



Weakness in Architecture
Lessons in the ruins

Graduation research book

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Abstract: Dual identity

Let them be helpless like children, because weakness is a great thing and strength is nothing. When a man is just born he is weak and flexible, when he dies he is hard and insensitive. When a tree is growing it is tender and pliant, but when it's dry and hard it dies. Hardness and strength are death companions. Pliancy and weakness are the expressions of the freshness of being . Because what has hardened will never win. (Tarchovsky,1976)

While carefully sneaking next to a cracked wall of a concrete ruin, Andrej Tarkovsky's stalker is uttering this manifest of weakness. This insecure guide submits himself unconditionally to the invisible laws of the mysterious Zone. Weakness is a great thing; we both want to persuade you. Yet this adjective is rarely a positive description in any situation. There are other, kinder words, still it is this particular term that I believe has the capacity to disclose hidden relations, allow for new understandings and fresh perspectives.

This project is a deduction. From the abstract notion of weakness I will descend to the realm of direct consequences, tangible, real and truly architectural. To be able to do so, I am introducing an external party – the ruin.

The tool of ruin will be used, as a lens, a link, or a Petri dish, in which the hazy notion of weakness is to be cultivated into visible architectural forms. The ruin is the core of this work and the body. Yet this work is not about ruins but weakness itself. I am proposing a dual identity – weak is the ruinous and ruinous is weak. Ruin is the stalker here, the guide, only a map. So let it take us on this tortuous journey in search of weak architecture.

Architecture that is, as the ruin, a product of conflict. A fragile ceasefire between an absolutist rule of all determining, pre-existing order, and the wilful, distortive riots of chaos.

Architecture that is, as the ruin, open, fragmented, disordered, and monumental.

Architecture that, as the ruin, fuses the disharmony of the eternal human urge for imperfection, with the pleasure of form, the beautiful abstraction of the artistic spirit.

Architecture of discontinuity and conflict, of thousand images collaged into a neurotic whole, an unstable wad of various yet completely consistent opinions or an everlasting argument, open design that calls for restrictions and complications, a rigid schedule that allows for changes two days after the deadline, a pencil in a shaking hand. In a train.

Introduction

The project of weak architecture

The “inventor” of the term weak thought or *Il pensiero debole* is the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo. Even though his writings originate in 1980s, it is now more than ever they offer a strikingly precise description of the contemporary condition of lost polarities and unclear structure.¹ Vattimo points out that we are now living in world of no absolutes, where everything is just a result of interpretation, where all values are exchangeable. Everything has been weakened as possibly fictional. This is why he proposes the term weak thought with various implications to philosophy, science, art and thus, by inclusion, architecture.

Catalan architect and theoretician Ignasi de Sola Morales directly follows Vattimo in his essay *Weak Architecture*. He is the first scholar who applies weak thought to the discipline of architecture. Without any references to the real world his texts stays somewhat enigmatic, still it is clear he is dealing with the imagined polarity between an experience of abstraction and integrity on one hand and deconstruction and multitude on the other.

After Morales, Weakness went silent for nearly 13 years until Juhani Pallasmaa writes an essay entitled “Fragile architecture”. He bases his work just referentially on Vattimo and his findings are “*somewhat different*” (Pallasmaa, 2000) to those of Morales. He proposes the term fragile as yet another justification of his lifetime refusal of a contemporary architecture of vision and strong concepts. If Morales applies the ‘*weak thought*’ described by Vattimo in order to create a new theoretical position, Pallasmaa translates the weak philosophy almost too directly into weak architecture. It is as if he substituted the word ‘thought’ for ‘architecture’.

In the following pages I plan to closely explore this rather limited discourse on weakness as well as I want to define my own position within it. More than in the analytical capacity of weakness - in its apparent tendency to take things apart - I am interested in its ability to synthesize, create and project.

To be able to do so, I am introducing an external party - the ruin. Ruin itself is a direct product of the same conflicts as weak architecture itself. The conflict between the stubborn will of the artist and the inevitable resistance of the chaotic world, the hardness of abstraction and the softness of the organic, the conflict of plan and accident. In ruin I see the capacity to confront all of these polarities successfully. Therefore it is the ruin that I am using to derive five projective lessons of weak architecture: openness, disorder, fragment, the useless and monumentality.

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The idea of weak thought first appeared in Vattimo's Collection of essays entitled 'The end of Modernity' published in 1985, was followed both by edited versions and reprints (1988, 1994) and translations 1991, 2002 as well as new publications focused just on the topic, such as Weak thought translated by Peter Carravetta in 2012. All these illustrate a widespread interest on the subject.

Pyramid and shed

Vattimo, Pallasmaa and Morales

The principal 'inventor' of the term weak thought is the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo. It is a self-evident necessity to explore this notion of weakness in his philosophy; however, as this essay wants to stay within the disciplinary borders of architecture, this chapter is a mere personal interpretation of the writings of this Italian scholar. I looked upon a work of Jon R. Snyder for guidance; still these interpretations might contain plain errors which, I am sure, the expert will excuse.

Gianni Vattimo operates in-between three streams of philosophy: nihilism, the philosophy of difference and hermeneutics, which he constantly links and compares in order to construct his idea of the weak thought. With these three Vattimo agrees that the current condition is a condition of complete interpretability of every aspect of our existence. We are living in world of no absolutes. The god of modernity – progress - does not have any purpose as there is no destination any more. The death of the absolutes inevitably means that no objective guarantees exist anymore. If we agree there is no absolute guarantee, we can never be sure about anything in the world being true. Everything now is just a result of interpretation. All values are exchangeable. Everything has been weakened as a possible fiction.

The distinction between Vattimo and the philosophers of difference Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida is in an attitude Vattimo is taking towards this situation. Unlike them, Vattimo sees it as an opportunity for a new kind of experience. For this experience to be possible he proposes the *weak thought*, style of thinking affirming the new condition of weakened and diffused reality and even more, taking advantage of it: *'We must abandon the notion of unitary organizing thought and instead consider the possibilities of the manifold thought, one which is multi-voiced, variously shaped, always more than one but just as importantly no longer pretending to be the seal to the claims of totality or universality.'* (Vattimo, Rovatti 2012, 15)

The interpretative nature of the world is truly one of the main drivers of the philosophy of weak thought. If the truth cannot be recognized anymore the relation between essence and appearance, subject and object, centre and periphery is suddenly open to a new understanding. The philosopher proposes deconstruction as a tool to reveal the beauty of this condition. For Vattimo, deconstruction is not a final revealing statement of negation, as deconstruction is for Derrida, rather it is a first step on a journey towards new positive philosophy of weak thought.

According to Vattimo, if there is still some essence to be found, it is via an event. The true is not self-apparent anymore. It is not based on any reference point. The essence is not stable anymore, it is not capturable. The truth itself can be only „recollected“ as a feeling, as a memory. We must be 'grounding without grounds' in the words of Nietzsche.

Catalan architect and theoretician Ignasi de Sola Morales was the first scholar who applied the philosophy of weak thought to architecture. In his writing 'Weak architecture' he stays closely related to Vattimo. It might be because of this kinship that he keeps strictly beyond the built reality and thus remains somewhat mysterious.

He agrees with Vattimo, that all the absolutes of the past have dissolved into nothingness. There are no more clear rational systems. Reality is not a unitary whole anymore; it is rather a result of complex lay-

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It is also here that Pallasmaa notices the relation between weakness and ruins, only in somewhat different version, that I intend to. The ruin is mentioned only for its haptic qualities, for the beautiful aging of material and complexity of sensual percepts.

ering and superimpositions. Only deconstruction of these layers makes it possible to perceive them. But again it is not a deconstruction as a negation of modernity. It is not the deconstruction that had inspired deconstructivist architecture for an almost too direct translation of this negation into matter. Morales instead seeks deconstruction as an archaeology of our reality that makes it possible to experience its multitude and richness. Not a critique but an exploitation of our current condition.

This richness is reflected in our understanding of time. If renaissance time was static, baroque and modernistic time linear then Morales proposes simultaneous times of cubism. This experience can be described as intensification. Different layers, different systems, different entities are all forced to meet. This sort of simultaneity can only be experienced through the mediation of aesthetics. This is precisely a task for an artist. It is this sort of intensified experience of reality that Morales refers to as monumentality. Monumentality to him can acquire a new meaning: a glimpse or “*a window to a more intense reality*”, reality of multiple times. This understanding of monumentality may seem as a rather premature conclusion, it is only with the direct comparison with Morales’ sources we can understand why weak has to do anything with monumental.

‘Then the work of art becomes a monument precisely because of the weak nature of the truth it recollects...the techniques of art are stratagems that transform 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, but because of its weakness.’ (Vattimo 2002, 86)

Nothing can be further from the mysterious abstractness of Morales than the clear and straightforward message of Juhani Pallasmaa. His text is composed on a simple dichotomy of strong - visual and weak - haptic architecture. This is an opposition between the architecture of imposed repressive concept and architecture open to changes and accidents.

It is not just according to Pallasmaa that contemporary culture is obsessed with image. ‘A picture says more than a thousand words’ exploded with the invention of internet and now it seems that the words are not needed anymore, nor is anything else. The Finish architect claims this long term development towards vision has many consequences for the quality of our built environment. The architecture of an instant image is flat, uniform, homogenous and most of all sensory poor. In opposition to this exaggerated visuality, Pallasmaa proposes the familiar term weak architecture. *Whereas the first desires to impress through a singular image, the second seek a real sensory interaction instead of idealized and conceptual manifestation* “ (Pallasmaa 2000, 5)

Even though Pallasmaa starts with the adjective weak, later he switches to fragile, because of the “negative connotations”. The globally published author’s concerns of misunderstanding are understandable, luckily I do not need to share his worries. Moreover the very word fragile has a direct haptic reference, that I want to elude.

To a certain extend Pallasmaa derives his notion of weakness ex negativo from the architecture of early modernity. The focus on vision is its unwanted heritage. According to Pallasmaa, the architecture of modernism was designed to be timeless, but in a different sense - forever young.¹ It was meant to be an “autonomous artefact”. Autonomous from the location, context, and even time. This was achieved by its complete abstractness. The surface was abstracted to such a degree it disappeared completely. Abstrac-

tion turned the tangible matter, stones and wood and concrete, into mathematical volumes. Unlike that, material, haptic designs make the user aware of the direct sensual reality. Even the time was reduced to a singularity. While in reality, we perceive the building in unfolding time, the architecture of vision is immediate and instant. It is timeless – as if without time.

The closed, perfect and strong image aspires to final artefact “*to which nothing can be added or subtracted*” and has minimal tolerance. The contemporary strong designs are often aware of this risk, so afraid they become “hermetic” and “autistic”. (Pallasmaa 200,7) On the contrary “weak gestalt” allows for additions and alterations; a fragile form possesses aesthetic tolerance, a margin for change. (Pallasmaa 200,7)

Thus, apparently there is some degree of ignorance needed for maintaining the strong image, but not just that. The strong image contains hidden repressions. Violence of opposing all that is not in accordance with the abstracted image. These rioting forces can range from site constraints to the smallest detail. *What is wrong with the window frames*’ asks the architect Metchild Stuhlmacher in a critical tone. (Stuhlmacher, 2014)

Lets illustrate the difference between these two texts on a metaphor. Imagine a pyramid and a shed. Let’s draw a spectrum with these two as opposite extremes. The pyramid represents the power of an idea to shape matter. Man’s ability to organize the chaos of nature by means of abstraction. What is appealing to the observer is the monumentality of the perfect geometry. The countless blocks of stone are transformed into the singularity of one mathematical volume.

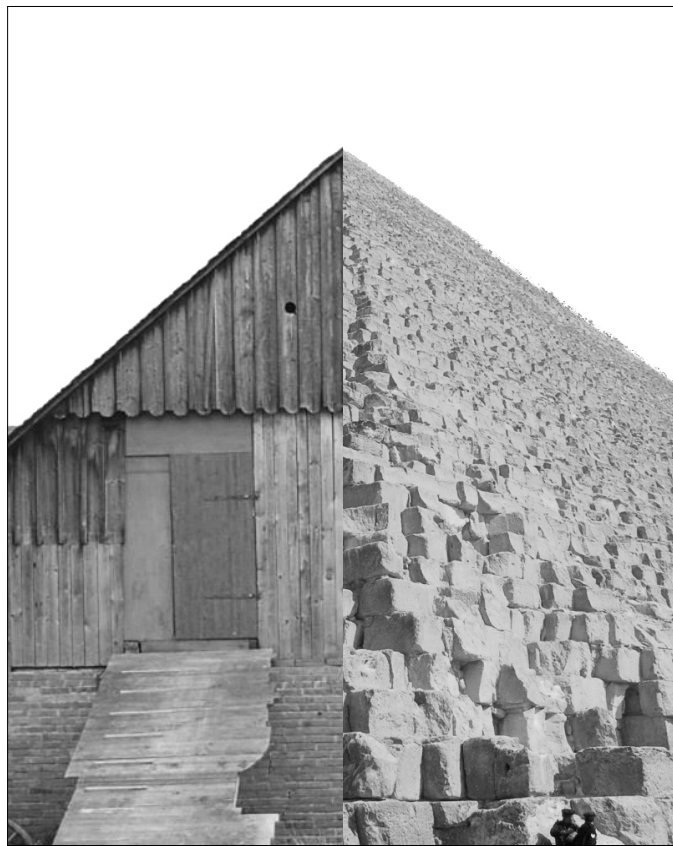
In the shed we enjoy the exact opposite qualities – the complexity and softness, the picturesque disordered silhouette, the organic materiality. Compared to the absolute inceptional singularity of the pyramid the shed is a result of long series of accidental decisions that can create thousands of possible shapes and still be called a shed.

Any building ever built or thought of can be positioned somewhere in-between. Gothic and Romanticism is to be found closer to the shed, Renaissance and Modernist designs can rather be related to the pyramid. Entire styles and epochs indeed are too heterogeneous to be ‘positioned’ anywhere, for Corbusier would be closer to the shed than Hilbersheimer and Aalto yet closer than Corbusier. It is only individual designs, and even details within them that create the richness and wideness of this imagined spectrum.

In this polarity Pallasmaa clearly takes the position of the shed and calls this conquered spot fragile architecture. Let’s create beautiful sheds, because the pyramids of modernism deprived us of the direct sensual experience.

Morales approach is uncanny. He seeks a shed that is monumental as the pyramid; or rather he says that the shed can sometimes be a pyramid. According to the Catalan scholar the experience of multitude that we relate to the shed can become an intensification of our already complex reality. This intensification is the new monumentality stolen from the pyramid.

The reading of Morales gives us hope that as any polarity, the opposition between the pyramid and shed creates charge that can be exploited. Contrary to that Pallasmaa does not see any real possibility of a mutualism between the absolute visual and weak haptic architecture. He does mention a few exceptions; these are just there to prove the rule. For him the mere atmosphere is enough to hold the entirety of a building together. It is easy to agree that hapticity should be an inherent quality of any architecture, but it



Pyramid and shed
Polarity

can hardly become the pillar of its creation.

In the following pages I will try to prove, that the tension between direct experience and abstract concept is not something mutually annihilating, but on the contrary a fruitful and enriching potential. The necessity of the other half of the spectrum is precisely what draws border between naive openness and autistic seclusion. For breaking, bending, fragmenting, distorting there must be something to break, bend, fragment or just forget for a little while.

Architecture, that I am about to call weak is not positioned to any of the polarities; rather it is the product of movement in between or their temporary dissolution. Not choosing from, but joining both extremes. All these dichotomies of ordered and disordered, total and fragmented, central and peripheral, universal and manifold create a polarity that can produce maximum of charm.

I am not interested in utilities, vertical, horizontal or diagonal cuts. I don't want to categorize, order and put into shelves. I don't even want to oppose vision, hearing, or smell. I am a student of architecture. I am interested in projecting. I am proposing the project of weak architecture.

I propose the heterotopic architecture of touch and vision, architecture of thousand images collaged into a neurotic whole, an unstable wad of various yet completely consistent opinions or an everlasting argument, open design that calls for restrictions and complications, a rigid schedule that allows for changes two days after the deadline, a structural ornament and ornate structure, a pencil in a shaking hand. In a train.

For all this to be possible, openness, softness and affirmation is not enough. Weak is not liquid.

The weak gestalt even according to Pallasmaa allows just certain "additions" and just a certain "alteration" for they have a certain "tolerance" and certain "margin". There never is a tolerance without a resistance. The resistance of weak is simply just significantly lower, or rather more selective than the resistance of strong conceptual architecture.

The weak architecture uses selective resistance and selective uphold at the same time. Weak resistance to money, politics, context, program, time and even architect's own self justified artistic will. In its submission to these drivers it is not liquid, nor opportunistic and even less pragmatic. Weak architecture only allows a certain margin. What is liquid can never bend. Weak architecture can bend, but also crack, inflict add or subtract, it can get distorted, disordered, fragmented but never fall apart completely. Weak architecture is more than just not liquid.

In weak architecture, there is an order, there is a coherence, there is a symmetry it is just constantly being questioned, threatened and shaken to such an extent, it sometimes, for a while, seemingly disappears.

In order to understand this polarity, and thus, by inclusion, its products I am introducing an external party.

An entity that itself is a product of the same conflicts. An entity that is delicately balanced on the same knife's edge. I propose a **dual identity** of the weak architecture and the ruin.

The ruin

In the realm of things few are more charged with meanings than ruins. Bourgeois melancholy of a Sunday walk, millennial tragedies of long forgotten empires, fallen tyrants and tyrants yet to be born. The ruins dissect the world so violently that all of this and more is to be found within. They reveal, hide, confuse and blur the reality so successfully that it may seem that almost any notion, feeling or lesson can be derived.

And so ruins have always been provoking an interest of painters and school kids, philosophers and botanists, writers and readers, film makers, politicians and absolutely everyone.

Paradoxically the obvious creator of every ruin, the architect, rarely showed any interest in this inevitable renegade creation of his. This hypothetical historical ignorant could not look at the fragments of buildings for what they are, instead he only saw what they had once been. There indeed is a trace of exceptions, which I will hereby unashamedly attempt to follow. Sir John Soane, Robert Adam or John Ruskin all saw the ruin as an embodiment of certain qualities missing in their contemporary architectures.

The ruin is the body and core of this work, yet it is not its topic. The ruin is a realm on its own, impossible to grasp in its entirety within the scope of this essay or a lifetime. They are fantastically and frightfully open, described over and over, but rarely by architects. Hence I am using the ruin only as a tool, as a link, an illustration explanation and most of all a metaphor of weakness in architecture. For the bluntest, simplest and obvious characteristics of ruins are the same as the most abstract, theoretical and hazy starting points of weak architecture. Ruins and Weak Architecture are products of the same conflict between the order and disorder, totality and fragment, the material and the formal. Ruin is a functional metaphor; it reveals and illustrates but is simultaneously interesting in its own right. It stays within the domain of architecture, which it is at the same time illuminating from distance.

Episodes from the history of Ruins

Lizards and snakes

Different epochs recognized significantly different qualities in ruins if any at all. To attempt a historic excursion, I am drawing most of the factual information from the several writings and anthologies of Brian Dillon and Christopher Woodwarth, for both of whom the ruin is a lifetime fascination.

The renaissance saw the fragments of antiquity as a shattered puzzle waiting to be resolved. As a message through which the golden past is communicating with the rather rusty present. This is clearly illustrated in the popular renaissance treaty *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* where a confused Poliphilus wanders around a landscape of shattered capitals and cornices that seem '*somehow significant*' to him. (*il.p38*)

Hypnerotomachia was first published in 1499 in the striving trade port of Venice, itself an outcome of the downfall of Roman civilization. On the mainland however, this fiction could have easily been experi-

enced in reality. By the end of 5th century, after years of plundering raids of all sorts of different Goths, the metropolis once striving with eight hundred thousand people fell to just 30 000. Rome became the capital of ruins. Three fourths of the city, as outlined by the old fortification, were abandoned and empty. Old Palaces and Temples were turned into nothing more than the matter they were built from. They were crawling with lizards, snakes and lime burners. They literary turned into quarries. This must have been an apocalyptic image comparable only to the most terrific catastrophes of Richard Wagner, Old Testament or Hollywood.

The focus point of all this was the Forum Romanum. With cottages, barns and wandering sheep the most palatial public space of the civilized world became the most eloquent symbol of the downfall of a civilization.

Truly, more than a hypnerotomachian fantasy living in the ruins was the mere reality of medieval Italy. In his book 'In Ruins' Christopher Woodwarth quotes the antiquary Poggio Bracciolini that described the quattrocento's Capitol: *'The citadel of the earth, the terror of kings, illustrated by the footsteps of so many triumphs, enriched with the spoils and tributes of so many nations. This spectacle of the world, how it is fallen. The path of victory is obliterated by vines, and the benches of the senators are concealed by a dunghill...The Forum of the Roman people, where they assembled to enact their laws and elect their magisters, is now enclosed for the reception of swine and buffaloes. The public and private edifices, that were founded for eternity, lie prostrate, broken, and naked, like the limbs of a mighty giant, and the ruin is the more visible, from the stupendous relics that have survived the injuries of time and fortune.'*

Although they were an important reminder of the downfall of the Roman civilization, the ruins could never be of any aesthetic importance to the artist of renaissance. For renaissance, as for the antiquity perfection and completeness was all governing rule. Human body was understood as a metaphor for the work of art. Alberti explains building in its entirety as a body composed of its parts. The relation of any part to the whole leads to the definition of beauty as that of a state when nothing can be added nor subtracted without destroying this delicate balance. In this situation the architects were interested in the ruin merely as an encyclopaedic collection of the lost perfection.

The first appreciation of the actual ruinous about the ruins did not come from aesthetic, but religious motives. In 1462 the Pope Pius II introduced a law that was supposed to protect them from their apathetic inhabitants as well as from the parasitic lime industry. The ruins were not protected because of their historic legacy, rather thanks to their 'exemplar frailty' that resonated so well with the Christian idea of the transient material world.

Educative decay

The later baroque understanding of ruins follows precisely this line. It is only great deal more disturbing. The fascination with ruins was the fascination with tragedy and disaster. Wars, natural catastrophes, epidemics, eruptions, battlefields and scattered decapitated heads among the decapitated antique capitals. (*ib.p 39*) It is first in Baroque that the appreciation of the decay itself is widespread. Again, not yet for its aesthetic qualities, rather for the illustration of how vain human life is, when even the most eternal of man's creations are subjects of an inevitable destruction. This contemplating capacity of ruins was described later by Dennis Diderot, when he was admiring the paintings of Hubert Robert in the Salon

These ideas of the philosophy of association were first described by John Locke in his essay Concerning Human understanding 1690 and later in Edmund Burke Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful 1759.

exhibition. *What is my ephemeral existence in comparison with that of a rock being worn down, of a valley being formed, of a forest that's dying, of these deteriorating masses suspended above my head?*

Woodwarth notices, that there is a second hidden underline in the baroque appreciation of ruins. In the time that Europe was divided in between the tyrannies of Habsburgs, Bourbons and Ottomans the ruins offered a glimpse of hope for future change. Even the millennial empires fall to pieces, even the most rigid tyrannies eventually turn into dust. This satisfaction was most beautifully expressed later in the famous sonnet by Shelley, inspired by a fresh addition to British museum – found head of a mysterious Egyptian Pharaoh in the 1818.

And on the pedestal these words appear:

My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:

Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair.

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay.

Of the colossal wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Some of these long awaited revolutions came earlier than others, but the mind-shaking revolution in the understanding of ruins took place already in the beginning of 18th century. It happened in Shelley's homeland. It was Brittain that gave birth to the concept of the 'picturesque'.

Dismembered body

Lets come back to the Albertinian metaphor of the work of art as a human body. In his essay *'Architecture dismembered'* Anthony Vydler explains how the romantic aesthetics of 18th century caused an abrupt end to this appreciation of perfection. Under the influence of Kant and German Romantics the new aesthetics of the sublime and the picturesque fragmented the bodily unity of art by the means of an individual experience. According to Vydler, after the picturesque the perfection is just a nostalgia for something not possible anymore *'the parts that as in Frankenstein can never be assembled into anything but a monster'* (Dillon 2012, Vydler 61)

The romantic fascination with ruins in 18th century is an appreciation of yet new qualities of decay, for the first time it is the aesthetic qualities. The reference to history is still present, yet it is now just a fairy-tale addition to the pure, sublime aesthetic qualities of deteriorating matter as such.

In fact it was the ruins that eye witnessed the birth of the picturesque. This fresh and new aesthetic concept that influenced Europe for almost two centuries was both inspired by ruins as well as it first created tools for their aesthetic appreciation. The first writings on picturesque were formulated by Uvedale Price in his *Essay on the Picturesque* and then later developed by Richard Payne Knight in his *Analytical Enquiry into the principles of taste*.² They appreciated the disordered the ambiguous, the secondary in contrast to the rigid cold laws of classicism, the oblique, the mysterious, the dynamic in contrast to the regular, harmonious and symmetrical. Picturesque literary meant *'fit for becoming a subject of a picture'*. The inconspicuous way the picturesque attacked the classical can, at least in aesthetic terms, be very much related to the postmodern dissolution of modernism.

More than that, the picturesque was the subjectivisation of the aesthetic experience. Before its existence,

it was believed that the beauty is an objective quality such as colour or shape. A filled checklist of harmony, proportions, contrast and symmetry. The opposing new understanding was later described by Wilhelm Vorringer who explained that we enjoy ourselves in the work of art through ourselves and ourselves only, we project memories onto the work of art, and it is only through them that we ourselves make it beautiful.

John Dyer was a farmer, country curate and even though born in the 18th century a truly renaissance man. By no coincidence it was this joined figure of painter, writer and philosopher that first noticed the building can become more beautiful in ruins than shining and intact. ...*There is a certain charm that follows the sweep of time, and I can't help thinking the triumphal arches more beautiful now than ever they were, there is a certain greenness, with many other colours, and a certain disjointedness and moulder among the stones, something so pleasing in their weeds and tufts of myrtle, and something in them altogether so greatly wild, that mingling with art, and blotting out the traces of disagreeable squares and angles, adds a certain beauties that could not be before imagined, which is the cause of surprise no modern building can give.* (Woodwarth 2002,124)

Around the same time in Italy, another, way more influential character had arisen: Giovanni Battista Piranesi. This author is the first, who understands ruination as a process with a strong resemblance to creation. He is naturalistically depicting the actual ruins of Rome in his etchings, but at the same time creates fantastic landscapes that are just a product of his own imagination. (il.p40) He considers himself to be an architect but he is foremost a propagator. It is through his etchings that most of 18th century Europe fell in love with the ruins of Rome. His graphics were so much more dramatic than the actual reality that when Johan Wolfgang Goethe finally visited Rome, he was greatly disappointed. If ruins have any credit in the triumph of the picturesque, it was to a great extend thanks to Piranesi. His etchings were hanging not only in the salons of scholars and artists but became means of 'armchair travelling' of the European nobility as well.

This new aesthetic concept first influenced the painters, then, very soon, the landscape design. Piranesi's etchings hanging in the stately rooms of stately estates were soon to be materialized right behind their windows. The English park was the apotheosis of the picturesque. And it was via the park that the ruin kept in direct contact with this product of its own.

In 1789 a parson named William Clubbe erected a pyramid in the garden of his vicarage at Brandon, In Suffolk. It was assembled from fragments of medieval wall which had been destroyed in the modernisation of the church in the nearby parish of Letheringham. This is the first, but not nearly last example of artificial ruins created out of original fragments of the past.

The most prominent Ruinist of all – John Soane - was using the same strategy. In his own house at Lincoln's inn Fields the rooms were not *decorated*, instead they were *created* through original fragments. There are so many resonances between the work of Sir John Soane and this essay that I will devote an entire chapter to him later.

The biggest 'reruination' took place in 1816 when parts of the ruins of Leptis Magna were 'replaced' from its original location to England. Here the king's George IV architect Jeffrey Wyattville was given a task to transform this chaotic heap of fragments into a stately edifice as a charming folly in the garden of Virginia Water near Windsor. Thirty seven columns were reassembled in a completely new manner, unrelated to their original arrangement.

Any sort of ruin in a romantic garden was considered appropriate, and if there was none available, new ruins had to be created. Artificial ruins were being built in the homeland of picturesque as early as in 1729. Very soon, for the richest counties in England as well as the countless courts of yet ununified Germany, the fashionable ruin was a necessity. If there was no historic one to be found, new ruin was created. One of the largest new ruins was created in Trippel in Postdam. In Sansusi garden there is the necessary lake which mirrors the fragments of more than three buildings, apparently antique temples. They are both long abandoned and just destroyed for on of the fallen marble columns is still, by an accident, diagonally leaning on the frieze. (*il,p 42*)

The ruined cake

In the late 18th century the picturesque was slowly transforming from a fresh way of looking at the world into a symbol of a decadence of the lucky few. The artificial pleasure farm in the gardens of Versailles was ridiculing the toil of the deprived ordinary French, and was yet another reason to hate the foreign Queen Maria Antoinette. Poor Frenchmen luckily did not know that the cakes at royal dinners were designed as ruins with broken arches from sponge and caramel. (*il,p44*) It is as if the ancient regime had been aware of its imminent violent end, that it was shining with the last flash of terrific decadence, so bright and intense we can feel it even now. In such an atmosphere ruins became extremely popular.

The ruin became a basic motive as well as trademark of French painter Hubert Robert. This brought the 'Robert des Ruines' a great success and fortune. His paintings were appreciated by aristocracy as well as philosophers. The words of Dennis Diderot contemplated in front of one of them were recorded probably by Robert himself : *'Everything vanishes everything perishes, everything passes away, the world alone remains, time alone continues. How old this world is. I walk between these two eternities? .'* (Dillon, 2011)

But for Robert ruins were just a source of income. And a good source it was indeed. Every salon in Paris had to be ruined by his brush. Hubert Robert imaginary view of the grand gallery of Louvre 1796 was the first painting of an existing building in ruins. (*il,p45*) This work was created just three years before an absolute inversion of the French society and with it, the meaning of ruins.

The French revolution started with a ruin. Bastille was attacked and plundered as a symbol of oppression. After 1789 and the subsequent raging, France did not need to imagine its buildings in ruins anymore, the mob turned these fantasies into a terrific reality. The silent witness of this hysteria is hidden in the Jardin Elysee des Monuments Francais, assembly of Fragments salvaged by Alexandre Lenoir from churches palaces and gardens after their were plundered.

The French revolution revived the understanding of ruins as a proof of an inevitable disaster the European civilization is heading to. The metropolis of France already experienced its catastrophe, one of many in the subsequent years. The fear from the chaos found its new home just across the English Channel.

Second Rome

Victorian London was only the second city in history that exceeded the population of one million. The first one had been Rome not more than 1400 years earlier. In 1851 Crystal Palace became the first building ever to exceed The Coliseum in its size. Around the half of 19th century London was taking on itself the role of the new Rome. And with it, the dark ruined past of the eternal city became the yet darker future of this British metropolis.

In 1840 Thomas Macaulay writes a novel entitled 'New Zealander': a future visitor is coming to see the famous ruins of the fallen metropolis of London. This novel has been an inspiration for the famous painting of Gustave Doré 'The new Zealander' in 1872. (*il,p46*) An image of long abandoned ruined metropolis. These fantasies of fallen London have deeper roots than just a temporary fashion. Unlike Paris or Vienna, London always was the antithesis to the ideal city. It was the driving force of countless utopian projects and critiques. It was the Antichrist of all who were striving for a better world since the end of 18th century. Only its sheer scale was horrific for the 19th century visitor.

It was a city where both the formal and the moral laws were obviously broken. In 1883 Socialist author Andrew Mearns wrote a treaty entitled: '*The Bitter Cry of Outcast London, An Enquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor.*' Here he describes the condition of London as '*depravity concealed by the thinnest crust of civilization and decency.*' The American writer Jack London visited his namesake city in 1900 and found '*A mass of miserable and distorted humanity, the sight of which would have impelled Doré to more diabolical flights of fancy than ever succeeded in achieving.*' (Hardy, 2000,57)

In the Victorian London, there was a common apprehension that the 'thinnest crust' of Andrew Mearns can crack any day. The conditions in which the poor of London were living were thought unbearable. The dirty masses of oppressed outcasts were expected to march from their eastern suburbs to the mansions in the north and businesses in the west and under their feet destroy all traces of civilization. The British empire was expected to fall under the burden of its own development.

Hysterical century

In the 20th century the man's natural 'ruinlust' was satisfied generously and repeatedly. The war with its brutal power turned the world upside down and with it the perception of ruins. Christopher Woodward quotes the head of English National gallery Kenneth Clark, who with German Luftwaffe still above his head noticed that the '*Bomb damage is in itself Picturesque.*' (*Woodward, 2002, 212*) This exemplary British statement is the last resonance of the romantic charge the ruins once had.

It was the suffering and pain of millions that for long subtracted the aesthetic qualities from the ruin, leaving just despair and disillusion. The painter John Piper was given a propaganda commission by the same Kenneth Clark, he was to paint the still burning ruins of the German Blitz and thus boost the moral of the British. This indeed was not an easy job to do. When he was painting the still burning Coventry cathedral (*il,p47*), he was ashamed for offering sketchbook instead of a helping hand. The ruins became a tool of propaganda for both sides. The domestic ruins were symbols of bravery and endurance against *the Blitz* in Britain as well as against the *Luftmörder* in Germany. The ruins of the enemy were on the other

hand shown as a proof of his imminent end.

Oddly enough the war was not only destructing, but also creating brand new future ruins. On the foggy coast of Northern France, in the hearth of German cities and later in the deserts of New Mexico and Forrest of Siberia. A web of useless objects still haunts our world today. Rocket silos, bunkers, air defence towers and protection zones, abandoned warehouses and hangars all remind us of either the war they witnessed or the war that never came.

The hysterical spirit of the 20th century pushing everything to extremes gave birth to yet another eager producer of ruins. The modernism movement. These ruins are an inevitable product of the utopian dreams and their somewhat inappropriate aging. It is by no means a coincidence that the end of modernism is often marked by an act of ruination - the demolition of Pruitt Igoe residential towers in 1972.

(il,p48)

According to Guliana Bruno, in her essay *Modernist ruins - Filmic Archeologies*, Modernist architecture does not absorb the passing of time as naturally as the traditional architectures did. The problem of aging of the modernism is that of a skin. Ladies skin one might want to add. Wrinkles and imperfections are really not appreciated.

In *Fragile Architecture* Juhani Pallasmaa describes how modernity was incapable of aging. Yet the ruins of modernity are more popular now than any medieval ruin could ever hope for. The modernistic buildings still standing are extremely fragile ruins to be. The great power that created them has disappeared. Their era has passed and now they are standing alone, bare and naked in a distrustful crowd holding hammers. The modernistic architecture can turn to a ruin not by decades of abandonment but by a single signature of a pen. The biggest contemporary ruin in London; the Heygate estate was ruined from a complete operability by a single decree of the municipality. Now it stays there as a perfect ruin already for 6 years, waiting for an imminent end. *(il,p49)* I will finish this chapter with a question. In the homonymous essay Mark Lewis is asking: Is modernity our Antiquity? Who knows. The lizards and snakes are gone, but the lime burners are still here.

Ruins now!

There is no doubt a widespread fascination with ruins in present days. Countless fan pages, social groups and blogs are its proof. Even Silva, the last James Bond villain is not living in a futuristic masculine volcano residence but on a random office floor of a derelict building, on an abandoned island. *(il,p50)* The contemporary 'ruin lust' is obvious, its explanation however, is not. Juhani Pallasmaa recognizes himself the kinship of ruins and weak architecture. For him the current popularity is caused by the lack of haptic and peripheral percept in our built environment. Others see a relation between the decrepit buildings and the economy in ruins.

I believe the current popularity of the ruinous is more than anything else a natural refusal of world that consists of perfect systems and sets. It is the refusal of the perfectly silent suspended ceilings fit for a bedroom or a hospital, the hollowness of walls and the continuous 'cleaning in progress'. Le Corbusier was urging the architecture to seize the industry and the exact opposite has happened. The building industry has created an all-inclusive system of elements where the smallest tile's calibrated dimensions meet

the span of a highway bridge. When you can connect everything to everything, when everything in the world is compatible, you gain an unprecedented freedom in combining. A freedom that in fact is extremely limiting. This systematization of our environment becomes a cage that can best be escaped through the ruin. In ruins we find the freedom and openness. The trademark rules and catalogue compatibilities are suspended here.

The ruination and decay have always been tied to certain epochs more than others. Renaissance or modernism could not care less about old rubble, mannerism; baroque and romanticism on the other hand were much more open to the charms of ruins. Ruins were a conscious or unconscious inspiration to most decadent epochs, in times where both political and aesthetic rules were deliberately spoiled and destroyed – ruined themselves. Vattimo's reading of our contemporary condition can be understood as a quality of certain decadence. If there is any message to be derived from his writings it is, not to resist, but exploit the current state. If all the foundations that we thought are grounding our world had been dissolved, then the ruin may yet again prove to be a fruitful starting point to enjoy this unstable condition.

Conflict

In the first part of this essay I tried to illustrate the polarities described by Pallasmaa and Morales with an imagined spectrum of pyramid and shed. If Pallasmaa took the position of the shed and Morales suggests that sometimes the shed can be a pyramid, I am simply interested in the tension in between. Not the extremes but the forces that repel them. The movement hence and forth. The conflict itself.

It is ruins that are successfully confronting almost identical dichotomies while keeping this productive tension. As weak architecture, ruin is an equilibrium, only a fragile balance, a result of a violent disintegration. Only what survives the destruction can ever be called a ruin.

This fragile state of the ruin was described by George Simmel in 1911 *'It disappears when not enough remains. The stumps of Pillars of Forum Romanum are ugly, halfway crumbled pillar, can produce maximum of charm ... A vision of the ruin as essentially an accommodation between culture and nature, the artificial object sliding imperceptibly towards an organic state, until the end the nature has its way and we can no longer legitimately speak of a ruin at all.* (Simmel, Dillon, 13, 23)

Weak architecture is a product of conflict.

Conflict between the order and chaos. Generic and specific. Abstract and empathic. Total and fragmented. Regular and empirical.

Ruin is a product of conflict.

Conflict between the culture and nature, order and chaos. Abstract and empathic. Total and fragmented. Regular and accidental. It is this conflict that produces accidents, exceptions and points of friction at all possible levels and scales.

What I mean here was more eloquently described again described again by Georg Simmel:

'The purpose and accident, nature and spirit, past and present, here resolve the tension of their contrast – or rather, preserving this tension, they yet lead to a unity of external image and internal effect. (Simmel, Dillon, 23)

Some epochs of architecture history are more open to such conflicts than others. Or, better still the tran-

sitions between these big epochs are typical for such conflicts. Most of the architects capable of producing weak or ruinous architecture operate on a threshold of two contradictory styles. Their education and habits keep them in one, but their nature drags them to the other simultaneously.

Benedict Ried between the gothic and the renaissance, John Soane from the classical to the romantic, Alvaro Aalto between the vernacular and the modernistic, Sigurd Lewerentz between the neoclassicist and the modernistic, James Stirling between the modern and postmodern and many others. Some of them elude any of the categories but even this specificity is a product of the conflict they emerged from. Each of these architects alone could become a topic of a separate work. Yet I don't want to leave the weakness and ruins so soon. These and others won't serve as case studies, more just as a series of examples. Just a catalogue.

The basic ambition of this work is turning the analytical notion of weakness to a projective power. Ruins are dissecting architecture better than any axonometric drawing ever could. But who is dissecting the ruins? What is it in ruins that provoke our attention, what is it that makes us feel at ease or thrilled? Under which broken broken arch the joyful mystery is hidden? What is it that made them picturesque, and what inspired the few architects that took them for inspiration? Some of these questions were already answered by others; some are still waiting for resolution.

If we agree on the dual identity of ruins and weak architecture than the strategies derived from the ruin are the strategies of weakness as well. Whatever we learn from the ruin can be immediately applied to weak architecture. The products of the conflict between the pyramid and shed are the same products that we see in the ruins of Leptis magna, in Abandoned steel factory or in the exposed intimacy of a ruined family house. If you ask, how can weak architecture ever become a project I answer: through the ruins.

Openness

Pasquino and Alvar Aalto

Pasquino is an inconspicuous Hellenistic statue in Rome. A true torso with effaced outlines and decrepit limbs. There are marvellous miracles of sculpture all around, still this ruined work of art became so symbolic the square where it stands holds its name - Piazza Pasquino. In the centuries people have been inscribing epigrams and vulgar poems, clothing the statue and decorating it with objects of all sorts, freely, spontaneously. (*image.p53*)

I have explained how Alberti and scholars of renaissance understood the work of art via the metaphor of human body, as a closed perfection to which nothing can be added or subtracted. What makes the example of Pasquino so illustrative is the literary reference to this bodily metaphor.

And really it is not any of the perfect statues of Rome but fragmented Pasquino who is continuously donated with plants, pictures pipes and glasses, wigs and beards and all sorts of ordinary and extraordinary objects that would suffice for a museum of the generosity of the past five centuries. And it is Pasquino who was being carved out by the knives of vandals and philosophers, tourists and lovers. The ruinous example of Pasquino literary shows us the conceptual relation between openness imperfection.

This direct causal relationship between the openness of the work of art and its state of disorder is described by Umberto Eco in his 'Open work'. Eco uses the metaphor of language to explain this relation.

The rules in language make it possible for us to understand each other's message. The clearer the message, the more understandable, the fewer possible meanings it might carry. The more disordered, the more ambiguous, the more possible meanings there are. Therefore the disordered, hard to read - that is open - work of art is an invitation, that allows the observer to project the richness and multitude of his own experience instead of offering him one that is prefabricated. Disorder as a projective force is to be explored in the next chapter. For Eco, openness is a quality that allows for a multiple possible readings. Different understandings and countless emotional responses.

The same can be applied to the works of architecture. Where the will of the creator is too obvious the environment is complete, over determined and therefore closed to different perceptions, changes, appropriation and life.

In his book 'The history of modern architecture' Leonardo Benevolo sums up the work of Alvar Aalto in a critique tone: "*Almost always his incomparable talents make up for incomplete rational control, but sometimes this tendency exposed sudden weaknesses...*" (Benevolo 1971, 617)³ The use of the word 'weakness' may or may be not a coincidence, but these deviations, this 'incomplete rational control' which Benevolo understands as a flaw of otherwise mastery design is something that I believe is what makes the design to be mastery in the first place. In Pallasmaa's *Fragile architecture* Aalto was repeatedly referred to.

In his lecture at the Swedish craft association entitled *Rationalism and Man*, Aalto calls for a more '*inclusive approach*' called '*expanded rationalism*' as opposed to plain rationalism and cold *sachlichkeit* of his contemporaries. '*We should expand the rational approach so that it includes more requirements connected to the problem.*' (Aalto, lecture, 1935) This approach is most apparent in the interior. As Juhani Pallasmaa suggests in his essay '*Rationality and domesticity*', Aalto puts the occupant of the house to the centre of design in a most possible prominent way, preceding the outer form and structure and even the architect. Everything is conformed with the experience of the user. This way instead of strong singular image, the design strategy leads to a multitude, richness and, especially, openness. „*The setting seems to be a result of a long process of occupation by several generations rather than of an uncompromising aesthetics and deliberate design.*"³ Both in ruins and in Aalto's work openness is a product of complexity, layering and mostly of spoiling of the all determining absolute composition order.

There are two main interpretations of Aalto's work. First one could be described as wilful modernist. This implies that Aalto's architecture is modernist by its nature and its heterotopic appearance is just a result of inflicting the original „rational“ project, which here is represented by the word order. This is explained by Robert Venturi's whom nobody could accuse of favouring the modernists „*Aalto's architecture was largely appreciated for its human quality, as it was called, derived from free plans, which accommodated exceptions within the original order...*" (Venturi 2002, 82).

The other interpretation, that of Porphyrios, claims, that the very nature of Aalto's work is heterotopic and there is no modernist thinking (here represented by grid) whatsoever. "*If the homotopic mind sets out to establish frontiers of an uninterrupted continuity, heterotopia was to destroy continuity of syntax and to shatter predictable modes of the homogenous grid*". (Porphyrios 1982, 2) These two approaches could be described as resisting the grid (Venturi) and no grid whatsoever (Porphyrios).

I would like to cowardly conclude, that the truth is somewhere in-between. Even though Venturi's interpretation is closer to the ruinous conflict, I must admit that if there was an original rationalist idea in

Aalto's design he was very parsimonious in resisting. While moving on the imagined scale of Pyramid and Shed Aalto often gets dangerously close to the latter extreme. It is by no coincidence then that he is so appreciated by Pallasmaa. In his buildings Aalto is hiding the traces of the composition order and spoiling the abstraction by exceptions, insertions and subtractions. He has a light hand of an artist that is sometimes just all too open for any force to spoil its planned move. The openness, sometimes too wide, is a felicitous result that can most be appreciated in the interiors. (*im. p54,55*)

Disorder

Classical Figurae and Benedikt Ried

In ruin, the chaos of nature manifests itself only on the account of a pre-existing order. These two are in constant tension that produces new relations and forms. Forms that are entirely meaningful, forms that are charged with the tension by which they were created. The ruin is not any closer to chaos than it is to perfection. It is just a fragile equilibrium. The moment a creation of human spirit turns into a pile of rubble, we don't speak of ruin anymore. Just about a pile of rubble. *'The stumps of Pillars of Forum Romanum are ugly, halfway crumbled pillar, can produce maximum of charm'*. The same goes for weak architecture itself. It has this latent quality that ensures it will always be seen as work of an architect, not just as a compound of random components ready to fall back to the chaos they accidentally emerged from.

Deliberate spoiling of the composition order has a long history in both art and architecture, only certain epochs were fonder of disorder than others. Let's start with those that were not. As the renaissance, the antiquity developed a cult of perfection. The Greek temple was 'Temennos' – an enclosed entity, cut off from the outside world. An island of absolute all-encompassing order ensured by taxis, genus and symmetry – three tools of an antique architect that prevented any contradiction to appear. Still some very subtle, almost unperceivable conflicts were (rarely) used. The role of these intentional mistakes was to make the observer aware, that there actually is an (almost) perfect order to appreciate. There are several examples of such gentle disruption of order that together are called figures: *parallelism, contrast, alignment, analogy aposiopesis, abruption, epistrophe, and oxymoron*. (*im.p66-110*) These were used rarely in their origin Greece, more often in Roman architecture, which had to deal with much larger typological variety. (Tzonis, 1986) For the sake of clarity let's skip the disordered millennium in-between that would confuse already confusing chapter on disorder. The disorder in middle ages too often took the upper hand. Instead let's go straight to renaissance. For it is in renaissance that both the absolute order and the figurae emerged back from the ruined past. Strangely enough, the purpose of figurae stayed submissive, uncritical and affirmative to the perfection of the composition order. (Tzonis, 1986)

At least in Italy. North of the Alps, where Renaissance canon could only be seen in drawings and descriptions the unintentional or intentional conflicts were striving. This accidental mannerism can be observed for instance in Prague. The Vladislav Hall of the Prague castle has been the first of many Renaissance designs in Bohemia and one of the first in trans-alpine Europe, at the same time it is an exquisite example of the decadent late gothic.

Here the architect Benedict Ried felicitously applied the destructive habits of late gothic to the freshly arrived forms of renaissance. Stately porches are twisted, mouldings are receding instead of standing out,

pilasters are rotated. Benedict Ried got the renaissance kit without a description, so he invented one of his own. The result is an extremely interesting compound of late gothic and renaissance, where the result is not somewhere in-between but simultaneously in both styles.

This decadent orgy of renaissance forms can be understood as a sort of accidental prelude to mannerism that came one century later. It was mannerism where the deliberate breaking of the canon became the new canon. Mannerism in Italy itself would be a fruitful topic for the discussion of deliberate disorder, but for the sake of focus lets look a bit closer on Benedict Ried in Prague instead.

In his book: *'Benedikt Ried and the origins of Transalpine renaissance'* Czech art historian Pavel Kalina speaks about the way in which the renaissance information could transpire north from its homeland.

'The tradition of gothic used strictly only plans, sections and elevations. Except a certain overtones, it did not use the perspective and shading. Thus its depictive capacities were very limited: this way only a certain type of information could be transmitted. If a central European architect could perceive antiquizing architecture, much – mostly the plasticity of the segments and their spatial relations – must have eluded him. We will see that this was the problem of Benedikt Ried'. As with Alto's weakness described by Benevolo, I understand this 'problem' of Kalinas as Ried's greatest mastery. This confusion is what separates him from the others, and what made me mention him in the chapter on disorder. The necessity to create his own rules inverted some of the habits of Renaissance tectonics in the most joyful way.

The Old royal Palace is most known for its exquisite Vladislav hall. The experience created by its beautiful ribbed vaulting only can be compared to a well grown oak alley. My interest however, will stay below this engineering masterpiece and focus on the windows and porches of this great hall. Let's start with the porch leading to the small parliament chamber. (*im.p62*) It is a double aedicule porch, with a lightly simplified Corinthian pilasters. These are twisted like they were from rubber, in a similar way the gothic ribs in the ceiling twist from the pillar to the first nod and then back again like Mobius stripe.

The eastern gable is still more interesting. (*im.p63*) Instead of protruding, the entire element is receding. The lower part is decorated in the modern rustica manner The columns and pilasters are positioned to the edge of this recession. First a Corinthian column is holding a mysterious fragment of architrave and frieze and cornice that supports a Corinthian pilaster rotated 45 degrees. (*im.p64*) The gable is tri-partitioned in three fields occupied by three windows. The division is carried out by a strange sort of bastion of two pilasters both 45 degrees rotated. This arrow sharp arrangement is something that Ried might have taken from the late gothic tradition, namely the oriel windows triangular in plan as well. The last porch is rather humble, only its recession deep under the level of plaster is the most eloquent illustration of the lack of information Ried must have had about the new renaissance 'kit'. As if he had just seen an elevation and never a section of an actual renaissance porch. (*im.p65*)

Ried is a true master of disorder. Yet, he did not use any delicate theoretical composition figures, instead he just designed as his empirical knowledge taught him to. In the adjacent catalogue, I am presenting the figurae of disorder, not as an futile attempt to reconstruct the design process, rather as a collection of similarities, that only together may be of any interest.

The Useless

No house or even room

He wants no House or even Room in it, but merely the Walls and Semblance of an Old Castle to make an object from his house. At most he only desires to have a staircase carried up one of the Towers, and a leaded gallery half round it to stand in., and view the Prospect. (Woodward 2002, 126).

This is a quote from a letter written by Lord Lettelton in 1747 addressed to an amateur architect Sander-son Miller who was to design one of the first artificial ruins in England – Wimpole Hall near Cambridge. Ruin is a site from which life has departed. This uselessness – one of the obvious characteristics of ruins is touched in this text in a sober, almost discreet, yet very felicitous manner. Subtracting function turns any building into just an *object*, only a representation.

In his famous quote Adolf Loos says that ‘*only a very small part of architecture belongs to art: the tomb and the monument. Everything else that fulfils a function is to be excluded from the domain of art.*’ But what is the position of ruins within this duality? The quote suggests that what separates architecture from art is its purpose. In ruin this purpose is subtracted in its entirety. Hence it becomes more than an object; it seems to acquire completely artistic status.

The useless is not a common feature of any project. In fact, in the modernist understanding, it seems there should not be any useless involved. Still the useless found its way to many of the canonical architectural pieces. Often it is disguised as ‘public’ or ‘multiuse’ space, while in fact, it simply is just useless, or rather ‘functionless’.

There indeed always is a reason for the useless space to come into being, but that does not make it any less useless. How else then useless could we possibly describe the free ground floor of Corbusier’s unite. The pebble stone ground makes it even impossible to walk underneath; the stark wind makes it impossible to even stand underneath. Still the useless free ground floor is a crucial part of the building and even one of Corbusier’s five points of modern architecture. (*im.p113*)

How else then useless should we understand the colonnade of Aldo Rossi’s Gallaratese II. In this space of rhythm, monumentality and somewhat mysterious significance, every time you enter your house you could be as well ascending the stairs of St. Peter’s basilica or Space Shuttle Endeavour. It is especially in this project where we come across a disturbing resemblance of the useless and the monumental. (*im.p114*)

Circulation in general tends to be providential excuse for the creation of the useless. In Stirling’s Staats-galerie Stuttgart the need for the ramp carved out an empty exterior space that answers to a significant list of possible historical references, but in fact is completely and utterly useless. (*im.p115*)

Most often the useless spaces is not a product of a bohemian artistic spirit, but a by-product of two other neighbouring spaces. Then this in-between room can either transform its absolute uselessness into absolute artistic status, or it can just stay a useless space, never seen and never...well, used.

Ruin is a functional metaphor, sometimes it illustrates trivially what otherwise would have to be explained in lengthy and complicated way, other times it informs and influences the message that I want to convey with its help. This is one of those times. I don’t want to and can’t attempt any serious discourse on the useless here. Let’s instead look at it as another product of exploring architecture through the lens of a ruin, another topic for discussion and with a certain license a projective strategy.

Fragment

Michelangelo's head and John Soane

When looking at the sculptural collage by Eduardo Paolozzi entitled Michelangelo's David (*im. p119*), we can see a clear distinction between a fragment and an element. David's head, the symbol of perfection and mastery, is broken to pieces, and as if the destructor realized what crime has been committed, clumsily combined back together. It can be said, that element is a constituent part of a whole, whereas fragment is a result of violent disintegration, of a forceful cut-out. Hence elements can be related to a sort of construction set, out of which almost anything can be built. In contrast to that fragments offer just one possible way of assembly.

If there was one architect truly inspired by fragment and ruins it is Sir John Soane.

His life story is one of great luck and great misfortune. As a son of a bricklayer he could have had hardly ever believed he gets to study at the Royal academy of arts, work in the most fashionable of London architecture practices and eventually start his own. As unlikely it seems, this all happened at the end of 18th century, which is not particularly famous for its social mobility.

And there he was, after setting his own business and getting a number of a rather significant commissions he even inherits a fortune from his wife's distant relative. Enough to stop working the same day and life comfortably till the rest of his life. One wouldn't expect an architect to do so, and he didn't. Instead he focused all this wealth on one particular purpose at one particular spot in London – Lincoln's Inn fields – his house, museum, academy, mausoleum and life purpose. He spent the rest of his days turning his own house into a masterpiece in which the classical meets the romantic.

This double nature of the house is in direct proportion to the dualist personality of John Soane himself. It is a typical example of the productive conflict repeatedly mentioned in this essay. John Soane was one of the architects lucky enough to be living on the threshold of two opposing philosophies. In his work, as in the works of Ried, Berlage, Plečnik, or Lewerentz we can clearly see the inner fight between the past injected to them with education and the uncertain future spoiling and sometimes even ridiculing all that the first hold most sacred. And again it is the ruin, that is a perfect metaphor for the resultant architecture. The most interesting difference in the case of John Soane is, that he himself recognized this kinship with ruins.

John Soane was an architect of monumental classicist buildings. His ambition was not to design disordered complex dawns of the romantic but serious, monumental and imposing classicist edifices. That was what the spirit of his time dictated and that is what he was prepared to do. These luckily mostly not built buildings can be described as schematic, copy paste and most of all absolutely cold designs, fitting the taste of the time.

In his British senate house the symmetry is so inappropriately violent that it almost seems like Soane designed just half of the building and let the mirror do rest of the work. In his Triumphal Bridge, the heaviness of monumental masses threatens to crush the clumsy bridge underneath any moment. What all his stultifying fantasy projects have in common is a complete nonexistence of any constraining context. The monumental bridge faces nothing more than its own water reflection; the site for the British senate would have to be first flat demolished.

In his text, *'Soane Spaces and the Matter of Fragmentation'* David Watkin notices that in contrast to the previous examples, what all the design that we adore now have in common, is that they are delicately positioned next to, in-between or even on top of very constraining conditions. In the Bank of England Soane had to work with existing walls in the Court rooms he was compressed by the flying buttresses of the nearby Westminster abbey. (Watkin, 1999, 31) The very impossibility of an absolute orderly arrangement allowed for something much more interesting to be created.

(Not) surprisingly, this avant-garde aspect of Soane's artistic personality was not what gave him any wider recognition. Instead the more serious, but also slightly dull other part of his nature is what won him a scholarship for his trip to Rome. In the capital of past he spent two years studying the ruins of antiquity and he even met Piranesi himself. (Watkin, 1999, 35) I do not want to suggest that this was a turning point in his approach that irreversibly killed his classicist tendencies, as I believe it is clear that the romantic was embedded deep in his nature. Rather I would say that the Ruins of Rome both the actual, and the represented provided him with tools, with which he could start disassembling his classical education. And he did.

In his Law courts, Bank of England and his own house, the only example preserved, he breaks all the grammar and habits of classical composition. However, he still follows the language. He does not ignore the rules, he breaks them deliberately instead. Luckily for us, the only of his surviving 'ruined' designs is also the most radical one. Here he managed to truly apply his fascination for ruins.

In 1792, right after the inheritance he buys the first house at the Lincoln's inn fields, immediately demolishes it and starts building a new one, repeating this process two times with the two neighbouring houses. It is only the second and the third that allowed him to truly satisfy his 'vandal' urges. Already this additive strategy has set an interesting starting course. The distinction of the three houses is clearly readable both in the facade and the rooms behind it. Unlike the front part, on the rub of the house, in the sky lighten single story extension this tri-partition completely dissolves into a labyrinth of roof lighten rooms. This order dissolving into chaos is confined within a clear rectangular boundary. (im.p86)

The way how Soane worked with light is the second inspiration he might have drawn from the ruin. In his house light comes to the interior from the most unexpected and most impossible of angles. Rarely it is laterally and if, always filtered through some secondary non-function space in-between. More often it is from above, or, strangely enough from bellow. Light coming from bellow must have been a mind shaking experience in times when lavishness of dinner was judged by the number of wax candles. No need to stress that light protruding from the most unexpected and unforeseen places is a typical characteristics of most ruins. (im. p120)

There is one particular tool Soane uses to further confuse the lightning and the visitor. The mirrors. There are mirrors everywhere, around the windows, in the windows, mirrors that are framing, mirrors that are separating, mirrors in mirrors. The mirrors are both penetrating the matter with light and by reflection of both the interior and themselves further complicating the already complex arrangement. (im.p121) The mirrors are very often also framing the interior objects like paintings, chimneys or doors. These objects imprisoned in mirrors completely lose their relation to the surroundings. It is as if they were cut-out from the interior or better still if there is no all-encompassing interior, but rather a collection of independent fragments.

In Piranesi's drawings such as that of the derelict Pantheon, we can observe how fragmentation of a part of a building is enriching the situation, while the actual whole is untouched and even enhanced in our imagination.

Subtraction and fragmentation is Soane's principal strategy. By subtracting he connects the spaces of the crypt with the ground floor so violently, that these two spaces appear almost simultaneous. Several times he even manages to connect two horizontal floors with a vertical opening.

There is one other, most literal and most ruinous way Soane works with Fragments. (im. p122)

With acquiring his great fortune, Soane became a dedicated collector. As his house, and his personality, the collection is everything but unitary, it is not a thematic nor historic section. It is a shapeless compound of things that he liked as well as things that looked good next to each other. Casts of baroque sculptures would rest on gothic capitals supported by renaissance pedestals. Soane's collection of things (no other word is general enough to describe this variety) was a physical embodiment of the eclectic. Soane managed something impossible, he managed to create a whole out of parts that were never meant to be put together and by most would be even understood opposite and impossible to combine. What he attempted was using the fragments, as elements and succeeding. As if he broke a Greek amphora and from the ceramic shards created a wedding dinner set instead.

This is most clearly visible in the 'dome' with the skylight and the pasticcio - Itself and compressed manifest of the nature of the collection. When you enter this space it is as if you had miraculously entered the Piranesi's Via Appia etching. Only something is unmistakably wrong with the scale, for you are either a giant or this great space is just a collection of small fragments in a room not higher than few meters. The first option seems more probable by far. (im.p123)

Monumentality

Simultaneity and section

It was usually politicians, not architects who contemplated on the monumentality of ruins. In the crumbling relics of antique Rome, Adolf Hitler did not see the proof that everything perishes in time but quite the opposite - he saw monument of endurance and stability. From that moment on The Zeppelin field in Nurnberg was to be designed in such a way that in centuries to come its ruins will be as inspiring as those of Coliseum. The monumentality of ruins can indeed refer to their history, true or imagined. We project our own images drawn from the glorious pasts onto the eager fragments of stone that are present here, in front of us. Let's instead look at the monumentality of ruins from the architect's or rather anatomist point of view. Let's forget for a while their symbolic meaning, reference to great people, epochs or events. Without any of these, what is the monumentality in ruins as we see them now?

It clearly is not the monumentality of the absolute, the monumentality of an obelisk, that of a pyramid. It must be different than the geometric monumentality which is a direct translation of power to matter, be it power of man over nature or one man over the others. It is not only different, it must be the opposite of such a singular understanding of monumentality.

If it is the purpose what separates the monument of the rest of architecture than we first need to come

back to the notion of the useless. Draining the function seems to be a valid strategy of monumentalization. It might be so, but only in an auxiliary, peripheral way. The central mechanism of the monumentality of ruins lays somewhere else.

Let's for a while come back to the definition of monumentality offered by Morales. It could hardly be more enigmatic: "*a window to a more intense reality*" or "*the lingering resonance of poetry after it has been heard*.". He also links the '*feeling*' of monumentality with the simultaneous experience of multiple times. It is now again as many times before that ruins are offering a very literal embodiment of concepts that seem so distant from reality.

For in ruins, the past and present, or even multiple pasts can be seen, touched and deeply experienced instantly, at once, simultaneously. The ruin is a section through times, and as any section it reveals simultaneously what was meant to stay within separate domains. This simultaneity allows for an instant experience of multitude that is my (possibly false) interpretation of the monumentality of Morales. The simultaneity is the monumentality of ruins.

And it is not just the simultaneity of times. Ruin is dissecting the world. Section is its most powerful tool. The suddenly exposed intimacy of a ruined home offers us an experience of simultaneity of a rather inappropriate kind. (*im.p133*) I am not able to convey this powerful feeling other than by a quote. In a beautiful and terrific passage, the writer Rose Macaulay is describing her own house in London, destroyed during the Blitz.

'But often the ruin has put on, in its catastrophic tipsy chaos, a bizarre new charm. What was last week a drab little house has become a steep flight of stairs winding up in the open between gaily-coloured walls, tiled lavatories, interiors bright and intimate like a Dutch picture or a stage set, the stairway climbs up and up, undaunted, to the roofless summit where it meets the sky. The house has put on melodrama, people stop to stare, here is a domestic scene wide open for all to enjoy.'

This terrifyingly disiective simultaneity was already exploited in the past as a tool of representation. The painted visualizations of John Soane and William Chambers were imagining not yet built designs as ruins. This was indeed in accordance with the ruinous fashion of their time, as well as fascinations of their creators but at the same time this was a very effective technique of representation. The ruined image had the revelative capacities of section, while keeping the artistic atmosphere. In the architectural drawing for mausoleum for Frederick, Prince of Wales in 1751 William Chambers is showing us ruined image of his design, which in fact is just a decorated parallel projected section. (*im.p138*) The famous Bank of England as a ruin painting by Joseph Gandy is a simultaneous representation of interior and exterior as well as structure. (*im.p136*) The painting Rotonda shows the most representative room of the same building in what can be plainly described as perspective section.

There could be all sorts of different simultaneities. Simultaneous styles of Benedikt Ried. Formal simultaneity of Palladio's churches. (*im.p130*) Representational simultaneity of Chambers' ruined sections. Simultaneity of levels we experience in Soane's own house. Simultaneity of sensual perception Pallasmaa is pleading for. Simultaneity of times in cubism and most of all the simultaneity of our own two eyes fusing two distinct images into one.

One that is more real. More intense.

Conclusion

Imaginary deduction

Human brain is capable of incredible complexities, both of their creating and their understanding. Human brain requires incredible complexities. Even those, and maybe especially those, that are beyond its ability to decode. Mystery is a necessity. And the ruins do offer it eagerly. Sometimes being rational is being dull, that is the painful lesson of modernism. The lessons of the ruins on the other hand offer us tools for breaking this rationality, while keeping a certain (illusion of) control. In the words of Terentius: *Exerting the reason to act foolishly.*

Openness, Disorder, Fragment Useless and Monumentality of ruins are just several different layers of this meta-rationality. In art or architecture, it is almost impossible to isolate a particular layer and connect it unequivocally to its function. The work of art is always a product of fusion. Nevertheless in this essay I tried to isolate precisely those aspects of ruins that are in some reference to the inherent conflict of the order and chaos, and thus, related to the starting point of weak architecture.

In his article order beyond chaos, Alejandro Zaera Polo explains how informal geometric arrangement is not completely beyond geometrical description; it is just significantly more difficult and lengthy to rationally describe the informal than the formal. In a similar sense it can be said, that the mysterious qualities of both ruins and weak architecture that seem to be beyond any rationality, and thus purely artistic, are in fact just a product of more complex, more intricate implicit order or orders. Orders than cannot be described by a formula or a diagram, but must also include lists of exceptions, erasures, multiplications notes and comments. The ruins offer us tools of complexification and intensification of experience, some of which I tried to explore. In this sense it may sound rather funny to suggest that weak architecture is a product of intensification. The intensity I have in mind, is the intensity of feelings encouraged by a crack between two irreconcilable fragments, that of two centuries meeting in a detail, the intensity inspired by an unexpected breach of rhythm or the joyful deprivation of the expected.

If this entire project was a deduction, let me attempt to conclude with an imaginary induction.

Let's explore a certain very specific type of architecture. Product of two opposing styles or their transition which shows all the scars of the fight from which it emerged. Architecture of Ried, Lewerentz, Asplund, Stirling, Plečnik, or Soane. Let's attempt to decode its creation. Not in the sense of a scholar decoding the iambic pentameter of Shakespeare sonnets. I mean different sort of decoding, subjective, superficial and oblivious. That of a chef who likes his rival's dish so jealously, that in his furious struggle to decode its recipe, creates one of his own, entirely different, but hopefully tasteful. The product of an interpretative reading of these architectures is a set of concepts, or tools: the openness, disorder, monumentality, and fragment. The cookbook of wrong recipes. They are not tools that were used in the creation of the explored architectures; rather they are tools that could be possibly used in the recreation of their mysterious qualities. These concepts are in striking resonance with the ruin, in fact it is through the ruin that they can be further developed and understood. And it is through the ruin again, that a more general and abstract idea of architecture can be proposed. Architecture that, as the ruin, fuses the disharmony of the eternal human urge for imperfection, with the pleasure of form, the beautiful abstraction of the artistic spirit.

Architecture, which for its dilatory relationship to the imposing power of singular order, can be called, for instance, weak.

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Part Two:
Lessons in the ruins

Collection of images

Epizodes from the history of Ruins
32 -46

Openness:
Pasquino and Alvar Aalto
48-55

Disorder
Classical figurae and Benedict Ried
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The useless
No house or even a room
108-113

Fragment
John Soane and Michelangelo's head
114-123

Monumentality
Simultaneity and section
123-137

The following images and their categorization are not presented in a futile attempt to reconstruct the design process, nor thinking of the authors. Rather they are a collection of similarities, that only together may be of any interest.

The Ruins

Foreword

In the realm of things few are more charged with meanings than ruins. Bourgeois melancholy of a Sunday walk, millennial tragedies of long forgotten empires, fallen tyrants and tyrants yet to be born. The ruins dissect the world so violently that all of this and more is to be found within. They reveal, hide, confuse and blur the reality so successfully that it may seem that almost any notion, feeling or lesson can be derived.

And so ruins have always been provoking an interest of painters and school kids, philosophers and botanists, writers and readers, film makers, politicians and absolutely everyone.

Paradoxically the obvious creator of every ruin: the architect: rarely showed any interest in this inevitable renegade creation of his. This hypothetical historical ignorant could not look at the fragments of buildings for what they are, instead he only saw what they had once been. There indeed is a trace of exceptions, which I will hereby unashamedly attempt to follow. Sir John Soane, Robert Adam or John Ruskin all saw the ruin as an embodiment of certain qualities missing in their contemporary architectures.

The ruin is the body and core of this work, yet it is not its topic. The ruin is a realm on its own, impossible to grasp in its entirety within the scope of this essay or a lifetime. They are fantastically and frightfully open, described over and over but rarely by architects. Hence I am using the ruin only as a tool, as a link, an illustration explanation and most of all a metaphor of weakness in architecture. For the bluntest, simplest and obvious characteristics of ruins are the same as the most abstract, theoretical and hazy starting points of weak architecture. Ruins and Weak Architecture are products of the same conflict between the order and disorder, totality and fragment, the material and the formal. Ruin is a functional metaphor; it reveals and illustrates but is simultaneously interesting in its own right. It stays within the domain of architecture, which it is at the same time illuminating from distance.

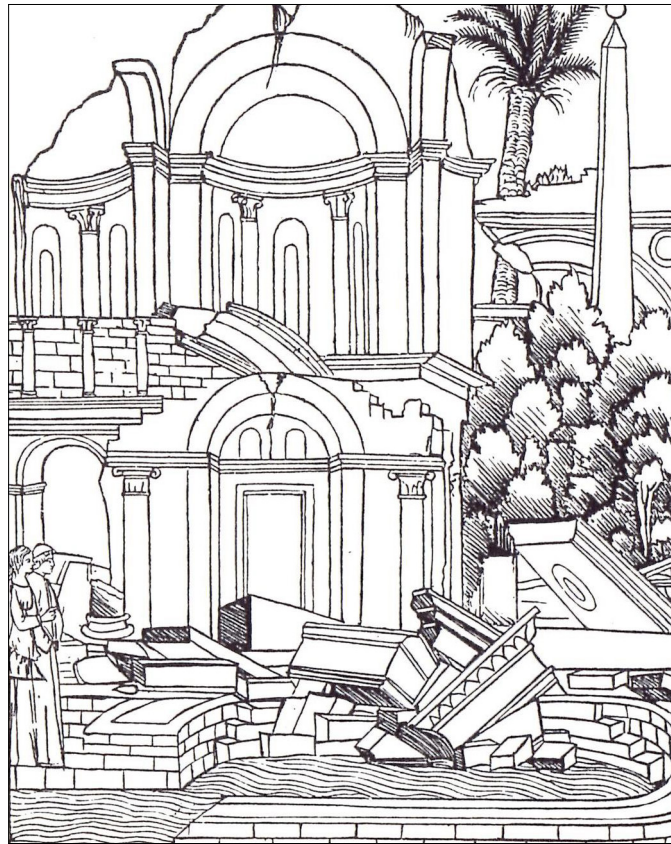
History



Soviet invasion to Czechoslovakia
Liberec, 1968

The ruins are overcharged with meanings. Tragedies that still haunt us today, millennial disasters of long forgotten empires, fallen tyrants and tyrants yet to be born. It is almost impossible to look at the ruins and see just ruins.

H.II



Hypnerotomachia Poliphili *Venice, 1499*

Different epochs recognized significantly different qualities in ruins if any at all. The renaissance saw the fragments of antiquity as a shattered puzzle waiting to be solved, as a message through which the golden past is communicating with the rather rusty present. This is illustrated on the popular renaissance treaty *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, where a confused main character wanders around a landscape with shattered capitals and cornices that seem *'somehow significant'* to him.

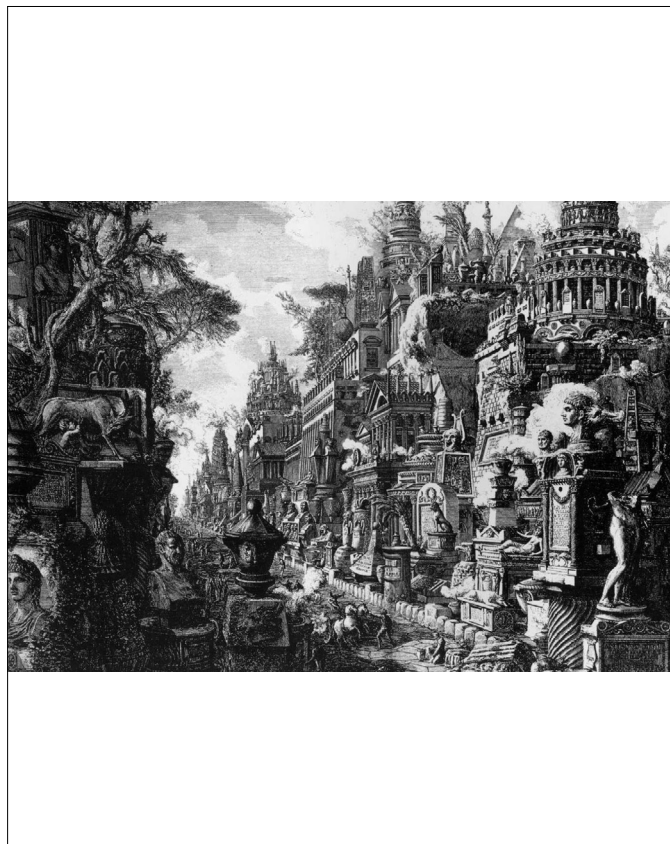
H.III



Allegory of war
Jan Breughel the younger, 1640

The baroque fascination with ruins is the fascination with tragedy and disaster. Wars, natural catastrophes, epidemics, eruptions, battlefields and scattered decapitated heads among the decapitated ionic capitals. It is first in Baroque that the appreciation of the decay itself is widespread. Not yet for its aesthetic qualities, rather for the illustration of how vain human life is, when even the most eternal of man's creations are subjects of an inevitable destruction.

H.IV



Via Appia
Giovanni Battista Piranesi ,1756

Gian Batista Piranesi is the first artist, who understands ruination as a process with strong resemblance to creation. He is naturalistically depicting the actual ruins of Rome in his etchings, but at the same time creates fantastic landscapes that are just a product of his own imagination. It is through his art that most of 18th century Europe fell in love with the ruins of Rome. On this picture you see his via Appia etching, a capriccio of real, forgotten and non existing monuments of Antiquity.

H.V



Ruined room
Charles Louis Clerisseau, 1760

The ruin did not influence architecture directly, it was only through art and the picturesque it had any influence. The first direct touch the ruin had on the 18th century architecture was through decoration. This can be seen on a slightly later proposal for a room decoration that was carried out in the monastery Trinnita de Mondì in Italy.

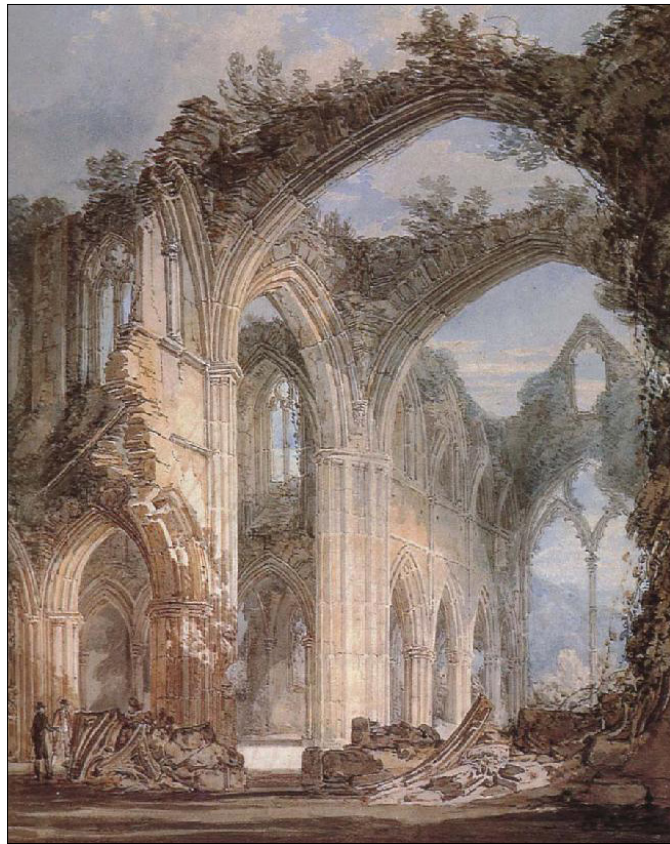
H.VI



View from Ruinenberg to Postdam
Albert Ludwig Trippel, 1745

Very soon, for the richest counties of England as well as the countless courts of yet ununified Germany, the fashionable ruin was a necessity. If there was no historic one to be found, new ruin was created. One of the earliest new ruins can be seen on this painting of Albert Ludwig Trippel in Postdam, Sansusi garden.

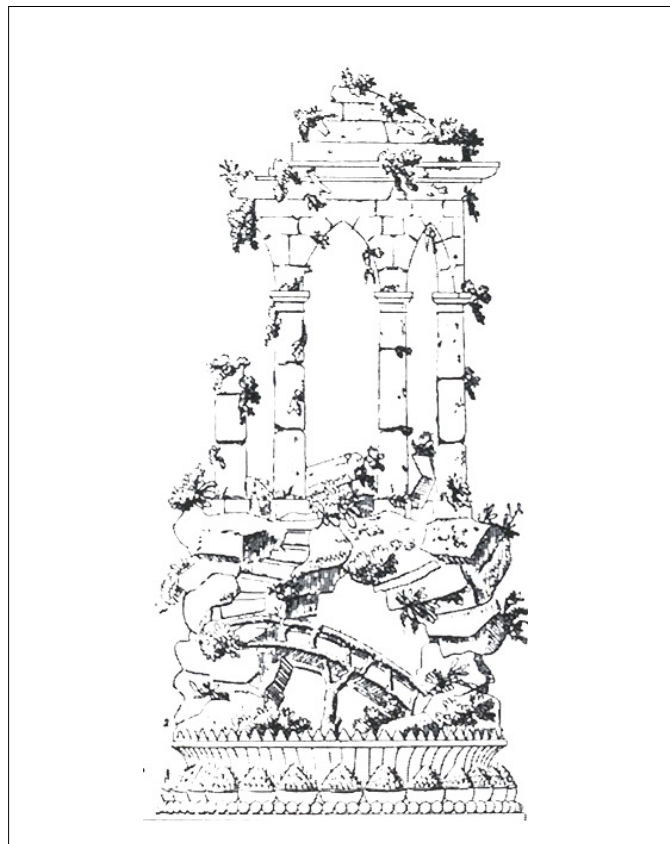
H.VII



Inside of Tintern Abbey
Joseph Mallord William Turner, 1795

The romantic fascination with ruins in 18th century for the first time discovered their aesthetic qualities. It was the ruins that witnessed the birth of the picturesque. This fresh and new aesthetic concept that influenced Europe for more than a century appreciated the disordered the ambiguous, the secondary in contrast to the rigid cold laws of classicism.

H.VIII

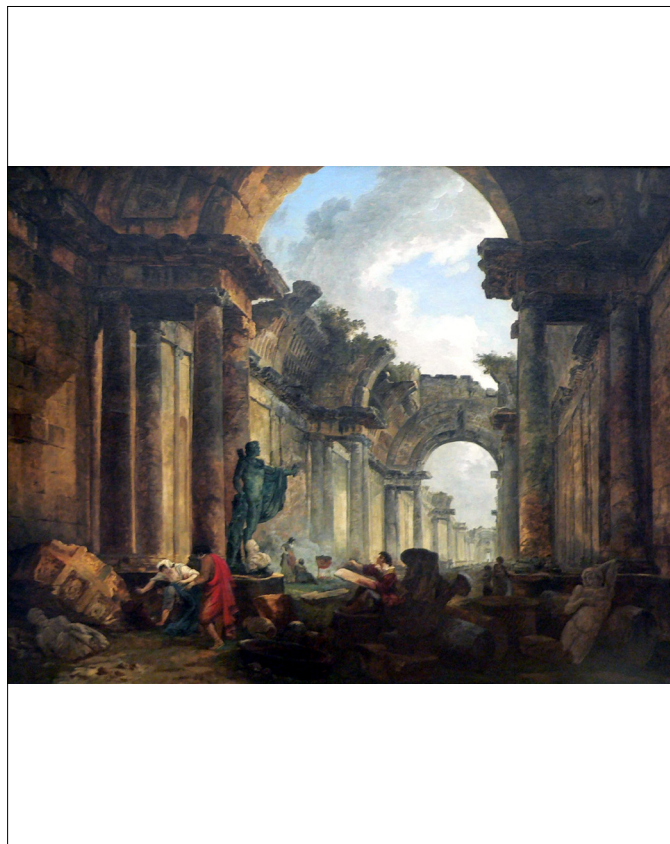


Cake

Antoine Careme, 1785

In the late 18th century the picturesque was slowly transforming to a symbol of a decadence of the lucky few. Even the dinner cakes at the court of Louis XVI were designed as a ruins with broken arches from sponge and caramel ivory. It is as if the ancient regime had been aware of its imminent violent end, that it was shining with the last flash of terrific decadence so bright and intense we can feel it even now. In such an atmosphere ruins became extremely popular.

H.IX



Louvre in Ruins
Hubert Robert, 1786

Hubert Robert imaginary view of the grand gallery of Louvre was the first painting of an existing building in ruins. This work was created just three years before an absolute inversion of the French society and with it, the meaning of ruins. After 1789 and the subsequent raging, France did not need to imagine its buildings in ruins anymore, the mob turned these fantasies into a terrific reality.

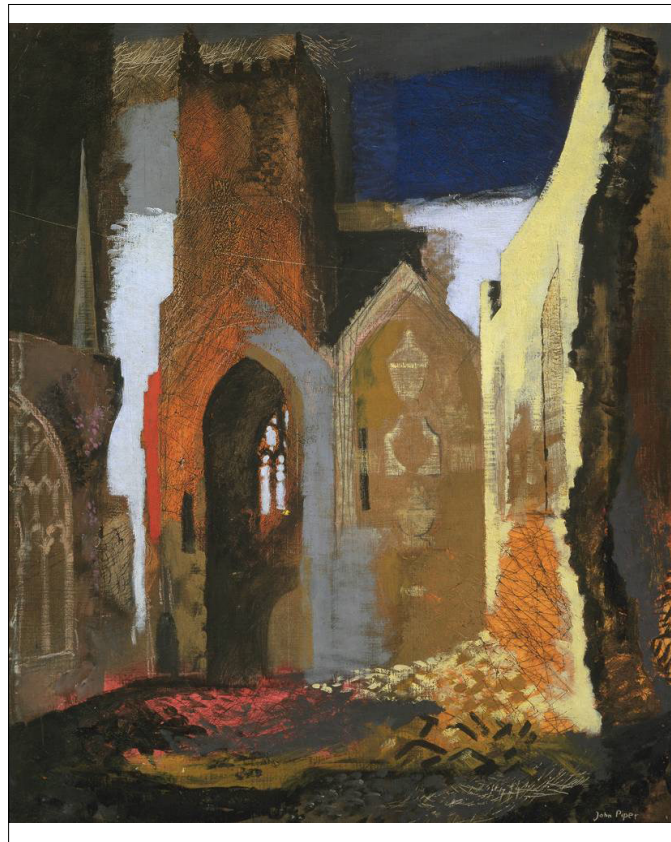
H.X



New Zealander
Gustav Doré, 1872

Around the half of 19th century London was taking on itself the role of the new Rome. And with it, the dark ruined past of the eternal city became the yet darker future of this British metropolis. In 1840 Thomas Macaulay writes a novel entitled 'New Zealander': a future visitor is coming to see the famous ruins of the fallen metropolis of London. This novel has been an inspiration for the famous etching of Gustave Doré 'the new Zealander' in 1872.

H.XI



St. Marry Le Port
John Piper, 1940

It was the suffering and pain of millions that for long subtracted the aesthetics qualities from the ruin, leaving just despair and disillusion. On this picture we can see the still burning church of St. Marry Le Port which was a state commission given to John Piper. These paintings became a double sided tool of propaganda. The domestic ruins were symbols of bravery and endurance. The ruins of the enemy were shown as a proof of his imminent end.

H.XII



Pruitt Igoe Demolition
Minoru Yamasaki, 1972

The hysterical spirit of the 20th century pushing everything to extremes gave birth to yet another eager producer of ruins – The modernism movement. These ruins are an inevitable product of the utopian dreams and their somewhat inappropriate aging. It is by no means a coincidence that the end of modernism is often marked by an act of ruination - the demolition of Pruitt Igoe residential towers in 1972.

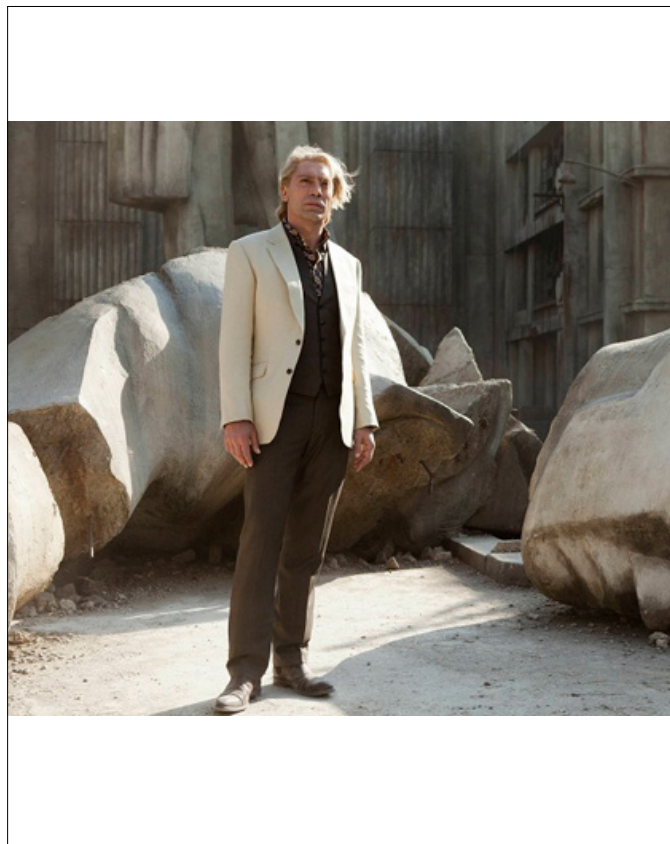
H.XIII



Heygate estate ruin
Soutwark council, 2011

The modernistic buildings still standing are extremely fragile *ruins to be*. The great power that created them has vanished. Their era has passed and now they are standing alone, bare and naked in a distrustful crowd holding hammers. The modernistic architecture can turn to a ruin not by decades of abandonment but by a signature of a pen. The biggest contemporary ruin in London; the Heygate estate was ruined from a complete operability by a single decree of the municipality.

H.XIV



Skyfall
Sam Mendes, 2012

There is no doubt a widespread fascination with ruins in present days. Countless fan pages, social groups and blogs are its proof. Even Silva, the last James Bond villain is not living in a futuristic masculine volcano residence but on a random floor of an derelict building, in a derelict city. On this picture, he is standing in front of some new kind of Ozymandias. The contemporary 'ruin lust' is obvious, its explanation however, is not.

Openness

Pasquino and Alvar Aalto

Pasquino is an inconspicuous Hellenistic statue in Rome. A true torso with effaced outlines and decrepit limbs. There are marvellous miracles of sculpture all around, still this ruined work of art became so symbolic the square where it stands holds its name - Piazza Pasquino. In the centuries people have been inscribing epigrams and vulgar poems, clothing the statue and decorating it with objects of all sorts, freely, spontaneously.

Alberti and scholars of renaissance understood the work of art via the metaphor of human body, as a closed perfection to which nothing can be added or subtracted. What makes the example of Pasquino so felicitous is the literary reference to this bodily metaphor.

And really it is not any of the perfect statues of Rome but fragmented Pasquino who is continuously donated with plants, pictures pipes and glasses, wigs and beards and all sorts of ordinary and extraordinary objects that would suffice for a museum of the generosity of the past 5 centuries. And it is Pasquino who was being carved out by the knives and keys of vandals and philosophers, tourists and lovers. The ruinous example of Pasquino literary shows us the conceptual relation between openness imperfection.

The direct causal relationship between the openness of a work of art and its state of disorder is described by Umberto Eco in his 'Open work'. Eco uses the metaphor of language to explain this relation. The rules in language make it possible for us to understand each other's message. The clearer the message, the more understandable, the fewer possible meanings it might carry. The more disordered, the more ambiguous, the more possible meanings there are. Therefore the disordered, hard to read - that is open - work of art is an invitation, that allows the observer to project the richness and multitude of his own experience instead of offering him one that is prefabricated. Disorder as a projective force is to be explored in the another chapter. For Eco, openness itself is a quality that allows for a multiple possible readings. Different understandings and countless emotional responses.

The same can be applied to the works of architecture. Where the will of the creator is too obvious the environment is complete, over determined and therefore closed to different perceptions, changes, appropriation and life.

In his book 'The history of modern architecture' Leonardo Benevolo sums up the work of Alvar Aalto in a critique tone: "Almost always his incomparable talents make up for incomplete rational control, but sometimes this tendency exposed sudden weaknesses..." (Benevolo 1971, 617) The use of the word 'weakness' may or may be not a coincidence, but these deviations, this 'incomplete rational control' which Benevolo understands as a flaw of otherwise mastery design is something that I believe is what makes the design to be mastery in the first place. Both in ruins and in Aalto's work openness is a product of complexity, layering and the invisibility of all determining absolute composition order. This openness is a quality, that can be traced mostly in interiors.

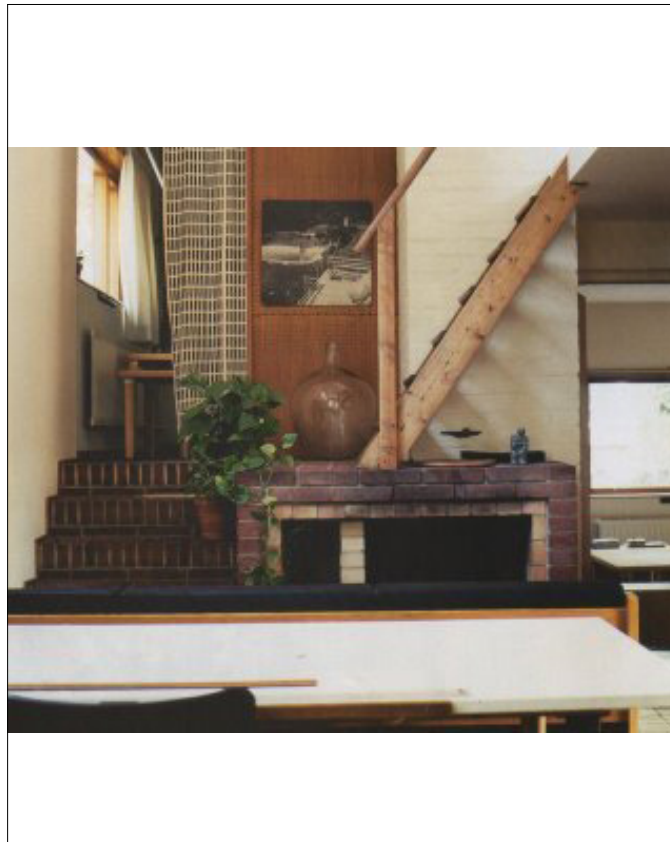
O.I



Pasquino
3rd century BC, Rome

Pasquino is an 3rd century torso standing in Rome. Alberti understood the work of art via the metaphor of human body, as a closed perfection to which nothing can be added or subtracted. And really it is not any of the perfect statues, but fragmented Pasquino where people are inscribing epigrams and vulgar poems, clothing it and decorating with plants and pipes and glasses and wigs and beards and everything that would suffice for a museum of the generosity of the past 5 centuries.

O.II



Alvar Aalto's own house
Alvar Aalto, 1934

Everything in Aalto's interiors is conformed with the experience of the user. This way instead of a strong singular image, the design strategy leads to a multitude, richness and openness. *'The setting seems to be a result of a long process of occupation by several generations rather than of an uncompromising aesthetics and deliberate design.'*

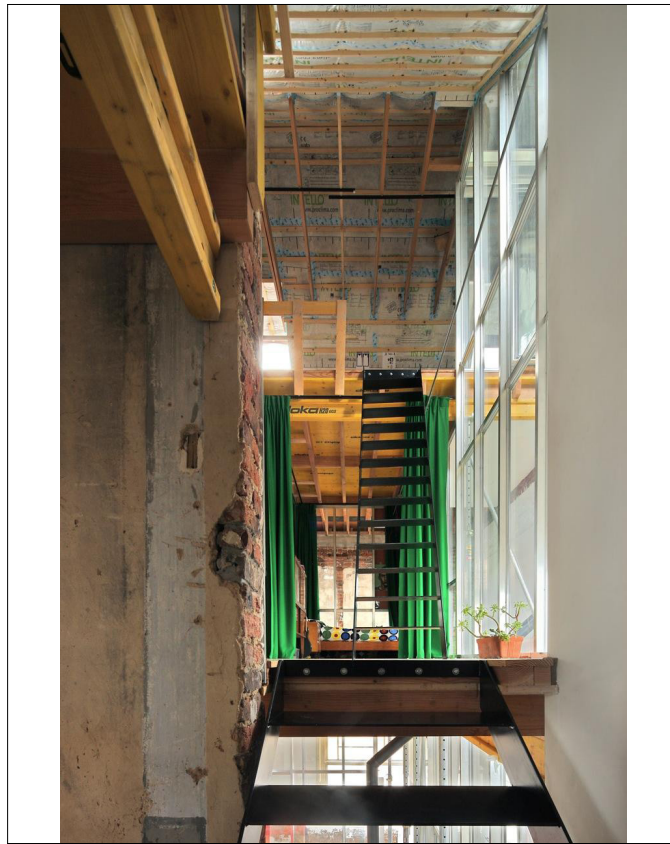
O.III



Villa Mairea Staircase
Alvar Aalto, 1938

Staircase and its railings is usually an irresistible bait for Aalto. In villa Mairea, TKK building, or MIT dormitory staircase is where his hand gets lightest and most artistic, all too open for any force to spoil its planned move. On the imagined spectrum of pyramid and shed, Aalto often gets almost too close to the latter extreme.

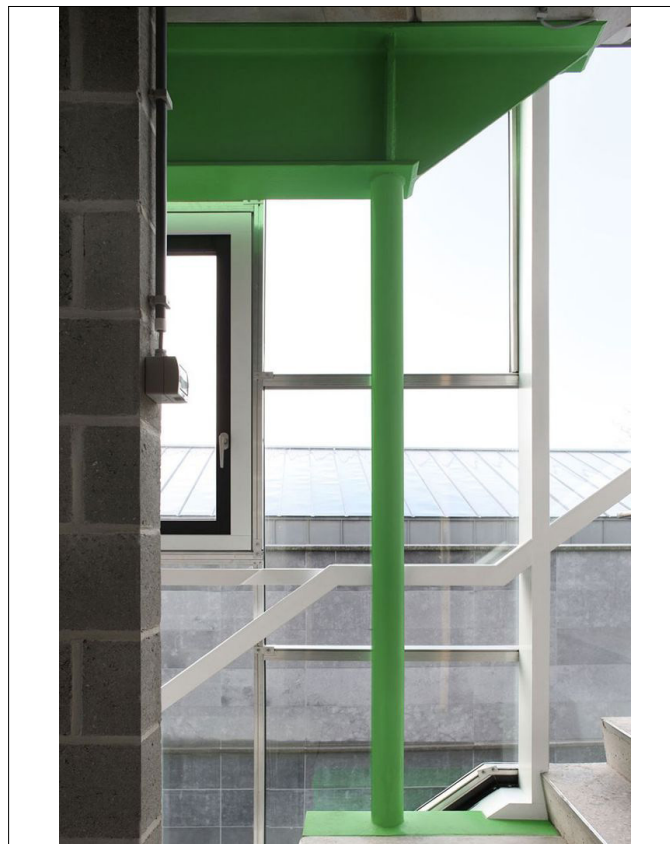
O.IV



House Rot Ellen Berg
Architecten de Vylder Vinck Taillieu 2011

This truly ruinous interior designed by V.V.T. is still closer to Pasquino than Aalto's interiors. Under the exposed insulation, next to the subtracted plaster wall, on top of the blade sharp staircase anything can be positioned, anything from a slightly funny flowerpot, to an adult sized Kaplan turbine.

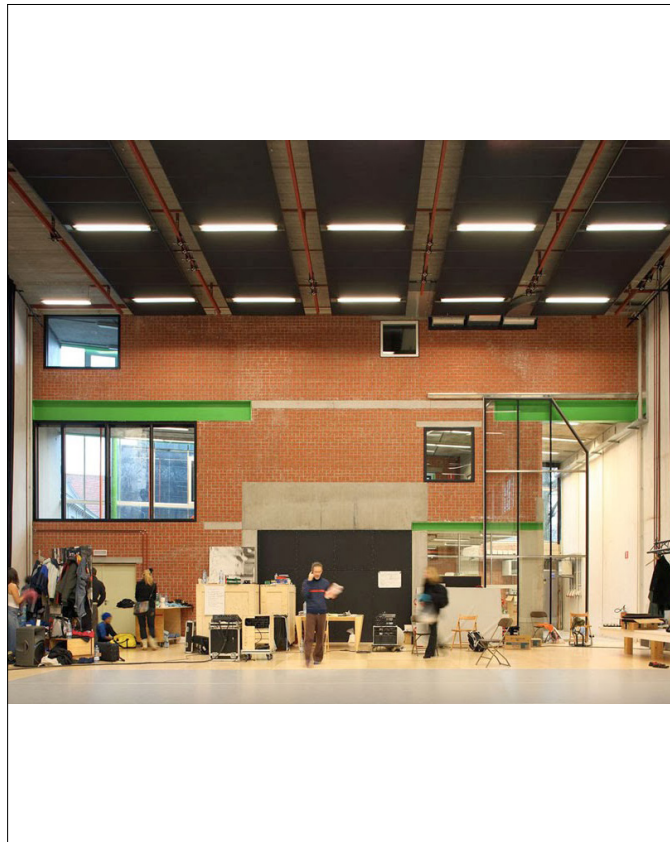
O.V



Les Ballets C de la B
Architecten de Vylder Vinck Taillieu, 2008

What is wrong with the window frames? Metchild Stuhl-
macher was asking at her lecture in Antwerpen in 2014.
The imposing power of the abstract is often sweeping away
the traces of its own oppression by hiding the ordinary
details. Not so in les Ballets. The complexity of the interior
allows for this massive frame to be fitted into the delicate
curtain wall glazing.

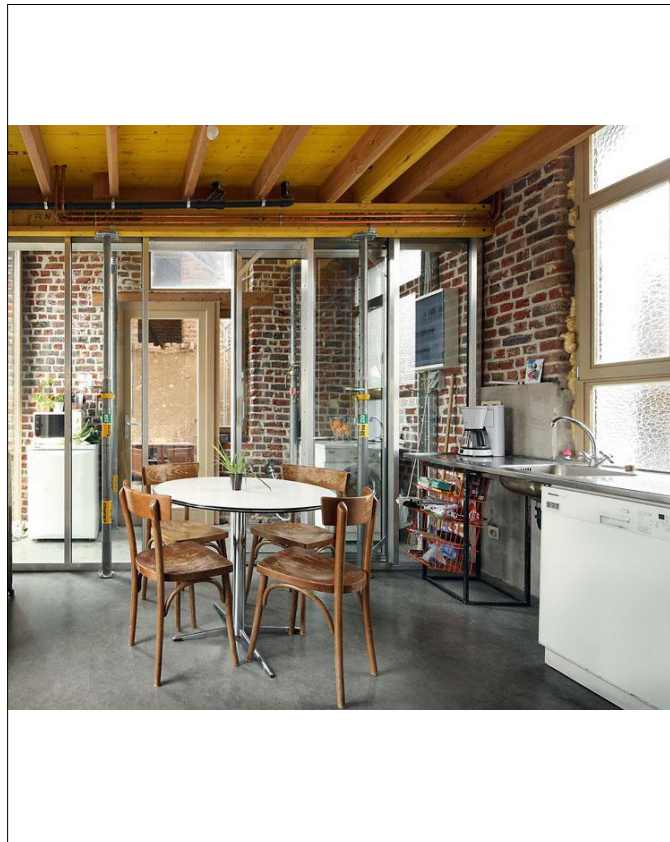
O.VI



Les Ballets C de la B
Architecten de Vylde Vinck Taillieu, 2008

The disorder and openness not only for changes, but especially imagination is important for artistic institutions more than anything else. This can be seen on the beams, sliding door, installations and communications of Les Ballets C de la B by V.V.T.

O.VII



House Rot Ellen Berg
Architecten de Vylder Vinck Taillieu 2011

It is not so hard to create an interior, where copper heating pipes are intentionally exposed. However, the interior must offer a great deal of openness to allow for an exposed mounting foam. Even openness can be exaggerated.

Disorder

Classical figures and Benedikt Ried

In ruin, the chaos of nature manifests itself only on the account of a per-existing order. These two are in constant tension that produces new relations and forms entirely meaningful. Forms that are charged with the conflict from which they emerged.

The ruin is not any closer to chaos than it is to perfection. It is just a fragile equilibrium. The moment a creation of human spirit turns into a pile of rubble, we don't speak of ruin anymore. Just about a pile of rubble. *'The stumps of Pillars of Forum Romanum are ugly, halfway crumbled pillar, can produce maximum of charm'*. The same goes for weak architecture itself. It has this latent quality that ensures it will always be seen as work of an architect, not just as a compound of random components ready to fall back to the chaos they accidentally emerged from.

Deliberate spoiling of the composition order has a long history in both art and architecture, but certain epochs were fonder of disorder than others. Let's start with those that were not. As the renaissance, the antiquity developed a cult of perfection. The Greek temple was 'Temennos' – an enclosed entity, cut off from the outside world. An island of absolute all-encompassing order ensured by taxis, genus and symmetry – three tools of an antique architect that prevented any contradiction to appear. Still some very subtle, almost imperceptible conflicts were (rarely) used. The role of these subtle conventional mistakes was to make the observer aware, that there actually is an (almost) perfect order to appreciate. There are several examples of such gentle disruption of order that together are called figures: *parallelism, contrast, alignment, analogy aposiopesis, abruption, epistrophe, and oxymoron*. These were used rarely in their origin Greece, more often in Roman architecture which had to deal with much larger typological variety.

For the sake of clarity let's skip the disordered millennium in-between that would confuse already confusing chapter on disorder. The disorder in middle ages too often took the upper hand. Instead let's go straight to renaissance. For it is in renaissance that both the absolute order and the figurae emerged back from the ruined past. Surprisingly enough, the purpose of figurae stayed submissive, uncritical and affirmative to the perfection of the composition order.

At least in Italy. North of the Alps, where Renaissance canon could only be seen in drawings and descriptions the unintentional or intentional conflicts were striving. This accidental mannerism can be observed for instance in Prague. The Vladislav Hall of the Prague castle has been the first of many Renaissance designs in Bohemia, at the same time it is an exquisite example of the decadent late gothic.

Here the architect Benedikt Ried felicitously applied the destructive habits of late gothic to the freshly arrived forms of renaissance. Stately porches are twisted, mouldings are receding instead of standing out, pilasters are rotated. Benedikt Ried got the renaissance kit without a description, so he invented one of his own. The result is an extremely interesting compound of late gothic and renaissance, not somewhere in-between but simultaneously in both styles.

This decadent orgy of renaissance forms can be understood as a sort of accidental prelude to mannerism that came one century later. It was mannerism where the deliberate breaking of the canon became the new canon. Mannerism in Italy itself would be a fruitful topic for the discussion of deliberate disorder, but for the sake of focus let's look a bit closer on Benedikt Ried in Prague instead.

DG.I



Staircase vaulting
Benedikt Ried, around 1500

The Old royal Palace is most known for its exquisite Vladislav hall. The experience created by its beautiful ribbed vaulting can only be compared to that of hundred years old alley. This picture shows how Ried managed to connect this vaulting to the rotated staircase. My further interest however, will stay below this engineering masterpiece and focus on the windows and porches of this great hall.

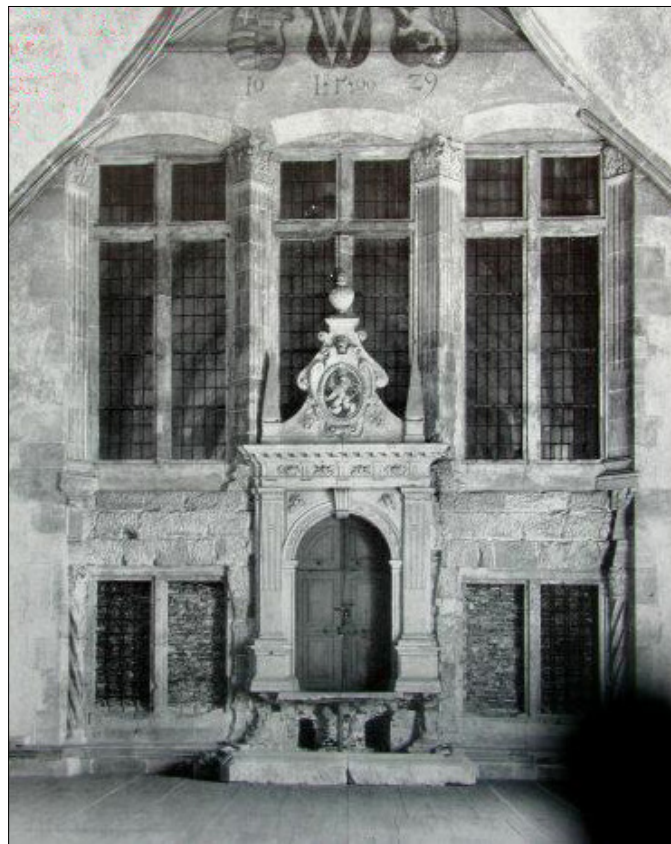
DG.II



Northern Porch of Vladislav Hall
Benedikt Ried, around 1500

This porch is leading to the small parliament chamber. It is a double aedicule porch, with a lightly simplified Corinthian pilasters. These are twisted like they were from rubber, in a similar way the gothic ribs in the ceiling twist from the pillar to the first nod and than back again like Mobius stripe.

DG.III



Eastern Gable

Benedikt Ried, around 1500

The lower part of the eastern gable is decorated in the modern rustica manner. The gable is tri-partitioned in three fields with three windows. The division is carried out by a strange sort of bastion shaped pilasters 45 degrees rotated. This arrow sharp arrangement is something that Ried might have taken from the late Gothic tradition, namely the oriole windows triangular in plan as well.

DG.V



Western Porch
Benedikt Ried, around 1500

This porch is rather humble, only its recession deep under the level of plaster is the most eloquent illustration of the lack of information Ried must have had about the new renaissance 'kit'. As if he had just seen an elevation and not a section of it before.

DG.IV



Eastern Gable detail
Benedikt Ried, around 1500

The columns and pilasters are positioned to the edge of (already wrong) recession. First a Corinthian column is holding a mysterious fragment of architrave and frieze and cornice that supports a Corinthian pilaster rotated 45 degrees. Sometimes it even seems that Ried did see the renaissance designs, and just found them dead boring.

DG.VI



Palazzo Valmarana Braga
Andrea Palladio, 1565

In Antique and renaissance architecture, few, very subtle, almost unperceivable conflicts were rarely used. These gentle disruptions are together called figures: *parallelism, contrast, alignment, analogy, aposiopesis, abruption, epistrophe, and oxymoron*. The last one is used on the facade of Palazzo Valmarana. You don't see it? No wonder, it is the small Corinthian columns denying the nobility of the high order.

DG.VII



Trajan Triumphal arch
Thabugabi timga, Algeria

The ruins are much more outward with their disruptions. The figures of the ruins are threatening and spoiling the composition order, not affirming and revealing it. Within this chapter on disorder, the classical as well as new figures will be presented. Not in their tied version, but free, confident and unrestricted: *Intrusion, Extrusion, Inflection, Discord, Confinement Almost the same*. They are not shown as an futile attempt to reconstruct the design process, rather as a collection of similarities, that only together may be of any interest.

D.int.I

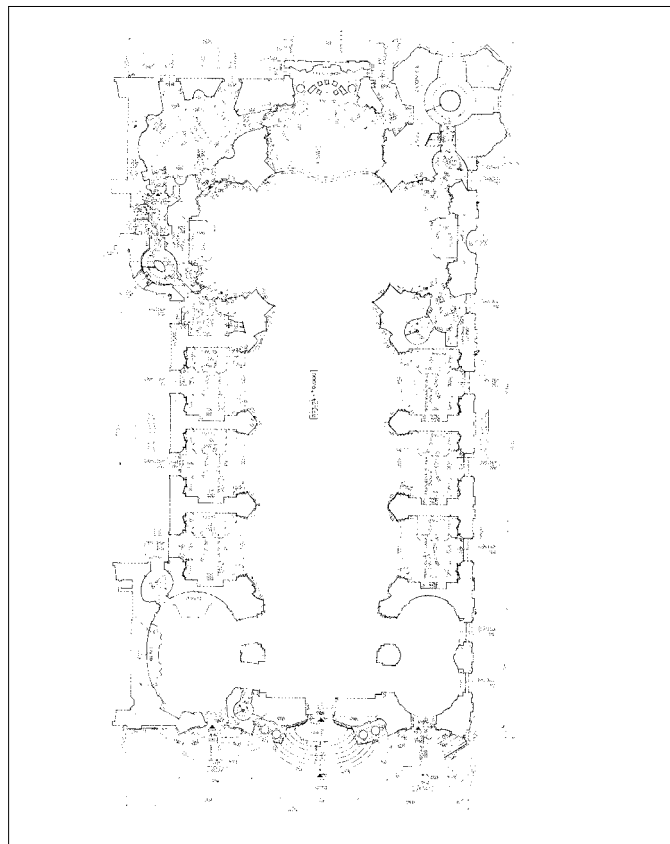


St. Nicholas Church Prague
K.I Diezenhofer, Anselmo Lurago, 1703-1728

Although it has a civic program completely unrelated to the temple, the watchtower intrudes the harmonic plan of the St. Nicholas cathedral. It spoils the symmetry of a baroque church, but creates a much more interesting combination of unbalance.

Intrusion

D.int.II



St. Nicholas Church Prague

K.I Diezenhofer, Anselmo Lurago, 1703-1728

Although it has civic program completely unrelated to the temple, the watchtower intrudes the harmonic plan of the St. Nicholas cathedral. It spoils the symmetry of a baroque church, but creates a much more interesting combination of unbalance.

Intrusion

D.int.III



Hotel Grand Canal
Delft, xxx

The Entrance porch intrudes the facade of the hotel Grand Canal so eagerly, that it overlaps the outline of the building.

Intrusion

D.int.IV



St. Mary Abchurch
Christopher Wren, 1681-1686

The site constraints did not allow for a symmetrical plan in St. Mary Abchurch. The entrance therefore intruded the lateral facade on the account of both symmetry and one of the windows.

Intrusion

D.ex.I



Twiggy shop Gent
Vylder Vinck Tailieu, 2013

The staircase is shifted out of the body of the building, which lets itself being distorted phlegmatically and pretends that everything is as usual. Windows are cut in half, floor slabs are visible behind useless glass. The occasional visitor would pass without noticing, then later stop, shake his head and with an assuring “nah” ignore the subliminal different sight as if he just passed a woman with shoes on her hands. This is an act of an almost humorous *extrusion*.

Dex.II



MIT Baker house dormitory
Alvar Aalto, 1946

Staircases of Alvaro Aalto are often tools of disordering. We can see that in Vila Mairea, TKP building or his own house and studio. In his Baker house dormitory Aalto displaced an entire three storey staircase. He created an oblique silhouette as well as interesting spatial effect in the interior of the stairway space. This action can again be referred to as displacement or *extrusion*.

D.ex.III



Stockholm Rowing club
Sigurd Lewerentz, 1912

The staircase of Lewerentz' Rowing club escapes the simple barn like volume with a certain obviousness hidden behind the identical cladding. Just the diagonal windows are silently witnessing an act of *extrusion*.

D.ex.IV



Stennas Cottage
Gunnar Aasplund, 1937

In his Stennas Cottage, Aasplund presents us with a confusing detail. The timber cladding of the staircase is separated in two, so the steps almost accidentally protrude outside. Even though it is not, it seem almost as a result of *extrusion*.

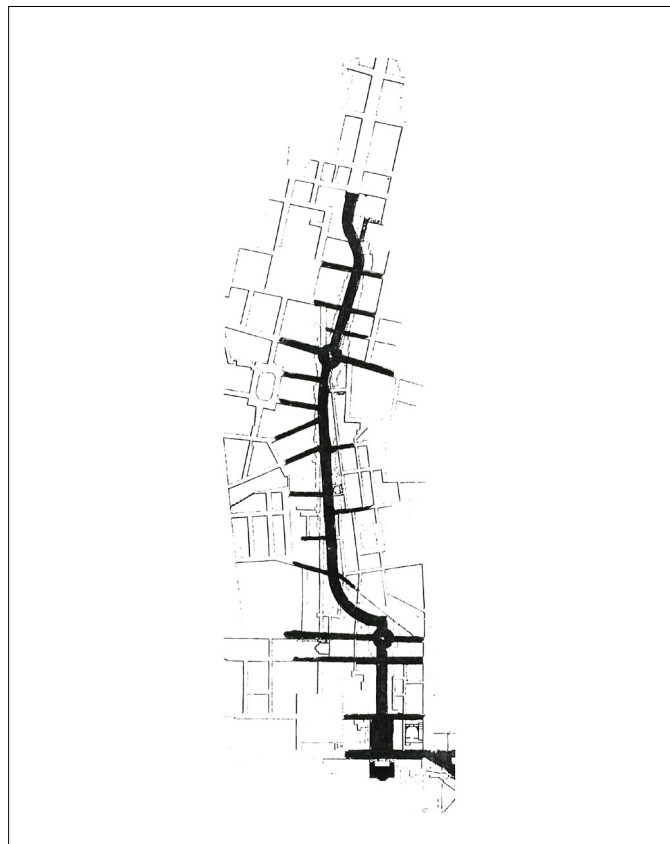
D.inf.I



Regent Street
John Nash , 1811

The most ambitious urban project ever to be undertaken in central London is in fact a successive series of casual compromises. This project of John Nash was meant to connect two royal houses, one that was never built and the other that was soon demolished. It is a perfect example of what happens when plan meets accident. The project of Nash, keeps a certain integrity, but is a product of *inflection*.

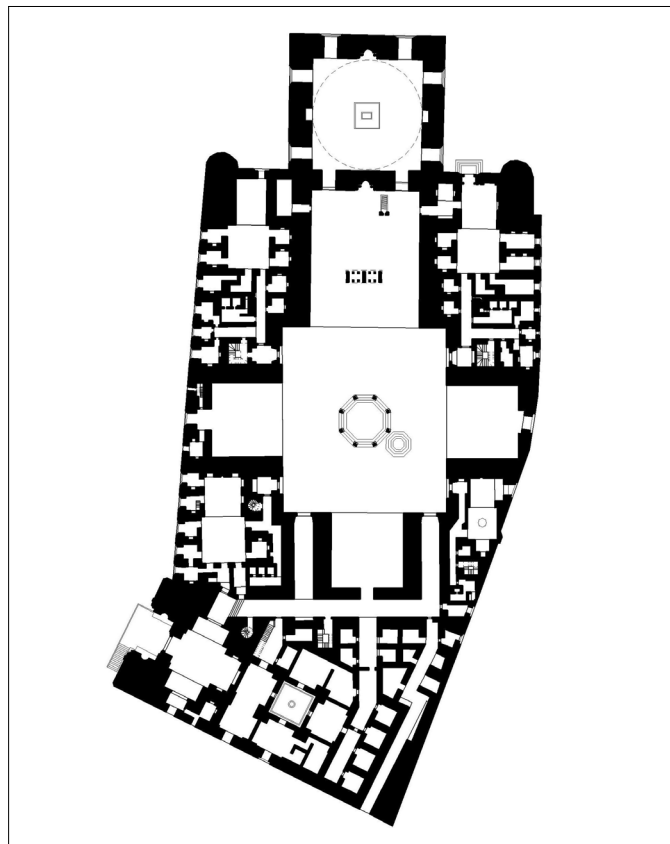
D.inf.II



Regent Street
John Nash , 1811

The famous banded Quadrant crescent came to existence because the grounds needed for a straight line would be *'too costly to acquire.'* Regent street is in urban scale what the ruins of Parthenon are in the architectural scale. An aesthetisation of failure. The countless nuisances that Nash managed to all include into his compound shifted an already cranky boulevard into a complete resignation to any Parisian ambitions.

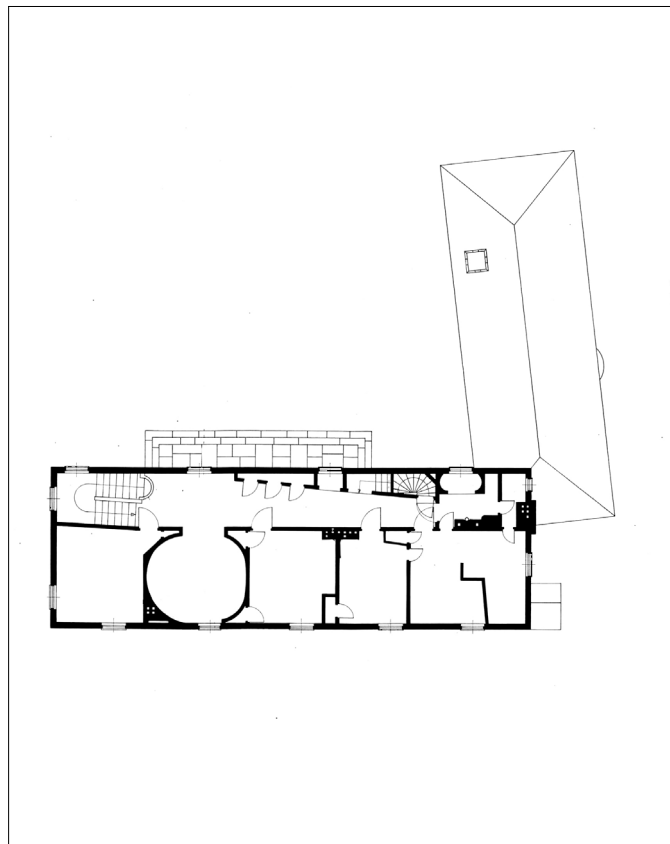
D.inf.III



Masjid al-Sultan Hasan
Cairo, 1356

Floor plan of Sultan al-Nasir Hasan monumental Funerary Complex in Cairo bends slightly according to the site. The inner layout stays intact as if the rest was just cut away. In that sense it is just the façade what is *inflected*.

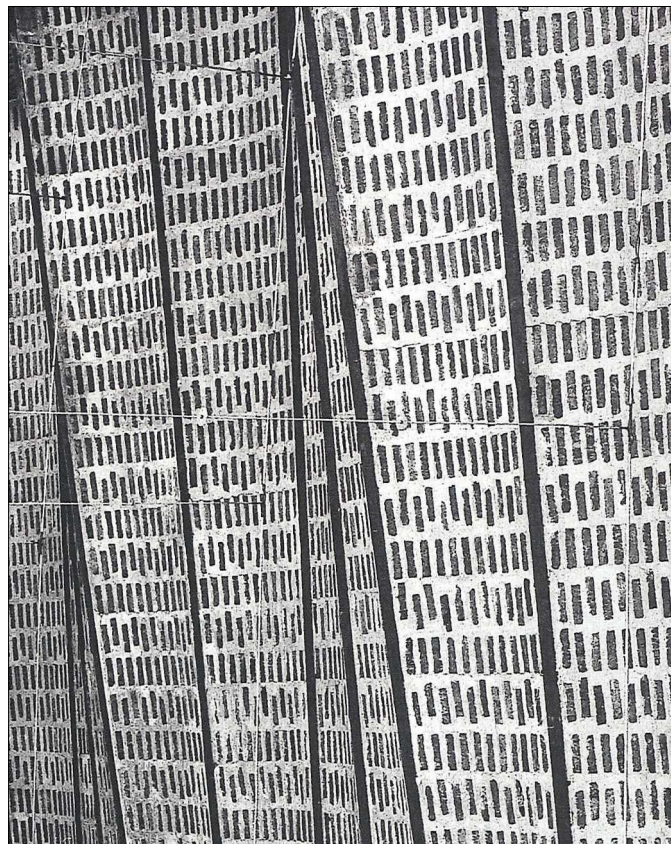
D.inf.IV



Villa Snellman
Gunnar Asplund 1917-1918

Disruption of the classical order, not just through inflection is a common feature of many buildings by Gunnar Asplund. In his Book on this architect Stuart Wrede suggests that in Villa Snellman Stuart ‘*transformed the medieval layout within a classical shell .. In addition, the inflected walls, other subtle displacements and distortions have been introduced. Through them Asplund is evoking playful images.*

D.inf.V



St. Marks Church
Sigurd Lewerentz, 1956

The ceiling of St. Marks Chapel is a modern translation of the broken ribs of late gothic vaulting. The slightly diagonal supportive beams created a more complex geometry as well as increased structural stiffness. The ceiling is a result of *Inflection*.

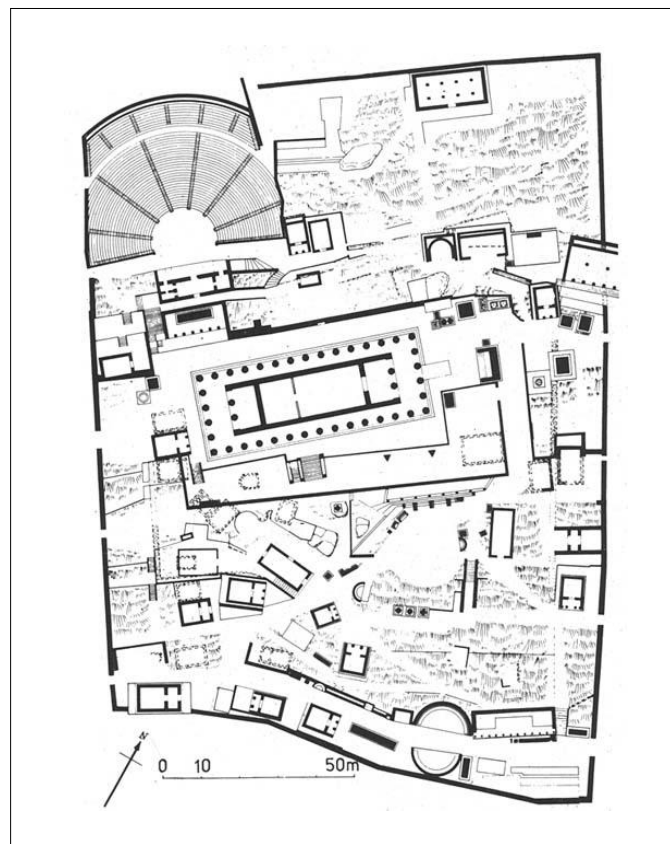
D.inf.VI



77 Urban Housing
Sergisson Bates Architects, 2009

What is happening horizontally in St. Marks happens vertically in this project of S.B.A. The facade breaks slightly in plan, allowing for beautiful shading as well a somewhat fragile outline. Fragility is sometimes both the producer and product of *inflection*.

D.con.I

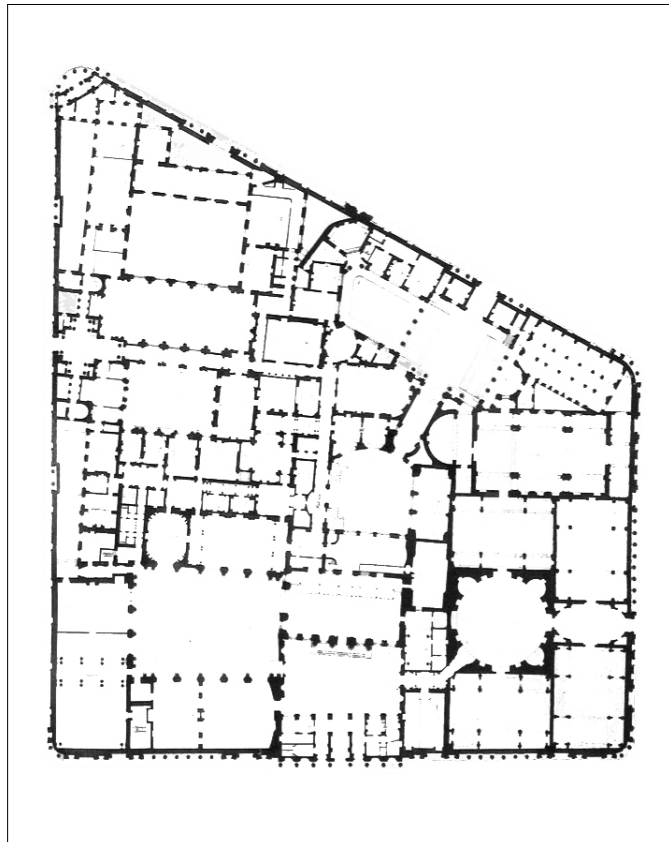


Temenos
Delphi, classical Greece

Antique temple is a cut out piece of the world free of any contradiction, but the relations of various temples are much more conflicting. The strict perimeter of the temple district allows for a chaotic arrangement inside.

Confinement

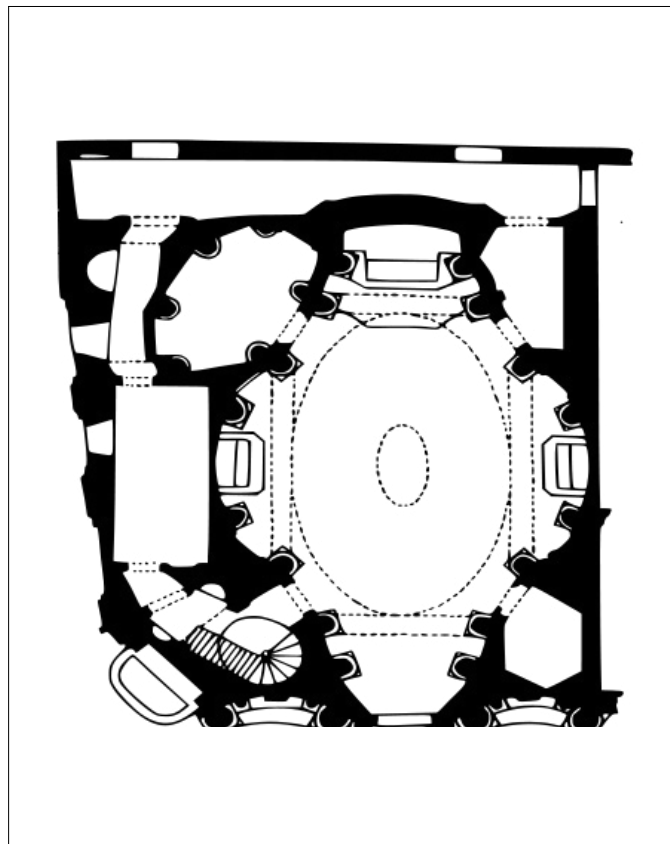
D.con.II



The Bank of England
John Soane, 1788-1833

All the designs of Soane that we now adore are delicately positioned next to, in-between or even on top of very constraining conditions. The very impossibility of an absolute orderly arrangement allowed for something much more interesting to be created. In the Bank of England Soane had to work with existing wall. *confinement.*

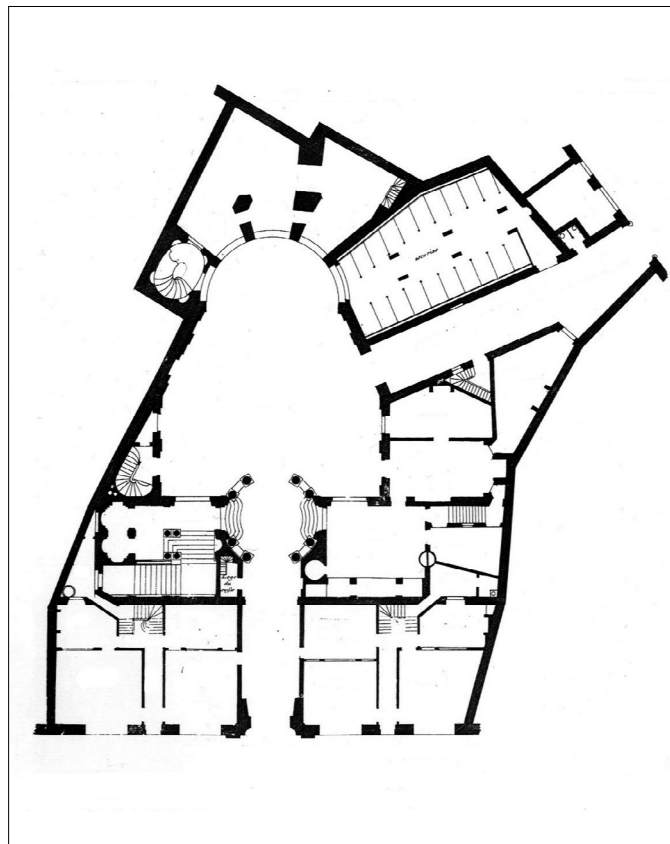
D.con.III



San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane
Francesco Borromini, 1638-1641

The main nave, lateral chapels and staircase are forced to occupy extremely limited site. The front facade happens to be positioned at the corner, and all sorts of other beautiful confusions are to be found in San Carlino thanks to the general *compression*.

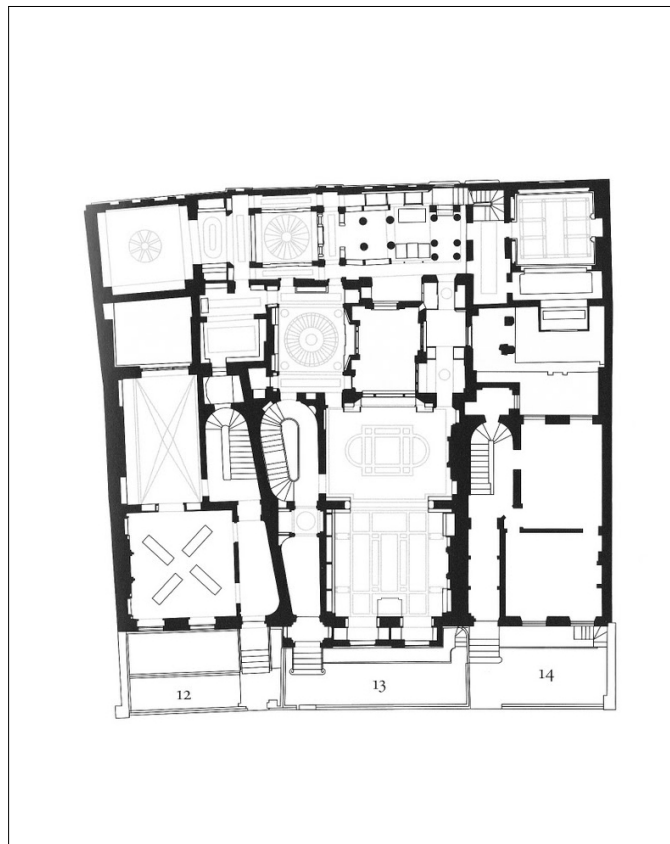
D.con.IV



Hotel de Beauvais, Paris
Antoine Le Pautre 1652 - 1655

Le Pautre managed to built a stately palace on a site, that seems unfit for much smaller building. These repulsive forces are most visible on the inner form of the courtyard. It is shaped in the manner of dynamic baroque, so rare in classicist France. The curve is just a product of submission to the diagonals that *compress it*.

D.con.V

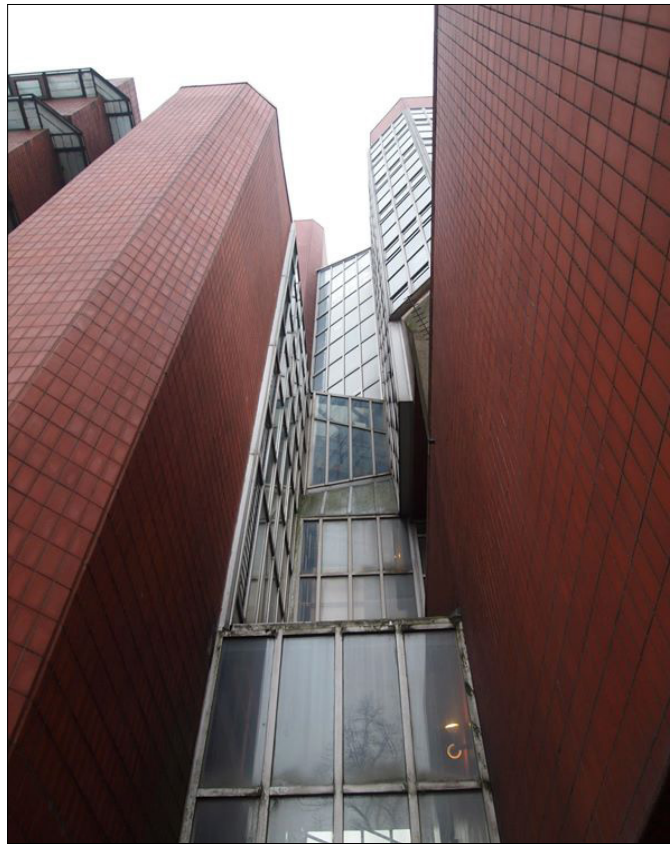


Lincoln's inn Field
John Soane, 1792

The tri-partition of the three original buildings completely dissolves into a labyrinth of roof lighten rooms in the rub of the house. This order dissolving into chaos is confined within a clear rectangular boundary.

Confinement

D.con.VI

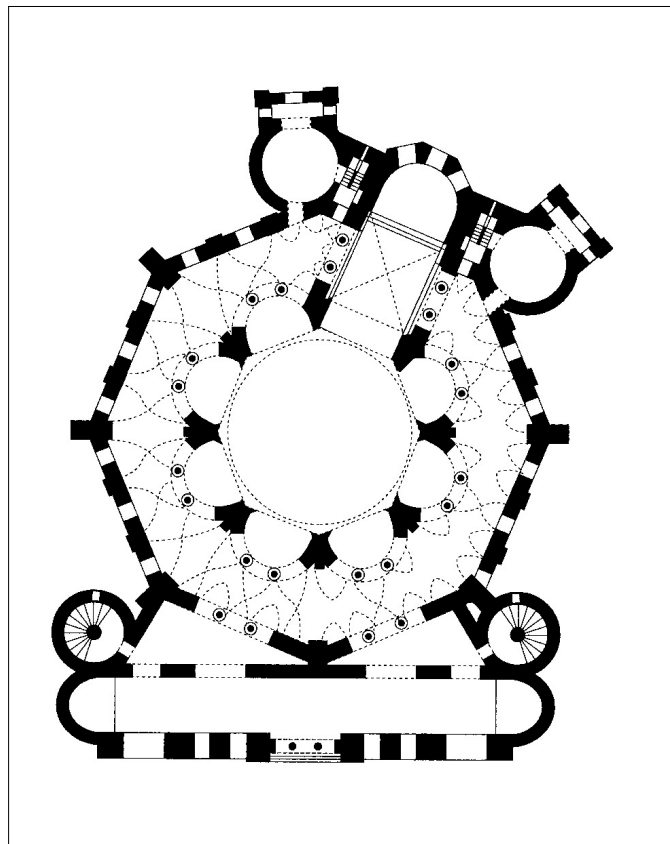


Faculty of Engineering, Leicester
James Stirling, 1959-1963

The circulation spaces are compressed in between two solid volumes. It almost seems that the glass surface breaks under the pressure of the two heavy masses around.

Confinement

D.ad.I

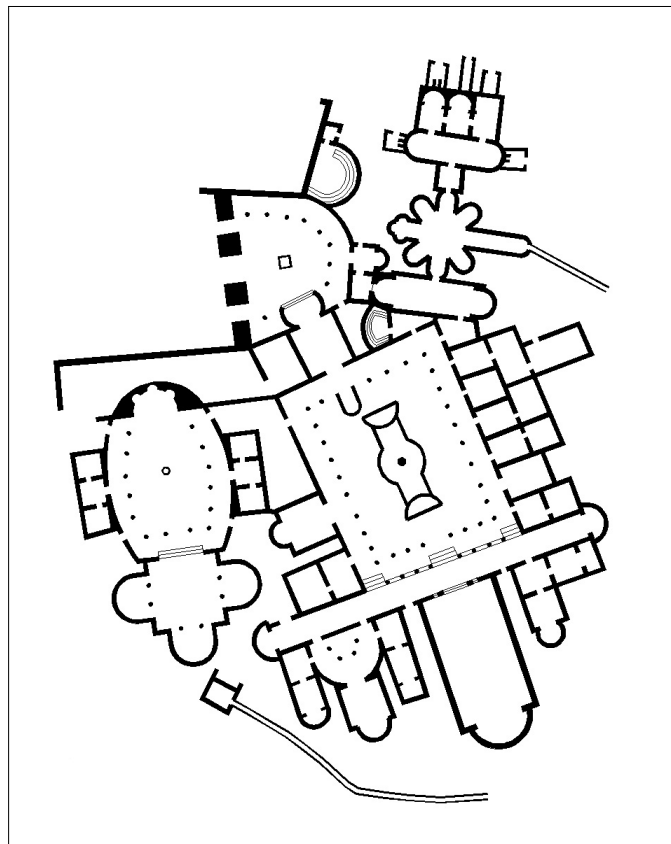


San Vitale
Ravenna, 526-547

Let us for a while forget the exquisite mosaics in this byzantine church. For the chapter on disorder it is more interesting how the central octagon is combined with the longitudinal lateral nave and what kind of spaces this juxtaposition creates in between.

Addition

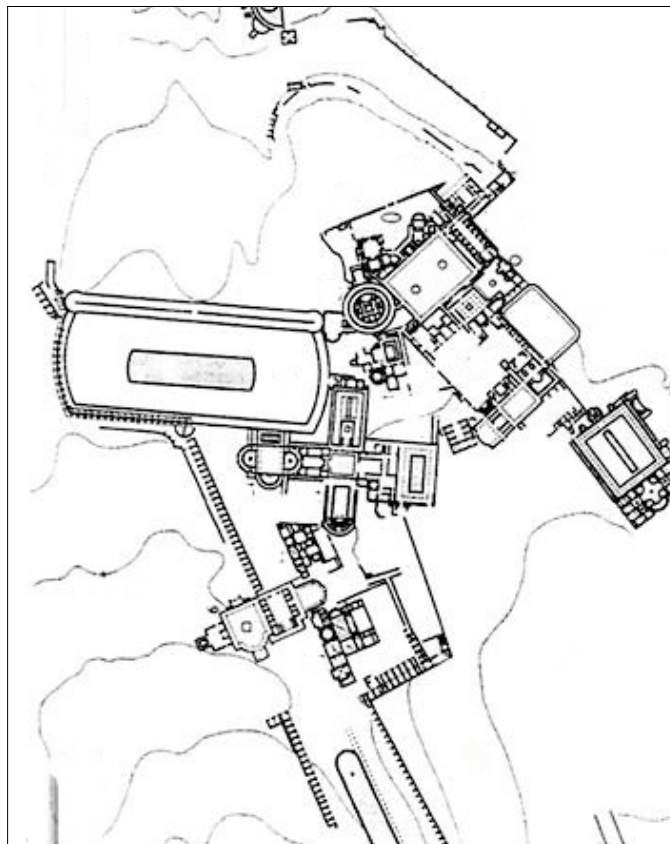
D.ad.II



Villa Romana del Casale
Sicily, 4th century

The roman villa del Casale was built on remains of the existing villa. Individual programmatic parts like baths, guest rooms or Private apartments are all arranged around a dual backbone of the peristyle and the great corridor. The whole is a result of an *addition* of interior spaces, whose exterior relations are of no importance.

D.ad.III

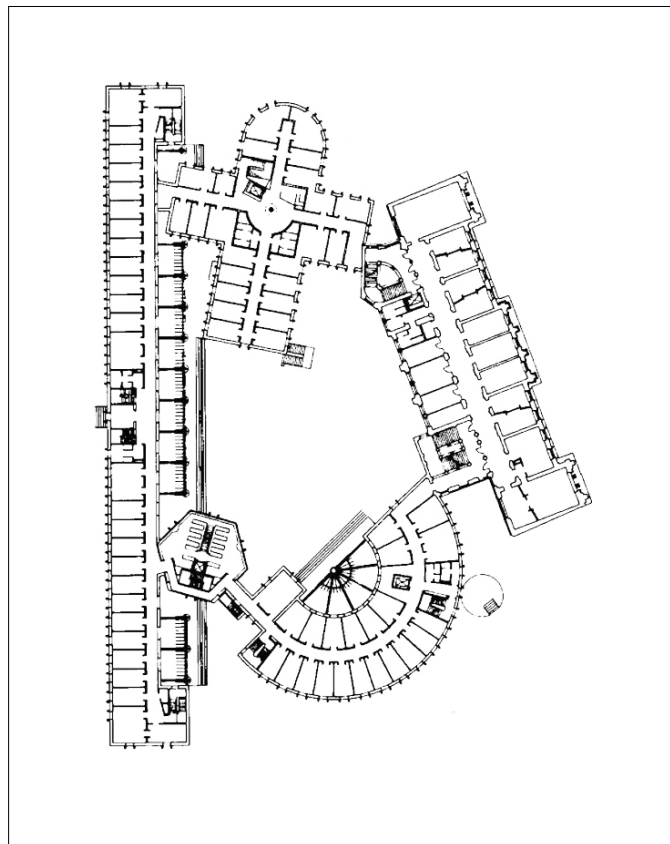


Vila Adriana
Tivoli, 2nd century

This antique example is positioned on the edge of architecture and urbanism. It is a complex of more than 30 buildings assembled in an almost accidental manner, through addition.

Addition

D.ad.IV

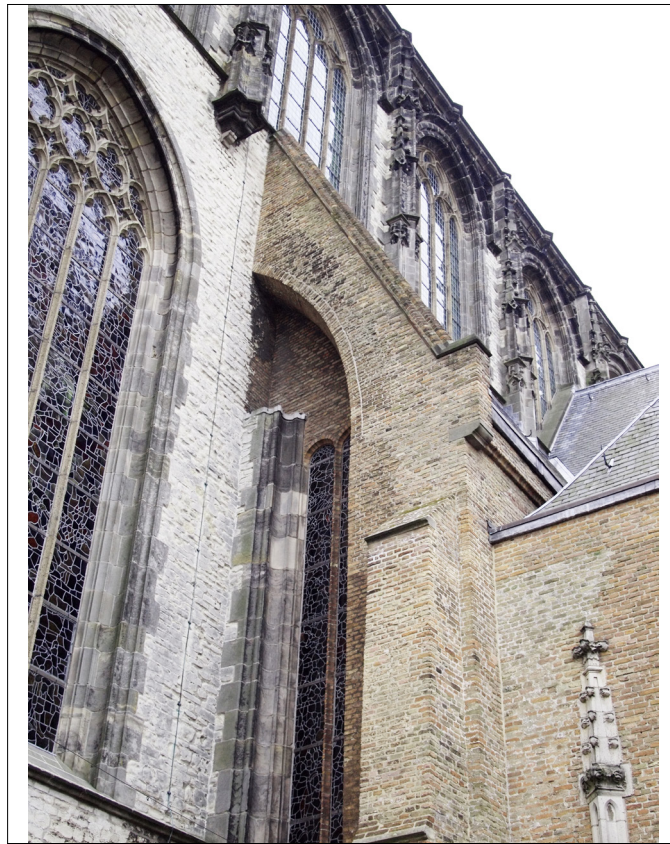


Social Science research center
James Stirling, 1988

This building designed by James Stirling is an assemblage of several archetypal forms. These individual objects are loosely connected by almost mobile joints. This respectable company is enclosing the most irregular courtyard.

Addition

D.ad.V



Oude Kerk
Delft, 1325-1500

Main nave and transept are combined violently, disregarding the different materiality and support system. Two different epochs are meeting with hostility.

Addition

D.ad.VI



St. Anna Monastery
Prague, 1231 - 1435

The monastery is a result of the layering of time. Elements were being added disregarding the composition rules. The chance of history created an interesting longitudinal juxtaposition of three subsequent church naves.

Addition

D.sa.I



Church of Mother of God in front of Týn
Prague, 1300-1511

When one expects two elements or parts to be identical and he is deprived of this sameness, the result is a surprising confusion comparable to the other figures of disorder. The left spire of the Týn church in Prague is intentionally made several meters slimmer.

'Almost the same'

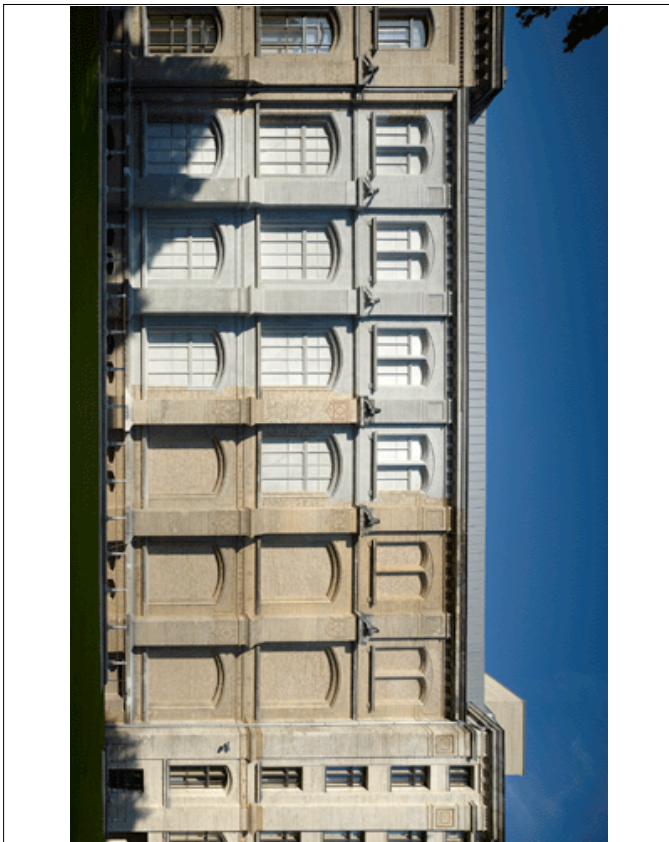
D.sa.II



Alte Pinakothek in Munich
Hans Dollgast, 1955

Hans Dollgast approach the ruined Alte Pinakothek in a ruinous manner. During the refurbishment he filled in the gap created by Allied bomb with new plain brickwork like an Amalgam, keeping a slight, still noticeable difference.
'Almost the same'

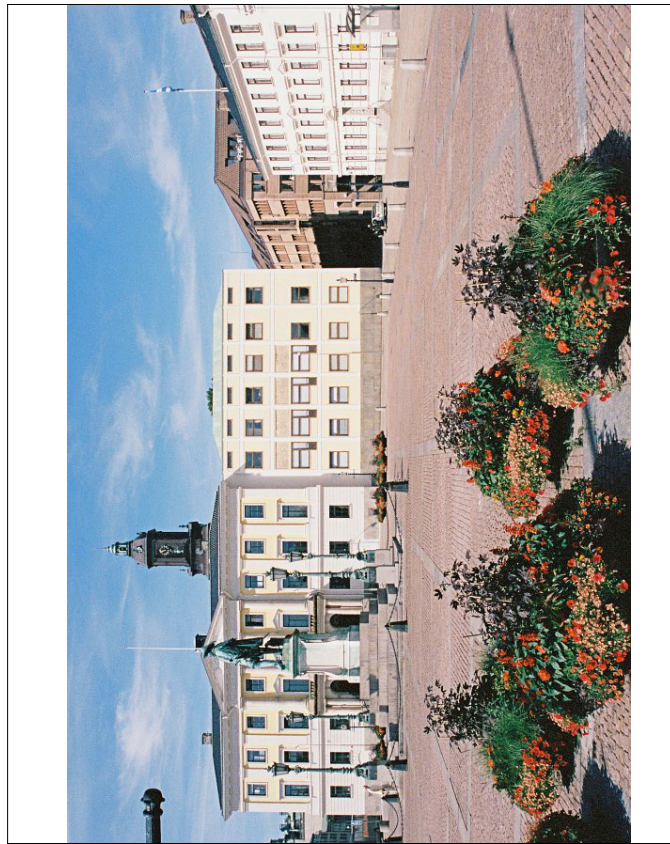
D.sa.III



The same strategy that Dollgassr used in Munich Diener and Diener applied in Berlin. The ruined gap was filled with formally identical cast. The disturbing difference is only in the material.
Almost the same?

Museum for Naturkunde Berlin
Diener & Diener, 2010

D.sa.IV



Göteborg courthouse extension
Gunnar Aasplund, 1936

Additions and extension of all sorts need to answer the principal question, same or different? The third example shown here answers as the two previous ones '*almost the same*'.

D.sa.V



Schreber House extension
Amunt, 2011

‘How to continue building?’ Was the principal question of this extension. The German studio Amunt chose this approach instead of the ‘smooth and perfect’.
‘Almost the same’

D.sa.VI



Casa Collage
Bosh Capdeferro, 2013

This mimicry extension in Girone is most suspicious by its inconspicuousness. The nouvelle shape and flatness spoil the effort to hide, which is only pretended in the first place.
'Almost the same'

D.ox.I



Prague Castle Entrance Hall
Jozef Plecnik, 1918-1936

Oxymoron is one of the oldest figures in both language and architecture. This 'breach of logic' can be seen for example on the entrance hall of Prague Castle designed by Jozef Plecnik. Central column is positioned in front of circular window.

Oxymoron

D.ox.II



Casa Cogollo in Vicenza
Andrea Palladio, 1559

In this design of Palladio that we see the use, might be even intentional, of oxymoron. The main focus in the facade is given to an empty, useless and undecorated central field.

Oxymoron

D.pa.I



Parallelism is another of the classical figures. One form is repeated in different contexts or scales. This can be seen for instance on St. Chad's church designed by August Pugin where we see a repetition of the pitched roof gable from transept to and entrance to the sacristy, only the scale is changing.

St Chads Cathedral
Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin 1839-1841

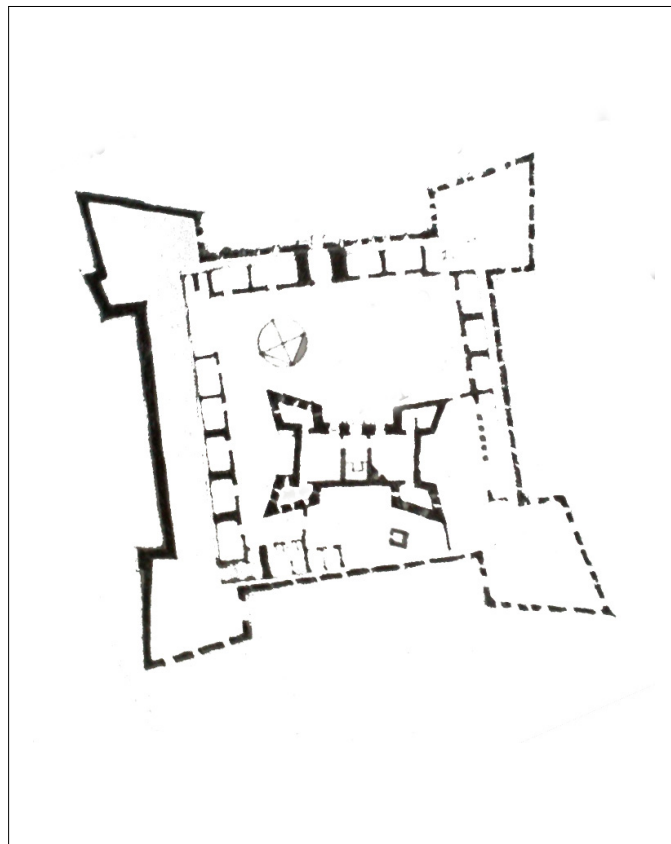
D.pa.II



The primary programmatic space of the building – the auditorium, gets almost musically divided into five repetitions, which get smaller (quitter) before they fade out completely. Another example of *Parallelism*.

Cultural Centre Wolfsburg
Alvar Aalto 1959-1962

D.pa.III



Fortress Comenda
Ghana, 1663

Parallelism in plan is more rare than in the facade. From the practical defensive reasons only, the rectangle with 4 bastions is repeated twice.

Parallelism

D.pa.IV



18 Suburban housing
Stevenage Sergisson Bates architects

Mirror. A contemporary interpretation of the semi detached house - a typical English type. The gables of these two(one) almost identical houses are slightly rotated. Creating the effect of *Parallelism*.

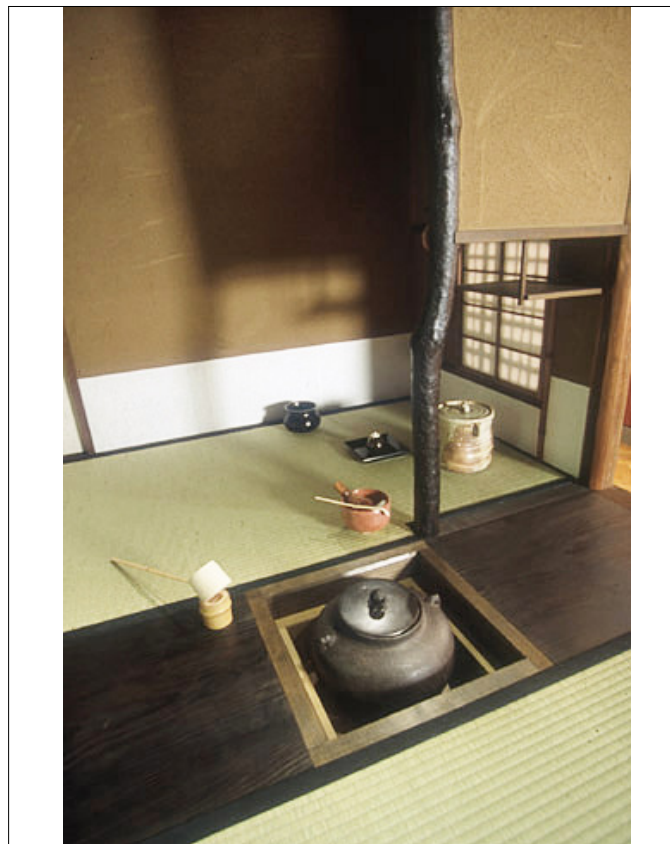
D.con.I



Weekend house
Allison and Peter Smithson, 1956

In their weekend house, the Smithsons used a found (step)stone as an entrance to their rather abstract cubic addition. When the pure is tarnished with the dirty, when low is attached to the high, when useful spoils the artistic or the abstract faces the organic we may speak of *contamination*.

D.con.II



Shikunshien museum
Kitakamura, xxx

The abstract faces the organic: typical feature of ruins.
In the Japanese gardens as well as tea houses the contrast
between the organic and the abstract is the main driving
force. An element of Nature penetrates the perfection of
this Japanese tea house - *contamination*.

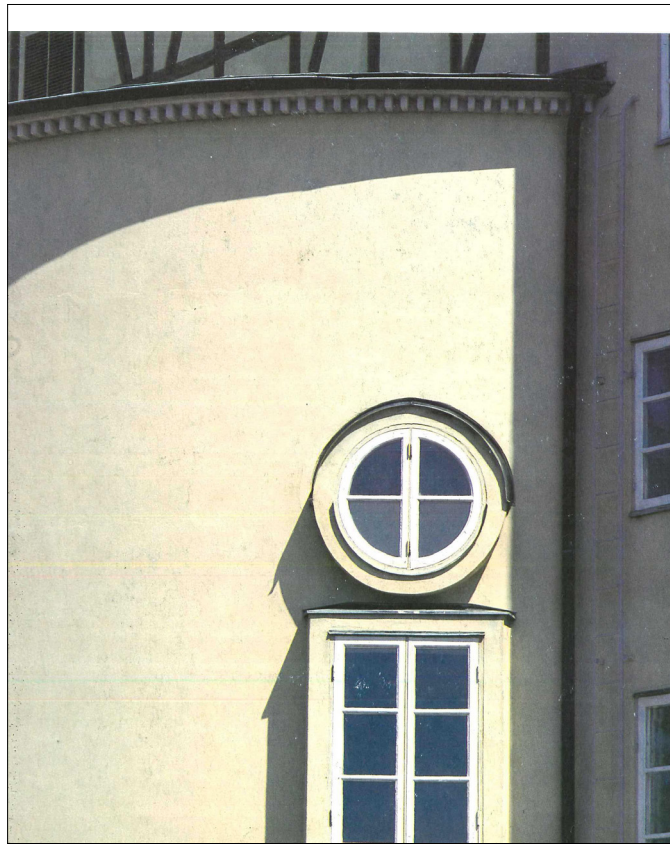
D.con.III



Ludwig wing, Prague castle
Benedikt Ried, 1492

The well composed geometry, of an early renaissance facade, is improved with an addition of a toilet bay. This might be a very literal example of *contamination*.

D.dis.I



Lister County Courthouse
Gunnar Aasplund, 1919-1921

The last figura presented here is discord. A resonance of
two unfamiliar forms. Such as the windows of the Lister
County Courthouse.

Discord.

D.dis.II



Galerie Benedikta Rejta
Emil Prikryl, 1998

What we see in vertical facade of Lister court house
happens in space in the gallery designed by Emil Prikryl.
Square lift is going through a circular opening.
Discord.

The useless

No house or even a room

He wants no House or even Room in it, but merely the Walls and Semblance of an Old Castle to make an object from his house. At most he only desires to have a staircase carried up one of the Towers, and a leaded gallery half round it to stand in., and view the Prospect. (Woowarth, 126)

This is a quote from a letter written by Lord Lettelton in 1747 addressed to an amateur architect Sanderson Miller, who was to design one of the first artificial ruins in England – Wimpole Hall near Cambridge. Ruin is a site from which life has departed. This uselessness – one of the obvious characteristics of ruins is touched in this text in a sober, discreet yet very felicitous manner. Subtracting function turns any building into just an object, only a representation.

In his famous quote Adolf Loos says that *'only a very small part of architecture belongs to art: the tomb and the monument. Everything else that fulfils a function is to be excluded from the domain of art.'* But what is the position of ruins within this duality?

The quote suggests that what separates architecture from art is its purpose. In ruin this purpose is subtracted in its entirety. Hence it becomes more than an object; it seems to acquire completely artistic status.

The useless is not a common feature of any project. In fact, in the modernist understanding, it seems there should not be any useless involved. Still the useless found its way to many of the canonical architectural pieces. Often it is disguised as 'public' or 'multi-use' or 'free' space, while in fact, it simply is just useless, or rather 'functionless'.

There indeed always is a reason for the useless space to come into being, but that does not make it any less useless.

Most often the useless spaces is not a product of a bohemian artistic spirit, but a by-product of two other neighbouring spaces. Then this in-between room can either transform its absolute uselessness into absolutely artistic status, or it can just stay a useless space, never seen and never...well, used.

Ruin is a functional metaphor, sometimes it illustrates trivially what otherwise would have to be explained in lengthy and complicated way, other times it informs and influences the message that I want to convey with its help. This is one of those times. I don't want to and can't attempt any serious discourse on the useless here. Let's instead look at the useless as another product of exploring architecture through the lens of a ruin, another topic for discussion and with a certain license another projective strategy.

U.I



Unite d'Habitation
Firmini, 1950

How else then useless could one possibly describe the free ground floor of Corbusier's unite. The pebble stone ground makes it impossible to even walk underneath; the stark wind makes it impossible to even stand underneath. Still the useless free ground floor is a crucial part of the building and even one of Corbusier's five points of modern architecture.

U.IV



8 Gallarates II
Aldo Rossi, 1967-1974

How else then useless should one understand the colonnade of Aldo Rossi's Gallarates II. In this space of rhythm, monumentality and somewhat mysterious significance, every time you enter your house you could be as well ascending the straits of St. Peters basilica or Space Shuttle Endeavor. It is especially in this project where we come across a disturbing resemblance of the useless and the monumental.

U.II



Neue Staatsgalerie
James Stirling, 1977

Circulation in general tends to be providential excuse for the creation of the useless. In Stirling's Staatsgalerie Stuttgart the need for the ramp carved out an empty exterior space that answers to a significant list of possible historical references, but in fact is completely and utterly useless.

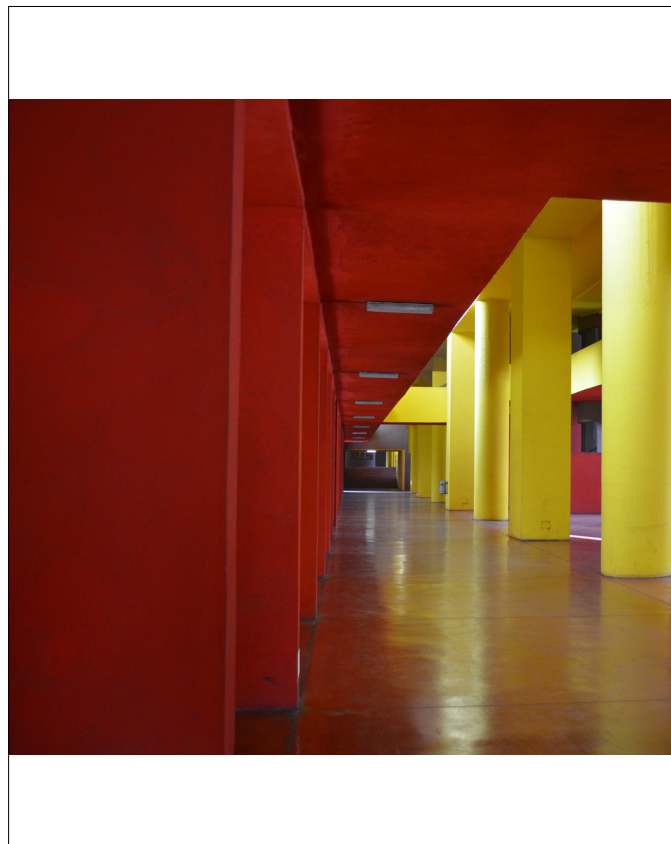
U.III



Verse of the vaults of St. Bartolomej Church
Pilsen, 1295

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U.V



Monte Amiata Housing Complex
Carlo Aymonino , 1969-1978

The question of the relationship of the useless and emptiness is to be asked but not answered by the project of Carlo Aymonino in Milan.

Fragment

Michelangelo's head and Jon Soane

When looking at the sculptural collage by Eduardo Paolozzi entitled Michelangelo's David, we can see a clear distinction between a fragment and an element. David's head, the symbol of perfection and mastery, is broken to pieces, and as if the destructor realized what crime has been committed, clumsily combined back together.

It can be said, that element is a constituent part of a whole, whereas fragment is a result of violent disintegration, of a forceful cut-out. Hence elements can be related to a sort of construction set, out of which almost anything can be built. In contrast to that fragments offer just one possible way of assembly.

If there was one architect inspired by fragment is Sir John Soane. He was one of the artists lucky enough to be living on the threshold of two opposing philosophies. In his work, as in the works of Ried, Berlage, Plečnik, or Wagner we can clearly see the inner fight between the past injected to them with education and the uncertain future spoiling and sometimes even ridiculing all that the first hold most sacred. And again it is the ruin, that is a perfect metaphor for the resultant architecture. The most interesting difference in the case of John Soane is, that he himself recognized this kinship with ruins.

In his Law courts house, Bank of England and his own house, the only example preserved, he breaks all the grammatical rules and habits of classical composition. However, he still follows the language. He does not ignore the rules, he breaks them deliberately instead. Luckily for us, the only of his surviving 'ruined' designs is also the most radical one. Here he managed to truly apply his fascination for ruins.

With acquiring his great fortune, Soane become a dedicated collector. As his house, and his personality, the collection is everything but unitary, it is not a thematic nor historic section. It is a shapeless compound of things that he liked to have and things that looked good next to each other. Casts of baroque sculptures would rest on gothic capitals supported by renaissance pedestals. Soane's collection of things (no other word is general enough to describe this variety) was a physical embodiment of the eclectic.

Soane managed something impossible, he managed to create a whole out of parts that were never meant to be put together and by most would be even understood opposite and impossible to combine. What he attempted was using the fragments, as elements and succeeding. As if he broke a Greek amphora and from the ceramic shards created a wedding dinner set instead. This is most clearly visible in the 'dome' with the skylight and the pasticcio - Itself and compressed manifest of the nature of the collection. When you enter this space it is as if he had miraculously entered the Piranesi's Via Appia etching. Only something is unmistakably wrong with the scale, for you are either a giant or this great space is just a collection of small fragments in a room not higher than few meters. The first option seems more probable by far.

FI



Michelangelo 'David'
Eduardo Paolozzi, 1987

This statue is composed of sculptural fragments. When looking at ruins we can see a clear distinction between a fragment and an element. It can be said, that element is a constituent part of a whole, whereas fragment is a result of violent disintegration, of a forceful cut-out. Hence elements can be related to a sort of construction set, out of which almost anything can be built. In contrast to that fragments offer just one possible way of assembly.



Lincoln's inn Field
John Soane, 1792

As in ruins, in Soane's own house light comes to the interior from the most unexpected and most impossible angles. Rarely it is laterally and if, always filtered through some secondary non-function space in-between. More often it is from above, or, strangely enough from below. Light coming from below must have been a mind shaking experience in times when lavishness of dinner was judged by the number of wax candles.



Lincoln's inn Field
John Soane, 1792

There is one particular tool Soane uses to further confuse both the lightning and the visitor. The mirrors. There are mirrors everywhere, around the windows, in the windows, mirrors that are framing, mirrors that are separating, mirrors in mirrors. They are penetrating the matter with light, framing the paintings, chimneys or doors. Imprisoned in glass these objects lose relation to the surroundings. It is as if they were cut-out from the interior, or better still if there is no all-encompassing interior, but rather a collection of independent fragments, as in a painting of Dali.

EIV



Lincoln's inn Field
John Soane, 1792

Fragmentation and subtraction bear an obvious relation. By subtracting, John Soane connects the spaces of the crypt with the ground floor so violently, that these two spaces appear almost simultaneous. The discontinuity of individual parts works for the continuity of the whole. Several times he even manages to connect two horizontal floors with a vertical opening as with this 'window' that leads to the floor bellow.

F.V



Lincoln's inn Field
Painting by Joseph Gandy

In the 'dome' under a skylight we find a pasticio. Itself a compressed manifest of the nature of Soane's collection. When you enter this space it is as if you had miraculously entered the Piranesi's Via Appia etching. Only something is unmistakably wrong with the scale, for you are either a giant or this great space is just a collection of small fragments in a room not higher than few meters. The first option seems more probable by far.



The Temple of Zeus
Dimitrios Constantinou

In ruin coherent totalities fall into arbitrary fragments. What once had a structure and unity is now disrupted to an extent in which the disorder of the parts is the prevailing connecting characteristics. Fragment can become a projective strategy: the individual parts are coherent and organized only on the account of the displacement of the whole. This allows for both for the calming unity within the parts as well as the disturbing conflicts between these parts.

F.VII



Palazzo Porto Breganze
Andrea Palladio, 1571

Fragment as a formal approach. Andrea Palladio's own house seem to be just a small fragment of much larger Palace. Only two fields of High Corinthian order look almost humorous.

FVIII



Ponte ruinante
Gian Lorenzo Bernini, 1632

A direct formal translation of a fragmented ruin into a new design. Ponte ruinante is a crooked connection of Palazzo Barberini to its garden.



Leptis Magna Ruins
Virginia Water Garden, 1816

The biggest reruination ever took place in 1816. Th Ruins of Leptis Magna were ‘replaced’ to England, where the architect Jeffrey Wyattville was given a task to transform this chaotic heap of fragments into a stately edifice. *The architect Jeffrey Wyattville ‘relied upon his audience to imagine what was missing: that is the rule of the game. A ruin is a dialogue between an incomplete reality and the imagination of the spectator. Each visitor completing a picture of his own.’ (Woodwarth, 139)*

Monumentality

Simultaneity and section

It was usually politicians, not architects who contemplated on the monumentality of ruins. Let's instead look at the monumentality of ruins from the architect's point of view. Let's forget for a while their symbolic meaning, reference to great people, epochs or events. Without any of these, what is the monumentality in ruins as we see them now?

It clearly is not the monumentality of the absolute, the monumentality of an obelisk, that of a pyramid. It must be different than the geometric monumentality as a translation of power to matter. Let's for a while come back to the definition of monumentality offered by Morales. It could hardly be more enigmatic: "*a window to a more intense reality*". He links the '*feeling*' of monumentality with the simultaneous experience of multiple times. It is now again as many times before that ruins are offering a very literal embodiment of concepts that seem so distant from reality.

For in ruins, the past and present, or even multiple pasts can be seen, touched and deeply experienced instantly, at once, simultaneously. The ruin is a section through times, and as any section it reveals simultaneously what was meant to stay within separate domains. This simultaneity allows for an instant experience of multitude that is my (possibly false) interpretation of the monumentality of Morales. The simultaneity is the monumentality of ruins.

And it is not just the simultaneity of times. Ruin is dissecting the world. Section is its most powerful tool. The suddenly exposed intimacy of a ruined house offers us an experience of simultaneity of a rather inappropriate kind. I am not able to convey this powerful experience other than by a quote. In a beautiful and terrific passage, the writer Rose Macaulay is describing her own house in London, destroyed during the Blitz.

'But often the ruin has put on, in its catastrophic tipsy chaos, a bizarre new charm. What was last week a drab little house has become a steep flight of stairs winding up in the open between gaily-coloured walls, tiled lavatories, interiors bright and intimate like a Dutch picture or a stage set, the stairway climbs up and up, undaunted, to the roofless summit where it meets the sky. The house has put on melodrama, people stop to stare, here is a domestic scene wide open for all to enjoy.

This disjunctive simultaneity was already exploited in the past as a tool of representation. The painted visualizations of John Soane and William Chambers were imagining not yet built designs as ruins. The ruined image had the revelative capacities of section and better. The famous Bank of England as a ruin painting by Joseph Gandy is a simultaneous representation of interior and exterior as well as structure.

There are all sorts of different simultaneities.. Formal simultaneity of fused layers in façades of Palladio. Representational simultaneity of ruined sections. Simultaneity of times in ruins as well as cubist paintings. Most of all there is the simultaneity of our own two eyes fusing two completely distinct images into one. One that is more real and more intense.

S.I



The Hill House
Charles Rennie Mackintosh, 1892

Lets start with a simple formal simultaneity. Facades of at least three houses seems to occupy one plane in the case of Mackintosh Hill House.

S.II



Il Redentore
Andrea Palladio, 1592

Formal simultaneity, similar to the Mackintosh Hill House, can be seen in some churches of Palladio: Il Redentore, San Giorgio Maggiore and others. As if there were three simultaneous façades that happened to intersect because of some immense compressive force.

S.III



Hogeschool Gent
Photographed 2014

This ruined wing of Hogeschool Ghent shows the simultaneity by subtraction. The demolition of the adjacent building exposed layers of time, that never were meant to occupy one space, that never were meant to be seen simultaneously.

S.IV



Twiggy shop Gent
Vylder Vinck Taillieu, 2013

Subtraction and section are the most powerful generators of both time and spatial simultaneity. In V.V.T. Twiggy shop in Gent we can see that in both vertical and horizontal direction.

S.V



Domestic Ruins
Salman Khoshbroo, 2014

Ruin is dissecting the world. Section is its most powerful tool. The suddenly exposed intimacy of a ruined house offers us an experience of simultaneity of a rather inappropriate kind. *'.... tiled lavatories, interiors bright and intimate like a Dutch picture or a stage set, .. The house has put on melodrama, people stop to stare, here is a domestic scene wide open for all to enjoy.'*

S.VI



Bungalow Germania
Alex Lehnerer and Savvas Ciriacidis, 2014

The extremely charged ideologies clash in the German Pavilion in Venice Bienalle 2014. The optimistic German Kanzlerbungalow designed by Sep Ruf, an embodiment of the 60s democracy is projected onto Albert Speer Nationalist Classicism. Two buildings, as mutually repulsive as it gets, are forced to occupy one space.

S.VII



Field of walls
Dogma, 2012

Campo Marzio by Piranesi is in plan, what Via Appia Imaginaria is in perspective: imaginative compound of antique fragments, or in the words of P.V. Aureli, a full scale architectural project. In their reinterpretation of this project, Dogma has imposed a simultaneous field of parallel walls over it in order to emphasize the architectural, thus limiting, nature of this Piranesi project.

S.VIII



An imagined view of the Bank of England in ruins
Joseph Michael Gandy, 1830

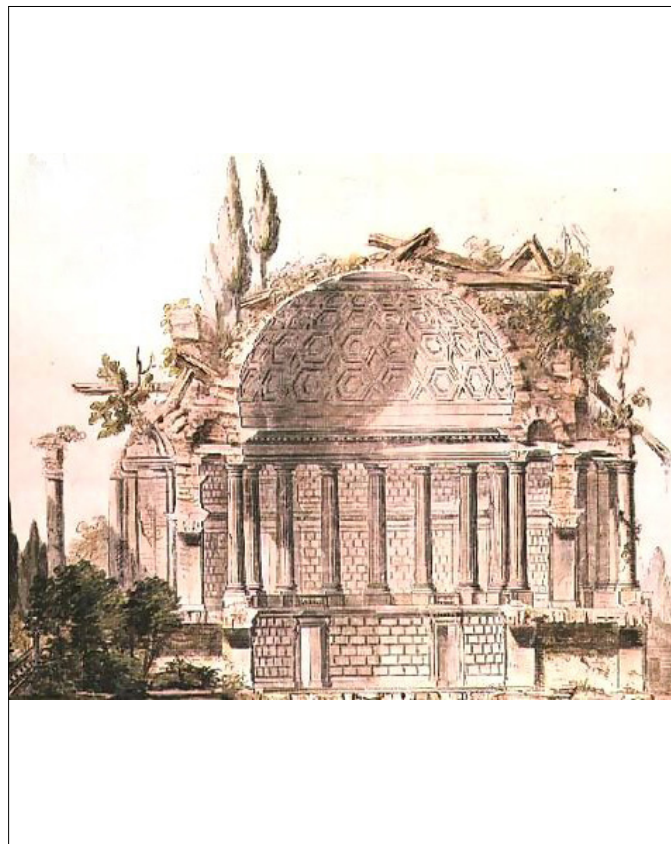
This disiective simultaneity was already exploited in the past as a tool of representation. This famous painting by Joseph Gandy is a simultaneous representation of interior and exterior as well as plan and structure. It is a typical cutaway axonometric. The revelative qualities that we ascribe to this geometric representation are also present in every ruin.



Maison de la Publicité Project in Paris
Oscar Nitzchke, 1936

Even the name 'cut away' axonometry speaks of a certain reference to ruins. Even though empirically known long before, the rules of axonometric projection were only codified and published in 1822, just 8 years before the painting of Gandy. To illustrate this kinship, I am presenting Oscar Nitzchke drawing of Maison de la Publicité Project, Paris, from 1936.

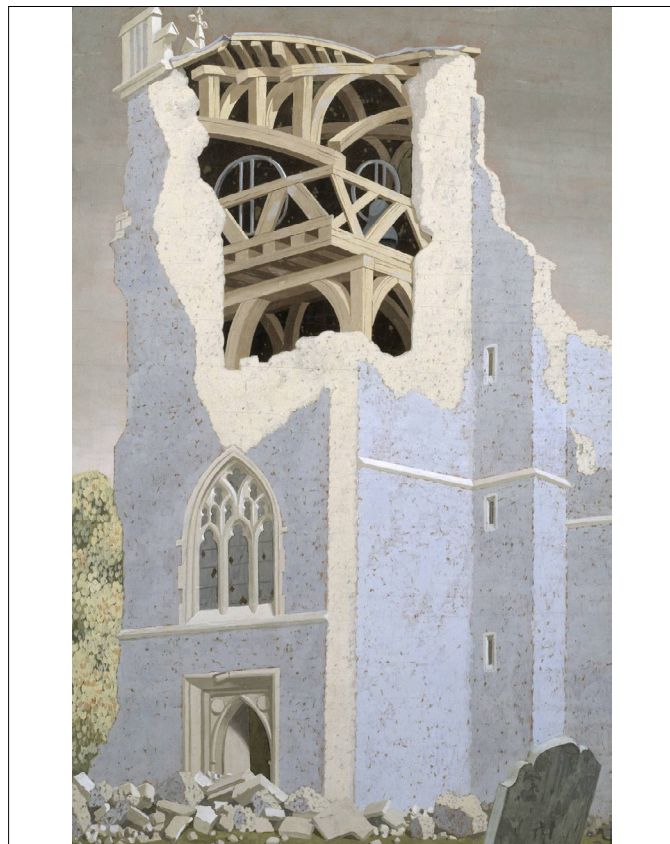
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Mausoleum for Frederick, Prince of Wales
William Chambers, 1751

The ruined image had the revelative capacities of section, while keeping the artistic atmosphere. The architectural drawing for mausoleum for Frederick, Prince of Wales in 1751 William Chambers is showing us ruined image of his design, which in fact is just a decorated parallel projected section. It is the first ever representation of not yet building a ruin.

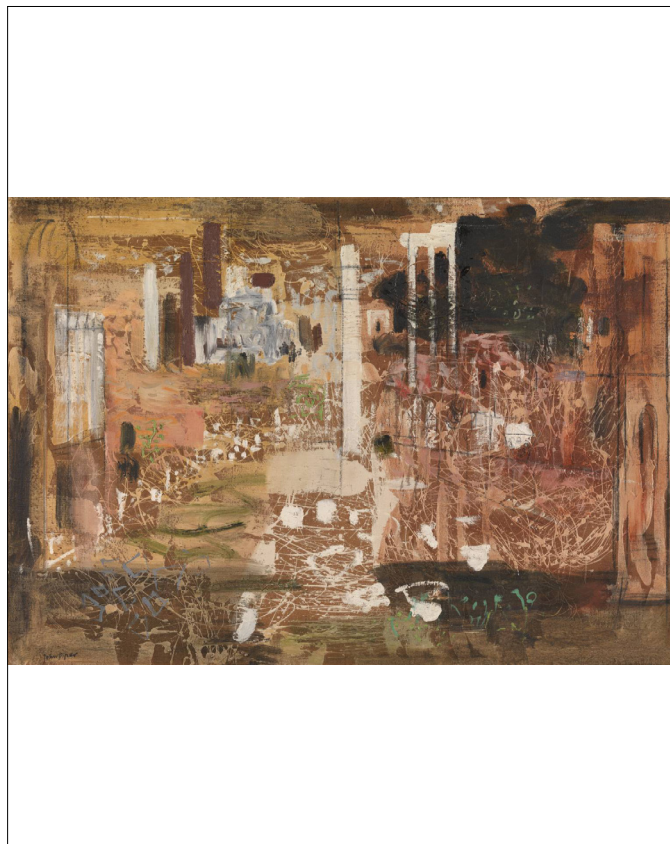
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Coggeshall Church
John Armstrong, 1940

During the raging of the Blitz, various avant-garde artists were commissioned to depict the subsequent rubble. In his painting of the bombed Coggeshall Church, John Armstrong got so close to axonometric projection techniques, that it seems almost like a technical or educative drawing.

S.XII



Forum
John Piper, 1961

The *feeling* of simultaneity that we get in ruins was beautifully illustrated in this work of John Piper. Different layers of the painting are scratched away and added again almost painfully. They are all present in a simultaneous patchwork, which violence and hystery reminds one of an anonymous letter composed of cutaway magazine characters.

S.XIII



Conical Intersect
Gordon Matta Clark, 1977

Gordon Matta Clark took simultaneity of Section as his principal topic. Anthony Vydler described his work as an interest in cutting through the layers of wall to reveal ‘how uniform surface is established’ as a way to ‘create complexity’ in making information about building visible, and in describing the procedure as ‘formal’ ...

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