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An investigation
of the ways we think
of buildings
through other
buildings.

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A. Prokos
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Word Problems.

*"And now, for something completely different."*¹

"The history of contemporary architecture is inevitably multiple, multifarious even ; a history of the structures that form the human environment independently of architecture itself ; a history of the attempts to control and direct those structures ; a history of the intellectuals who have sought to devise policies and methods for those attempts ; a history of new languages which, having abandoned all hope of arriving at absolute and definitive words, have striven to delimit the area of their particular contribution.

Obviously the intersection of all those manifold histories will never end up in unity. The realm of history is, by nature, dialectical. It is that dialectic that we have tried to pin down, and we have done what we could not to smooth over conflicts which are cropping up again today in the form of worrisome questions as to what role architecture itself should or can have. It is useless to try to reply to such questions. What needs to be done, instead, is to trace the entire course of modern architecture with an eye to whatever cracks and gaps break up its compactness, and then to make a

#1

John Cleese, opening Monty Python's flying circus from an absurdly placed desk.

#2

Quote from Tafuri and Dal Co, *Modern Architecture*. in Cava, John, Kenneth Frampton, and Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts. *Studies in Tectonic Culture : The Poetics of Construction in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Architecture*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1995. p.3.

#3

Probably the most powerful observation of Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels in the communist manifesto, taken up by the writer Marshall Berman as a title for his homonymous book.

#4

Nurtured by intelligent people ("No money no detail") and now dissolved into entirely idiotic territory ("yes is more").

*fresh start, without, however, elevating to the status of myth either the continuity of history or those separate discontinuities."*²

Having presented some amount of evidence in favor of pragmatism, we now need to examine what ways can be found in order to move through this crack towards the production of architecture, Tafuri's and Dal Co's very Achilles heel.

A general set of ideas about the world has never produced good architecture in itself. Saying that the architect today, formulating political as well as idiotic ambitions, should contribute to a pragmatic turn in the behavior of the architectural *polis* is nonsense in itself. Forwarding a framework in which we assemble life-supports and constantly assess the performance of the whole, is in itself no less pointless and by no means a theory for architecture.

To proceed towards some workability for these ideas, we need to reassess the role of words in our work. It seems to me that words act like keys, or door handles within the general construct; they need to be carefully placed, functional and sometimes beautiful. If they fail, the whole fails in a surprising way. But the opposite is not true at all, although this misunderstanding is widespread. This is another one of the consequences of architecture's modern decay; we embrace buildings for how they are marketed not for how they perform. An architecture that is too dependent upon concepts and promises is a large-scale iteration of marketing, the heavy artillery for "melting into air (...) all that is solid"³.

The phenomenon of catchphrase architecture⁴, opportunism elevated to a latent theory of architectural marketing, is of course contrary to the urgency for pragmatism, the cautious radicalism of that which has no center. It is based on the proliferation of an extremely versatile nebula of worthless centers,

sold-off versions of previous more honest illusions, which are now allowed free movement and shifting, "one-size-fits-all" meaning. Concepts such as the "sustainable", the "public", the "monumental", the "iconic" etc. have become such fleeting, meaningless adjectives, used to sell stuff. It needs a fair amount of amnesia to keep working with these tools. Surprisingly, we lack any inclusive and sufficiently earthly and thingly counter-proposal on constitutional ground. So we end up merely translating into architecture the wider constitution's acceptance of liquid turbo-boosted liberalism.

The Hypothesis of the Collection & the Word.

Other than this marketing phenomenon, centered around lazy concepts, what are the other ways in which words enter the realm of architecture for real? To acknowledge the value of words is to uphold the very notion of a debate in architecture, directly present already in the parallel of the *polis*. But to downgrade the value of facile concepts, especially the ones that are reducible to one sexy sentence, means that within this *polis* the said debate is particular in its kind and must be examined independently in order to transition towards what we are seeking; the formulation of a theory for architecture which is synonymous to an agenda for debate.

The most interesting take on the issue of the word, is the one that has to do with summarizing past architectures, to somehow curate pieces of common knowledge into meaningful collections. Within this framework, these same words are immediately retrieved from the exhibit we make for ourselves, in order to direct future work. Words are there to narrow down multiplicities of buildings and turn them to an operable amalgamation of particular contexts. Given that these contexts already exist, their performance is measurable to some extent, and the words can serve to turn these findings into future compromises whose performance is not yet known.

On Comparison: From the Double to the Gradient.

This brings us to formulating the hypothesis; the pragmatic debate in architecture, about how we make and should be making buildings, opens up through a confrontation of many performances of many buildings, put in perspective and directed through some words.

This hypothesis is arbitrary if our vantage point is set on the specificities that make each building. The "problems" that call for assemblies of life supports each time an architect has a commission are indeed difficult to put together without starting to discuss, unendingly, an immense array of factors. Any architect still subscribing to the modern constitution will feel this way about collections of buildings, purifying each one of them in their highly technical aspects or in their human, financial or social particularities. An immense number of words and "measurements" would be needed to narrow this complexity down to an understandable collection, even for a handful of buildings.

If we forget these centralities and examine the "solutions" merely for what they are, formalized mediations in the environment, we can start grasping some shared attributes in all buildings. Life supports, coming within their envelopes, are always the protagonists of buildings and their final scope. Buildings themselves are nothing else than life supports, some of the biggest ones we make. Within the world of designed life supports we surround ourselves with, they are precisely the point where the kind of life supports assembled switches from a predominantly active mode to a mainly passive one⁵. An architect acts upon this transition, places, limits and adds layers of arranged resources to the assemblage, in order for it to serve its own purpose both within the *polis* of architecture and the *polis* of the environment.

#5

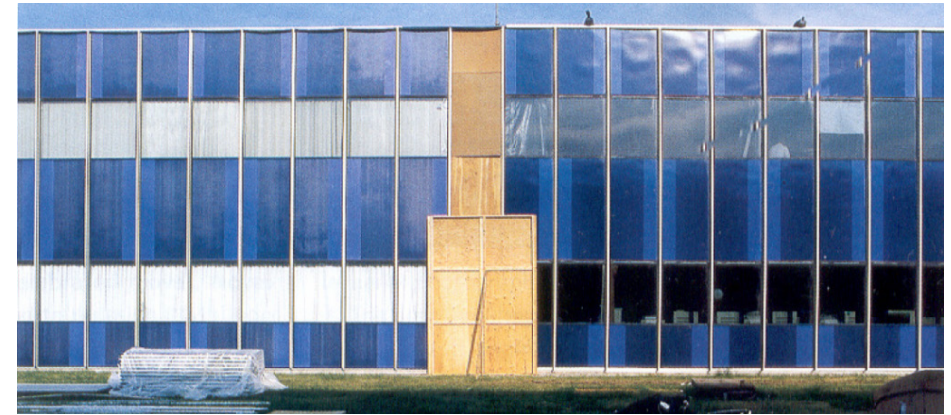
A slight extension of Banham's argument in *The Architecture of the well-tempered Environment*.

This introduces a framework for the comparison of two buildings, the double, as well as the sequence of

doubles that forms the collection.. Andrea Palladio's Villa Emo can thus be compared, for instance, with Eero Saarinen's "Big blue zoo"⁶, the IBM manufacturing and administrative center in Rochester. An assembly of fields, waterways, access roads, chimneys, animals, agricultural machinery, food stocks, country folk and noblesse versus an assembly of parking lots, manufacturing protocols, suspended ceilings, material stocks, computerized archives, meeting rooms, research laboratories, blue collars, white collars and rich executives. These projects both attempt to put in perspective the territorial distribution of the above and other life-supports.

Palladio extrudes a small part of a flat network in an apparatus, materializing the place of accumulation of most of the active life supports (workers, machines, weapons, stocks) against the horizontal availability of the passive ones (cultivable soil, sun, consumers). In this operation, he seems to focus on giving a face to the messy, extensive whole of agropastoral production and create a place where many of its underlying conditions appear. He tries to embody an imagery of reassuring abundance through the hierarchy of orders on the outside as well as extensive frescoes on the inside (which is another outside) of the main body of the building. He does this with simple means, brick, wood and stucco, applied differently along the plan.

Saarinen on the other hand starts from the box as the primary element of his own assembly, because the life supports he has to work with in the case of IBM are not available in the fields but have to be protected within controlled volume. Although he could have expressed an immense box, he chooses to bring the scale of the mediation down to smaller modules belonging to the whole but planned individually. A curtain wall surrounding the whole complex forms the one big box anew with a carefully crafted façade detail, elaborate enough to express this idea of advanced technology



and simple enough to be applied homogeneously to the whole. In this, he entrusts himself with the duty of arranging the environment(s) of IBM within the wider environment of parking lots within the even wider environment of Rochester Minnesota, making the whole horizontal and giving to the blue-collar workers and the silica stocks some of the appeal of the executive offices and the expensive furniture. Ultimately, all this is achieved just by means of a façade detail and a decision in plan.

This double opens the door for more; Emo through IBM (and even without it) can be connected to Branzi's Agronica. IBM through Emo can be connected to Pasquale Poccianti's cisterns. Such a process is the fabric of a collection, which in turn is governed and targeted within the whole body of architecture, by the word. Emo, IBM, Agronica and Cisternone, together with 69 others in this case, belong to a collection announced by the title "Roman Architecture" and governed by the obsession with "a universal territorial architecture with a radically simple materiality"⁷. Although more could be added for the sake of clarity and ease of understanding, these words, along with comprehensive research material (plans and perspectives), make already for a debatable agenda for future architecture and how it could be produced.

#6

Arthur Norberg, Jeffrey Yost.
IBM Rochester: A Half Century of Innovation. Charles Babbage Institute – University of Minnesota. Minneapolis, MN ; 2006.

#7

FORM, *Architecture Without Content 11 – Roman Architecture*, Lausanne : EPFL-ENAC-SAR, 2014.

Collection One: The (too) Ideal Villa.

Naturally, the collection as a process for the assessment of gradients within architecture has nothing very new about it. Since *De Architectura*, itself a collection and a word, survived with no illustrations, many have tried to complete the words with hypothetical collections, as well as write new words with new collections, in the continuum that forms the architectural practice as we know it. In this continuum, the modern separation between "old" and "new" architecture does not really hold any water; Colin Rowe of course demonstrated this, with his own appropriate word & collection⁸.

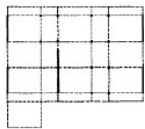
*"If you are searching (...) for visual stimuli in architecture, it is obvious that you look first of all at the big effects of movement, of volume, of profile and of relations. (...) The art work lives accordingly with the laws of the mind and it is obvious that all artistic production is based upon a certain form of abstraction"*⁹. Under these words, Rowe brings together a series of high modernist and high renaissance doubles to reestablish a continuum. In 1947 this was probably an important thing to do with this amount of clarity, facing the scarcely challenged idea of a radical departure, coming with the heroic temptation of your Giedions and your Pevsners. But today, in this essay, Rowe's conservative formalism can help us go forward rather through its shortcomings.

#8

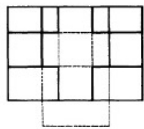
Rowe, Colin and Frank
Straschitz. *Mathématiques
de la villa idéale*. Collection
Eupalinos. Architecture et
urbanisme. Paris: Parenthèses,
2014.

#9

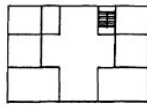
Rowe, Ibid. p. 47 and 52



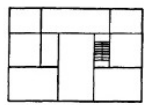
2. Villa Stein at Garche



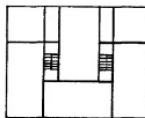
3. Villa Malcontenta



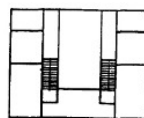
4. Villa Malcontenta



5. Villa Zeno at Cessalto



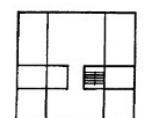
6. Villa Poiana at Maggiore



7. Villa Sarego at Miega



8. Villa Thiene at Cicogna



9. Villa Emo at Fanzolo

**Some things might
be in the eye of the
beholder;
thank god for that.**

In such an endeavor as Rowe's, and despite all the precisions provided to confer other dimensions to the argument, the main premise entrusts to the buildings themselves the attributes by which they are supposedly read by the "observer". This is an old idea, as old as perspective, which is given modern credentials through the study of visual perception, picked up by architects in its modern form mainly through Gyorgy Kepes¹⁰. There would be no ground for me trying to tackle the whole of Gestalt psychology here, although I'm very interested in the ideas of J.J. Gibson who does this himself to some extent. In my view, by taking away the notion of a "mental image" (and thus the Gestaltist link between perception and consciousness) Gibson seems to open the field for a truly pragmatic theory of visual perception in which reality in its perspective and material attributes amounts to movement rather than ideas¹¹. The building as a whole is too difficult to grasp through an idealist study of its form.

It thus seems clear to me that there is no case for the collection to be governed by compositional rules alone. Such an idea would lead us to investigate architecture on the basis of information embedded within each building, bringing the whole very far away from life supports, towards platonic, metaphysical arguments. I propose testing this through a mind experiment, by imagining the conscious impression of a building to a layman, Rowe's "observer", against the impression made to an architect, conscious of his *political* and *idiotic* capacities within the architectural *polis*. This aftermath of perception is, I believe, unexplainable through perception alone.

It is reasonable to expect that the "observer" will have a quite anecdotal understanding of the building, if he bothers at all. This will of course come down to compositional rules to some extent, but it will necessarily come back to what the building actually does for this particular observer, bringing in the mix his

#10

See Gyorgy Kepes. *Language
of Vision*. Chicago: Theobald,
1967.

#11

See Gibson, James J.
*L'approche écologique de la
perception visuelle*. Bellevaux:
DEHORS, 2014.

own urgency for envelopes and material negotiations with the environment, along with the representational aspects pinned down by Rowe. By the way, starting from the egoistic principle that people should constantly bother to form understandings of buildings, be it solely from the innocent standpoint of "beauty", leads us to the now commercialized notions of the monument and the icon. This problem could maybe be explained by means of the aforementioned Gibsonian psychology of perception, given the widespread blurring of the affordances in the perceptual environment that the proliferation of man's life supports have created¹². Maybe that is what Simmel was also on about¹³.

The architect will assess the whole through what he already knows: a mental collection of other built artifacts that propose assemblies of the said life supports, guided, sometimes, by compositional rules. Within this breaking down, made through comparison, of the building as a thing and of the thing as an assembly, it is possible to isolate the abstract, spatial structure at play, as a meta-criterion of the assembly. But, given the "observer's" indifference, this should not be misunderstood as a divine, absolute common ground between the architect and the building as a whole or between the whole and the "observer".

The interesting takeaway once we do away with the temptation for purification of what architecture deals with, is more about the architect than about the building or the observer. We seem to think (and discuss) in buildings exactly because they are the most inclusive form of discourse about life supports. From this standpoint, buildings are never either entirely mute or pure signs. They never work purely in the vague background of life, nor do they ever cease being assemblies of life supports to enhance life with some other meaning than the shared set of techniques used to stay alive.

#12

Gibson, Ibid. p. 211-215.

#13

Simmel, Georg, *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903) in "The Sociology of Georg Simmel" ed. Kurt Wolf, New York: Press, 409-424

Collection two: from the ideal whole to the difficult whole.

This building, thing, assembly, should be regarded always as a whole from the point of view of architecture, and -I think you know where I'm going with this- it is not an easy one. This is another issue with purifying architecture through composition, which often leads to disregarding the inescapable contradictions that come from assembling life supports at a large scale. A look at the magnificent back façade of the barchese in the aforementioned villa Emo, of the same Palladio who championed Rowe's rules of composition, is probably enough to convince of the difficulty of the whole.

Here's another peculiar, collection+ word, pleading for complexity and contradiction or "the difficult unity through inclusion rather than the easy unity through exclusion."¹⁴. A much welcome argument at its time once again, but one I'm admittedly unable to grasp at its entirety. It comes with another fair share of Gestalt psychology, underpinning the attempt to explain by what intricate mechanism do we visually accept, and even sometimes like, disorder. Again, who are "we"? The problem I have with this is identical as before, and no Kurt Koffka¹⁵ can bring together the difference in perception between the "observer" and the architect.

#14

Venturi, Robert. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. 2d ed. The Museum of Modern Art Papers on Architecture. New York : Boston: Museum of Modern Art ; distributed by New York Graphic Society, 1977. p. 88.

#15

A founding figure of Gestalt psychology, see *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (1935) publ. Lund Humphries, London. My scarce knowledge on Koffka comes from Pick, Anne D., Herbert L. Pick, Rebecca K. Jones, and Edward S. Reed. "James Jerome Gibson: 1904-1979." *The American Journal of Psychology* 95, no. 4 (1982): 693-700

#16

Venturi, Ibid. p. 42

Especially frustrating about Venturi's argument is how his own pragmatism has answered the question long before he made the attempt to purify mess through the theory of "inflection". "The main justification of honky-tonk elements in architectural order" he says, "is their very existence. They are what we have. Architects can bemoan or try to ignore them or even try to abolish them, but they will not go away."¹⁶ Excellent! Once we take out the gestalt then, we are left with these beautiful words and an incredible collection that is only obstructed and made pretentious by what appears mostly as sidenotes, or a highly personal account of the struggle with the difficult whole.



In my modest text here, there is an underlying obsession with something I announced as "theory for architecture". Maybe this obsession leads to overstating the segregation between how we should be thinking the making of architecture and who we are making architecture for. "*Complexity and contradiction*" is helpful in reducing the distance of this segregation, by attacking the "*noble purism in architecture*"¹⁷ that was heralded by most, including Rowe, up to that point. Although there are some abstract rules presented to link the chain of projects together, in my eyes they collapse as such and become an account for a general stimulation, as well as a mechanism for the exegesis of the collection.

Most importantly though the collection of projects in "*complexity and contradiction*" is an inquiry within the practice of architecture itself, putting to light a systematic and properly architectural ancestry of dealing with complex assemblies. This tradition of mediation, embodied in the notion of the "difficult

#17

Scully in Venturi, Ibid. p. 9.

whole", by definition thriving in disorder and not de-
spite disorder, is an important step towards pragmatism. We are moving here towards compositional rules that are much more flexible and never really isolated from the cases they were applied to. Each "difficult whole" is complete with its own rulebook of intentions that cannot be taken away from the hybrid situation in which they are found. Such a move, requires the abandoning of the temple as the elected representative of the collection.

Vincent Scully detected that shift, in his comparison between *Complexity and contradiction* and *Vers une Architecture*. "Le Corbusier's great teacher" he says, "was the Greek temple, with its isolated body white and free in the landscape, its luminous austerities clear in the sun (...) Venturi's inspiration would seem to have come from the Greek temple's historical and archetypal opposite, the urban facades of Italy, with their endless adjustments to the counter-requirements of inside and outside and their inflection with all the business of everyday life"¹⁸. This brings us to where this whole questioning all started, the idea of *Architecture as theme* by Oswald Mathias Ungers, the last theory for architecture to date as far as I know...

#18

Scully in Venturi, Ibid. p. 9.

The Theme as a tool for the difficult Whole; Collection and Word made explicit.

The very notion of a theory for architecture comes from the clarity and determination with which Ungers lays down his system in *Architecture as theme*. At first glance it is a very similar book with *Complexity and contradiction*, even in its design as a square-ish, mostly black and white mix of text, pictures and plans. They are also very close in terms of their initial scope; for Venturi the intention is to present his "way of seeing architecture"¹⁹, for Ungers the idea is to give "an account of (his) personal experience in the field of architecture"²⁰.

Although also expliciting his interest in the psychology of form, in what can be interpreted only as a generational obsession at this point, Ungers in my opinion manages much better to steer clear from the mumbo-jumbo. His beautifully and precisely built platform for debate is based on a constitutional proposal. It reads; "an architecture that does not derive its themes from itself is like a painting that tries to be nothing more than a photographic reproduction. The theme and content of architecture can only be architecture itself"²¹. The filter through which the *polis* communicates with the environment is thus defined, and then put to light in its simple function. Whatever the concerns, whatever the theoretical and philosophical understanding of all the multitude of humans and non-humans gathered in architecture, the only access to the gathering through which good architecture is produced and debated, is to think in architecture and speak, at least partially, in architecture.

This is of course, unlike Venturi and Rowe, an extremely clear standpoint regarding who is speaking and who he is speaking for. This first article is not unlike the first amendment of the United States constitution, the one protecting freedom of expression: it defines what it is to speak and most importantly what are the means by which we can construct a certain freedom around it. In the U.S. constitution this freedom is institutionalized through the press; in hybrid

gatherings of life supports, the freedom is institutionalized through architecture.

By being clear on that regard, Ungers consciously sets out to give an actual "political" speech, taking up a clear stand as *polites* (and as *idiotes*), in front of the architectural *polis*. The primarily architectural nature of his "speech" does not mean he champions any kind of introversion; O.M.U. takes the floor precisely because the environmental circumstance is urgent and the gatherings seem to need some scrutiny. However, he is cautious not to make out of this urgency the very point of his, and through his special attention he manages to construct an understandable and debatable collection along with a clear rhetoric of matters of concern.

The themes in *architecture as theme*, are seen as strategies of gathering. This again works really well with the *polis* metaphor, which establishes strategies internally, as a result of the interaction of *polites* (who are described individually only if we take into account their simultaneous status as *idiotes*). These decisions are taken based on whatever insight can be presented for common discussion, of which the predominant kind is predictably evidence on the performance of past strategies in past confrontations. Much like Main Street, Ungers is almost all right in this too. The themes he puts forward are an interesting series of words corresponding to some crucial aspects of gathering; transformation (or the morphology of the Gestalt – dai!-), assemblage (or the coincidence of opposites), incorporation (or the "doll within the doll"), assimilation (or the adaptation to the "genius loci") and imagination (or "the world as idea").

#19

Venturi Ibid. 13

#20

Oswald Mathias Ungers.
Architettura come tema = Architecture as theme. Vol. 1. Quaderni di Lotus. Milano: Electa, 1982. p. 7.

#21

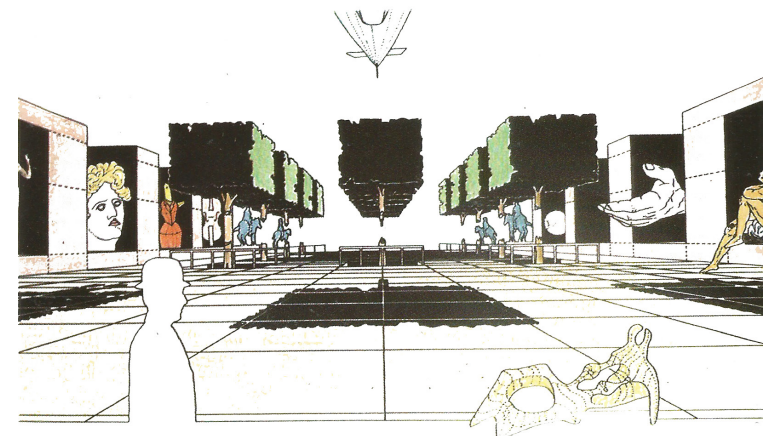
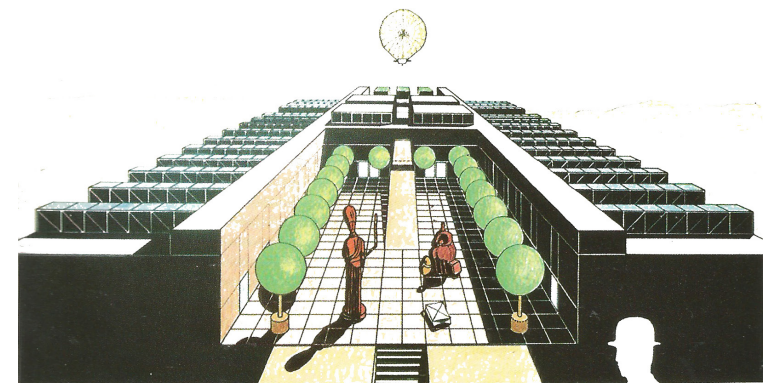
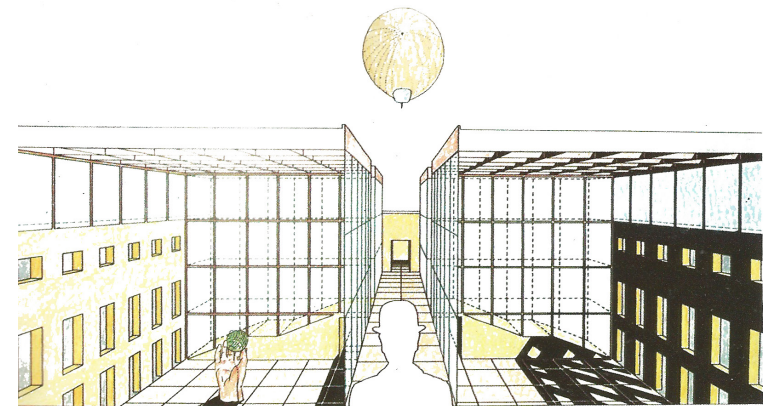
Ungers, Ibid. p. 9.

Collection three: the world as idea.

Then, you look at the collection itself, going with the above words and following the constitutional proposal; it is made mostly out of Ungers' own projects in their ideal form, on paper. Some of them look bold and strong (such as the Morsbroich Museum or Hotel Berlin), others overdone and pedantic (such as the youth hostel in Enschede), others very intellectual (such as the houses in Marburg) and most of them extremely intricate and rigorous in their compositional intention (such as the architekturmuseum). But then you look at the perspectives, with the weird Magritte figures, the dramatic, metaphysical points of view on calm lichthofe and alleys of identical abstract (and quite ridiculous) trees, and you understand there is very little pragmatism to be found here, despite a somewhat pragmatic method. In Ungers' interpretation of his own themes, he produces only ideas; metal trusses as ideas, alleys of trees as ideas, grids as ideas, plants as ideas, cupolas as ideas, squares as ideas, circles as ideas, broken squares and circles as ideas, people as ideas, places as ideas. No life supports, only ideas, a world were nothing is simply a goddamn "pipe".

Probably the most important point in my research so far happens right at this point, with the realization that Ungers's thinking creates the aforementioned framework for debate, but also that this framework liberates as such the space to situate and voice disagreement. Ungers is very clear in his positioning. He sides with Schopenhauer who says "the world is idea", meaning in his interpretation that "no object exists in itself but only a subject"²². This leads him to work under the urgency of a self-created reality, "A reality in which objects are significant not because they are verifiable and measurable, but as a result of the image that they communicate"²³.

This leaves Ungers' with silly, naked Magritte figures which are of course as rare in the world as "naked humans" or as "naked cosmonauts"²⁴. He



#22
Ungers, Ibid. p. 107

#23
Ungers, Ibid. p. 107

#24
Latour, *A Cautious Prometheus?* p. 8

is profoundly modern in that respect, trying to salvage and purify the cultural side of the modern deal while turning, once again, the back to the creation of hybrids. Despite the excellent platform for the negotiation of architecture within itself that he provides, Ungers' fiery rebuttal of functionalism turns into a constitutionalized dictatorship, yet again fanatically modern in its aversion for hybridization.

"A building without a theme, without a supporting idea" he wrote, "is an architectural work without theoretical foundation. Buildings put up in this way lack all sense ; they have no meaning and serve solely for the banal satisfaction of needs. Yet any need, even one relating to the simplest hut, can be given a theme and is represented in the process of thematic elaboration as a house that has itself for a theme and that at its highest level culminates in the ancient temple". Up to the last two words, this is another formulation of the pragmatic constitutional principle, but then Ungers' goes too far; he names the ancient temple as the Kim-il-Sung²⁵ of what was promising to be a negotiation, if not a democracy...

#25

The miraculous supreme leader and eternal president of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, who was given titles such as "Sun", "Great Chairman", "Heavenly leader" and awarded the "Double Hero Gold Metal" to himself ("Humankind Awards Many Titles to Kim Il Sung". Korean Central News Agency. April 3, 2012. Retrieved March 15, 2013).

Towards pragmatic themes; the steak of the Ultimate Ancestor.

Why is it that the ancient temple obsesses us so much? No scholarly analysis is needed to give an approximate answer to this question; if our current architectural edifice comes to a high extent from the renaissance rediscovery of Vitruvius, the issue is once again one of collection and word. *De Architectura* survived without illustration, and ancient buildings survived without their authentic context. Vitruvius' main word, in the preface of his first book, calls for an architecture of "public and private buildings (...) worthy to go down to posterity" - indeed as a mere annex to Emperor Caesar's "other splendid achievements". The main collection was one of enigmatic piles of stone here and there, idealized of course through the mythology of an intricate culture of design. Strangely enough, the annex has outlived, by far, most of that main body of splendour. The conquests, the slaves, the harvests, the laws, the laurels or the orgies seemed nowhere to be found. Also nowhere to be found was the need for new temples, or the means and skills to build those, so the collection had to be updated, in order to constantly uphold the validity of the word.

"How do we make buildings belonging to the lineage of ancient temples?" Such seems to be the key issue every architect has been required to answer before the *polis* for the last centuries. Having grown up a few hundred meters away from the Parthenon, I can sympathize with the question particularly well. However, the collapse of the center(s) story, the story of purification, makes the temple twice inappropriate to hold such a central position in the constitution of our thinking. First, we cannot explain things through the temple anymore; the thin line of ancestry has snapped. Secondly, and maybe most importantly, we cannot afford to continue struggling to implement renaissance neoplatonism within our current environment of hybrids where the perimeter is everywhere and the center nowhere. We urgently need the order, especially because it was much less orderly than the

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moderns thought, but we have to do without the *Mimesis*. It can no longer be the transcendent heritage of our profession, with the temple accepted as its epitome...

Of course, there is no case here against order in itself. My rhetoric might take the form of a rant from time to time, but it hardly qualifies as militant, by any definition of the term and is not against anything. It is just an argument in front of the miniature *polis* of the university on how we might as well look for other possible ultimate ancestors, and discuss them constantly, if we are to be pragmatic.

The historian Vincent Scully was previously quoted in this essay, pointing out how Venturi marks a move away from the temple, towards the urban façades of Italy. If this were indeed the case, we are all left hungry for more, especially when you realize that there have been very few well-mounted challenges to the temple in general, if you discount some occasional troublemakers with mainly reactionary mumblings. Le Corbusier, the master of ceremony of the modernist avant-garde was content with driving, flying and mooring some glorious machines in the picture but never even imagined challenging the temple's overhaul on architectural ancestries. Le Corbusier, who thought that everything had changed, readily adopted the temple. Acknowledging the sameness of nature-cultures, in that they are collectives of humans and non-humans, it is time that we start playing around with the Ultimate Ancestor a little more. My proposal to start this process is to try out the tent...



