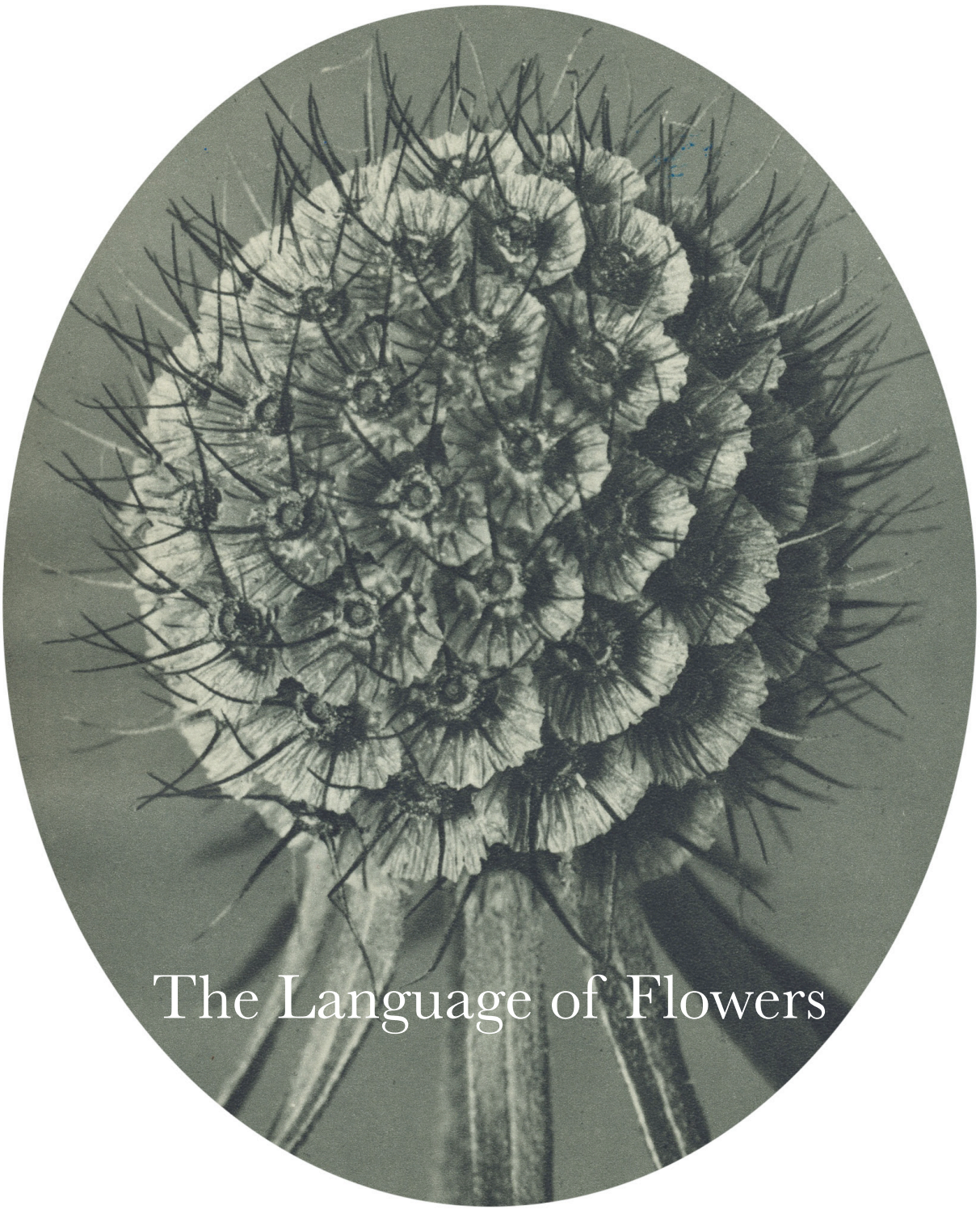

The Language of Flowers

‘FLOWERS ARE THE ULTIMATE EXAMPLE OF AN ARCHITECTURE (in vegetal form) aiming to heighten the senses (of insects, primarily, but also humans)’.

Willem de Bruijn

Intermediate 2 has been committed to bringing tactile, delicate and sensual poetry back to the AA and to the architectural discourse since 2010.

There is a sense of immediacy when we visit buildings, which can not be replicated in photography. A place, or a space is where you see, but also where you touch, smell, hear and breathe in. It is a very obvious point, but very few buildings and architecture today focus on these basic human needs, resulting in loss of memorable spaces. Architecture today is highly aesthetic and image-focused; less about the location, mteriality or the expe-rience. With the development of digital communication, the apparent 'need' to be in-situ seems less necessary and 'design' can be done in an office or in a room far away from the site. We aspire to producing architecture that directly communicate to the senses.

Digital communication has given us very fast access to information, places and to one another. Yet, to create architecture that truly appeals to the senses, the effect needs to be physically direct and visceral. We need to immerse in the situation and the environment. We need to take our time. We need to be in tune with the place but also with our own inner physical and emotional awareness when encountering architecture.

In the book *Quiet: the power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking*, Susan Cain argues for the power of the quiet and the importance of solitude, which have been overlooked for too long. The extrovert ideal has long been at the core of our society. In architecture, Modernism has pursued the Universal language, the 'openness' (open plans for example) and 'expansion' as the ultimate humane goal.

Could architecture re-connect with our inner senses, our inner solitude, our deep most inner room? Equally, what could such intensely evocative spaces trigger at a wider social scale?

> *OUR EYE NEED ONLY BECAME A BIT SHARPER, our ear a bit more receptive. We need to take in the taste of a piece of fruit more fully. We should be able to tolerate more odours and become more conscious and less forgetful when touching and being touched, in order to draw consolation from our immediate experiences, which would be more convincing, more paramount, and truer than all the suffering that could ever torment us.*

An intensification of our senses may counteract human suffering and thus neutralise violence and hostility, suggested the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, a year after the outbreak of the First World War.

How can architecture sharpen our senses?

This year **Intermediate Unit 2** will focus on spatial experiences that enhance awareness of our senses and emotions. Our main source of inspiration will be the enigmatic Villa Palagonia – a baroque icon located on the northern coast of Sicily, whose originality and eccentricity has fascinated personalities such as Goethe and Sir John Soane.

We will look for moments of sensorial intensity in the Villa and in other case studies. We will amplify and replicate these moments to capture their force. Reflective domes, sinuous staircases, coiled passages and elliptical rooms will figure amongst the architectural elements we will examine and reproduce. Our process will be analytical, and our means of communication will be artistic- and craftbased.

We will predominantly work with our hands and experiment with a limited palette of materials: charcoal, plaster, silver, wool. In Term One we will analyse and generate architectural fragments inspired by the Villa. In Term Two we will bring those fragments together to create a place in Bloomsbury, London – an area associated with the arts, education and medicine – that enhances our senses and emotions. In Term Three each student will inhabit his or her own architecture by picking one of three programmes: home for the elderly, bath house, hotel.

PROGRAMME

Term One

Tuesday 8th October
10 am, Introduction to Inter 2, The quest for the inner room and its role in society
11 am, Seminar
Georges Bataille, 'The Language of Flowers', in *Karl Blossfeldt, Art Forms in Nature*, pp. 7-11.
Ana Araujo, 'Lina & Pina' (manuscript)
2 pm, Film: Rosas, *Violin Phase*
5 pm, Introduction to Exercise One: *The Language of Flowers* (see Appendix)

Friday 11th October
10 am, Presentation Exercise One

Tuesday 15th October
10 am, Skills Workshop One: Plaster Casting, with Willem de Bruijn
5 pm, Introduction to Exercise Two: *Sinuous Staircases* (see Appendix)

Friday 18th October
10 am, Presentation *Leather Staircase, Mayfair and movement at Hexenhaus*, by Takero Shimazaki
11 am, Review Exercise Two, Part One

Friday 25th October
11 am, Seminar
Jonann Wolfgang von Goethe, 'Sicily', in *Italian Journey,* pp. 223-242.
Tim Knox, 'Introduction', in *Sir John Soane's Museum London*.
Alberto Pérez-Gómes, 'The Myth of Deadalus', in *AA Files*, no. 10, Autumn 1985, pp. 49-52.
2pm, Review Exercise Two, Parts Two and Three

Thursday 31st Oct - Tuesday 5th November, Field Trip to Sicily (see Appendix)

Friday 8th November
10 am, Skills Workshop Two: Drawing with Silver and Wool, with Willem de Bruijn

Friday 15th November
10 am, Tutorials
5 pm, Introduction to Exercise Three: *Zoom In, Zoom Out* (see Appendix)

Tuesday 19th November
10 am, Interim Jury, Review Exercises One and Two

Friday 22nd November
10 am, Tutorials

Friday 29th November
10 am, Skills Surgery One: Plans, Sections, Perspectives and Details, with Jennifer Frewen
2 pm, Tutorials

Tuesday 3rd, Friday 6th, Friday 13th December
10 am, Tutorials

Tuesday 17th December
10 am, End of Term Jury, Review Exercises One, Two and Three

Term Two

Tuesday 14th January
10 am, Site Visit
12 pm, Pinhole camera workshop, with Lili Carr
5 pm, Introduction to Exercise Four: *In Context* (see Appendix)

Friday 17th January
10 am, Site collage workshop, with Sarah Entwistle (see Appendix)
2pm, Talk on the history of Bloomsbury, *Art, Education, Medicine* by David Philips

Friday 24th January
10 am, Review Exercise Four, Part One
2 pm, Recording a site, *Measured information*, with Takero Shimazaki and Jennifer Frewen

Tuesday 28th January
10 am, Film: Andrei Tarkovsky, *Nostalghia*, followed by a short seminar on *Sculpting in Time - Tarkovsky,* with a guest.
2 pm, Tutorials

Friday 31st January
10 am, Review Exercise Four, Parts One and Two
5 pm, Introduction to Exercise Five: *Elliptical Rooms, Coiled Passages* (see Appendix)

Friday 7th February
10 am, Film: Sofia Coppola, *Marie-Antoinette*
Talk, Catja de Haas, *The Enclave*
2 pm, Tutorials

Tuesday 11th February
10 am, Seminar on Sigurd Lewerentz, *The Sacred Buildings and the Sacred Sites*
11 am, Discussion on 'how the master of classical language turned austere'
2pm, Tutorials

Friday 14th February
10 am, Skills Surgery Two: Plans, Sections, Perspectives and Details, with Jennifer Frewen
2 pm, Tutorials

Friday 21st February
10 am, Tutorials
2 pm, TS3 Interim Jury

Tuesday 25th February
10 am, Review Exercise Five
5 pm, Introduction to Exercise Six: *Reflective Domes* (see Appendix)

Friday 28th February, Tuesday 4th March
10 am, Tutorials

Friday 7th March
10 am, Review Exercise Six

Friday 14th March
10 am, TS3 Final Submission

Tuesday 18th March
10 am, End of Term Jury

Friday 21st March
10 am, Tutorials

Monday 24th, Tuesday 25th March
10 am, Intermediate Previews (Part 1)

Term Three

Tuesday 29th April
10 am, Introduction to Exercise Seven: *Programme* (see Appendix)
11 am, Tutorials

Friday 2nd May
10 am, Tutorials

Friday 9th May
10 am, Review Exercise Seven
2 pm, Tutorials

Tuesday 13th, Friday 16th, Friday 23rd May
10 am, Tutorials

Tuesday 27th May
10 am, Interim Jury

Friday 30th May, Friday 6th June
10 am, Tutorials

Monday 9th June
10 am, Second Year End of Year Reviews

Tuesday 10th June
10 am, Tutorials

Monday 16th, Tuesday 17th June
10 am, Intermediate (Part 1) Final Check

Tuesday 24th June
10 am, External Examiners: AA Intermediate Examination / ARB, RIBA Part 1

Friday 27th June
10 am, Opening End of Year Exhibition

APPENDIX ONE

Field Trip

Thursday 31st October, London - Tonnara di Scopello

Friday 1st November

Visit to Palermo: *Chinese Pavillion*, *San Domenico Oratory*
Presentation, Antonino Cardillo, Introduction to Sicily & *House of Dust*
Film: Luchino Visconti, *The Leopard*

Saturday 2nd November

Visit to *Villa Palagonia* and to the *Church of Castelbuono*
Charcoal Drawing Workshop at *Villa Palagonia* with Willem de Bruijn
Film: Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Canterbury Tales*

Sunday 3rd November

Visit to Palermo: *Zisa*, *San Cataldo Church*, *Gangi Valguarnera Palace*, *Villa Igea*
Film: Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Arabian Nights*

Monday 4th November

Tour around Erice

Tuesday 5th November, Tonnara di Scopello - London

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READING LIST

Ana Araujo, 'Lina & Pina' (manuscript)

Karl Blossfeldt: Art Forms in Nature, Munich, Schirmer Art Books, 1999.

Susan Cain, *Quiet*, Penguin Books, New York, 2012.

Gillian Darley, *John Soane: an accidental romantic*, Yale University Press, 1999.

Robin Evans, *Translations from Drawings to Buildings and Other Essays*, London, Architectural Association, 1997.

Per Olaf Fjeld, *Sverre Fehn: the pattern of thoughts*, New York, The Monacelli Press, 2009.

Nicola Flora, Paolo Giardiello, Gennaro Postiglione (eds), 'Journey to Italy', in: *Sigurd Lewerentz*, Pall Mall Press, 2013, pp.35-43.

Francesco Foscari, *Tumult and Order: Malcontenta 1924-1939*, trans. Lucinda Byatt, Zürich, Lars Müller, 2012.

Diana Fuss, *The Sense of an Interior: four writers and the rooms that shaped them*, New York & London, Routledge, 2004.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Journey*, London, Penguin Classics, 1962.

Tim Knox, *Sir John Soane's Museum London*, London, Merrell, 2009

Indra Mc Ewen, *Socrates' Ancestor: an essay on architectural beginnings*, Cambridge and London, MIT Press, 1993.

Alberto Pérez-Gómez, 'The Myth of Daedalus', in *AA Files*, no. 10, Autumn 1985, pp. 49—52.

Irenee Scalbert and 6a architects, *Never Modern*, Park Books, Zurich, 2013.

Alison Smithson, 'The Energising Cell' (manuscript)

Colin St John Wilson, *Siguard Lewerentz*, Pall Mall Press, 2013, pp.11-33.

Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time: reflections on the cinema*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1996.

Peter Zumthor, *Thinking Architecture*, Birkhauser, Basel Boston Berlin, 2006