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Form and Uniform

Reflection of Project in Relation to Discourse

Vitruvius defines order (*ordinatio*) as the first of the fundamental principles of architecture. Order is paired with arrangement (*dispositio*), and followed by proportion, uniformity, consistency and economy.

Architectural order is “the adjustment of size of the several parts to the several uses, and requires due regards to the general proportions of the fabric: it arises out of dimension (*quantitas*) [...]. Dimension regulates the general scale of the work, so that the parts may all tell and be effective”. Order is a metaphysical principle that is grounded on mathematics. Its manifestation in the physical world is guided by the principle of arrangement (*dispositio*), or the “putting of things in their proper places”, which is expressed through “ground plan, facade and perspective”. According to Vitruvius, architectural order is the platonic principle that guides the design. It cannot be expressed by itself, but it relies on Cartesian representation to become manifest to the world. “The word type does not represent so much the image of something that must be copied or imitated perfectly, as the idea of an element that must serve itself as a rule for the model. [...] The type is an object on the basis of which everyone can conceive of works that may not resemble each other at all”.

Resonating with Vitruvius’ order, Quincy’s type is the “rule” that generates a model. Both definitions seem to ground architecture in an immutable platonic realm based on *quantitas*, but they also admit that the generation of architecture cannot be a simple process of imitation, rather being an interpretation that might end up with wildly different results. Quite in the same way, the discretionary power of police in applying the law is an interpretation of state order. The architecture of police stations is thus located at the intersection of two interpretative processes: it is the manifestation of the order of architecture as much as the order of the state. This charged position makes the police station ideal for reevaluating the idea of architectural order.

In Ireland, where classic architecture has historically been a symbol of British domination, this question is of particular relevance. The root of an Irish architectural order shall thus not be searched in the Palladian Anglo-Irish Big Houses, which tower imposingly in the Irish countryside, but rather on the shop front, the most common vernacular interpretation of the classical order in Ireland. The Irish police station is thus defined: not by grandiose columns or cupolas, but the by creaking leg of the stool on which an Irishman is sipping his stout.