

EDITORIAL

THE NATURAL MATTER AS A NEW ARCHITECTURAL PARADIGM

The natural matter as a new architectural paradigm.

At Tipasa, I see equals I believe, and I am not stubborn enough to deny what my hands can touch and my lips caress (...) There is a freedom there.

Nuptials at Tipasa: Albert Camus

The experience of the stone has transformed my architectural approach. Without premeditation as nothing in me has changed through the thought, the act precedes it. I like it before understanding it. Architectural form comes from the desire to caress and love the willing matter. And in this way all proceeds from the matter and the experience built.

The Parthenon is the great human dream alienated by the sterile forms of the aesthetics. The art disappears in the contemplation of dead forms of plastics events. Only the vernacular building connects the human to his existence. The designed architecture purposely alienates.

In vernacular architectural forms is the matter which guides. Architecture of stone, wood, earth, straw, connects with those who live them. There are no limits between the human's body and houses emerging from the site. What we identify as suitable forms, are not, because there is no form thought. Matter dictates, and the human is guided. He loves before knowing he loves it. He is not concerned about the love of beauty. He puts his body in unison with its environment. His art is thrifty.

Having to think before building is the true perversion. Perverse reversal that forces the pencil on the blank page.

The architect must be a surveyor. He must measure the terrain with a human step. Stick the wood stakes. Place the stones. The act removes the drawing. The adventure can begin.

The cellar of Vauvert, my first stone construction, was born of a chance encounter. It was during holiday near the famous Roman aqueduct, the Pont du Gard. On the path I took every day to reach the river, there was

an enclosure of cyclopean stones. They were stacked by a scrapyard worker anxious to hide the object of his work. That is to say, the barbarity of a consumer society rejecting and throwing to the ground the objects used that doesn't want. Seduced by the power of this building, I sought to know from where were drawn those stones. The discovery of the quarry was an emotional shock.

The monstrous pile of stacked stones sprang to my eyes. I was swept up in a "maelstrom" kinetics. I saw at the same time the pyramids and temples of Egypt, the palace of Herod, the great cathedrals and Ankhor-Vat, Machu Pichu and the Mayan pyramids. The stones told me their secret. They whispered me: take us; we will take you beyond time. Each grain of our skin will reflect the cosmos. You will be at peace. Glad you put us honestly on the ground at the service of those who command you. We'll do the rest. These lytic Sirens enchanted me. I went on the difficult way of formal exile. I made a first experience built in stone, the cellar of Vauvert. It touched me by changing my architectural paradigms.

Every evening after the working day I put my hands and my face against the stone. I put together the large blocks erected in the night wind. I sniffed the strange smell and powerful millions of prisoners skeletons of inert gangue. Every part of this stone was telling me about his life, his destiny, I discovered on them celestial universes. I plunged into the great crash of atoms jostled by the energy that gave birth to our universe. I recognized the stone as mine. The nose against the matter I dove in galaxies. I saw dancing stars, large nebulae, stellar snakes, red dwarfs and cosmic swirls. Stone veins are the life that animates us.

I then realized that the matter was our history. Upright or lying stone was reveled. She's my twin. Part of myself. I had no need to format the matter was matter that took shape.

Industrial technology has alienated us from living matter, our double. We are no longer one with it. To shape the blacksmith struggles. Or dances. The matter likes being caressed, shaped, sheared, furnished. She

gets caught but the blacksmith does not possess it. In the end it is she who makes the rules. How far will she accept? Forging steel blacksmith becomes steel. It is the subject who possesses him. Is the same for the carpenter, the masoner, the stonemasoner. The matter guides their hand to his desire.

Industrial products are dead matter. The pestilential stench of their rotting gives nauseas. We build dwellings cells which are large coffins where our lives wither. Lives distracted by the circus games. Schizophrenic life in an unknown environment that ignores them.

Our work by imposing industrial "products" separates us from the matter. We are asked to make buildings like we were going to the supermarket: some perforated sheet here, some concrete blocks there, two kilos of glass suspended above, a box of red or black paint to hide the poverty... In short, go fast for a world where speed increases with profit. Have brilliant lives, rhinestones and stress. To be finally devoured in the great machine of oblivion.

To excel you have to forget. Wedding matter of time. I did my nursery school with large peasant father. He was born in the nineteenth century. In a time when men took their resources from their immediate environment. He knew to do everything: baking bread, dig with a wooden log, make wine, make baskets.

Under the stems of a hazel tree recently cut he drew long strips of soft bark. The bare stem, bent, deformed, attached, formed the carcass. Then we braid long bark snakes to blend with this structure. The basket was born of a reincarnated hazel.

It took me ten years to understand this childhood experience. It is the matter that dictates. By accepting the dictates my grandfather engendered wonderful forms. No need to foresee them. As far as we love living and natural matter, it will provide us. We must surrender to it. Accept his influence. Submit his law.

There is a freedom there.

Gilles Perraudin