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5.1. Design as research

Design is now a broad and unpredictable field where drawing tradition and new technologies of representation and programming coexist in an increasing tension. It is no longer about drawing or designing, but about *playing architecture*.

The ease of representation and computational speed open new horizons that change the idea of laborious manual arts associated with design. The architect's work can focus on a concept translated into 3D images, a play on architectural manipulation, decontextualization, proposition. The architect as an *imagineer* means that the building project can be done in other professional contexts. The designer's knowledge goes from constructive and structural issues to the knowledge of programming and formal representation/manipulation techniques.

Teaching design can now be about how to explode *software*, as it used to be about how to implode the prejudices that manual design always conveys.

The architect's formalist sensibility is finally placed at the centre of his/her strategy. He/she becomes a *geek* with a view of the world, more or less affected by the theory and history of architecture.

The architect will continue to occupy the place of synthesis, but this synthesis now slips into the framework of generating and manipulating volumes, instead of emphasising a singular context or developing constructive knowledge.

The architect might as well be someone with a virtual helmet that has never left the house, has never seen the world, except through websites of modern, ancient or contemporary architecture.

Architects as librarians of forms; as technicians of images generated by forms.

In any case, contemporary experience is no longer focused on "space", the "protagonist of architecture" (Zevi).

In this context, what is the use of drawing and writing as ancestral gestures? What does remain from the tradition of "plans, sections and elevations"? Does research in design refer primarily to aspects of manipulation, collage, rendering of forms? Formal ideas that are applied to virtual or physical contexts but still function as mere prototypes?

Does research in design itself also mean the passage of the architectural field from a physical, real, pragmatic world to an academic world, working on itself?

Through *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, by John Ruskin, Bruno Gil comes forward with *Seven Lamps of Architectural Design*, where absolute light becomes multicolour light. Although not strictly scientific, this approach appears as a guide, in seven steps, for *research by design*. Bruno Silvestre combines his formative experience at the University of Coimbra, and the cultural and climatic context of Portuguese architecture, with his current experience as a teacher in the English context, seeking a wider horizon, perhaps located at the confluence of these very different geo-cultures. On the other hand, Manuel Montenegro focus on the history and meaning of the School of Porto, and its greatest exponent, Álvaro Siza, particularly in the presence of History as a model for design. Juliano Aparecido Pereira takes us to Brazil and to the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Paulo, reflecting on the Reform that took place there in 1962, in specific aspects of design teaching and in relation to contemporary issues.

Bruno Silvestre

Towards a broader horizon

John Marshall, a student I've recently taught, sits on top of a concrete wall after sketching the geometric incisions of the tidal swimming pools in the midst of rocks and battering waves, with the broad horizon of the Atlantic beyond. This is preceded by the gentle descending movement from road level, parallel to the street and coastal line, at the end of which sea view disappears in the obscurity of the changing rooms. Open view is offered, denied and unveiled again at lower level with the flatness of distant horizon defied by the roughness of rocks and waves nearby (*fig.1*). A few hours later, two thousand kilometres away, John stands on the edge of the cliff looking the same distant horizon of the Atlantic from the south coast of São Miguel Island, sketching, eager to grasp the essence of the setting, cross referencing recent architectural experiences.

Back in the studio, he produces a series of parallel sections through the cliff, cut in cardboard and assembled as a site model describing the configuration of the terrain (*fig.2*). The brief required a small facility to support economic activities related to the productive land of the island, addressing topographical edge conditions. John designed a fish restaurant and shop, on the edge of the cliff with a mooring pier for the fishing boats arriving from the sea. Slightly sunken from road level, the building remains intentionally unnoticed from streetscape. On the west side, approach, entrance and access to the dining room are stages of a descending movement that offers, denies and unveils the open view of the Atlantic. The same happens to the public journey connecting street level and pier. A concrete wall extends the sea facing façade

of the restaurant downwards to the sea level (*fig.3*). From street level, a long stair descends in the obscurity of the space between the concrete wall and the cliff, denying the open view whilst announcing it with the natural light penetrating the wall at the bottom. In an ascending movement, a tension cable delivers the fish from the pier to the kitchen and fishmongers shop on the east edge of the building at street level. This simple gesture, the building's fishing line, whilst seemingly vulnerable in contrast with the robustness of the architecture; it furthers the kinship between the building and the setting.

Two distinct traditions stand behind the work of John Marshall in our studio in Oxford.

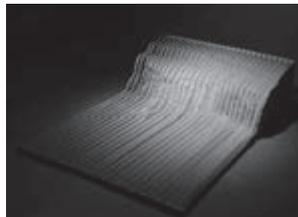
The Horizon of the School

When I was a student in Coimbra in the 1990's, the wings of the cloister were the horizon of the school (*fig.4*). At that time, the sense of intellectual and spatial isolation amongst students and professors reflected the lack of engagement between a new school of Architecture and a University widely credited for its excellence in other fields of studies. The College of Arts, built in the late sixteenth century, started another cycle of life. Its topographical condition – at the top of the acropolis – as well as its typological nature – large central courtyard –, whilst evoking centrality, also nurtured segregation. But there were other horizons.

The narrow one, hardly noticed, from the vertical windows of the design studio, and the wider horizon from the bar terrace – from where



1. Unit F Study Trip November 2010, visit to Tidal Swimming Pools, Leça da Palmeira, Álvaro Siza.



2. John Marshall, Unit F student work, Azores Fish Restaurant, 2010, Site Model.



3. John Marshall, Unit F student work, Azores Fish Restaurant, 2010, Model.



4. View of the Cloister at the College of Arts, Department of Architecture, University of Coimbra.