

Emma Moberg

Hand Book

Guide book
Instruction
Recipe
Ingredient
Store
Fridge
Bank
Encyclopedia
Cloud
Manual
Tool Box
Hand
Instrument
Machine

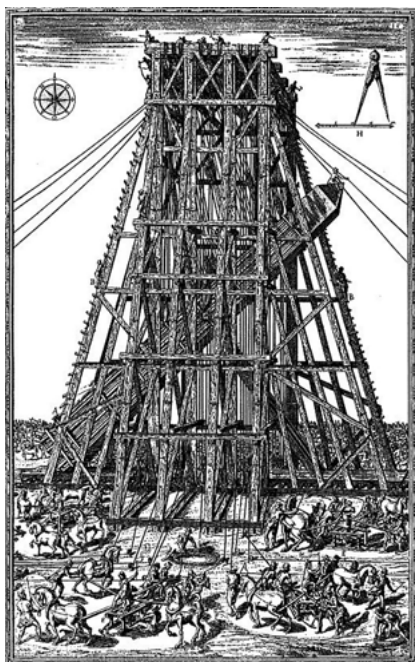


Fig. 1 Lowering of the Vatican Obelisk, Rome 1586, Domenico Fontana, from *Della Trasportatione Dell'Obelisco Vaticano* (1586).

Language Matter

In the physical world we exist in relation to matter. Matter is physical, and thus real and it is not “immutable or passive” as feminist theorist Karen Barad explains. Matter is always an ongoing historicity. Therefore matter, human and non-human, has the ability to shape Nature and other beings.

Equally, language has a defining power and the agency to become matter through the specific use of linguistics. Terms and language matters.

I see the agency in language and matter, take them seriously and use them consciously. I know that the line between language, definition and matter is often blurred and that they have the potential to transform between themselves.



Fig. 2 *Netsuke* from the collection of Edmund de Waal.

Thought and Object

In the novel *The Hare with the Amber Eyes*, author and ceramicist Edmund de Waal tells the story of a vitrine full of delicate porcelain figures as it travels through time and continents in the lines of his family.

Objects, like in a *Wunderkammer*, have the potential to be found, transferred, given and communicated. Their surface, weight, profile and iconography carry meaning, or not, inherent to the person who picks them up next.

My professor Elizabeth once showed our group of students a black piece of stone that had served as a tool in a settlement of 14th century Ireland. The stone is passed around amongst the students in Stockholm, six hundred years later, storing their fingerprints together with those of the Irish farmers, Elizabeth's own, the imprint of the piece of timber it once served to shape, and now ours. I believe this is meaningful. They are stored there, quietly in the material existence of the object, formed by those external influences it encounters.

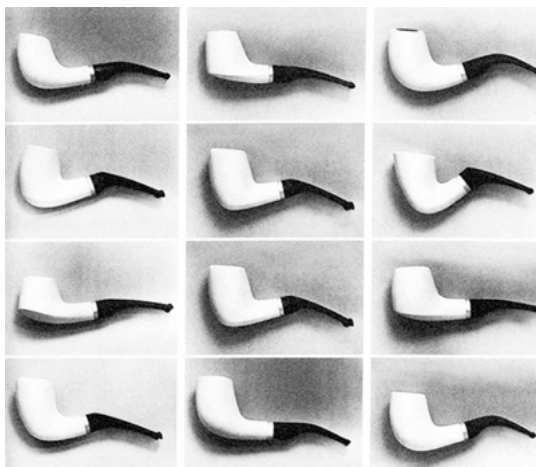


Fig. 3 *Pipes* by Tapio Wirkkala.

Nature and Culture

Since man became modern, this relationship has inevitably and permanently changed Nature. The relationship between Nature and Culture can be said to largely evolve around design. Design of the gene, design of cities, buildings, the whole environment, the biosphere, and it largely includes architecture and landscape. The notion of growth and positivism in the revolutionary ideas of modernism are impossible to reconcile with the ecological crisis that we are experiencing today.

Philosopher and theorist Bruno Latour writes that no designer invented the chair. Quite simply we decided to sit down and thus the chair came into being. Style and its path or evolution were secondary. Through the process of mimetics and learning, our effect on our surroundings can slowly evolve; it does so, however, through an evolutionary process rather than a revolutionary one.

The material culture inherent in nature carries a meaning in its permanence and matter. In this sense culture is long-lasting, and becomes, through time, what we refer to when we speak of Nature. We are part of the natural environment that surrounds us, and Culture and Landscape can no longer be distilled from one another.



Champs de glace entre lesquels la BELGICA s'est avancée le 16 février 1899,
resserrés et présentant de légères traces de pressions. Phot. Arctowski.

Icebergs and the Sublime

Polar expeditions have been stretching the horizon of human knowledge since the late eighteen-hundreds. Human nature is prone to search for the sublime. Two such extreme points are the ends of the Earth, its poles and the dangerous race of the 19th century to first set foot on them. Having grown up with the tales of the heroic Norwegian scientists and explorers Fridtjof Nansen and Roald Amundsen, I sympathise with the romantic adventures described in their travel diaries of the Polar expeditions. Fridtjof Nansen, racing to the North Pole, is quoted by the author Annie Dillard as he recites “the great adventure of the ice, deep and pure as infinity... the eternal round of the universe and its eternal death.”

The Polar prose, modern in its conception of industrial progress and utilisation of land, evokes the ideas of absolutes. Ideas of eternity, perfection and the sublime are celebrated as though they were visible parts of the landscape. To me, they somehow naively manifest the ideas of modernism in the sense of eternal growth, of Man mounting the impossibilities of Nature and expecting more once past the absolute point.



Fig. 5 Temple of Jupiter in the Diocletian Palace, Split, Robert Adams (1764).

Ruins, Skeletons and Structures

When we alter the city, nature or the ground, we are inevitably working with a cultural landscape. In the European city and landscape, the untouched and pure land and matter are not the reality from which we begin and continue.

A famous historical example of a human-made landscape taking on new and further function is the Diocletian Palace in Split. The bare cliff, becoming the palace, becoming the town itself, tells us of the continued and layered form of habitation of our culture.

Architect Rodrigo Peres de Arce writes of the palace: “A conversion operation of enormous scale took place from that moment onwards: the ruins of the palace were gradually transformed into a town and the social stratification of the inhabitants was reflected in the way that the grounds and available spaces were used. Thus the wealthy took possession of the areas inside the palace precincts where they could build their mansions, the less powerful citizens inhabited the rooms and spaces which had remained from the original fabric and the plebeians were left with the crypts, basements and cellar. New buildings and a new street layout were superimposed on the Roman ones.”

Ruins, skeletons, existing structures and cities are landscapes in their own right and part of the matter we alter and continue in our work with the cultural landscape.

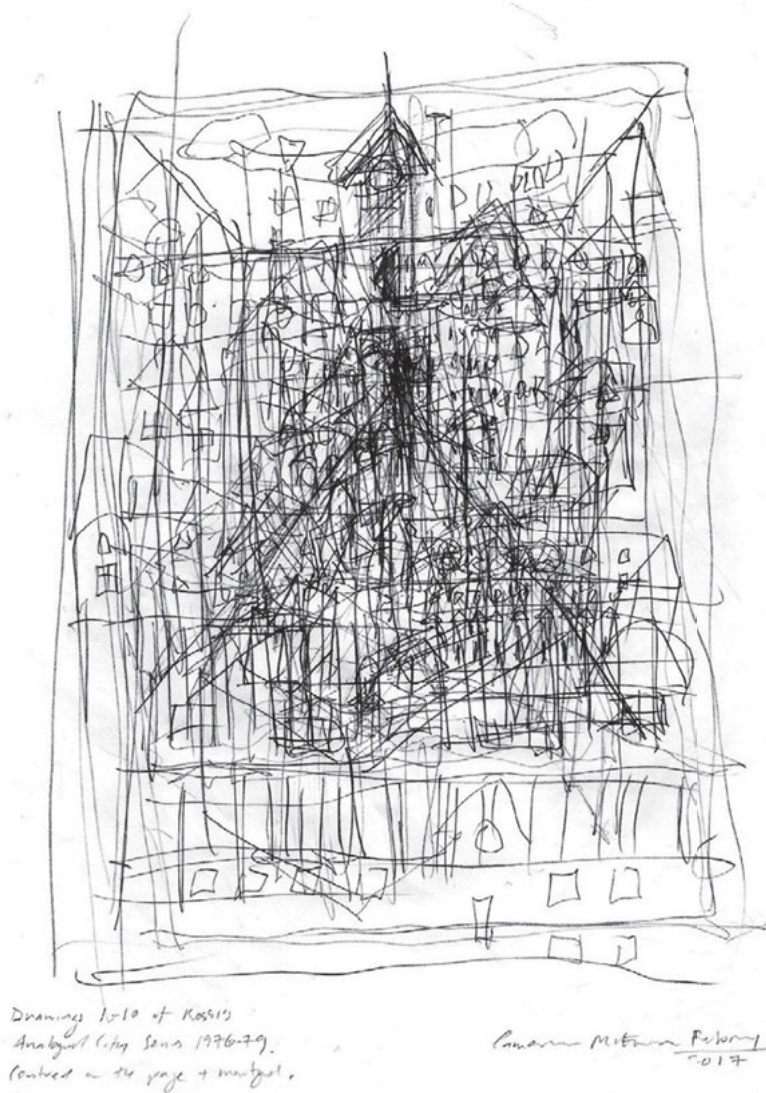


Fig. 6 The Analogical Surface, Aldo Rossi.

Analogue, Collage and the Digital

The simultaneous existence of different versions of the city lives in the land of ambiguity and duality in the image of the city.

It may not physically manifest itself, but is sometimes apparent in the memory of its inhabitants and only visible to the native eye. Franz Kafka, talking of his native Prague, wrote, “today we walk through the broad streets of the rebuilt city, but our feet and eyes are unsure. Still we tremble inwardly as if we were in the wretched old streets. Our hearts have not yet registered any of the improvements. The old unhealthy Jewish district within us is more real than the new hygienic city around us.” (p. 192) A parallel reality therefore exists to Kafka in Prague. I believe that this version of the city, perhaps one that existed until just recently, is as valid as the broad streets of the new city.

If we can imagine the past and the future flowing through the city like memory does with people, this previous version of the city lives on in a parallel image, drawing, archive, cloud, server, city wall, or physical object.



Fig. 7 *Barrio La Malagueira in Évora, Portugal, Álvaro Siza (1997).*

Drawing Matter

Drawing is a method. In the nature and landscape that is discovered and cultured, designed and altered, our ways to continue, inhabit and care for these starts with the act of observing, seeing, listening, recording. The architect, like the archeologist, the antropologist, the sociologist, the doctor, the engineer or the psychologist listens, records and reacts to the matter at hand.

The drawing, similar to the object, the recording, the model and the photograph, can never entirely capture the complexity and reality of nature. It holds the potential to capture fragments of lived or imagined realities that are stored and materialised in the same instance. As a physcial thought, specified and materialised, it carries the potential to resurface as matter and landscape in time.