

# On Architecture and Landscape. Some Fragmentary Representations

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## Landscape architecture. *Bergen Tomb, Utterö. Sigurd Lewerentz, 1928-1929*

Between 1928 and 1929, Sigurd Lewerentz designed and built Theodor Anton Bergen's tomb on the islet Utterö, in an archipelago near Stockholm that can only be reached by boat. There are three known versions of the project [1]. The well-known sketches of the first two belong to the category of inquiries into architectural graphic representation. They are plans, elevations, sections and axonometries, typical of the architectural language with which the author is defining the program and the proposal of an implanation, at the same time as he is approaching the dimensioning of his intervention. These are creation and research drawings. In the first version, Lewerentz shows the decision to locate the excavated burial site, with a gravestone floating on the plain, a jetty, a path and two benches. The

plan reveals the final decision to place the single slab on the plain overlooking the centre of the island, while the axis formed by the jetty, the tomb and the path regulates the position of all the elements (fig. 1).

The second is a map. The island is represented around its entire perimeter and is dimensioned with an encompassing grid slightly oblique to the north orientation already present. All elements have an exact position on the orthogonal grid that completes all its boundaries. We can see that the axis has been shifted so that the path is placed to the side of the tomb, making the floating tombstone the real organizing centre of the project. It still retains the east-west axial organization of all its elements, only altered by the position of the cross, which appears in perspective.

*This article was written upon invitation to frame the topic, not submitted to anonymous review, published under the editorial director's responsibility.*

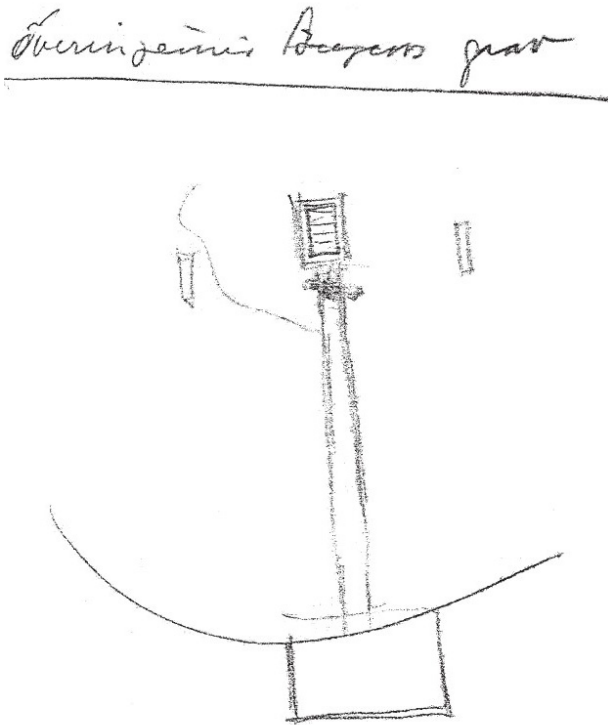


Fig. 1. Sigurd Lewerentz, 1928-1929. Bergen Tomb, Utterö. First version.

Surprisingly, with a dark shade of continuous lines parallel to the imposed grid, the representation reveals the sea, showing its depth with its color and reaffirming the need to reach it by sailing (fig. 2).

It is the third version, in particular the best known and most publicized sketch, on which we will dwell. It is not only an architectural representation for future construction. It also contains elements that we feel reveal something more. The sketch is an open system of representation, which adapts its content according to the needs at each point of the project [Montes, Jiménez 2001]. It is not a design drawing, in which one proposes, orders or gives form. It belongs to those representations of architecture and the territory that an architect draws up from the most intimate part of himself, for himself. It ratifies how we perceive, how we arrive, what we observe and how we are protected. It is a

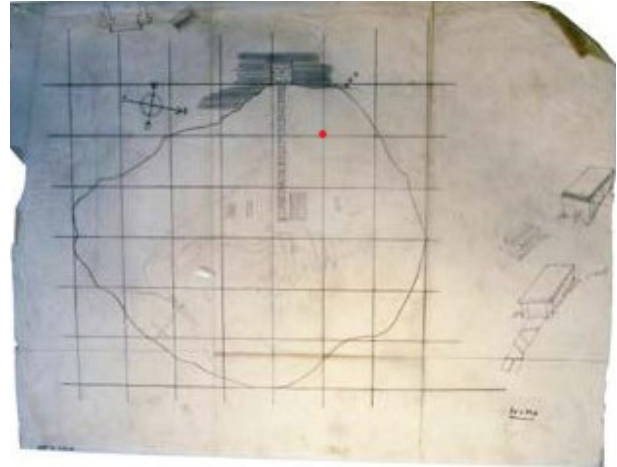


Fig. 2. Sigurd Lewerentz, 1928-1929. Bergen Tomb, Utterö. Second version.

search for the visual and sensorial experience of space in order to find the longed-for tranquillity and the feeling of peace radiated by the necessary eternity [2].

Lewerentz seems to affirm, as Bruno Zevi or Peter Zumthor later did, that any representation is insufficient where there is a spatial experience, since time and movement interfere with our cognitive experience. The result exemplifies, as Gombrich proposes, that any representation has, by its nature, limits that we have to accept or try to overcome with other means [Montes, Jiménez 2001]. Lewerentz does so with this total drawing.

The ground plan of the tomb and the wooded elevation of the central clearing of the island are overlapped. The perspective is supported and arranged according to the contour lines. At the same time, the codes of vegetation, stone and shadows are altered. Because of its configuration, it traps us from the centre and forces us to make a circular perceptual movement from one side to the other. It challenges us in the search for the meaning of each of its elements. Its understanding depends more on our interpretation of the visual cognitive action than on the reading of the representation under the premises of tradition. In its various parts and variations Lewerentz presents us with an enigmatic drawing that is at once "anciently modern and modernly ancient" [Aretino 1916, p. 186] [3] (fig. 3).

Ancient, as it reminds us of archaic representations or the inverted perspective studied by Pável Florenski, which Erwin Panofsky explored in depth. In this way, it transgresses traditional representation to contain, in its totality, the graphic and symbolic expression of a moment linked to a place. But on a closer, more relaxed observation, these first attractive intuitions do not seem to materialize. Lewerentz does not change the sense of the visual cone to offer us the deconstruction of the scientific assumptions of geometric perspective, as Florenski proposes. On the other hand, despite the overlapping of plan, elevation and perspective, by means of the staggering method, it is not a single vision, but is presented as a series of representations. Modern, because despite the above, at the end of the 1920s the new experiences of the representation of modernity, the experiments of the cubist avant-garde or the new cinematographic language of David Wark Griffith or Sergej Michajlovič Eisenstein, with the incorporation of movement and time in their movies, suggest a different interpretation. It is not an alteration of the ground plan, it is not a new perspective, it is a series of representations... It is an overall drawing that contains the elements that allow Lewerentz to check the project from all the points in motion. It is a storyboard or an architectural traveling in a single multi-representation, which begins with a map in height, to end with a view of the quietness.

There are four contiguous vignettes, the map, the plan, the elevation and the perspective, which are configured as some of his projects from fragmentation, including its paradoxes, as José Ignacio Linazasoro has studied [Linazasoro, 2023]. First vignette, the map. The reading process begins with the island. The perimeter is drawn and the north is located. It is a codified map that has all the aseptic and neutral elements that this type of representation must have. It locates you in space, shows you where it is and what its physical environment is, and includes the topography with its contour lines.

With this, Lewerentz indicates that the whole island has become part of the tomb project. Utterö is no longer a reference to the site or a location where to place an architectural element. It is the garden that he proposed as a response in funerary monuments that integrates with the terrain, blending in without altering the landscape. This decision, although already present in the previous sketches, is evident in this last one. Not only is the representation of a burial site sought, but also the representation of a landscape.

The ground plan. Once we have understood the garden that he has turned the island into, intuitively and in a very subtle way, we are led to descend visually from the map to the plan. It is a change of scale. We stand on the jetty, which is the only element invading and emerging from the water; to find the place where we can set foot and enter the island. We can see how it widens to welcome visitors. A narrow path that takes us to the interior of the island joins and emerges with it. We walk through the hollow of the shallow vegetation that protects it, without reference to its scale, drawn exclusively in plan.

The traditional stone paving, which contrasts with the flowers and grass of the natural terrain, guides us. We follow it, already from a height close to the ground, with our eyes or with our fingers because, as Juhani Pallasmaa writes in memory of the sculptor Tapio Wirkkala, "we have eyes in our fingertips" [Pallasmaa 2012, p. 48]. For the Finn, it is our corporeal sensory experience, in relation to the passage of time and space, that allows us to know, explain, analyze and create. A back and forth process, from the inside to the outside.

The path is interrupted right at the bench in front of the grave. The slab on one side and a bench on the other. We remain still. It is at this point that the project becomes concrete, for it "is not just any place from which one cannot go and remain the same" [Martínez Santamaría 2002, p. 8]. We observe.

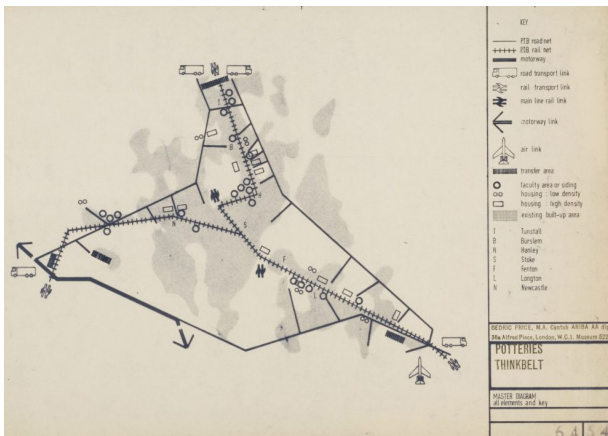
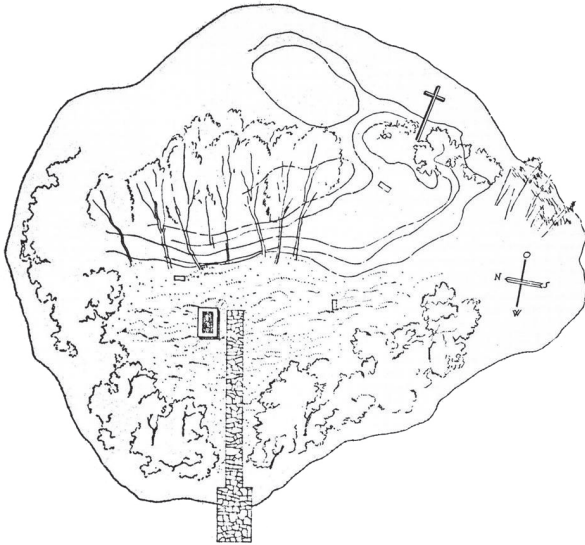
The tombstone, which was intuited from a distance, becomes evident at that moment. It floats over the garden and its shadow makes it present. It is an unnatural shadow. It is an impossible shadow. It is cast towards the south, something the architect was aware of after marking the north on the map. It is a resource, an underlining, that architecture has traditionally used to generate the three dimensions in a plan. Without ceasing to contemplate it, we sit on the bench. Time passes.

The elevation. After the moment of reflection, we look up. Again, there is a change in our gaze. We no longer look at the ground, but at the horizon. From the bench, as we stand up, we turn our gaze to the side.

Lewerentz changes our point of view with an artifice from vertical to horizontal and we discover the trees. The vegetation rises above the garden-ground. The trunks emerge above the contour lines in a game of double meaning. The curves have gone from being the horizontal element, codified and aseptic, to become the undulating vertical profile of the elevation, over which the trees grow. Lewerentz

Fig. 3. Sigurd Lewerentz, 1928-1929. Bergen Tomb, Utterö. Third version.

Fig. 4. Cedric Price, 1964-1966. Thinkbelt Potteries. Master Diagram.



uses this strategy to be able to move from the vertical to the horizontal projection and avoid the space of uncertainty between the two representations.

The vegetation protects and surrounds the central clearing where the tomb is located. Unlike the vegetation surrounding the island on the map, we can see its depth by its overlapping and staggering. Contour lines are replicated and trees take up positions near or far away.

The perspective. As we turn back, with the natural turn of our eyes, we discover the distant bench and the cross. The elevation has become perspective, aided by the same double play of meaning between curves and shapes. This time we can distinguish the different sizes of the vegetation altered in scale by the distance. Accompanied by the curved lines, the sandy area of the adjoining islet can be seen. The cross emerges and its lack of verticality helps us to shift our gaze to understand the interior space of the islet. This time, the shadow is to the north, there is no need to underline or use more resources. After the last silence, we return to the same path.

Between 1929 and 1931, Lewerentz would draw up an unbuilt proposal for his own burial with his wife Etty, on the adjacent islet that can be seen as we leave. He has been at rest in Malmö since 1975.

### Landscape as Architecture.

#### Potteries Thinkbelt, North Staffordshire. Cedric Price, 1964-1966

Cedric Price was born in 1934 in Stone in the county of Staffordshire, situated in the East Midlands, across the River Trent. Before the Second World War, North Staffordshire Potteries was a well-established centre of the English pottery industry, dating back over 250 years.

By the 1960s, everything had changed. The Potteries and their production methods were obsolete. The region had lost its strength due to the exhaustion of its coal mines, the rising cost of coal extraction, foreign competition and the use of new energy systems to support industrial production. All this had turned the territory into a disjointed region in search of a new future and an alternative definition.

In this context, Price decides to make this proposal. It is a self-commissioning, with no evidence of its realisation, no programme, no timetable and no financial support. As Stanley Mathews, who describes the proposal as a labour

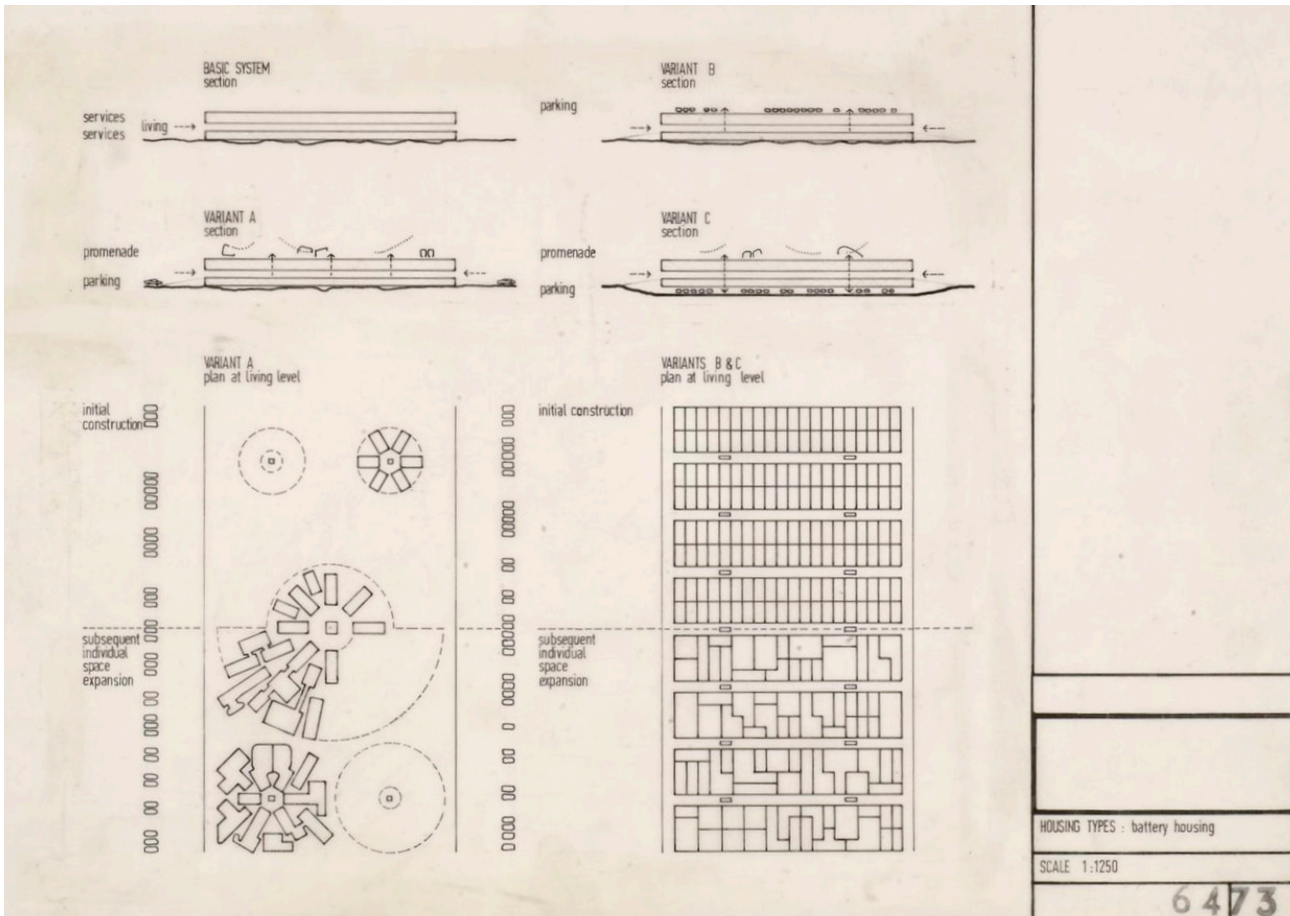


Fig. 5. Cedric Price, 1964-1966. Thinkbelt Potteries. Housing Types.

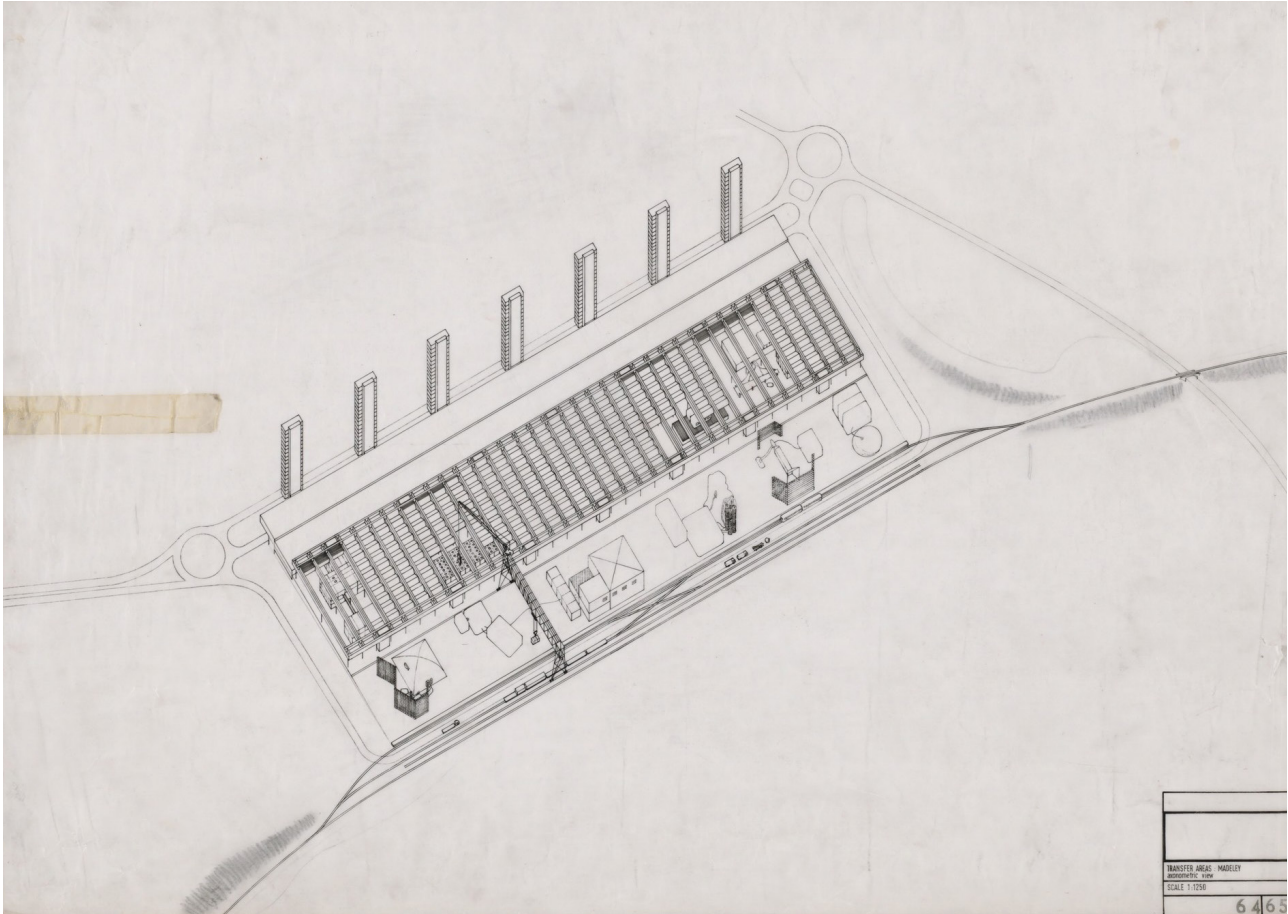


Fig. 6. Cedric Price, 1964-1966. Thinkbelt Potteries. Transfer areas.

of love, says, it is a response to the under-secretary for housing, Lord Kennet. It is an alternative capable of generating a new university structure and revitalizing a landscape described by Price as “unstable” and “useless” [Mathews 2001, p. 23]. On the other hand, the term ‘thinkbelt’ is difficult to translate, since apart from the immediate meaning of belt, Herreros relates it to “region or transmission [...] to think, to generate thought as a result of a Productive process” [Herreros 2001b, p. 13].

The structure of the territory was, and is, extremely unique. The potteries were arranged throughout an extensive territory. This is articulated by a railway line, which was one of the first to be built in the mid-19th century and is still in a very good state of conservation. The proposal, from the beginning, was to recycle and integrate this peculiar territorial organization of infrastructures, in a project capable of rethinking the territory, by means of the railway network that connected the cities and the disused ruins (fig. 4).

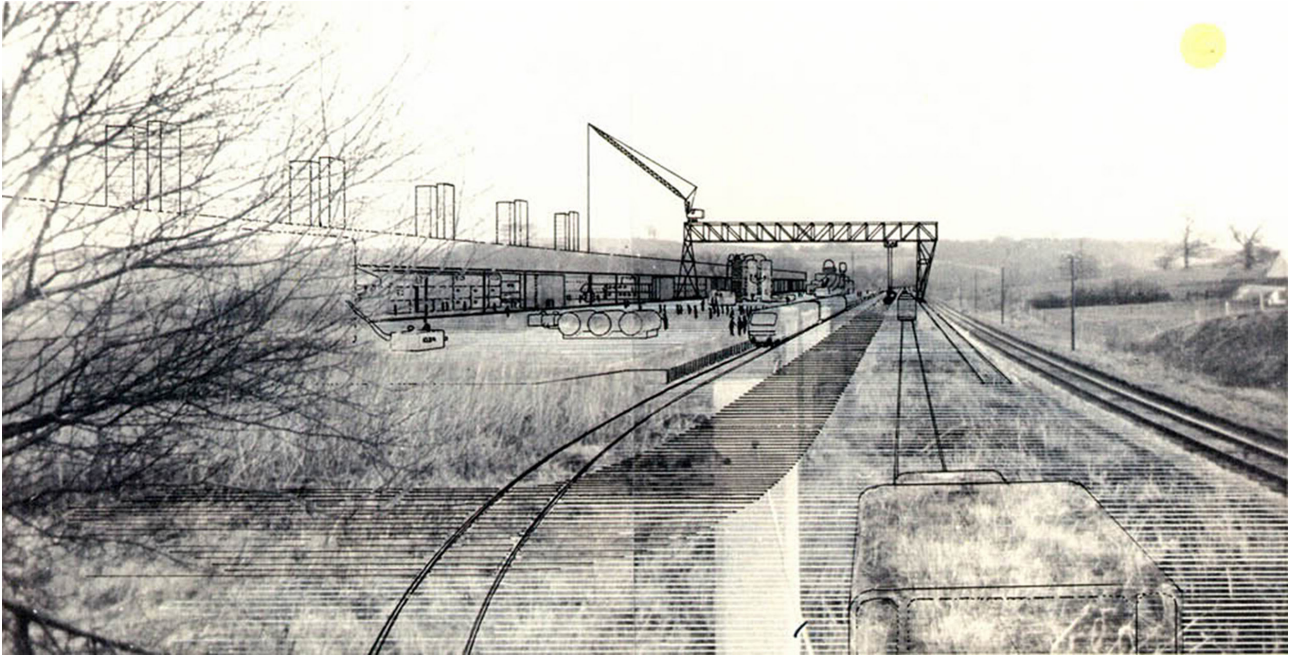


Fig. 7. Cedric Price, 1964-1966. Thinkbelt Potteries. Photomontage.

Price was seduced by the cybernetic theories of Norbert Wiener, defined by the feedback and interaction between people and machines. According to Mario Carpo, Price derived from this the idea of intelligent architecture capable of reorganizing, moving, reconstructing or mutating itself [Carpo 2023]. An action according to the use and needs of its inhabitants. In this way, he proposed a facility based on science and technology. He intended to create a university campus on more than 2,800 hectares, with more than 20,000 students, which would ultimately translate into some 40,000 new inhabitants for the county.

The proposed solution is not a university with a classical structure, against which he had taken a stand on countless occasions. He understood the university of the new times as an industry capable of promoting development, as a key part of a global philosophy. His brilliant idea was to make a virtue out of necessity, to take advantage of the local railway line, which was already obsolete, and to build a new decentralized campus around it, an alternative to

those already known. The project is somewhere between the poetics of the most Dadaist 'ready-made' and British pop culture. "The answer is always technology, but what is the question?" said Cedric Price [Price 1979].

In the *Thinkbelt*, a series of mobile modules were designed to contain the main bulk of the classrooms, laboratories and other facilities. The unit of teaching time was exactly the time required for a typical journey. Arranged on the tracks, they would move along the territory in the middle of a complex organization affecting time and space. Nothing in *Potteries Thinkbelt* is fixed or permanent, everything is mobile and changing, in fact, movement and change are its raison d'être [Hardingham 2016, pp. 192-207].

The proposal, which is well known, is basically materialized in two types of documents: plan, elevation and section diagrams and photomontages redrawn on snapshots of the territory (fig. 5).

The plan and section drawings are diagrams of use, assembly and construction strategies, narrated simply as industrial

elements. Their deliberate graphic asepsis makes them extremely subjective and personal. It is the representation of a flexible idea of industrialized architecture, which the architect makes compatible in his drawing and anticipates the cybernetic design methodology proposed by Christopher Alexander in *Notes for the Synthesis of Form* [Alexander 2012]. It is the action of constructing by drawing, not the representation as an aspiration of a future reality. It is not a question of altering reality, but rather of codifying, reinterpreting and transmitting from the graphic, with an objective in mind [Cortés, Moneo 1976, pp. 80-83]. In short, it proposes an information of a mutable architectural object with the maximum economy of means. Architecture is the diagram and architectural drawing is the expression of that diagram (fig. 6).

The coherence that he achieves with these diagrams, which being reductive are in essence concepts, is what differentiates them from the sketch. The diagram thinks and responds with representations, for as Stan Allen explains in *Diagrams Matter*, it is an instrument for introducing organisational structures as autonomous entities in the design process [Allen 1998, p. 23]. The plan documentation, with the exception of the codified map of the territory, makes hardly any reference to the site. There is no other document, notation or indication that is not strictly technological.

It is an open autonomous system, where a catalogue of elements is placed in a field of operations. It is technique and not form that provides the answer, for as Price argued about progress: "no one should care about the design of a bridge: what should matter to them is how to get somewhere else" [Mathews 2001, p. 23].

Let's look at collages and photographic images. Everything changes in the line drawing on the photographs. It refers us to a landscape and to an exact territory. The landscape is the only immutable reality.

Far from a romantic conservative attitude, he accepts the territory and the landscape as it is. He naturally incorporates the line, in an indifferent layer, a superimposed glaze that can be modified, eliminated or substituted. He dilutes his architectural proposal in a contingent or eventual way, so that it can be exchanged for another. Everything is operative (fig. 6).

The pre-existences of the road and the non-place are delimited by a linear prospective drawing. The architecture is transparent, while the overhead crane is still in action. The movement of the trains merges with that of the students and the workers. Neither volume nor space are of

interest, only the poetic action of movement, of inhabiting and building on the territory.

The line, just a line on an image, modifies the meaning of what is represented. Like the architect and draughtsman Saul Steinberg, Price, with a single stroke, alters the narrative of a photograph. A line that we hope will go outside the frame, as he sometimes did in other of his projects. In these collages, the simplest gesture of a representation becomes the protagonist that takes us into the future (fig. 7).

In these images he does not feel the 'restorative' nostalgia for a physical place, which, as Svetlana Boym has described, is harmful because it clings to the institutionalization of memory, feeling from the present the absence of an idealized past that rejects the now. With its attitude, it refers to a reflexive nostalgia that is positive and overcomes all melancholy. He looks to the future from the present, with memory as learning [Boym 2015]. Price shows us that he has accepted the impossibility of holding on to the past in order to try to reconstruct it. He is able to admire the territory together with the patina of time and the common values still present, to abandon the impossible and arrive at a new time. A new landscape recognized and delimited.

Show what 'is' and less what is 'shown'. Essence, versus appearance. A statement on the praxis of the idea together with disciplinary drawing.

### Architecture as Landscape.

#### Dipoli, Student Union Building, Otaniemi. Reima and Raili Pietilä, 1965-1967

In 1961 a competition was held for the construction of the Student Union Centre on the campus of the Otaniemi University of Technology near Helsinki. The future building was located within the development plan designed by Alvar Aalto in 1949, which was also the result of a competition. The plan included a new multi-purpose building. But if the project had been formalised in 1950, without delay, the result would have been different [Royo 2014, p. 85].

The site is a beautiful hill surrounded by forest and the characteristic rocky soil, which in Finland comes to the surface very easily. This natural environment had a strong influence on the Reima y Raili Pietilä's winning competition entry. The project primarily reflects the topography and the rocks.

Like many of his peers, he had a German education. He





Fig. 8. Reima y Raili Pietilä, 1965-1967. Dipoli, Student Union Building. Sketch.

spoke English, German and had a knowledge of French. The influence of German culture in Finland was common until after World War II.

Pietilä expressed his interest in German expressionist architecture and especially in Bruno Taut and Otto Bartning, although in some writings he distanced himself from Dipoli's expressionist interpretation. In the 1960s, in search of a Finnish architecture in the face of an international interpretation of his work, Pietilä states that the project "rests somewhere in Finnish culture without any parallels to international subcultures" [Royo 2014, p. 162].

In any case, he knew the special attraction that German expressionist architects showed for everything concerning the earth's crust, for all its precipitous coarseness. It is the triumph of the myth of the cave over the rationalist hut, the origin of all architecture: "let the perceiver learn to build with mountains", said Walter Müller-Wulckow in his book *Aufbau-Architektur* [Müller-Wulckow 1919, p.28]. Bruno Taut, too, in his monumental undertaking *Alpine Architecture* of 1919, intended to transform the entire mountain range into a fantastic landscape of grotto shrines and glass-covered caves. The architecture of the earth's crust would take its glittering forms to all continents (fig. 8).

The project considers how to inhabit a cave in a large rock, for which he does not hesitate to construct a powerful copper volume not far removed from Wassily Luckhardt's

*Formal Fantasies* of 1919. The initial drawings of the Dipoli Centre, represented in charcoal sections, also resemble Hans Poelzig's sketches for the Salzburg *Festspielhaus* of 1920. The parallels between the floor plan sketches and the forms of authors such as Hermann Finsterling in 1920, or interiors such as the Scala restaurant in Berlin by Walter Wurzbach and Rudolf Belling, are revealing.

The other sketches of the project in elevation, plan and section are the most reproduced, studied or known. The drawings of the roof, the undulating and faceted roof of the multifunctional spaces, as well as the narrative studies of the growth in elevation and plan on the hill have been analysed in particular (fig. 9).

But undoubtedly the most surprising of all Pietilä's sketches is the one in which five human figures are placed in different positions among what looks like a group of rocks, but between which one can guess possible routes of stairs and walkways. It is an inhabited rock through which people move, enter and leave.

The second surprise is that this is the sketch he chose to comment on the project process in the 1987 documentary directed by Anssi Blonsted *The Seasons. Four journeys into Raili and Reima Pietiläs architecture* (fig. 10).

In the first sequence of the documentary, before the credits roll, he enigmatically states in relation to the search for 'the truth': "I meticulously note down the surroundings, I

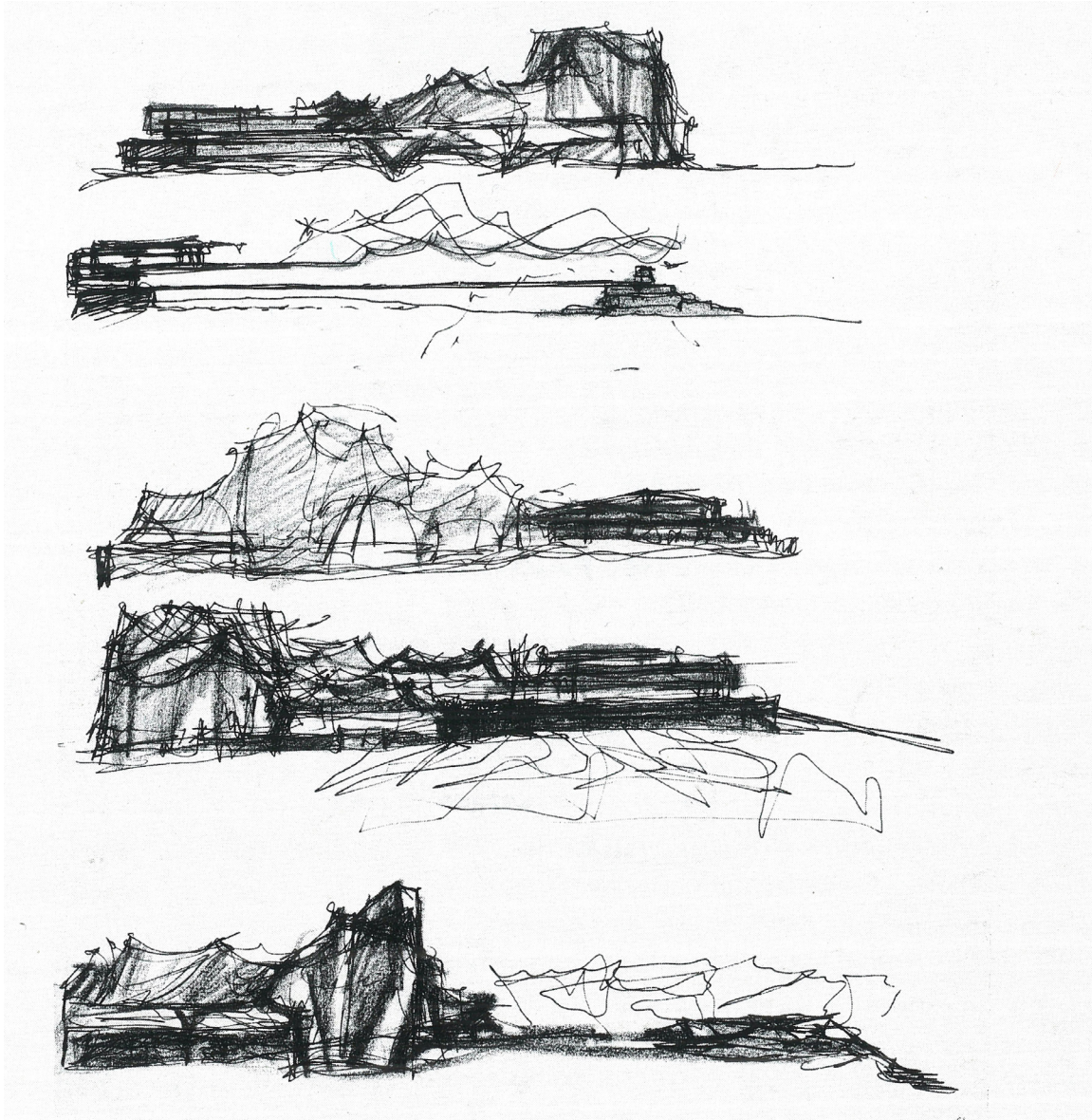


Fig. 9. 1965-1967. Dipoli, Student Union Building Sketch.

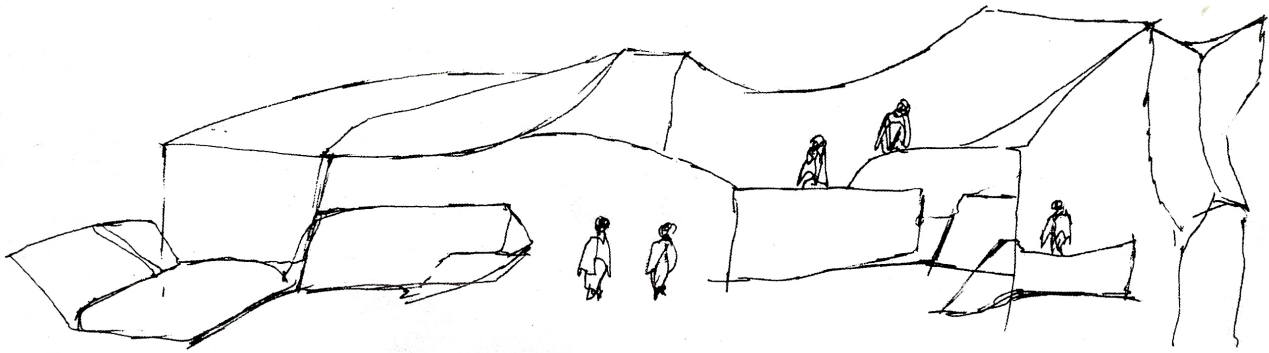


Fig. 10. Reima y Raili Pietilä, 1965-1967. Dipoli, Student Union Building. Sketch.

am content to interpret the truth through metaphors because in architecture it is enough to create a frame. Truth is what frames architecture" [Blomstedt 1988].

At the beginning, it focuses on the blowing up of a rock by delving into the inner visions, into the fissures produced by the deflagration. We are shown the interior partial images and the balances of the fragments of the stones in the resulting gravitations.

At the beginning of the project description, no plan, elevation or section representation is shown. Only four partial sketches, four static images.

It stops at the inhabited elevation. But it is not a complete image. Nor is it static. It begins with a zoom, a partial view, of its left side and moves over the elevation until it is completed on its far right. The sequence lasts 10 seconds, from second one to eleven, minute three. We never see it in its entirety. We walk through it dynamically, explicitly, from one end to the other. It is as if we were physically in the place and we are watching it with our eyes. We don't go back. It is a game that involves our senses and our memory (fig. 9).

The rest is the narration of a journey. The description of a commented architectural walk, in which reflection and memory merge. They are uninterrupted sequences, with no other narrative link than that of showing the building from the inside and the outside.

Turning back, the journey to Dipoli begins with portraits of the architect meditating, while his voice draws an analogy between literature and architecture: "he felt that the work

of architecture had a more direct structural relationship to a novel than to a pictorial work" [Blomstedt 1988]. We know that Pietilä was a bibliophile from his studies of the writings of Malcom Quantril and Roger Connah. He himself states that he liked to study grammar and invent words. In the documentary he acknowledges Samuel Beckett as a reference.

At the beginning of the traveling of the inhabited elevation, he explicitly speaks of architecture as a succession of fragmentary visions, like literary aesthetics, which are linked according to a formal narrative plan. At the end of the tour, he concludes with the statement: "the spatial content is formed by a series of pictorial situations that the narrative tone changes" [Blomstedt 1988].

This sketch opens up a specific dimension of the mechanisms of knowledge and intervention in architecture, so that discovery and invention converge. It is more about knowing how to look, learning how it is, how it is interpreted or how it is articulated. It is a new reading or re-reading. In Dipoli all faces and all sides of the exterior and interior are of equal importance. There are no clearly predetermined hierarchical relationships. The parts depend on the observer rather than on the object. He has drawn an environment of images in which sequence and displacement provide coherence. Everything is enveloped in a structure that gives it unity. To move is to accept simultaneities in time.

Everything is past and present at the same time.

## Notes

[1] On the various sketches for the Bergen Tomb cfr. Fernández Elorza 2014.

[2] Fernández Elorza's doctoral work [2014] includes excerpts from Lewerentz's article, dated 1939 and never published, with the title *Modern Cemeteries, notes on the landscape*. This article is dated 1939.

[3] The expression is due to the Italian writer and poet Pietro Aretino in a letter to Giulio Romano [Pietro Aretino 1916, II, 2, p. 186]. The

first to cite this expression when dealing with Renaissance art is Ernst Hans Josef Gombrich in his doctoral thesis on the architecture of Giulio Romano, published under the title: *Zum Werke Giulio Romano* in 1934.

[4] The documents can be consulted at the Canadian Centre for Architecture and in the bibliography proposed in the cycle of *Silent Architectures*. Cfr. Herreros 2001a, and especially in the monograph Hardingham 2016.

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