaking out about what one regarded as obvious falsities and rhetoric. All three were known for upsetting their fellow professionals and, as we’ve already seen, Penttilä would often pile sarcasm on top of his argument against illogicality.²⁹

In the case of Wittgenstein, it would be rather facile for anti-intellectual architectural purposes simply to quote the famous final line of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent”,³⁰ in the sense that architecture, like ethics and aesthetics, belongs to the realm of the ineffable: “There are indeed things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical.”³¹ Rather, later we will see how a particular aspect of the learning process discussed by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*, ostension, or pointing, was employed by Penttilä to explain the “ongoing tradition” of architecture. However, there is still one more point from Wittgenstein of relevance to Penttilä’s problems with a certain kind of theory, the sort that makes irrefutable metaphysical claims. For Wittgenstein science deals with that which is discernable through empirical testing while philosophy is left with the task of revealing the illusionary nature of pseudo-problems: “The results of philosophy are the discovery of some piece of plain nonsense and the bumps that the understanding has got by running up against the limits of language...” and “We may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. All explanation must disappear, and description alone must take its place.”³² Wittgenstein warned us about being misled by our metaphysically-loaded concepts: i.e. concepts mislead us because we fail to pay attention to their actual use in real world contexts. By arguing against theory, Wittgenstein was indifferent to the idea of philosophers “saving the world”, something which Penttilä thought applied similarly to architects.³³ For Penttilä, the potential for architectural design is freed by the very lack of theory.³⁴

Popper, in turn, offered Penttilä rational rigour in defending his critics and challenging their claims, which he regarded as pseudo-scientific.³⁵ That is, Popper offers him the principle of falsifiability; the idea that any theory is “scientific” only if it is falsifiable. Consequently, unfalsifiable statements such as “form follows function” or “less is more” are non-scientific yet irrefutable. Hence architectural theories could only justifiably be presented as opinion, metaphor, tradition or myth, though they often misleadingly were presented as research-based scholar-

ship and scientific. They would also be dogmatic in starting with an *a priori* stance or by claiming hegemony, as if to say “the fundamental principles have been discovered”.

Popper summed up his “thesis” on the growth of scientific knowledge in a single sentence: “we can learn from our mistakes” or better, “all our knowledge grows only through the correcting of our mistakes.”³⁶ Popper then uses this principle to suggest a “rational theory of tradition”.³⁷ Yes, a theory! The idea of tradition naturally seems at odds with science and modernism, but his point is simply that the “living tradition” is the given moment against which one must have a critical attitude. Tradition involves imitation but with unforeseen consequences. He sees this in opposition to reformers who aim to start from scratch, be it Plato, French revolutionaries or “vulgar Marxists”, leaving no institutions in place to rectify mistakes. In regard to scholarship, the anti-traditionalists also end up endorsing conspiracy theories, believing that everything is a result of conscious design, and hence they themselves would see tradition as a conservative force marshalled by conspiring agents.³⁸ For Penttilä, the paranoid conspirators would not be the traditionalists but rather the avant-gardists who want to start from scratch. Yet their works have unintended consequences, though they may not wish them to be “read” from the works. With Popper’s point in mind, Penttilä really should have visited Tschumi’s Parc de la Villette. There was more *there* than Tschumi intended. In architectural terms, this might be described as a continuous process of vernacularization or on-going tradition. Thus in staying away, Penttilä may be equally guilty as the theoreticians he chastises in giving priority to authors’ intentions.

3. *Three categories of theory – all of them wrong... yet some irrefutable*

Penttilä certainly never set out to produce an *a priori* theory of architecture that would explain his own works – and was keen to challenge the very idea of what theory promises, what has been referred to as *his negation of the concept of style*.³⁹ In a 1980 article titled “Theory and Tradition” Penttilä raises the question of what theory is supposed to achieve.⁴⁰ On the question of theory as part of epistemology in general, Penttilä differentiates between (1) “theory” which logically derives from clearly formulated premises giving clearly formulated conclusions, and (2) “doctrine” which derives from intuitively approachable premises conclusions without any compulsory logic. And in his viewpoint all architecture theory belongs to the latter viewpoint. Amidst the theorising, he ascertains three major theoretical positions – *scientific*, *historiographic*, and *operative* – all of them, in his eyes, wrong. As a counter argument, he defends the notions, derived from Popper, of “a living tradition” – i.e. without merely repeating what already exists – and rational argument.⁴¹ But could that in turn be interpreted as a theory of architecture? We will see.

The problem in architecture theory, as Penttilä sees it, is the entire “desperate search for universals and the naïve reliance upon the implementation of the

results.” The search for universals, such as a universal law for beauty through harmonic relations and proportions, has lain historically at the heart of architectural treatises – and though often linked to mysticism and esotericism, they may even be said to have “scientific” qua logical pretensions. For instance, the mathematical harmony in music discovered by the Pythagoreans would naturally have suggested the existence of similar proportional systems elsewhere.

The *scientific theory*, in its strictest sense, attempts to ascertain laws based on natural-scientific facts but, Penttilä states, is undecided about predictions of the future based on such facts. This could even lead to the so-called “naturalistic fallacy”, arguing from fact to norm, from “is” to “ought”, as with taking the forms of nature as the correct model for building, thus creating a model that would cut the claws of any criticism. “Form follows function” was presented as a scientific axiom, as was Marxism and the Finnish version of Constructivism; hence Penttilä’s suspicions. The *historiographic theory* – which includes the realm of the social sciences – is not concerned with general laws but with particulars, accepting that the unpredictable human does not follow rational laws. In turn, *operative theory* attempts to regulate action based on simulations of empirical evidence. The latter two thus have scientific pretensions, yet may be characterised as conservative if they simply assert the repetition of what has already occurred. The most influential example of this in architecture, Penttilä staggeringly claims, was the entire emergence of the Renaissance in 15th century Florence, in his words, “as if the diligent scholars’ awakening of a slumbering theory of an ancient style” made it all valid. Similarly in contemporary times with the case of building conservation, town planning regulations and public participation, all of which Penttilä had an antipathy towards for the very reason of unnecessarily perpetuating the already existing, but moreover putting an unnecessary shackle on the architect’s own creativity.⁴²

As Penttilä saw it, any operative theory is essentially a matter of opinion, though closer to a political or religious doctrine than scientific theory, and thus elitist and authoritarian. This is the basis of his opposition to Jean Nouvel. In a discussion with Jean Baudrillard, he first argues that “the existing recipes for doing architecture with a capital ‘A’ have become absolutely ridiculous. As soon as you integrate a structural model into this system, it becomes absurd. So in this sense, I’m against everything that is part of the same order as Architecture.”⁴³ So what is the natural or appropriate alternative strategy? Nouvel continues:

... we’re required to be slightly more intelligent, ... required to constantly diagnose the situation, required to face the fact that architecture is no longer the invention of a world but that it exists simply with respect to a geological layer applied to all the cities throughout the planet. ... Architecture can no longer have as its goal the transformation, the modification, of this accumulated material.

Penttilä sees such a viewpoint as yet again a case of architects' elitist intellectual task to save the "apocalyptic utopia". The architect has optimistic small-scale counter strategies in the face of a growing overwhelming urbanism – the generic. Vitruvius's concern for an architecture determined by the movement of the stars and the "inclination of the heavens" takes on a new kind of determinism with the analogy of geological layers. Like most post-Paris '68 theory, the claim yet again is that the author is dead – creativity, like freedom, is disclaimed in the very act of elitist authoritarianism and inevitabilism.

If modernism stood by the rationality born of the natural sciences, in turn postmodernism had similar scientific pretensions in arguing that architecture is a language – with appeals to "meaning" and the already knowable, as with the case of typology. However, Penttilä argues, if architecture theory is to make real claims *as if it were a science*, it would be necessary to know the future – indeed, Modernism was obsessed with it. True to their name, he sees the avant-gardists as the outriders testing theory; yet the very presence of a theory – i.e. possessing predictive power – is seen in their eyes as evidence of their rationality. There is even a high degree of borrowing of the language and methods of the natural sciences: the "experimentation" central to science is reformulated as experimentation in creativity, but with no responsibility for the consequences. So again, Penttilä is more than sceptical towards such an attitude.

Penttilä's counter argument to these *a priori* theories is to say that a *living tradition* is guided by practical action. The fruits of such a tradition are shared wisdom over generations and immediacy. Again, one learns from one's mistakes. Now clearly, if we "theorise", we could not mistake Penttilä's own architecture for anything but "modern". But it should be seen as part of an on-going tradition. Hence, as he sees it, the living tradition of architecture does not try to establish essences or predict the future. Indeed, Penttilä is equally scathing of Jürgen Habermas' anti-postmodernist argument of the so-called "uncompleted project of modernity", as if it had a knowable end.⁴⁴

4. *The ostensive method – ongoing tradition*

Timo Penttilä's most well-known building, Helsinki City Theatre (1961-67) is often favourably compared to Aalto's Finlandia Hall. The uninited even take it for an Aalto building, though the completion of Penttilä's building *predates* that of Aalto by a decade.⁴⁵ But it is not only the "Aalto original" argument but also the matter of dissipation; lessons from Aalto are dissipated in the ongoing tradition, and the same goes for traditions received directly and indirectly from Wright, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, etc., in addition to overarching concerns of the time with standardisation and the increased industrial production of buildings, which would be reflected in their appearance.

. For example, it has been argued that Penttilä's Salokunta Parish Centre (1962), with its circumscribing inner courtyard, red brick and exposed wooden

trusses, “repeats” favoured themes of the 1950s, such as Aalto’s Säynätsalo municipal hall (1952) and Kaija and Heikki Sirén’s Otaniemi Chapel (1957).⁴⁶ Even Penttilä’s diploma thesis project (1951), as well as his competition proposals for Seinäjoki town hall (1958) and the Sampola building (1962) comprise heavily Miesian or Corbusian rationalist elements offset by “Aaltoesque” counter-motifs. I would think this is not something Penttilä would have denied. On the contrary, the point is to question the idea of genius, the lone architect creating something from nothing.



Timo Penttilä, Pellonperäntie housing, Tammissalo, Helsinki, 1966.
 Timo Penttilä, Hanasaari power station, Helsinki, corner detail, 1976.
 Timo Penttilä and Kari Virta, Sampola adult education centre, Tampere, 1962.

To give some further comparisons, one might see ideas about “unbounded space” familiar from de Stijl and Mies van der Rohe in Penttilä’s Tammissalo row houses (1966), as if multiplications of Mies’s 1924 brick country house project, and the various blocks comprising the Hanasaari power station (1976)⁴⁷ have Miesian “negative corners” but in a more robust form. One might say here that, as Kruff argued, the architect without a theory of his own has simply followed on from the theoretical postulations of others. But it’s not that the architect sticks to the theory or that there is a normal form of practice (“paradigm” to use Thomas S. Kuhn’s over-borrowed term from the philosophy of science).⁴⁸ In the Sampola building (1962), for example, one sees the Corbusian *pilotis* and strip windows but the latter are also used vertically, hence (if one wishes to “theorise”) breaking up the façade into a series of elements, and in that sense emphasising even more than in Le Corbusier’s Five points the “free design of the façade”.⁴⁹ But let’s be clear: Penttilä is not drawing out the consequences of Le Corbusier’s theory.

Not to get too hung up about tracing these “lines of influence” but, as already mentioned, the idea is at least as old as the very first buildings: you pragmatically copy what others have done before you, and may fail in the effort due to a lack of understanding, or produce an inferior version, or you may even improve upon it, or adapt it to take into account the specificity of the task in hand, such as site, function, etc. But as Penttilä emphasises, memory of material culture lies essentially in objects which are made available by the environment, rather than information from some abstract and transcendental source:

It [material culture] consists in mute but analyzable objects ... "material originals". The nature of their analysis is practical, not ontological. There is no need to know "what the original is". The relative importance of objects' properties depends on how different interested copiers see them. To put it simply: if the original is a cubic house of bricks, one builder copies a cubic form, another the brick mass.⁵⁰

But so as not to get confused by the above example, "original has no ontological or objective existence, it consists only in properties that are interesting from the point of view of different copiers." Even though they themselves are not aware of it, the "theories" of practical architects are, even in modern times, mere abstractions of concrete cases.

Beyond the practical example of having a mentor in Aarne Ervi (who in turn had worked for Aalto), with whom he worked from 1957 to 1959, Penttilä's role model for his "ostensive" method viewpoint is Mimar Sinan, the great Ottoman architect. As chief architect of the sultan Suleiman, he built 81 mosques or at least had a significant hand in the design of very many of them. His ambition was seen as to compete with the great Hagia Sophia, building an even bigger dome: "Sinan understood that this goal was easier to achieve by copying the work of his competitors: one had only to amend the evident mistakes and magnify and improve a bit here and there."⁵¹ Penttilä suggests that Sinan was more single-minded than present-day architects. He didn't aspire for anything "more genuine" than something comparable with Hagia Sophia and considered better than it in any comparison. In his mind Penttilä even pictures Sinan standing there pointing his finger at Hagia Sophia and exclaiming: "I'm obsessed with that work of architecture – I must absolutely beat it." This, states Penttilä, is not seen as arrogance, but what should drive an architect. Here one can even mention how indeed Hagia Sophia also inspired Le Corbusier.⁵²

Pertinent also is that Penttilä argued that this is a significantly personal task, that each student is confronted with "existential choices".⁵³ Hence, though selected to be one of two "masters" teaching the architecture *Meisterschule* at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, where the principle was that selected students would learn how to design *in the style* of the master, Penttilä insisted that he would not impose any style on the students. He regarded aesthetic issues in architecture as subjective, matters of taste, albeit that "control" of any style requires skill.⁵⁴ When we think back again to the example of Parc de la Villette, this of course raises the question of whether he would be willing to appreciate a work regardless of its having stemmed from a dogmatic theory.

The actual physical pointing has its theoretical import, too; what Penttilä refers to, following Wittgenstein and W.V.O. Quine, as ostension or the ostensive method – in a word, *pointing*. Quine had in mind the rather prosaic notion of specifying identity – you can simply point at something; but to add words such

as, for example, “This river”, is already to go beyond ostension and to have assumed conceptualization.⁵⁵ For pure ostension you keep your mouth shut or are speaking to someone you don’t understand at all. And you can’t just point once, you need both spatial and temporal spread; this is a lesson in basic communication. The person attempting to understand what you are pointing at is afforded an inductive ground from which to guess the intended reach of the object. So, on day three you think you have already eliminated the sunset and the dogs, and by day ten have a good idea the person was pointing at the pyramid, or you surmise that when the person pointed and said “haram” he meant pyramid. But you never can be certain. Hence Quine’s assertion of the “indeterminacy of translation”; this is a term much favoured by Penttilä, in that one never truly reproduces the work one admires, and which he uses as a counter to the conviction of authenticity and truth, as an example of which he quotes Mies van der Rohe:

...architecture should only stand in contact with the most significant elements of civilization. Only a relationship that touches on the innermost nature of the epoch is authentic. I call this relationship a truth relationship. Truth in the sense of Thomas Aquinas, as the *Adequatio intellectus et rei*. Or, as a modern philosopher expresses it, in the language of today: Truth is the significance of facts.⁵⁶

The latter is indeed a heavy demand of architecture. However, Penttilä offers an opposite heavy demand: “Realizability is perhaps the most important single criterion of architecture.”⁵⁷ Unrealised projects may have their interest and even have an influence on later architecture, but they are “just as far from architecture as science fiction is from science.” The role of drawings has a specific intention, to serve the construction of the building: “A *true* architectural experience is not conceivable between a picture and a spectator” (my emphasis). This would imply the primacy of corporeal experience. But it’s something that it seems he never explored further, presumably because it leads to yet more theorising. Later, however, he invoked a Heideggerian metaphysical claim, quoting Hans-Georg Gadamer: “Understanding... does not consist in a technical virtuosity of ‘understanding’ everything written. Rather, it is a genuine experience (*Erfahrung*) – i.e., an encounter with something that asserts itself as truth.”⁵⁸

5. *The ostensive method – positive and idealising formalism*

Elsewhere Penttilä gives as examples of misplaced theorising, the writings of Robert Venturi (*Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, 1966) and Aldo Rossi (*L’architettura della città*, 1966). One might think that Penttilä would have at least been sympathetic towards these two for their interest in precedent. However, it is their reasoning – or lack of it – that he questions.

In the case of Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, it is dismissed as a personal manifesto, albeit couched as a "Gentle Manifesto":

I like complexity and contradiction in architecture. I do not like the incoherence and arbitrariness of incompetent architecture nor the precious intricacies of picturesqueness or expressionism. Instead I speak of a complex and contradictory architecture based on the richness and ambiguity of modern experience, including that experience which is inherent in art.⁵⁹

As Penttilä sees it, "Few people cause universal upheavals in such a casual manner. Venturi simply tells us what he likes and dislikes, and his words become the postmodern constitution." For Venturi "expressionism" is an ugly word, and hence a whole approach to architecture is summarily dismissed.

When it comes to learning from precedent, however, Penttilä discriminates between what he terms "positive formalism" and "idealising formalism".⁶⁰ Without exception, he argues, builders and architects are "positive" formalists, receiving their inspiration from others' creations. From the point of view of positive formalism, the creative process is always built upon "ostensive identification".

However, the theorising architect is an "idealising" formalist – typical of which he names Aldo Rossi. The latter theorizes about the essence of architecture, and finds it in typology, backed up by earlier claims by 18th century theorist Quatremere de Quincy:

Type is the very idea of architecture, that which is closest to its essence. In spite of changes, it has always imposed itself on the 'feelings and reason' as the principle of architecture and of the city.⁶¹

Penttilä finds all this ridiculous, as equally ridiculous as Marc-Antoine Laugier's argument that all structures that strive to be architectural works begin from the primitive hut.

Rossi had been a staunch defender of the notion of architectural autonomy. Penttilä himself had also written an essay titled "Autonomy and authority in architecture" (1980) in which he critiqued Functionalism, arguing that it "preached determinism" while not realising that such a stance led to the surrender of the last remnants of architectural autonomy.⁶² So both Penttilä and Rossi were interested in the "autonomy of architecture", but meant different things by the term. In Penttilä's words: "Something is autonomous when it gives law to itself or acts from its own inner principle... its inner authorities." But while for Rossi this "inner principle" had been form, or more specifically a deterministic typology, for Penttilä it was physical fulfilment, inseparable from craft, and man's practical action. And practical action cannot be determined *a priori* but only by the simple question "What ought I to do now?"⁶³ This has a real societal aim, and certainly not one of the artificial autonomy of avant-gardist graphics.

The “authorities” of which Penttilä referred to were, he stated, of three kinds: the “inner authorities”, the commands of which are enforced by the architect him/herself; and two kinds of “outer authorities”, one the result of different human value judgements and the other of the immutable laws of nature (e.g. gravity). For example, anything not harmonizing aesthetically with gravity still obeys its fundamental rules. Still, Penttilä’s complaint was that too many things are defended as immutable laws of nature. Again, a key culprit was Functionalism. Where it might be defended is in a situation of sheer survival (primitive shelter), but that would be a rare exception.⁶⁴ It could be argued that ritual is a true authority, and Joseph Rykwert had chastised Rossi for his assertion that “indifference to functional considerations is proper to architecture”.⁶⁵ Penttilä is certainly not dismissive towards ritual, though again it is not something unchanging. Instead, surprisingly, he discusses the notion of play (or creativity):

In our rational era the granting of autonomy must be a deliberate action. We must accept play as a necessary and inseparable counterpart of purposeful, functional action, or we must do without any architectural autonomy.⁶⁶

On this point he, like Popper, even acknowledges certain Marxist scholars who argue that play is the origin of all art:

Play has its own rules... but they are man-made and ephemeral. In the age of critical rationalism we cannot any more believe in any necessity whatsoever as the generative power of architectural expression, language or style.⁶⁷

So, following Penttilä’s argument against theory, should we conclude (“theorise”) that he is a conservative thinker, if not a conservative architect? In the sense argued for by Popper regarding “tradition”, as well as philosophers of conservative thought such as Hans-Georg Gadamer or Roger Scruton, Penttilä is probably a conservative.⁶⁸ He critiqued what he argued was the delusion of the scientific and elitist theory supporting Functionalism and the “astral theology” of much avant-gardism. As suggested by his criticism of Nouvel, I also think he would have found fault with the so-called “post-theory”, “post-capitalist” knowledge society – “theorised” by Michael Speaks and others – which replaced determinist leftist-style critique with a new kind of libertarian, globalist, neo-liberal, self-determining intelligence, where everything is part of a diagramming machine “read” through parametric design.⁶⁹ This does not mean he was against “business” – he was content to serve all clients, not only the Finnish state but also property developers, banks, multinationals, the kingdom of Bahrain and the communist Chinese government. It was a question of *how* one designs not *for whom*. Penttilä trusted in the creativity of the individual architect and the design team, hence giving a huge impetus to personal creative freedom, and not some form of determinism inherent in the world which one only had to see unfold before one’s eyes.

NOTES

1. Timo Penttilä, "Theory and Tradition", *Finnish Architectural Review*, 5/1980, pp.71-74.
2. Karl R. Popper, "Towards a rational theory of tradition", in *Conjectures and Refutations – The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, Routledge: London, 1963 (1989 revised edition), p. 131.
3. Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture – The growth of a new tradition*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1967, fifth edition, p. 410.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 691. The competition ran from 15.3.1960 to 15.10.1960. The building was completed in December 1967. Kati Salonen and Mona Schalin, *Helsingin kaupunginteatteri rakennushistorian selvitys ja inventointi*, Kati Salonen ja Mona Schalin Arkkitehdit Oy, 2013.
5. Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, "Timo Penttilä: Comments on his work", *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, Exhibition, Royal Institute of British Architects, London, 2.-18.12.1980, p. 7.
6. Kirmo Mikkola, "Suomalaisen arkkitehtuurin ajankohtaisia pyrkimyksiä", 1969, reproduced in Jorma Mukala (ed), *Arkkitehtuurinjojo – Kirmo Mikkolan kirjoituksia*, Rakennustieto: Helsinki, 2009, p. 19.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Despite the social concerns, Mikkola would later state that the problems of architecture could not be solved with the help of political ideology. Kirmo Mikkola, *Suomi rakentaa 5 – Taidehalli 29.10.-21.11.1976*, Helsinki, p. 7
9. Timo Penttilä, "Arkkitehtuurin aatteet ja arki", *Arkkitehti*, 8/1974, p.35.
10. Penttilä's former employee, Pekka Salminen, includes the brief quote from Giedion in his obituary for Penttilä in *Arkkitehti*, clearly seeing it as a mark of honour. Pekka Salminen, "Timo Penttilä – In Memorium, 16.3.1931-25.2.2011", *Arkkitehti*, 4/2011, pp.30-32.
11. Timo Penttilä, chapter IV. 2.11, "Modern avant-garde", *Summum Templum Architecturae*. Unpublished manuscript; no date, pp. 291-297.
12. Timo Penttilä, *Oikeat ja väärät arkkitehdit – 2000 vuotta arkkitehtuuriteoriaa*, Gaudeamus, Helsinki, 2013.
13. Timo Penttilä, chapter V.2.3, "The lesson of the Stone Age", *Summum*, pp. 349-363.
14. Jean Baudrillard and Jean Nouvel, *The Singular Objects of Architecture*, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2002. It was originally published in French [*Les objets singuliers*] in 2000, but Penttilä refers to the Italian edition published in 2003. The most topical references in *Summum* are from 1997.
15. Penttilä, 2013, p. 7.
16. Timo Penttilä, chapter VI.2, "The essence of architecture", *Summum*, pp. 382-393.
17. Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1986, p. 219.
18. Penttilä, 2013, p. 194.
19. Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking" [Bauen Wohnen Denken, 1954], *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper & Row: New York, 1971, p. 146 and p. 161.
20. Penttilä, 2013, p.8.
21. Timo Penttilä, "Eyes which do not see", chapter IV.2.10, "Hermetic Revival", *Summum*. See pages 118-123 of the present publication.
22. Heidegger, 1971, p. 86 and p. 160.
23. Timo Penttilä, "Was ist der Stil unserer Meisterschule?", *10 Jahre Meisterschule für Architektur Professor Timo Penttilä 1981-1991*, Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien: Vienna, 1991, p.20.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Timo Penttilä, "Kaupunki ei ole projekti", *amfion*, 2/1987, pp. 2-8.
26. Hanno-Walter Kruft, *History of Architectural Theory*, Princeton Architectural Press: New York, 1994, pp. 17.
27. Timo Penttilä, "LOGOS", Selostus. Vantaa Science Centre open architecture competition (1985), author's entry description. I'm particularly grateful to British architect Gordon Falla, one of Penttilä's assistants at that time, for providing me with the competition entry description.
28. Timo Penttilä, "Niin teoreettista! Niin laajapohjaista! Niin vaistonvaraista! Niin vakuuttavaa!" *Arkkitehti*, 1/1986, p. 16.
29. The conflict between Wittgenstein and Popper is discussed in an engaging way in David Edmonds and John Eidinow, *Wittgenstein's Poker*, Faber and Faber: London, 2001. Penttilä also mentions this book; see Penttilä 2013, p. 157.
30. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Routledge: London, 2002 (1922), § 7, p. 89.
31. *Ibid.*, § 6.522, p. 89.
32. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Blackwell: Oxford, 1963 (1953), §119 and §109.
33. Penttilä 2013, 159-160.
34. Timo Penttilä, "Arkkitehtuuteoria on nykyaikana eräs järkevän rakentamisen pahimmista jarruista", *Arkkitehti*, 1/1986, pp. 19-22.

35. Timo Penttilä, "Rationalismi ja epärationaalisuus arkkitehtuurissa", unpublished manuscript, dated 25.2.1980. I am particularly grateful to Jorma Mukala for providing me with a copy of this text.
36. Popper, 1989, p. ix.
37. *Ibid.*, pp.120-135.
38. The idea of "tradition" is of course central to conservative thought, yet not necessarily by being anti-modernist. Philosopher of conservative thought Roger Scruton points to the case of artists such as Eliot, Pound, Joyce, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Braque and Moore where "the problem of giving articulate voice to the modern consciousness was conceived as the problem of making that consciousness part of a tradition of artistic expression, and so bringing it back.. to the point where it might be understood". Roger Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*. Pelican: London, 1980, b, p. 40-43.
39. Magnago Lampugnani, 1980, pp. 4-6.
40. Timo Penttilä, "Theory and Tradition", written for "The Future of Modern Movement", an international symposium held aboard a schooner on the Gulf of Finland, 22-24.8.1980. *Finnish Architectural Review*, 5/1980. 25 male architects, 9 from Finland, 9 from US and the rest from elsewhere in Europe.
41. Popper, 1989, pp.120-135.
42. Timo Penttilä, "Arkkitehdin toimintakenttä koulutus ja vastuu", *Arkkitehti*, 3/1969, pp.18-19.
43. Baudrillard and Nouvel, 2002, p. 18.
44. Timo Penttilä, chapter V.1.1, "Builder's realism", *Summu*, pp. 315-316.
45. Aalto's urban plan for the area around Töölönlahti bay, described as a plan for a new centre of Helsinki, a project which included the Finlandia Hall concert hall, began in 1959 and was first presented to the public in March 1961. As already mentioned, the Helsinki City Theatre competition ended on 15.10.1960. and the building was completed in December 1967. Salonen and Schalin, 2013.
46. Jorma Mukala, "Timo Penttilän arkkitehdin työn ulottuvuuksia", in Penttilä 2013, p. 255.
47. Why go to such trouble in the design of a power station? Unlike the utilitarian power stations that inspired the early modernists, a role alongside the engineer was now given to the architect in the design, and the massing, Penttilä claimed, was expressly supposed to adapt to the cityscape, while "the choice of uniform and pared-down materials and details binds together the different parts of the building." Timo Penttilä, "Hanasaaren voimalaitos", *Suomi rakentaa 5 – Taidehalli 29.10.-21.11.1976*, Helsinki, p. 154.
48. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Second Edition, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970. Hence the awkward references to "paradigm shifts" in architecture, as if opposition to a new hegemonical style was irrational and factually wrong. E.g. Charles Jencks, "The new paradigm in architecture", *Datutop* 22, 2002, p. 13.
49. Le Corbusier, "Les 5 Points d' une architecture nouvelle", *L'Esprit Nouveau*, 1926. (1) pilotis, (2) free plan, (3) free facade, (4) the long horizontal window (5) roof garden. Coined comparatively late, even Le Corbusier experts point out that the 5 points are a rather unsteady base for an attempt at reconstructing the premises and the structure of Le Corbusier's architectural language. Stanislaus von Moos, *Le Corbusier - Elements of a Synthesis*, Nai 010 Publishers: Rotterdam, 2008. pp. 79-87.
50. Timo Penttilä, chapter V.2.3, "The lesson of the Stone Age", *Summu*, pp. 349-363.
51. Penttilä, 2013, p. 133.
52. Le Corbusier, *Journey to the East*, MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass., 2007 (1966).
53. Timo Penttilä, 1991, p. 12.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
55. Willard Van Orman Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1961, p. 67.
56. Mies van der Rohe quoted in Fritz Neumeyer, *Mies van der Rohe – Das kunstlose Wort, Gedanken zur Baukunst*, Siedler: Berlin, 1986, p. 100. Cited in Penttilä, 2013, p. 128.
57. Timo Penttilä, "Autonomy and authority in architecture", *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*.
58. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second revised edition, Sheed & Ward: London, 1989 (1960). Quoted by Penttilä 1991, p.15.
59. Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, Museum of Modern Art: New York, 1983, p.16.
60. Penttilä, 2013, pp.136-137.
61. Aldo Rossi, *Architecture of the City*, MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1981, p. 41.
62. Penttilä, 1980, p. 104.
63. *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980, p. 107.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 107. For a conservative-thinking take on planning as necessary only to primitive societies, catastrophes and armies see Roger Scruton, *The Uses of Pessimism – And the danger of false hope*, Atlantic Books: London, 2010, pp. 196-204.

65. George Baird, "A promise as well as a memory': Toward an intellectual biography of Joseph Rykwert", in George Baird and Robert Tavernor (eds), *Body and Building - Essays on the Changing Relation of Body and Architecture*, MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass., 2002, pp. 5-7.

66. Timo Penttilä – *Finnish Architecture*, 1980, p. 110.

67. Ibid.

68. Gadamer also analyses the notion of tradition, arguing that it does not stand inert, that it is active in all historical change. Gadamer 1989 (1960), pp. 281-282.

69. See for instance, Michael Speaks, "Intelligence after theory", *Perspecta* 38, 2006, pp. 103-106. I would also presume that Penttilä would also argue against the claims of Patrik Schumacher, for while he argues for the autonomy of architecture, he claims that architecture is distinguished from mere building by the advocacy of a theoretical position. The error would be compounded by Schumacher's belief in a hegemonical style, namely parametricism. Patrik Schumacher, *The Autopoiesis of Architecture. Vol 1. A new framework for architecture*, Wiley: Chichester, 2011.

>> Hanasaari power station, Helsinki, 1976.



(9)

Timo Penttilä

Pictorial biography of architectural works

- 1931 – Born, Tampere, Finland, 16.3.1931.
- 1950-56 – Helsinki University of Technology Department of Architecture
- 1956-57 – Finnish military service
- 1953-56 – Employed in various architectural offices
- 1957-59 – Architect at Aarne Ervi's office
- 1959-95 – Own architectural office: Partners: Kari Virta, 1959-61; Heikki Saarela, 1972-; Kari Lind, 1974-; Timo Avela, Tapio Heijari, Sakari Tilantera, 1976-
- 1959-60 – Assistant at Helsinki University of Technology Department of Architecture
- 1968 – Vice-chairman of the Association of Finnish Architects (SAFA)
- 1968-69 – Visiting professor at the University of California, Berkeley, USA
- 1970-80 – Member of the Board of the Museum of Finnish Architecture
- 1976-80 – President of the Museum of Finnish Architecture
- 1978 – Member of the Finnish Academy of Technical Sciences
- 1980-98 – Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria
- 1993 – Resigned from SAFA
- 2011 – Died, Helsinki, Finland, 25.2.2011

It is difficult to say with any degree of certainty how many buildings Timo Penttilä designed. It is also difficult to say how many completed buildings can be attributed to him. An approximation of the total number of completed works is “at least 21”, though some involved groups of buildings, some notable early schemes were to varying degrees designed together with Kari Virta, while other later schemes sometimes attributed to him may have had little or even no input from him. His role in some of the later works credited to the various partnerships, especially Penttilä-Saarela-Lind, is thus open to debate, his previous employees, Heikki Saarela and Kari Lind, as well as Timo Avela, Tapio Heijari, Sakari Tilantera, having been made partners. On the other hand, beyond some of early competition entries made with Virta, perhaps all of the other entries were in their basic outline primarily the work of Penttilä. With no preserved archive of Penttilä drawings, models and other design material, the following photographic appendix of works and competition entries has been gathered from a wide selection of sources; the Finnish Museum of Architecture, municipal building offices and archives, various publications and even advertisement brochures (of particular value was the brochure of works *Arkkitehdit Oy* [1987] made by Penttilä-Saarela-Lind), and the archive of Penttilä's former partner Kari Virta, as well as former employees. However, there are several projects by Penttilä for which no illustrations so far have been found.

Chronological list of buildings and competition entries by Timo Penttilä

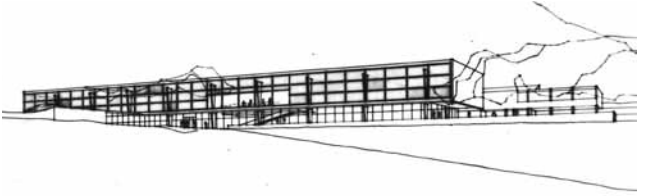
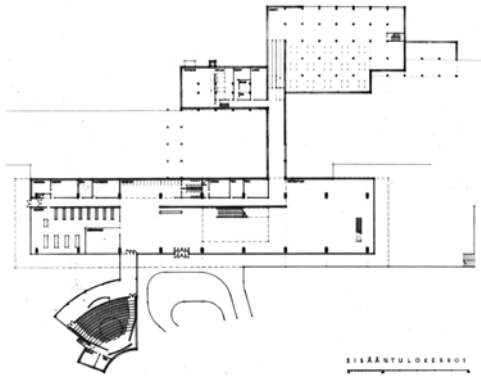
– Primarily the work of Penttilä unless otherwise stated.

- 1951 – An art museum for Helsinki. Helsinki University of Technology, Diploma thesis [source: Aalto University library archives].
- 1958 – Seinäjoki Town Hall, open Finnish architecture competition, entry “Agora” joint 2nd prize (shared with Mona and Lars Hedman), Timo Penttilä and Kari Virta [source: *Alvar Aalto ja Seinäjoki*, no illustrations found].
- 1958 – Seinäjoki Town Hall, invited architecture competition, 2nd prize (1st prize, Alvar Aalto), Timo Penttilä and Kari Virta [source: *Ilkka*, 13.12.1958].
- 1958-1962 – Salokunta parish centre, Karkku. Building completed 1962 [source: *Arkkitehti* 10/1962, *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1959 – Kaleva Church, Tampere, open Finnish architectural competition; unplaced [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987, no illustrations found].
- 1959 – Highway construction plan, Tampere, design competition, purchase [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987, no illustrations found].
- 1959-62 – Sampola Adult education centre and school, Tampere, open Finnish architecture competition, 1st prize, Timo Penttilä and Kari Virta [source: *Arkkitehti kilpailuliite* no.3, 10-11/1959]. Building completed 1962 [sources: *Arkkitehti*, 10/1962; Kari Virta archives, VPL Architects].
- 1960 – Sports hall, Turku, open Finnish architecture competition, 2nd prize [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987, no illustrations found].
- 1960-61 – Exhibition and sports hall, Tampere, design proposal [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987, no illustrations found].
- 1960-65 – Tampere Business College, open Finnish architecture competition, first prize, Timo Penttilä and Kari Virta. Building completed 1965 [sources: *Arkkitehti kilpailuliite* no.4, *Arkkitehti*, 8-9/1960; Kari Virta archives, VPL Architects].
- 1960-67 – Helsinki City Theatre, open architecture competition, 1st prize, Timo Penttilä and Kari Virta [source: *Arkkitehti*, 1-2/1961]. Building completed 1967 [source: *Arkkitehti*, 10-11/1967]; extension 1985, Timo Penttilä and Kari Lind.
- 1960 – Helsinki City Hall remodelling and extension, open architecture competition, 3rd prize, Timo Penttilä [source: *Arkkitehti*, 7-8/1961].
- 1961-62 – Teisko co-educational school, Terälahti [source: Tampereen kaupunginarkisto]. Building completed 1962. Extension plan 1967, unrealised (remodelled and extended, 2000, Mikko Uotila).
- 1962 – Oulu “monumental centre”, open Finnish architecture competition, 2nd prize, Timo Penttilä [source: *Arkkitehti kilpailuliite* no.4, *Arkkitehti*, 9/1963].
- 1962-78 – Army officers’ apartment houses, and kindergarten, Valkeala [source: *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980, no illustrations found; location of buildings unconfirmed].
- 1963 – Finnish Embassy, Delhi, India; open Finnish architectural competition; unplaced [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987].
- 1963 – Kemi Cultural Centre, open Finnish architecture competition, open architecture competition, purchase, Timo Penttilä [source: *Arkkitehti*

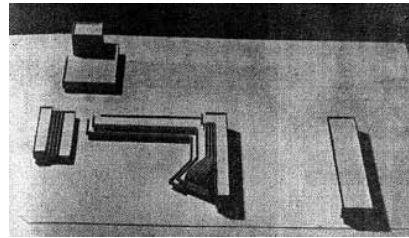
- kilpailuliite no.5, Arkkitehti, 7-8/1964*].
- 1964 – Madrid Opera House, Madrid, Spain, open international architecture competition, unplaced, Timo Penttilä [source: *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1964-77 – Reima-Pukine Ltd; several textile industry buildings and staff housing [source: *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980, no illustrations found].
- 1965 – Edward Grieg Concert House, Bergen, Norway, open Nordic architecture competition, purchase, Timo Penttilä [source: *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1965 – Vestamager master plan, Denmark, Nordic ideas competition, purchase [source: *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1966 – Ratina Stadium, Tampere, Timo Penttilä. Building completed 1966 [source: *Arkkitehti*, 1/1968, *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1966 – Pellonperäntie housing, Tammisalo, Helsinki. Building completed 1966 [sources: *Arkkitehti*, 3/1968; *Suomi Rakentaa 4*, 1980; *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1966 – Motel, Lappeenranta, unrealised [source: *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980, no illustrations found].
- 1967-70 School for hospital nurses, Helsinki, project, unrealised [source: *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980, no illustrations found].
- 1967 – University of Oulu campus, open architecture competition, unplaced [source: *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1967 – Fishing cabin, Iniö. Building completed 1967 [source: *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1969 – Sauna Society Humallahti type-sauna, open architecture competition, 3rd prize [source: *Arkkitehtuurikilpailuja*, 9-10/1969].
- 1970-74 – Tapiola extension development plan, Espoo, Timo Penttilä, Jouni Ijäs, Heikki Saarela [source: *Arkkitehti*, 3/1974].
- 1971 – Yyteri Rantasipi Hotel, Pori, open architecture competition, 3rd prize [source: *Arkkitehtuurikilpailuja*, 7/1971].
- 1972 – Rosendahl Hotel, Tampere, invited architecture competition, unplaced [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987, no illustrations found].
- 1975 – City Institute, Espoo. Building completed 1975 [sources: Espoon rakennusvalvonnan arkisto; *Arkkitehti*, 1/1976; *Suomi Rakentaa 5*, 1976; *A+U*, 10/1979; *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980] [partly demolished and converted into a hotel and apartment block, Petri Rouhiainen, 2007]
- 1975 – KOP bank head offices, Helsinki, invited architecture competition, 1st prize, main proposal unrealised, but other interior work realised [source: *Arkkitehtuurikilpailuja* 8/1975; *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1975 – Linnanmäki amusement park viewing tower, Helsinki, invited architecture competition, unplaced [source: *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1976 – Hanasaari power station, Helsinki. Building completed 1976 [sources: *Arkkitehti*, 4/1974; *Suomi Rakentaa 5*, 1976; *A+U*, 10/1979; *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1976 – Bahrain Cultural Centre, Manama, Bahrain, invited international

- architecture competition, 1st prize, unrealised [sources: *Uusi Suomi*, 9.9.1976; *Suomi Rakentaa* 6, 1976; *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1976 – Finnish National Opera House, Helsinki, open Finnish architectural competition, unplaced [source: *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1977 – Supru wilderness cabin, Inari. Building completed 1977 [source: *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1977 – Vaduz Art Centre, Liechtenstein, international architecture competition, purchase [source: *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1978 – Gyllenberg Art Gallery, Kuusisari, Helsinki, invited architecture competition, unplaced [source: *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1978 – Pahlavi National Library, Tehran, Iran, invited international architecture competition, unplaced; Timo Penttilä and Heikki Saarela [sources: *Arkkitehti*, 5/1980; *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1979 – Imatra Voima laboratory, operational centre and communications mast, Vantaa; Timo Penttilä, Heikki Saarela and Kari Lind. Building completed 1979 [sources; Vantaan kaupungin rakennusvalvonta, Vantaa, *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987].
- 1979 – Quartier des Halles, urban development, Paris, France, open international architecture competition, unplaced; Timo Penttilä, Roberto Menghi and Roberto Sambonet [source: *Roberto Menghi*, 2000].
- 1979 – Vantaa City Library, open architecture competition, unplaced [sources: *Arkkitehti* 2/1980; *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1979 – Foreign Ministry, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, invited international architecture competition, 1979, unplaced [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987].
- 1974-1980 – Finnish Sugar head offices, Tapiola, Espoo; Timo Penttilä, Heikki Saarela, Kari Lind. Building completed 1980 [sources: Espoo rakennusvalvonta arkisto; Suomi rakentaa 6, 1981; A+U, 5/1982, *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980]. Demolished 2014.
- 1980 – Domizil head offices, Brühl, Germany, invited international competition, 1st prize, unrealised [source: *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1981 – Hirveniemä housing, Kuusisaari, Helsinki. Building completed 1981 [sources: *Arkkitehti* 2/1982; A+U, 7/1982; *Timo Penttilä – Finnish Architecture*, 1980].
- 1981 – Stadt- und Festhalle congress and concert hall, Ludwigsburg, Germany, invited international architecture competition, purchase [source: *Wettbewerbe aktuell*, 9/1981]
- 1981 – Vasa Museum, Stockholm, Sweden; open Nordic architecture competition, unplaced [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987, no illustrations found].
- 1982 – Joensuu City Library, Joensuu; 3rd prize, Jussi Heinonen and Heikki Saarela [source: *Arkkitehtuurikilpailuja*, 4-5 1982].
- 1983 – Lahti Cultural Centre; open Finnish architecture competition, unplaced [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987].
- 1983 – Nokia head offices, Keilalahti, Espoo; invited architecture competition, unplaced [source: *Arkkitehtuurikilpailu* 1/1984].
- 1983 – Official residence of the President of the Republic of Finland; open Finnish architecture competition, unplaced [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987].

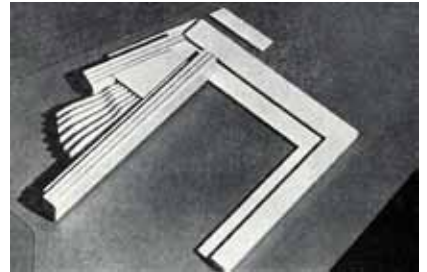
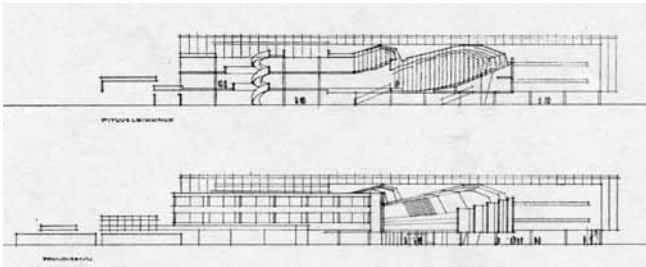
- 1983 – Tête Défense, Paris, France, open international architecture competition, unplaced [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987].
- 1984 – Kuhmo Library, Kuhmo, open Finnish architecture competition, unplaced [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987, no illustrations found].
- 1984 – Anhalter Bahnhof, Berlin, Germany: IBA 87 invitational architectural competition [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987, no illustrations found].
- 1985 – Salmisaari power station, Helsinki. Building completed 1985 [sources: *Suomi rakentaa* 7, 1986; *A+U*, 3/1988, *Baumeister*, 4/1986].
- 1985 – Tammiväylä housing, Tammisalo, Helsinki; Heikki Saarela, Gordon Falla. Building completed 1985 [source: *Arkkitehti*, 2-3/1986; *Suomi rakentaa* 7, 1986; *A+U*, 3/1988].
- 1985 – Finnish Science Centre, Vantaa; open architecture competition, unplaced [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987].
- 1985 – Lumivirta housing, Kulosaari, Helsinki; Heikki Saarela, Gordon Falla, realised not in accordance with the plan [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987].
- 1985 – “Vesiparatiisi” spa, Helsinki, unrealised project [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987].
- 1986 – Makrotalo head offices, Tapiola, Espoo; Timo Penttilä, Heikki Saarela, Sakari Tilanterä. Building completed 1986 [sources: Espoon rakennusvalvonnan arkisto; *A+U*, 1988].
- 1986 – New National Theatre, Tokyo, Japan; open architecture competition, unplaced [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987].
- 1987 – Economic and Commercial Section of Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Finland, Kulosaari, Helsinki. Heikki Saarela and Gordon Falla. Building completed 1987 [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987].
- 1987 – Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Department for Development Policy, Helsinki, open architecture competition, unplaced [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987].
- 1987 – Lauri Viita memorial, Tampere; open design competition, unplaced [source: *Arkkitehdit Oy*, 1987].
- 1988 – Gumpendorferstrasse housing and kindergarten, Vienna, Austria. Building completed 1988 [source: *Wettbewerbe*, 78-79/1988].
- 1989 – Tampella urban development plan, Tampere, unrealised [source: National Board of Antiquities; *Aamulehti*, 31.8.2013].
- 1990 – City Prag urban development plan, Stuttgart, Germany, invited architecture competition, unplaced [source: *Arkkitehti*, 2/2011].
- 1991 – Alppikylä area development plan, Helsinki, unrealised [source: *Meisterschule*, 1991].



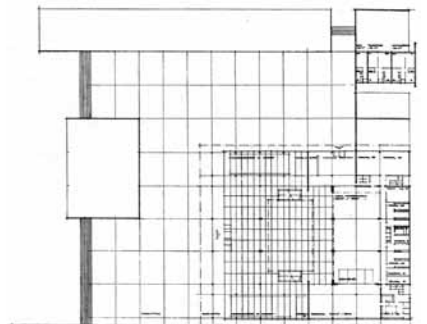
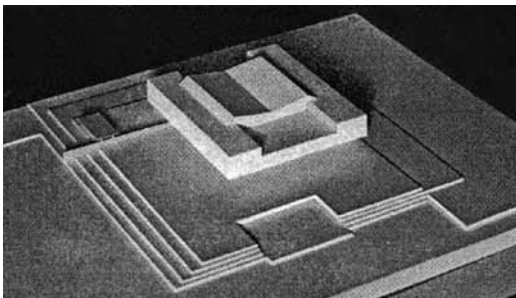
Diploma thesis - An art museum for Helsinki, 1951.



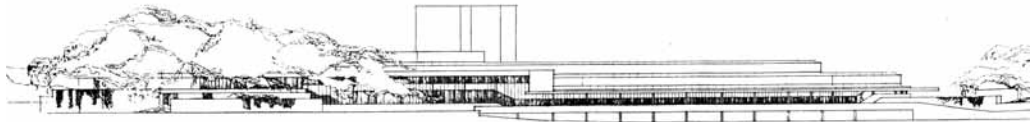
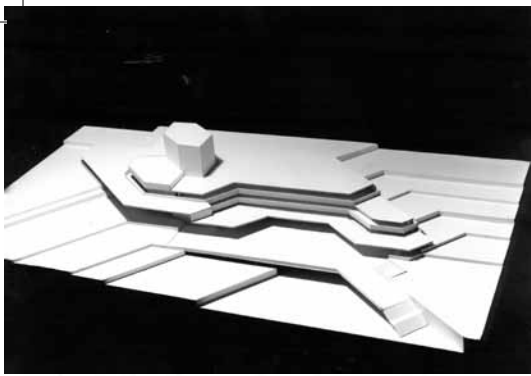
Seinäjoki town hall, second competition (2nd prize), 1958.



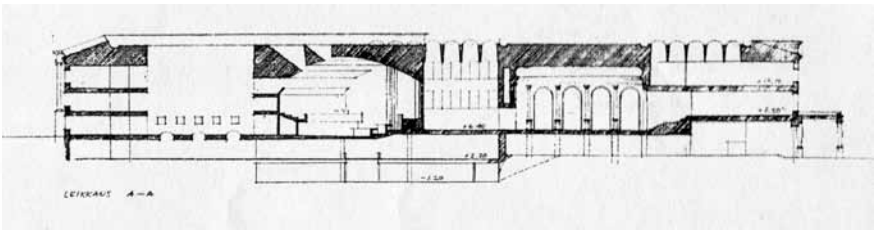
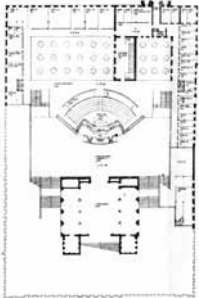
Sampola, school and adult education institute, competition (1st prize), 1959.



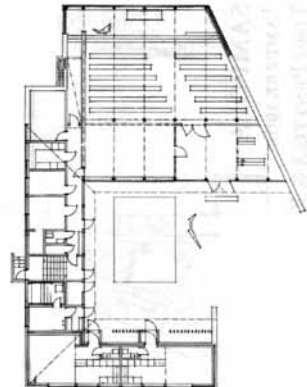
Tampere business school, competition (1st prize), 1961.



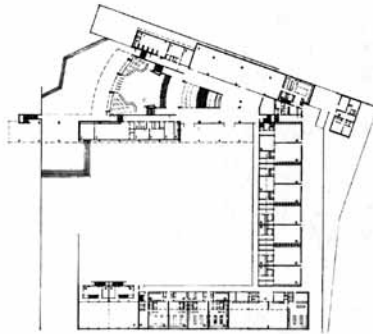
Helsinki City Theatre, competition (1st prize), 1960.



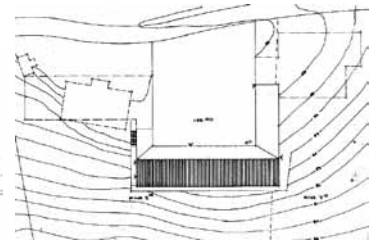
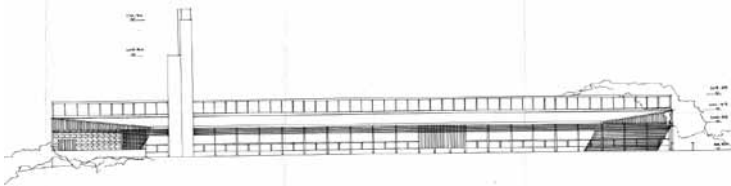
Helsinki City Hall, competition (3rd prize), 1960.



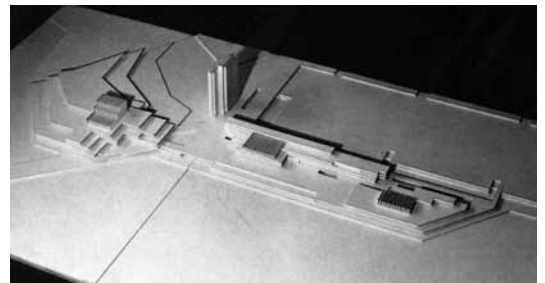
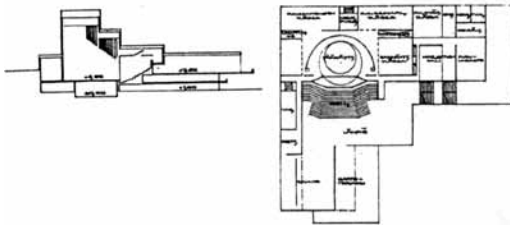
Salokunta parish centre, Karkku, 1962.



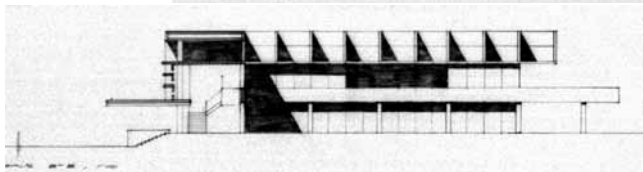
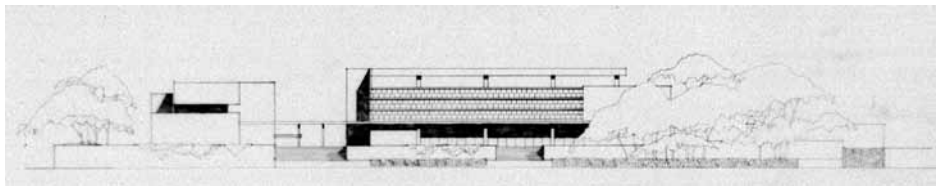
Sampola, adult education centre and school, Tampere, completed 1962.



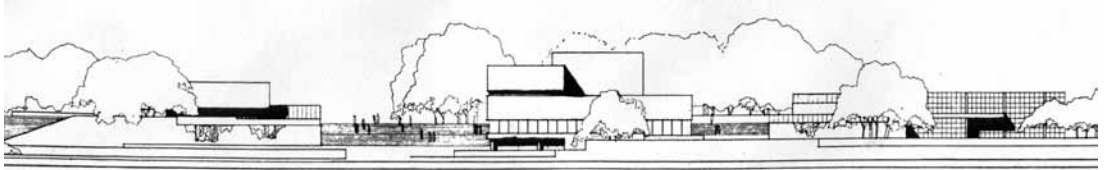
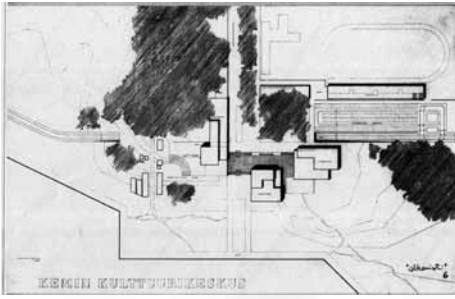
Teisko co-ed school, Karkku, completed 1962.



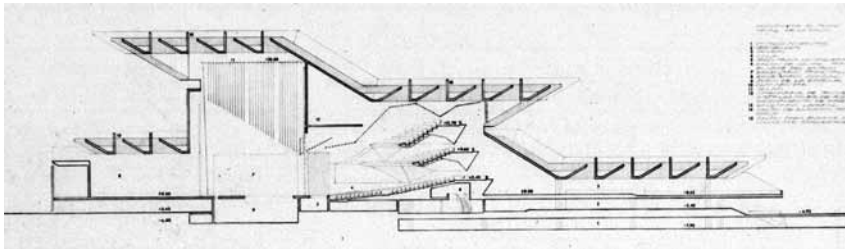
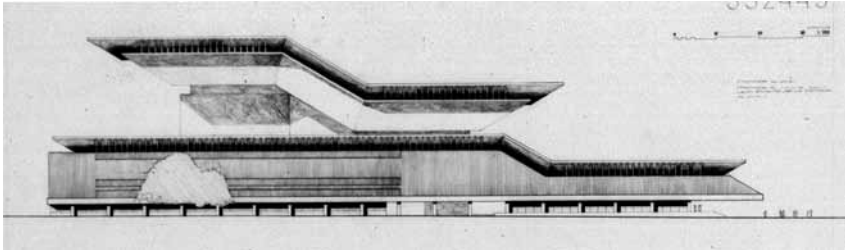
Oulu "monumental centre", competition (2nd prize), 1962.



Finnish Embassy, New Delhi, India, competition, 1963.



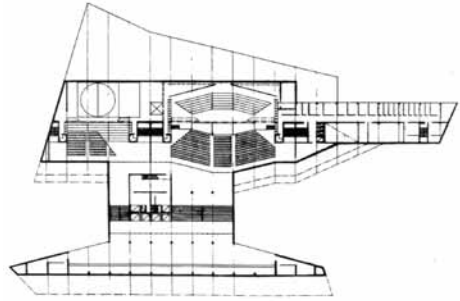
Kemi Cultural Centre, competition (purchase), 1963.



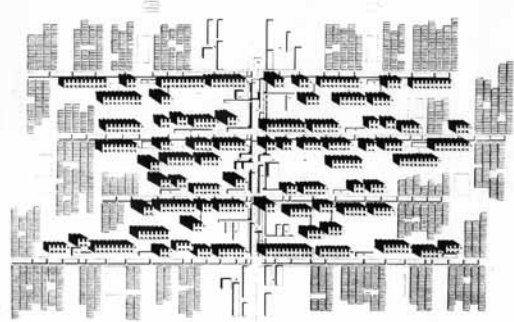
Madrid Opera House, Spain, competition, 1963.



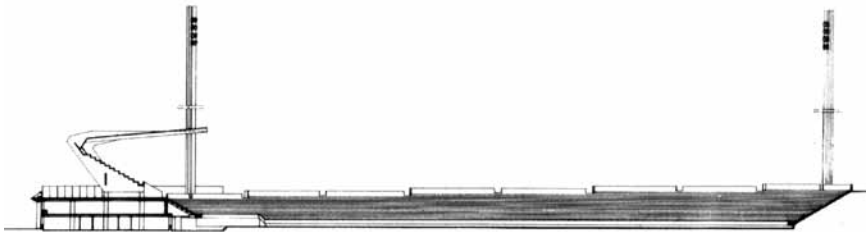
Tampere business school, completed 1965.



Edward Grieg Concert Hall, Bergen, Norway, competition (purchase) 1965.



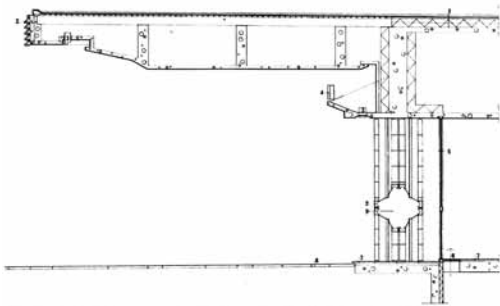
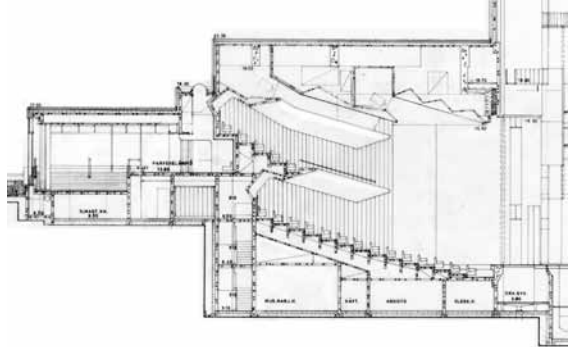
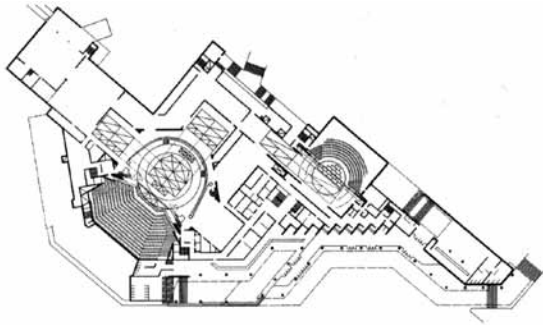
Vestamager master plan, Denmark, competition (purchase), 1965.



Ratina Stadium, Tampere, completed 1966.



Pellonperäntie terraced houses, Tammisalo, Helsinki, completed 1967.

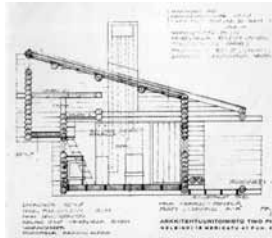


Helsinki City Theatre, completed 1967.

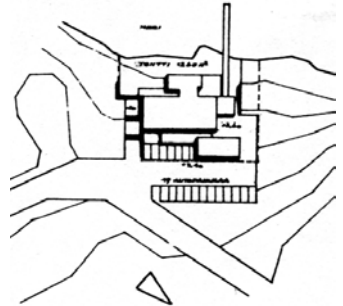
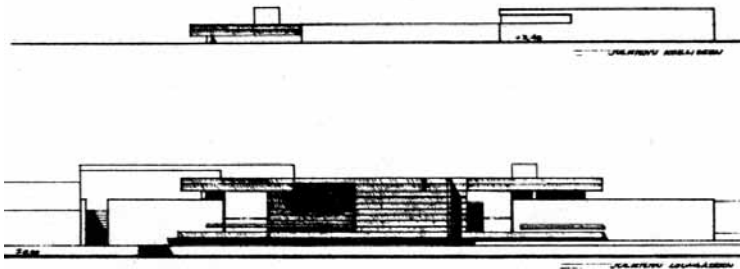




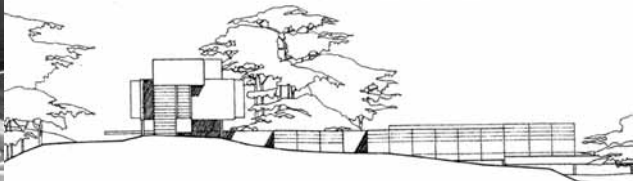
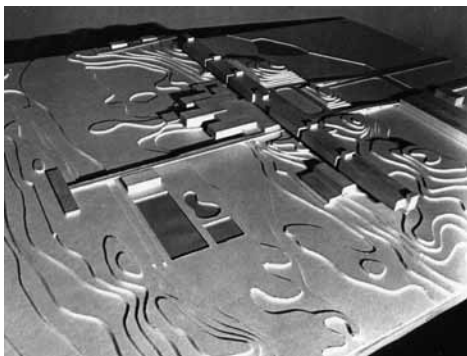
University of Oulu campus, competition, 1967.



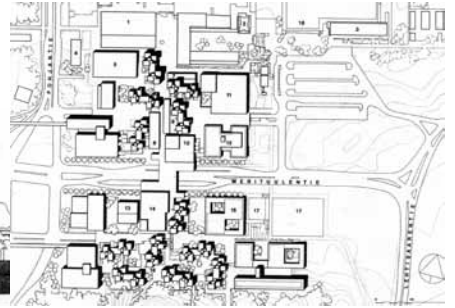
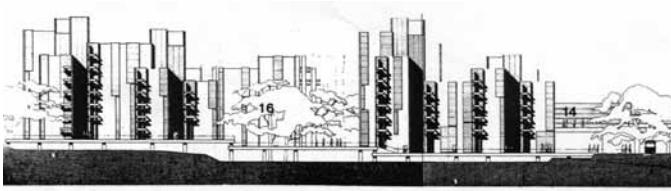
Fishing cabin, Inio, completed 1967.



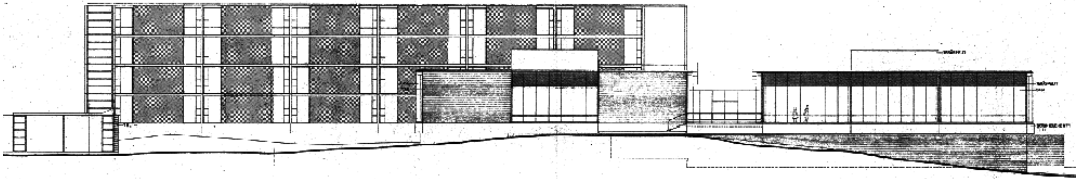
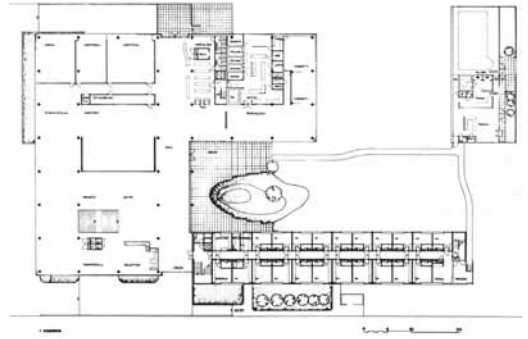
Humalahti type-sauna, Helsinki, competition (3rd prize), 1969.



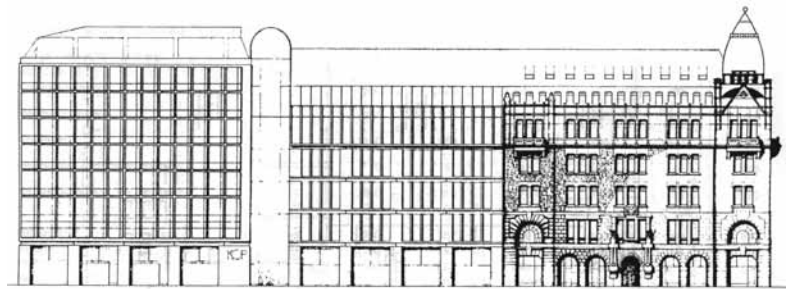
Yyteri Rantasipi Hotel, Pori, competition (3rd prize), 1971.



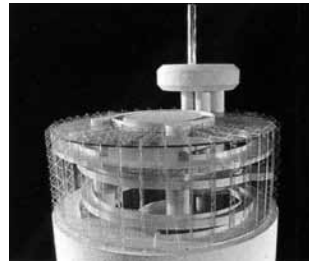
Tapiola extension plan, Espoo, 1974.



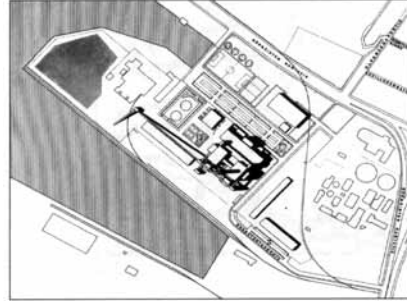
Suomen kaupunkiopisto (Finnish city college), Espoo, completed 1975.



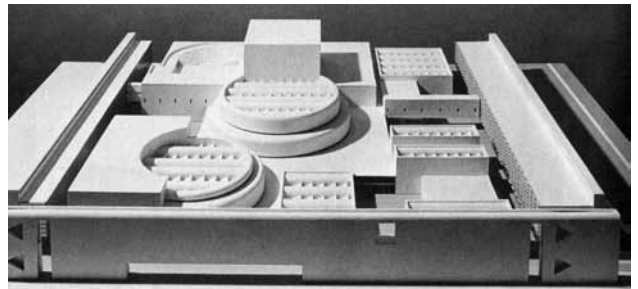
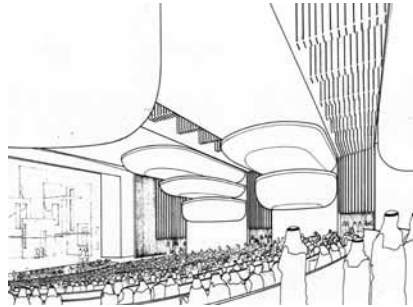
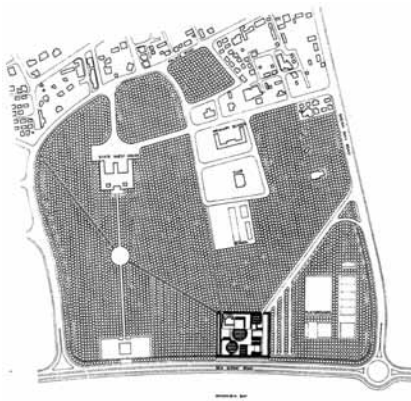
KOP Bank head office block, Helsinki, competition (1st prize), 1975.



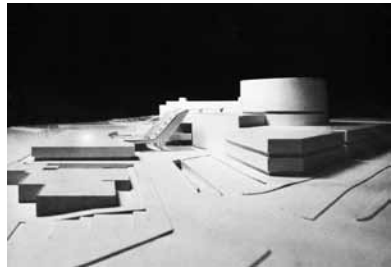
Linnanmäki viewing tower, Helsinki, competition, 1975.



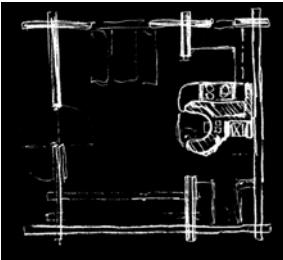
Hanasaari power station, Helsinki, completed 1976.



Bahrain cultural centre, Manama, Bahrain, competition (1st prize), 1976.



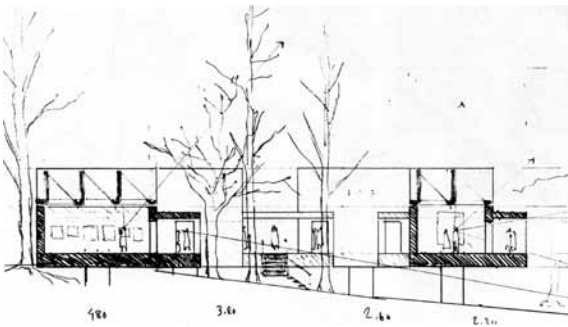
Finnish National Opera House, Helsinki, competition, 1980.



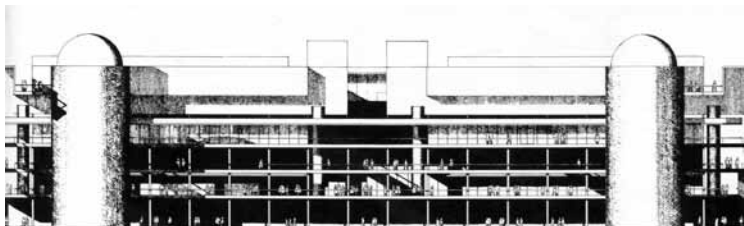
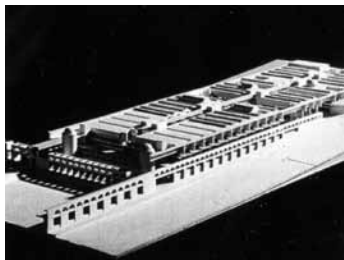
Supru, wilderness cabin, Inari, completed 1977.



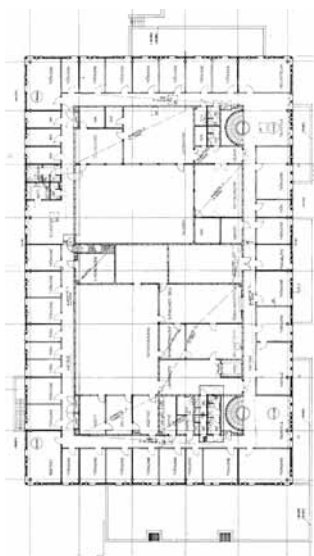
Vaduz Art Centre, Liechtenstein, competition (purchase), 1977.



Gyllenberg Art Gallery, Kuusisaari, Helsinki, competition, 1978.



Pahlavi National Library, Tehran, Iran, competition, 1978.



Imatra Voima laboratory and operational centre, Vantaa, completed 1979.



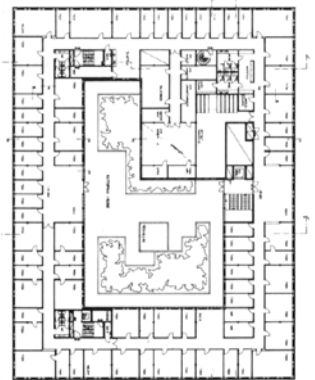
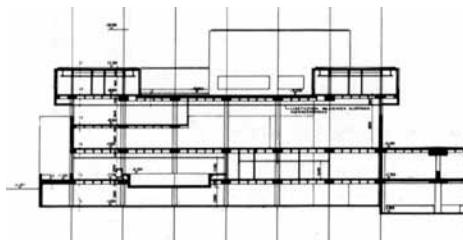
Quartier des Halles, Paris, France, competition, 1979.



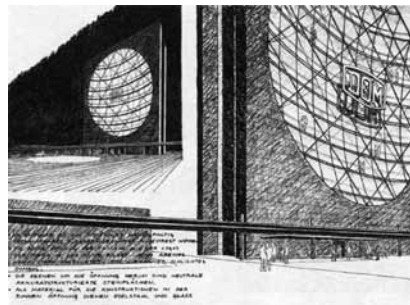
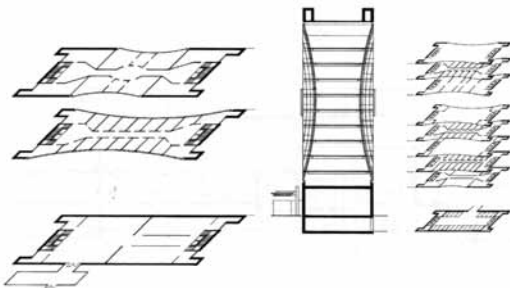
Foreign Ministry, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, competition, 1979.



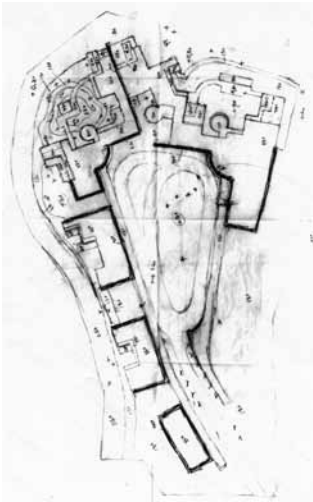
Vantaa City Library, competition, 1979.



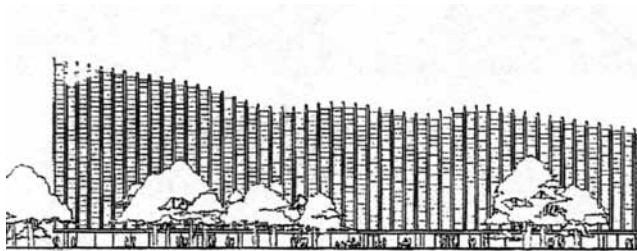
Finnish Sugar head offices, Tapiola, Espoo, completed 1980.



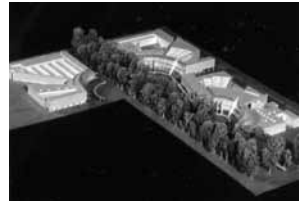
Domizil head offices, Brühl, Germany, competition (1st prize), 1980.



Hirveniemi housing area, Kuusisaari, Helsinki, completed 1981.



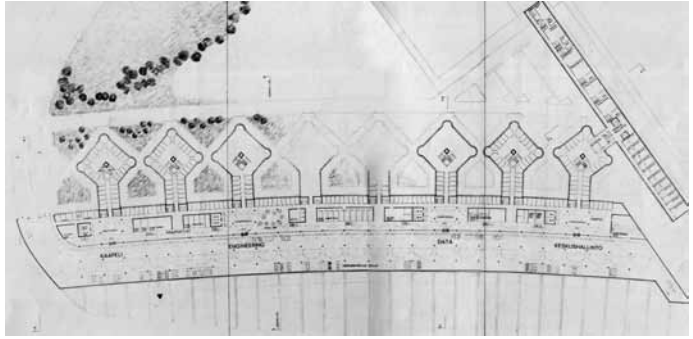
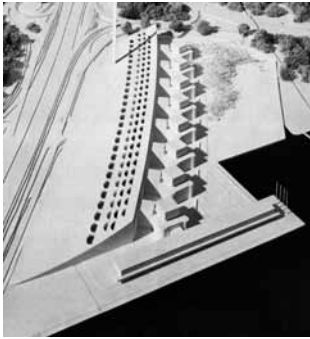
Stadt- und Festhalle, Ludwigsburg, Germany, competition, 1981.



Lahti Cultural Centre, competition, Lahti, 1982.



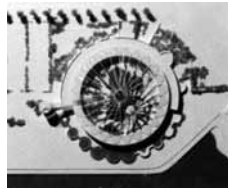
Joensuu City Library, Joensuu, competition (3rd prize), 1982.



Nokia head offices, Keilalahti, Espoo, competition, 1984.



Tête Défense, Paris, France, competition, 1983.



>> "Vesiparatiisi" spa, Helsinki, competition, 1985.



Official residence of the President of the Finnish Republic, Mäntyniemi, Helsinki, competition, 1987.

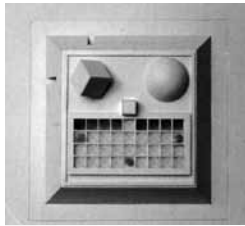


Salmisaari power station, Helsinki, completed 1985.





Tammiväylä housing, Tammisalo, Helsinki, completed 1985.



<<Finnish Science Centre, Vantaa, competition, 1985.



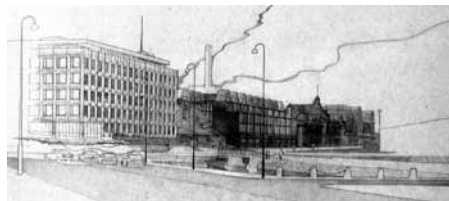
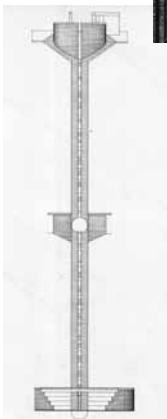
Makrotalo head offices, Tapiola, Espoo, completed 1986.



New National Theatre, Tokyo, Japan, competition, 1986.

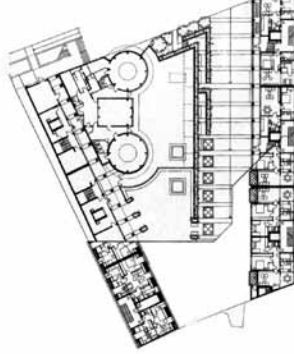
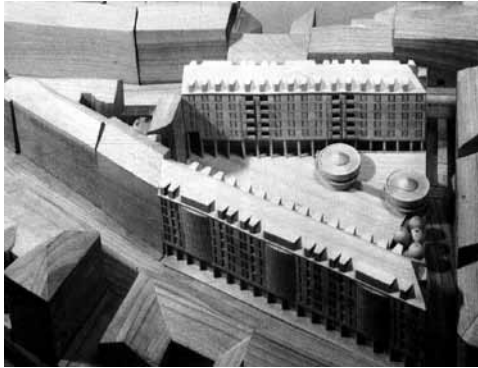


<<Economic and Commercial Section of Chinese Embassy, Kulosaari, Helsinki, completed 1987.

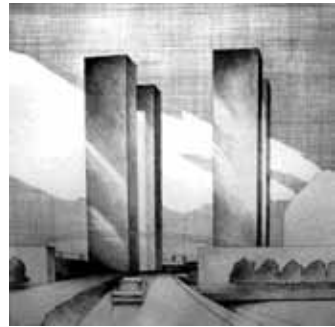


Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Department for Development Policy, Helsinki, competition, 1987.

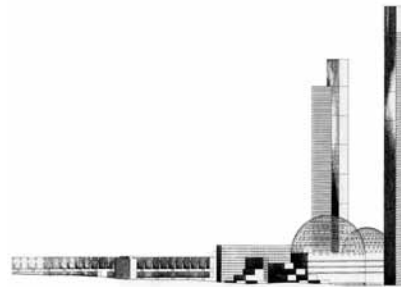
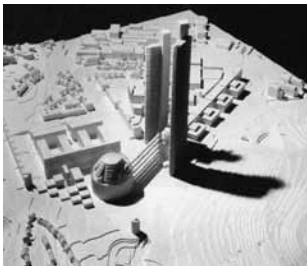
<<Lauri Viita memorial, Tampere, competition, 1987.



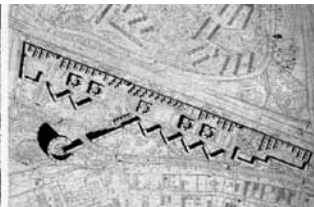
Apartment block and daycare centre, Gumpendorferstrasse, Vienna, Austrian, completed 1988.



Tampella urban development plan, Tampere, 1989.



City Prag urban development plan, Stuttgart, Germany, competition, 1990.



Alppikylä city district development plan, Helsinki, 1991.

6 THE SCHOOL OF EXILE

Sounds good. Sounds like, if you have to have a self,
that's what you want it to be: 'intractable' as in 'can't
be fucked with.' That's what you want: an incurable
malady of self, if you have to have a self.
- Frank Letricchia¹

About five years ago I suggested to a close colleague in Finland that there may be a fresh and usefully critical way to explore the history of a country's architecture through the ideas and movements – architectural, cultural and political – by mapping the different networks.

This emerged from the feeling my colleague expressed that the younger architects were losing a nearness to some of the strong, defining elements in the society that had produced such a vibrant and robust architectural culture. By networks I meant a mapping of the “professional”, “collegial”, “academic” and “friendship” patterns within Finnish architecture. This would also take seriously the way gossip, polemics and speculations concerned ideas and turned them into operative procedures.

This was a suggestion to look at, especially in a small country like Finland that operates as a community often on familial, clannish, even tribal relationships to each other. Personal relationships were never merely personal as so much was known about each other. In Finland it was impossible to hide. Always has been. My suggestion at this point was to redefine the notion of influence and “originality”. Friendship circles played a huge part in what was considered right and what was considered wrong architecture. Concepts like “forest space”, tectonic neutrality and non-representation went in and out of fashion, often also prompted by the architects' friendships and loyalties with artists and designers.

Finland's visual imagination – a repertoire of some distinction – lent and borrowed ideas freely, and not only from visiting countries or exotic lands. It was a culture of exchange; there were friends of steel (a steel network) and friends of wood (a timber network). Young architects learned who to go to for help and advice and this had operated as a very successful schooling in between “other” schooling. Though some interest was expressed in this idea, there was no confidence shown that anyone could actually get inside this and ultimately that very few would offer genuine experiences or information that could openly map this cross-traffic in ideas. This was not suspicion as much as a guarded and protected cultural secrecy. No one is the perfect insider, though many can become the irritant. The outsider has cognitive value certainly, as one who can continue to ask questions from a position of exile, as Kolakowski described. In many ways Timo Penttilä took on this role within the Finnish architectural culture, and spent at

least thirty years living within that exile.

I felt this idea of a mapping of exchange could have radically altered the conventional way of looking at the history of Finnish architecture and challenging some of the narratives that were clearly subject to time and censorship. This would have been a way to re-engage the young architects in a (critical? narrative?) history that was getting fainter by the year. It would let us understand the notion that Penttilä raised more than once on my short visit to him in Italy in 1996, the idea of a fake history. We much remember though; in a country so long used to the shadow of the three beards (Lenin, Marx and Engels), there is a diplomacy within Finland of unspeaking agreements with itself. There used to exist clannish contracts not to say too much – like diplomats who have working misunderstandings in order to buy time and space. It was quite possible in this way that Finland might be said to have an agreed working fake history. It proceeded well enough. If you have to have a self, then what is that “self” under these conditions? Penttilä might have asked the same question.

*

This has not so much been a journey into non-writing as, if we are still able to recall the ghost of Georges Bataille, non-knowledge. Grand theories, grand narratives, agreed critical histories, narratives unchallenged: architecture is left with grand shadows. If we can re-align the obvious technical innovations, the digital imaging and scientific development today toward design thinking, would this imply the need for a radical revision in the role of the architect as skilled software craftsman, overseer, director; the architect as *auteur* rather than builder?

Auteur was a term used to distinguish between a filmmaker responsible for the entire conception of a film and one who might merely stage scripts written by another. It became, after the *nouvelle vague* in France in the late 1950s, referred to as the *politique des auteurs*, expounding the idea that great filmmakers are also *auteurs* when they transform material given them by imposing, visually and structurally, their own occupation and contesting and continuing themes. The architect, some of them today, have in many ways, become film directors.

None of this is relevant to Timo Penttilä. Or is it? Many architects seem pleased to release material at their own pace, requiring the control of an *auteur* but also the privilege of desire. Architects are well known for that tendency to want to be in control of everything, but this anxiety needs to find its necessary outlet. Even collaboration makes for vigilance. It works if others move and circle around a similar vision. To pull together needs nuance and the understanding and tracking of even the slightest change.

Collaboration is also about editing the contribution, especially of the young colleagues and students. To know when to expand, to know when to let go; often it is knowing how to let go, which can paradoxically mean how to reign in. Is this an *auteur's* talent? Material emerges in a trickle, small pieces are revealed just as

they contribute to the projects underway in any minor but significant oeuvres. And what then if the architect has destroyed the evidence?

To set out to edit our misunderstandings is never as important as to realize that the hermeneutic contract between architect and critic, architect and client, can be manipulated just as it has been done, and is still being done, by countless architects today organizing, scripting and editing out their own archives. That belief that finally, finally, one journalist, one essay, one article might put right what countless others have distorted, have mismanaged. Yet disenchantment slips in and this too must be negotiated – but how? We are in agreement, as many architects are; what could be of less interest than a staged production and a choreographed index of lauded attribution and architectural enigma? This is about the issues we shared in Italy in 1996. And yes, strangely perhaps, we did have laughter in mind as our common response.

I remember telling Penttilä a story. I recalled a time in Buenos Aires where I heard a lecture by Charles Correa to students and wondered why he did not show his earlier pre-iconic “wow-factor” (a term already used then) architecture influenced by Rajasthan motifs and colour. It was a period when Postmodernism was redefining the moment and architects had to appear to be doing more voodoo than before. The seduction to public imagery and public symbolism suddenly meant that a competent Post-Corbusier hotel building in white modernist garb in Ahmedabad, a hotel I had actually stayed in, would not really demonstrate the iconic values the architect now wanted to claim for his work. Even the large airport in Delhi was left out, its modernist treatment particularly shoddy in the Indian climate. Instead, the iconography and echoes of the North Western Indian desert communities of Rajasthan and Gujarat inspired the vernacular to become the new modern. It always mystified me why architects are not forward in understanding and demonstrating the way their thinking has changed and developed, and how they work on *this* rather than *that* right now.

What sort of self was being exposed? Did all architects do this? Penttilä rightly thought this naïve. Of course they did. The difference is that many architects are not lecturing or presenting to share their thoughts, to pass over a process, a way of thinking, or the architect’s being-in-question, they are so often there to promote their work as if an advertising pitch or a brochure of achieved success. Penttilä admitted to a period doing this, a period which had finally irritated him. Clearly the professional structure of architecture actually serves to strengthen this erasure and blinding, as everyone who has ever witnessed the briefcase full of slides and pre-Powerpoint presentations knows. Some architects go even further and try and control everything that is written about them. Penttilä admitted to this, too, but then laughed. Interestingly we spoke about no architects but we knew exactly who we were talking about. It shouldn’t be but it is: the architectural world is fine-tuned to hold itself ransom to the gossip of its own limitations.

If he had to, I asked, which buildings would the architect leave out? It was a rhetorical question addressed to all architects, of course. There may be some works

in an architect's life less worked through than others, some cut off or hijacked; some projects do not achieve the necessary conditions for alertness. They fail not for the ideas but for the conditions imposed upon the architect that struggles against efficiency and practice. But is that any reason to undo previous work, to erase projects with creative inkling to a failed or successful future? Is that any reason to re-write the life's work and re-script the personal encyclopedia? Penttilä was not that kind of architect, which doesn't then necessarily make him any more worthy. It is just that I felt, whilst in Italy, with no adequate reason to support this, that Penttilä had settled in the comfort of his own skin, and unlike some other architects, he had no intention of using works of architecture to measure private anxiety or degrees of esteem. Architecture just didn't work that way for Penttilä.

And now, on his death, on the creation of a Timo Penttilä Society, on the awakening to new documents and a lost manuscript, what might this say of the profession in the 21st century? Where does this leave our Last Modernist? There is a likelihood that the architecture profession may start taking on a different social organisational structure in the not too distant future. Its model looks tired, its business ethic suspect. It may, if it is to respond to the bifurcation in universities between training and learning, between management and education, begin to re-structure the profession along the lines of architecture meets business administration. The horror at such a merger would not necessarily imply architecture loses out; the current privileged structure of the profession allows the heroic and leadership mentality of the divine root control of the profession. The model trickles down to every County and Local Planning office. Finland, Europe, Asia.

But we might take another route. It might be that structural change within the profession has little to do with the vibrant blurring of literature, philosophy and architecture and is realistically and speculatively more connected with social structures that invite change at the core of the practice. This may lead us to explore how advanced systems thinking and organisational strategies may lead to a breakthrough in areas of architecture not imagined in the last century. If this takes the architect-auteur beyond the confines of architecture as we know it professionally today, Penttilä would probably have been the first to address the "structural" and inter-disciplinary activities necessary for a new and radically generous interactive practice. Within this imagined paradigmatic shift, eventually the *person non grata* may have to be listened to! But that might be asking too much. If you have to have a self, Penttilä would have said, then make it incurable. The shadow kills us, then we awake.

*

The splendid melancholy of the North invited me back once more. The truancy from my family began to pain me. I began to think I knew what the architect felt, why he left his own country, Finland, and what exile was. For what is the relief of pain in having nothing more to say, and not having to write books or build

buildings in order to prove it? How much exile resembles that moment when we all return and offer our apologies to birth? To live a life with nothing more to say, to enter the cloister or the kitchen and yet live in full everything that is implicated by this silence. This is the school of exile. Nothing or nothingness: still to be determined. Lost to all outside, exile is however not the gain to those few we wish to imagine. Everyone is listening. Everyone is silent. Life is never over; architecture is never over. But to some it is, and then returns.

I began to plan, in the form of the “worry” that I began all this with. Where next to go? Nothing like a real worry yet of course! Nothing like shoddy leather, for example, on Italian shoes – just essential estrangement and dissolution waiting to find its other form.

Near Milan now, there is haze to be seen from the plane. A delayed flight, this being Italy, allowed me to try and begin the book on *Contemporary Treachery*. It was difficult to get past the opening remarks for a book, which so openly invited instability. But it seemed unnecessary to read on. I made a quick mental note of the worries as I saw them right now, knowing they would alter as I took the back seat on the plane and found some space to be alone.

Had our disbelief collided? Did we disbelieve the same things? What in our reactions was similar and what resistance could we use against others who disbelieve us? What flaw in my own argument have I missed which will make our lives irrelevant to each other, and life and architecture once more diverge. No photos, no teapot, no Lapsang Souchong tea, no interruptions, nothing but coffee, books, philosophy and the thrill of the next worry. What else remained of my visit to Timo Penttilä? I sat in Piazza Navona trying to take in a breath after sitting in the Pantheon. After watching for some minutes everyone in the Pantheon, it felt difficult to come down or back to earth after living fraudulently. For anyone noticing this, even the architect in his vineyard, there may of course be nothing more than naivety in this realisation. Inside, the answer is one of humility. Or then, if one had ignored history so consistently, stupidity! It is possible to have flirted with cities in just the same way as we have flirted with the ideas of other thinkers. We have not done much with either but they still serve us a momentary understanding of life.

I knew now what it was. Rome was to me part of my own “joke knowledge”, left aside as if modernity could remove the need to understand its past, the need to understand any past. A random visit to the world might be all that is left us. I arrived into Rome at about 4 in the afternoon and began walking at 5.45, returning to the hotel at 10.45. Using the priorities of Rome’s past as a route, the Colosseum, then St. Peter’s, finally the Spanish Steps. But Rome’s fascinations showed no break between leaving the Colosseum and arriving at St Peter’s. The city trawled, St Pozzo’s ceiling left behind, the train to the airport took 30 minutes again. I would never leave this school either.

NOTES

1. Frank Letricchia, *The Edge of Nigh – A Confession*, New York, Random House, 1994.

THE DEATH OF THE ARCHIVE

The Missing



Reima Pietilä & Keijo Petäjä, Hvitträsk 1980

Why was I so fascinated with Timo Penttilä's statement in 1996 that he had destroyed his own archive? Of course I didn't question that statement at the time; clearly he must have told his old partners to do this and they had carried out his request. Or not! However, I somehow doubted all drawings had perished. It was, though, seductively conceivable; an architect turns back on his work and decides to remove any trace of the process, if not the buildings themselves. I found this so seductive, in fact, that I ended up writing a piece about an architect called Frank Heron who set up a practice to destroy his own previous work, and then took on the demolition of the work of other architects who, for whatever reason, had turned against their previous work. For a publication that eventually had something to do with *Mutations*, I continued the narrative and wrote out a fragment about this architect Frank Heron. It appeared in Chinese, as far as I remember in 2001. I forgot about it after that.

However, five years from that moment in 1996 the house I had called *The Hotel Architecture* in Ruthin, north Wales, was flooded with over a metre of water. The nearby River Clwyd had swollen due to a high river table, melting snow from the nearby mountains and tidal back flows. Water had made its way into the hollow where the house lay. I thought the archive, mostly placed in the upper floors of what was originally a 14th century Hall Building, had survived. It didn't concern me to check whether the files and film cassettes had survived. And as the two planes plunged into the Twin Towers the idea of Mohamed Atta as an engineer-architect destroying the works of Minoru Yamasaki came to mind. Later Martin Amis in *The Second Plane* (2008) would talk about three architects of the future: Donald Rumsfeld, Mohamed Atta and the second plane.

Still I imagined, without giving it much further thought, that the one or two small DV cassettes labelled "Sinalunga 1996" had survived along with all the cassettes from half a dozen other films that were never completed at the time and would probably never emerge. I didn't even give it a second thought in 2011 after the harshest November on record in the UK, when the pipes burst and the

water tank in the attic of the Hotel Architecture poured out continuously through the oak beams and cascaded over yet another part of the archive. As if somehow rebounding on this record of writing and criticality, it was mainly the Finnish part of the archive that was destroyed. Clearing out this second chaos I noticed no cassettes of film material.

Yet I still didn't think anything of it. In my mind, after the near-dozen publications on Finland and its architecture, I had little intention (as I thought) of ever returning and writing more. That life sentence was over and I stored all the damaged archive, files and reference books in an 800-year old chapel next to the Hotel Architecture that belonged to my mother. All files and remaining documents, film stock, video, and digital cassettes were, I thought, all stored safely.

It was in 2014, as I began ordering the dying archive after the architect's death, that I began to think of the cassettes on Timo Penttilä. Surely they would be easily located alongside the others, the films realised and the unrealised scripts called *Three Firm Zeros* (1995), *Who's Afraid of Fashion* (1997), *Hotel Suovesi* (1998) and *The Cholera Pool* (1999). I took out the 50 small DV cassettes, the near 100 video and Beta cassettes, the 30+ Hi-8 cassettes. They had all survived intact. Suddenly, it wasn't panic, it was the resignation, something akin to a Sufi moment.

In amongst all this material there was not one named "Sinalunga 1996", as I had expected, as I thought I had remembered. Perhaps I had written it differently and called it something else; but another thorough search still revealed nothing. Perhaps I had called it "The Fortunate". I was now clutching at straws. Had I given the cassettes to the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE who originally showed interest in the film? It would be necessary to transfer the material for editing, I became very unsure of myself. I am sure I was in Sinalunga. I am sure I took the train from Rome. I am sure I was met and travelled in a small Fiat. And I am sure, too, the big man met me dressed in shorts.

The tapes remained elusive. Could it be? Now I knew what it meant: the death of the archive and the missing? What did it matter that we do not have an image of the "big man" prowling around his Tuscany farmhouse, serving me coffee, or draining the water from the salad, uttering something about Hermes Trismegistus with a glint in his eye? What did it matter that there is now no record of this? More than that. Had I actually gone to visit the architect and professor? Had I imagined an architect, detached and calm in a school of exile, who wished to destroy his own archive? Had I really invented it all? Surely not!





Suomeen Sokeri [Finnish Sugar] head offices, Tapiola, Espoo, 1980, demolished in summer 2014.

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