

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, materiality or the experience. 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 Takeru 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-Gómez, 'The Myth of Daedalus', 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, *Nostalgia*, 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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APPENDIX TWO

Exercise One

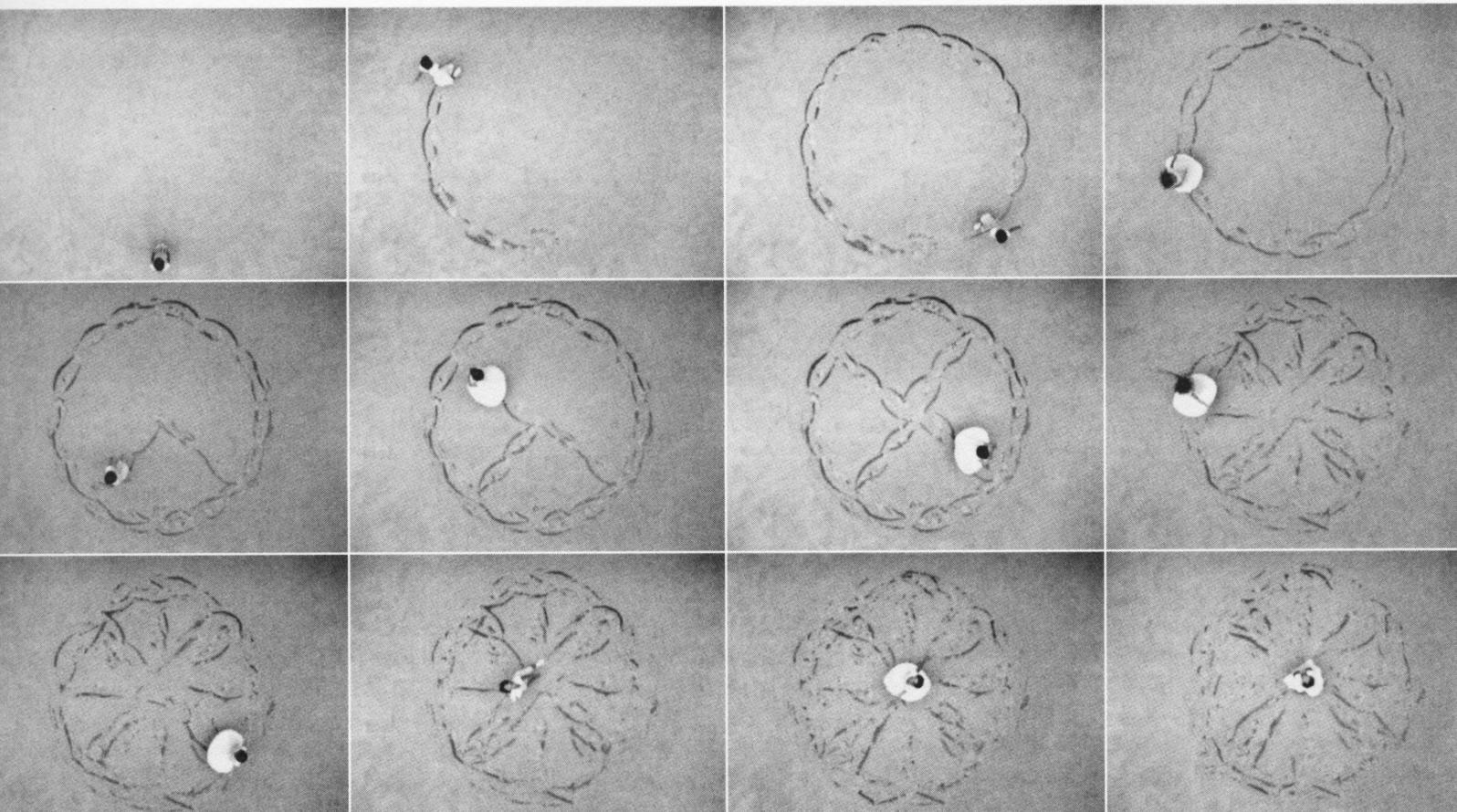
The Language of Flowers

In groups of three, research the presence of flowers in London buildings. Prepare a presentation including photographs, drawings, quotes (scientific or literary), historical and botanical references.









APPENDIX THREE

Exercise Two

Sinuuous Staircases

Stairs always enthral men. Great flights in the cities, steps up to thrones, and stairs in holy places are fascinating elements, and I, being an architect, have always been fascinated by ideas about stairs. I never saw a staircase as a practical element, for climbing from one level to another.

Lina Bo Bardi

Part One, Research

In groups of three, research the following works.

Group One. Marcel Duchamp, *Nude descending the staircase*

Group Two. Alfred Hitchcock, *Vertigo*

Jean-Luc Goddard, *Contempt*

Group Three. Gio Ponti, *Love Architecture*

Gio Ponti's staircases

Prepare a presentation showing and discussing the work you researched. If you are researching an artwork, show preparatory drawings and related pieces. If you are researching films, show relevant footage. If you are researching architecture, show photographs and drawings. If you find other information relevant to the theme of stairs include it in your presentation.

Part Two, Model

Choose three stairs from the following list and model them, separately, in scale 1.75 (you can use heavyweight cartridge paper or another material of your choice).

1. Tommaso Maria Napoli, *Villa Palagonia* (you must model this one)

(other stairs to choose from)

2. Andrea Palladio, *The Four Books of Architecture*. You can choose any of the staircases featured in Palladio's Books, for example, plates 62, 63, 65, 66 (Book One); plates 52, 53, 54, 71, 72, 74 (Book Two) etc

3. Germain Boffrand, *Pavillon de Bouchefort*, *Palace of Nancy*, *Palace of Malgrange*, *Château de Cramayel*

4. Lina Bo Bardi, *Solar do Unhão MAMB (Bahia Modern Art Museum) and Folk Art Museum*

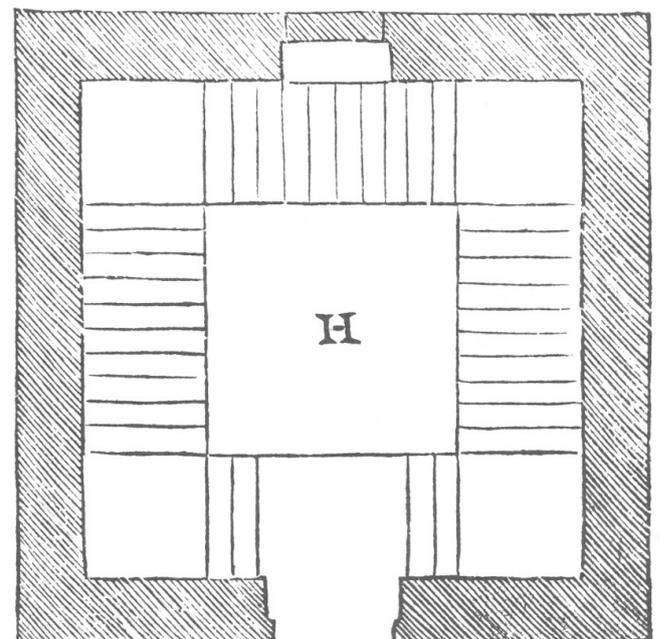
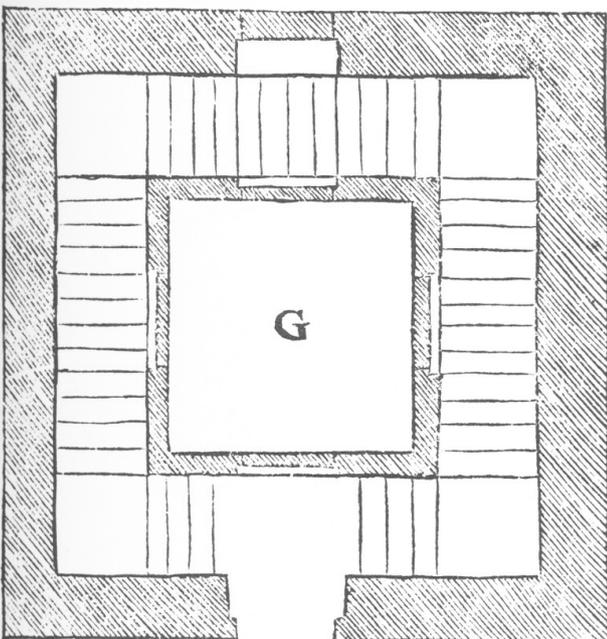
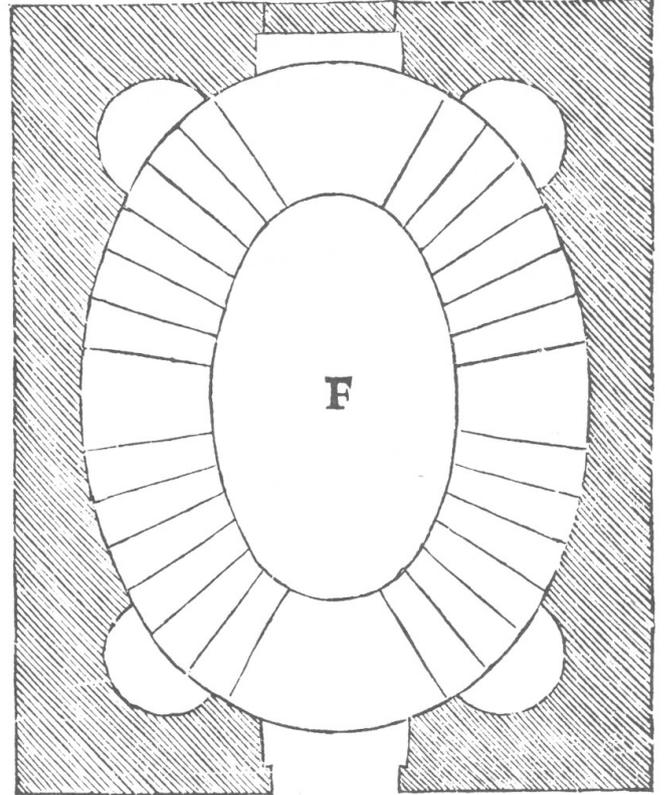
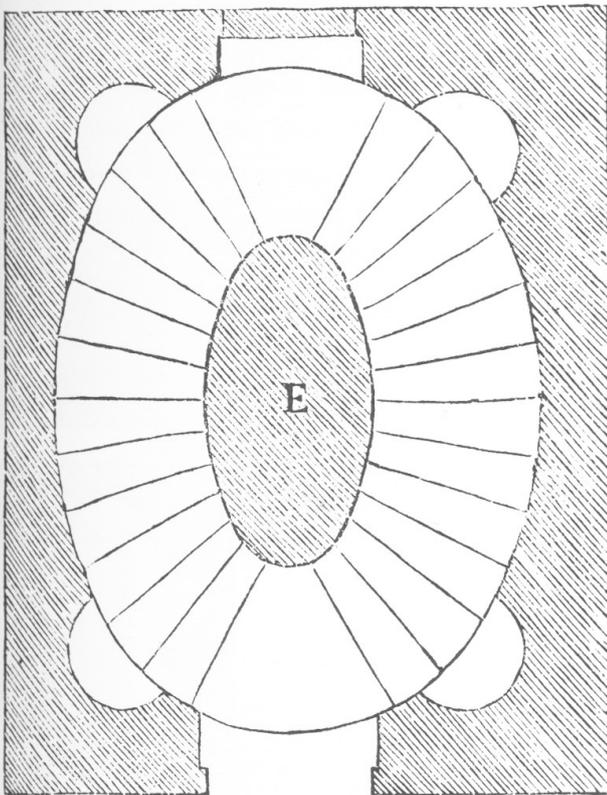
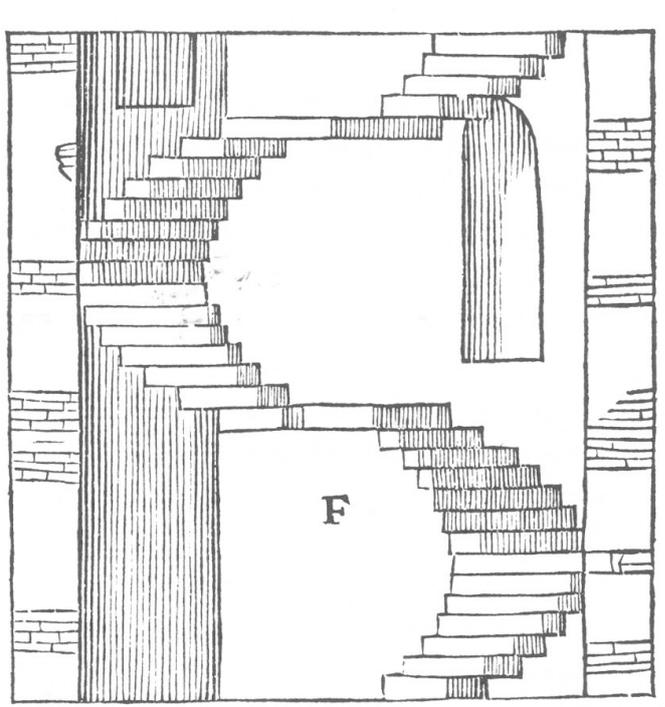
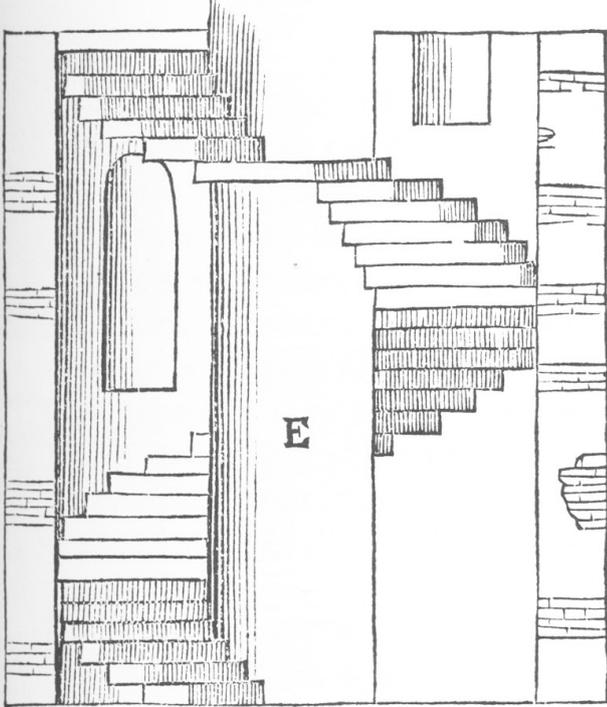
Part Three, Combine

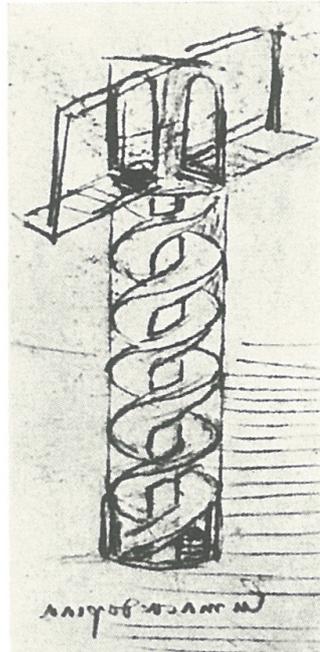
Combine fragments of the three staircases you made into three new ones. Reflect: how might your design enhance the sensorial/emotional experience of the user?

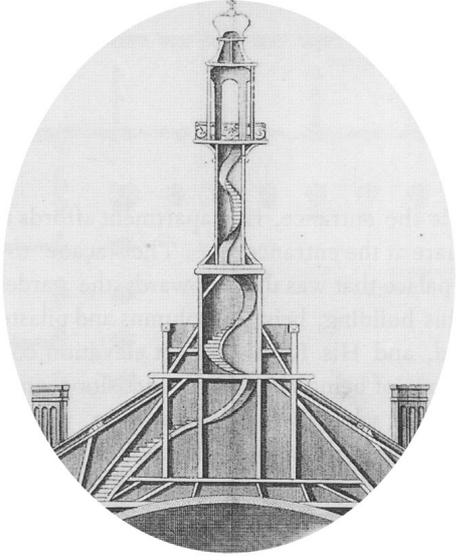
Part Four, Cast

Cast your staircase in plaster.











APPENDIX FOUR

Exercise Three

Zoom In, Zoom Out

Part One, Draw

Employing the materials and techniques of the Skills Workshop Two, draw a plan, a section, an elevation, a detail and a three-dimensional view of your staircase in scale 1.25.

Part Two, Model

Model your new staircase in scale 1.50, in your chosen material.

Model a detail of your staircase in scale 1.5, in your chosen material.

Part Three, Reflect

Compare the staircases that inspired you with your staircase. How do they relate? How does your stair enhance the movement, sensorial experience, emotions of the user?

References:

(text)

Peter Zumthor, *Thinking Architecture*

(architecture)

1. Peter Zumthor, *Hotel Therme Vals*

2. Sverre Fehn, *Hedmark County Museum*

3. Sigurd Lewerentz, *St Mark's Parish Church*

APPENDIX FIVE

Exercise Four

In Context

Most of the tropical rivers that the traveller sees are very wide, but this one, overhung with an immense luxuriance of vegetation, was as narrow as the Wey. But you could never have mistaken it for an English river, it had none of the sunny calm of our English streams, nor their smiling nonchalance; it was dark and tragic and its flow had the sinister intensity of the unbridled lusts of man.

Somerset Maugham

Part One, Research

In groups of three, research works in which a new architectural element has been inserted in a landscape or in an existing urban fabric or building. Prepare a presentation showing and discussing the work you researched.

References:

1. Lina Bo Bardi, *Solar do Unhão, MAMB (Bahia Modern Art Museum) and Folk Art Museum*
2. John Hejduk, *The Mask of the Medusa*
3. Carlo Scarpa, *Pallazzo Abatellis*
4. Witherford Watson Man, *Astley Castle*
5. Sverre Fehn, *Hedmark County Museum*

Part Two, Insert, model and draw

Insert your staircase in a chosen site in Bloomsbury. Produce a plan, a section, an elevation, a model and a view of the staircase in context in scale 1:25. Consider:

What do you need to adapt/demolish to insert your staircase on site?

How does your staircase interfere in the atmosphere of the space?

After some time, how will your staircase and its surrounding fabric be affected by use and weather?





APPENDIX SIX

Exercise Five

Elliptical Rooms, Coiled Passages

The matrix of connected rooms is appropriate to a type of society which feeds on carnality, which recognises the body as the person, and in which gregariousness is habitual ... Such was the typical arrangement of household space in Europe until challenged in the seventeenth century, and finally displaced in the nineteenth by the corridor plan, which is appropriate to a society that finds carnality distasteful, which sees the body as a vessel of mind and spirit, and in which privacy is habitual.

Robin Evans

Part One, Research

In groups of two/three, research a room or gallery you like. Prepare a presentation showing and discussing the work you researched.

References:

(text)

1. Diana Fuss, *The Sense of an Interior*
2. Robin Evans, 'Figures, doors and passages', in *Translations from Drawings to Buildings and Other Essays*
3. Francesco Foscari, *Tumult and Order: Malcontenta 1924-1939*
4. Alison Smithson, 'The Energising Cell' (manuscript) and Stefan Wewerka, *Cella*

(architecture)

1. Sir John Soane, *Lincoln's Inn Fields*
2. Tommaso Maria Napoli, *Villa Palagonia*
3. Andrea Palladio, *Villa Foscari*
4. Toyo Ito, *Tama Art Library*

Part Two, Model & Draw

Choose three stairs from the following list and model them, separately, in scale 1.75 (you can use heavyModel & draw three rooms you like, in scale 1.25).

Part Three, Combine

Connect your rooms to your site and staircase, and produce a model and drawings of the architecture you created.

Part Four, Cast

Cast your architecture in plaster.













APPENDIX SEVEN

Exercise Six

Reflective Domes

Part One, Research

In groups of two/three, research a a roof you like. Prepare a presentation showing and discussing the work you researched.

References:

(text)

Robin Evans, 'Translations from Drawing to Buildings', in *Translations from Drawings to Buildings and Other Essays*

(architecture)

1. Herzog & de Meuron, *CaixaForum-Madrid*
2. Steven Holl, *Knut Hamsun Centre*
3. Tommaso Maria Napoli, *Villa Palagonia*
4. (unauthored), *San Cataldo Church*

Part Two, Model & Draw

Model & draw three roofs you like, in scale 1:25

Part Three, Combine

Connect your roof to your site, staircase and rooms, and produce a model and drawings of the architecture you created.

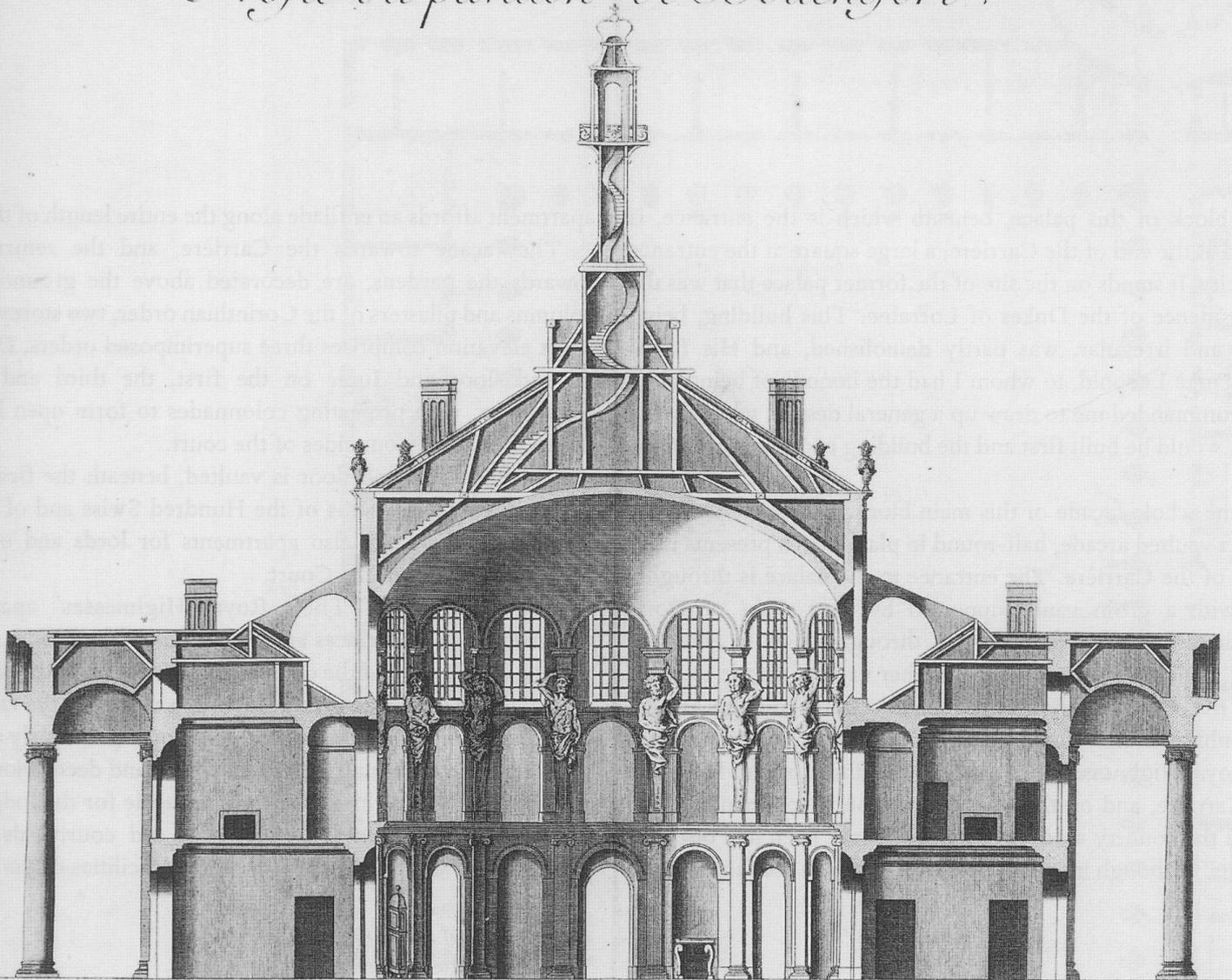
Part Four, Cast

Cast your architecture in plaster.

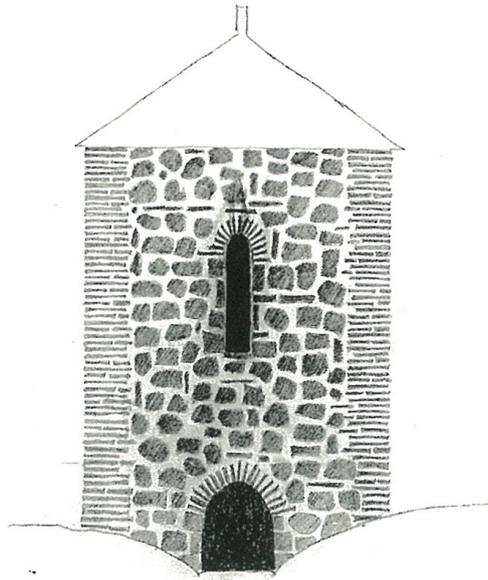
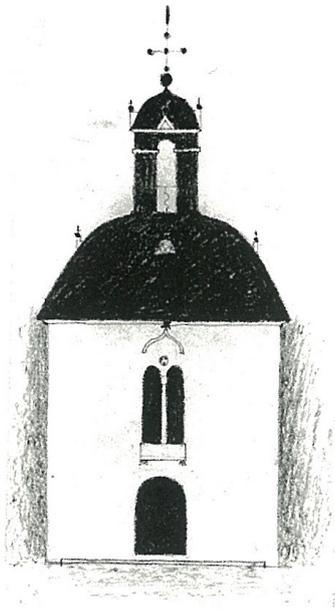
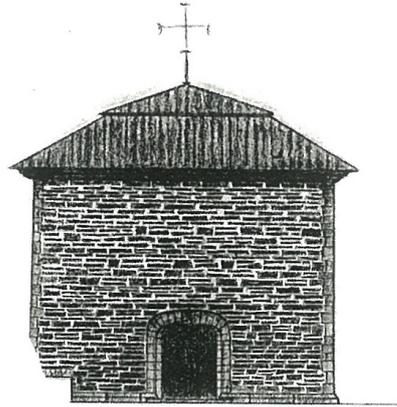




Profil du pavillon de Bouchefort.



1 2 3 4 5 10 toises de France



APPENDIX EIGHT

Exercise Seven

Program

In groups of two/three, research three examples of one of the following typologies: hotel, home for the elderly, bath house. Prepare a presentation showing and discussing the work you researched.

References:

(film)

Alain Resnais, *Last Year in Marienbad*

(book)

Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*

(architecture)

1. (unauthored), *Das Seffarine* (Fes, Morocco)
2. (unauthored), *Porchester Spa* (London, UK)
3. Aires Mateus, *House for Elderly People* (Alcácer do Sal, Portugal)
4. Christopher Wren, *The Royal Hospital Chelsea*
5. Peter Zumthor, *Hotel Therme Vals*
6. Peter Zumthor, *Home for Senior Citizens*
7. Hammam/Bath Houses in Ancient Rome, Hungary, Japan, Morocco, Turkey.

Technical Studies

This year, we will explore:

1. a specific detail of a tactile spatial experience, or;
2. a structural resolution of a stair or a roof that you designed.

What is the essence of what you have designed? How can the sensorial intensity be gained through the detailing and the structural solutions?

A Detail includes the construction of that particular resolution. From identifying the source of the material, extracting of that material, delivering of that material and the labouring of the actual construction.

Details (in this Unit) should focus on the manual hand labour on site by either an expert craftsman or more interestingly, by less experienced readily available maker.

Study for example a particular 'craft' that achieves the intensity of the sensual and emotional architectural detail. Refine your choice of craft, inspired by the architecture we visit or study such as Villa Palagonia, so that by the end of your technical studies, you have repeatedly tested and identified failures of that particular method. It will become 'your' craft as you have tested, wrestled, agonised, cried, and become deeply happy with the process of invention and creative cycle.

For the structural studies, it is important that several engineering options are thoroughly tested and failures recorded. As with a craft, structure makes architecture. Architectural integrity and emotions are born out of the integrity of its structure, like its inner bone structure in our bodies. Its the bones supported by the muscles that support us. Its the beauty of the bone structure that accentuate our movement, our balance, unbalance, leaning, bending, jumping, stepping, or twisting. Like all different bodies that exist, each architecture is different and equally unique.

We want our technical investigation to zoom into the specifics and the micro details in order to highlight the varying uniqueness of your overall zoomed-out architecture, as a detail or a structural principle will be applied across the architectural proposal and its context.

Technical study should enhance the architectural ambition. The Unit will focus this year on testing the techniques of creating sensual details and structures.





ILLUSTRATIONS

- [1] Karl Blossfelt, *Scabiosa Columbaria* (Plate 1/Title Page); *Aconitum* (Plate 5)
- [2] Tommaso Maria Napoli, *Villa Palagonia* (Plates 2, 9, 16, 22, 26, 28)
- [3] Sigmund Freud's plastercast of *Gradiva* (Plate 3)
- [4] Leonardo da Vinci, *Studies of hands in metalpoint over charcoal* (Plate 4)
- [5] Atelier Domino, *Detail of column in silver leaf for Home Vjvcs* (Plate 6)
- [6] Stefan Wewerka, *Cella* (Plate 7)
- [7] Rosas, *Violin Phase* (Plate 8)
- [8] Andrea Palladio, *The Four Books on Architecture* (Plate 10)
- [9] Stefan Wewerka, *Cella Leonardo idea of a spiral construction in a house* (Plate 11)
- [10] Germain Boffrand, *Profil du pavillon de Bouchefort* (Plates 12, 24)
- [11] Lina Bo Bardi, *Solar do Unhã, MAMB (Bahia Modern Art Museum) and Folk Art Museum* (Plate 13)
- [12] Sverre Fehn, *Hedmark County Museum* (Plates 14, 17)
- [13] Andrey Tarkovsky, *Scenes from Nostalgia* (Plate 15)
- [14] Antonello da Messina, *Saint Herome in his study, watchful in protected, familiar surroundings, with prospect of landscape and town* (Plate 18)
- [15] Sigurd Lewenrentz, *Drawings, Projects* (Plates 19, 20, 23, 25, 27)
- [16] Andrea Palladio, *Villa Foscari* (Plate 21)

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.

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