

TALES FROM THE UNCONSCIOUS

The Hidden Room

BLOGGING WITH MYSELF IN WORD[S]

...

7 April 2010: 11.20 PM

GAP ONE:

I discovered a gap in the [my?] lack of direct [embodied] connection with the dimension and the scale of [the site] in the Landscape. Either I did not pay enough attention to it, or I disappeared into the vague cloud of 'the unspeakable'.

Then, I nested myself in this cosy easy unawareness for years.

But, little by little, I began to feel uneasy about this: had I done and did I do enough to bridge this gap, this uncomfoting feeling of: is that all there is in a[n architectural] life? I was pondering for days and weeks and months and years, and gradually, through other people, and especially through [my] cultural mentors, this pondering mutated into conscious reflection, which made me see this gap as something not to simply accept, but as a space that can be bridged. Subsequently, looking back at my own practice, acres of missed Landscape opportunities stretched out vastly behind me. So, the first thing to endeavor was to go back to the PAST, to clean up unfinished business, starting from that question about the future: what is the projection NOW of the FUTURE architect I want to be in five years.

Then I put my favourite pencil on a piece of paper I like, starting to make new sketches and new drawings of a future yet to come close, my right hand moving slowly, sensitively, feeling the measurements of my hand combining in an almost autonomous ritual, through accumulated experience of scale and embodied Landscape both gathered over years of practice and half a lifetime of intense living up till NOW.

GAP TWO:

But there is another gap to bridge, or are we talking about the same gap here?

What are the ways master builders deal with Landscape?

What is MY way to deal with Landscape, the small building master I would like to be?

Investigating this, what could be my way to deal with the Landscape, the great building master I would like to become in my future practice? And what could this mean for the way to deal with Landscape in future praxis of Making Architecture?

8 April 2010: 4.56 PM

Designing 'tales from the Subconscious One':

GAP THREE:

Today I found myself in the middle of nowhere.

Feeling alienated from both an embodied connection with the scale and measurements of the Landscape and from the existence of my personal spacial intelligence [Van Schaïk].

So I have to look in both directions, reaching out in the Landscape and measuring both the site and myself, and looking inside to trace the eidetic moments in my personal spatial history, going back to my Grandmother's House and a trip to Ostend, on Juli 14th 1966. My Grandmother could reveal Tales from the Unconscious through the revelation of spaces up till now hidden safely, while Ostend could bring in the measurement of the pace of walking man, with a conscious step in space over a certain amount of time, introducing embodied measurements of space as a mental awareness in the act of *making architecture*.

9 April 2010: 10.55 AM

Pondering hybrid structure: yes or no?

I 'promised' myself I would make this house completely out of brick. But at some strategic points, I would like to introduce some very visible opposites: thick brick masses only working upon the principle

of compression, alternated strategically -both in the spatial and the optical image- with structural elements working on tensile stress.

By the principle of contrast these two bearing principles of statics can reinforce one another by the image they provoke, combined with our embodied *knowing* of opposite forces, and the way we can make them 'neutralise' each other to obtain a balance in the masses and the sights, resulting in a comforting space-play through readable structural principles.

Limiting myself 'to only brickwork' in the design process would lead to a self imposed limitation of spacial potential, so indispensable in what comes hierarchically on top in this house, in which the Tales from the Subconscious prevail. Coming first, they have to be served by the Techné in order to reach Poiesis.

So, this option being pondered and being aware of this hierarchy, I can go on. This not only implies a principle for this design, but it could also become a design-principle for future designs.

What am I going to do next?

Well: it's 11.55 AM now, this consideration has taken some time, and it also kept me awake until 4.35 AM last night. I might have a sandwich, or I might make some sketches of a steel beam bearing both the brick vault and the light shaft of the living room, and by choosing the steel beam instead of a series of heavy brick arches, I even can disclose the living room and provide it with a longitudinal light shaft, emphasizing the longitudinal spatial characteristic of this space, and by doing so, opening up doors to discover the up till now hidden room, metaphorically, as new space conquered upon the unknown, pre-presuming its existence through my own mental spatial history that feeds my designer intuition.

To conclude: this design situation makes me think of Alvaro Siza's Centro Gallego de Arte Contemporaneo in Santiago de Compostela (and in a more direct way, of the simple solution Aldo Rossi applied to span the window bays in his Berlin apartments), where he introduces an obvious steel beam that bears a huge mass of stone volume. I want to extend this concept into a permanent building site solution, a shoring timber and buttress solution, transcribed in steel as to say out loud: I had to do this, to save the situation from falling down, putting a beam under it, putting a buttress under the beam, and I had no time to waste, so all of it remains in the sight, visibly readable for the users of the building and passers-by in public space, giving access to the lecture of the structure, and by reading the work of gravitation transcribed in the real matter of steel bearing the masses of spanning and vaulting brickwork, being at ease with your own existence while standing with both of your feet in a clay world that will absorb your body one day.

It's like reading the structure of a Gothic cathedral during a boring religious ceremony, conducting your own rituals to kill time in a useful way until the priest gives permission to go out in open space.

Thank God, the Sun is shining today, so I can feel the light shaft better in my design process.

10 April 2010: 17.45

Designing *Tales from the Subconscious 1* reveals spaces quite unexpected. This really appears to be *the hidden room*, a GAP I wanted to bridge since a very long time.

On the one hand, I manage to create the 'hidden rooms' by design, by concept, in many ways I could explain by pointing at the drawings.

On the other hand, some unexpected opportunities pop up while I investigate the bearing structure of the whole. As the cross section reveals, through designing, the necessity to construct buttresses of brick masses becomes obvious [see: cross section, the *orthografia* layer in the Vectorworks document]. Caused by the volumetric configuration -as the design is growing- these buttress masses themselves form specific intersticed spaces, possibly accessible for walking or storing things. The latter possibility could be applied to form *the endless wardrobe*, or a hidden cavity to hide during unexpected wartime.

I have designed a water well, captured in a water pit, which will be the subject of a separate building mass that will be hooked onto the composition as a whole. The presence of the water pit as a vertical spatiality contrasts with the horizontal stretching of the design in the horizontal ridges in the Landscape.