

## **Templum, Tempus, Tempestas: the architecture of time (1500 words abstract)**

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If we are on the verge of a new era in architecture, the era of an architecture of time instead of an architecture of space, it seems wise to at least pose the question if time has not always been part of architectural thinking and if concepts of space have not always been entangled with those of time? Because the frame of this paper forbids any even limited genealogy of this entanglement, I will just give one example (indeed a truly exemplary one) by going back to Vitruvius, to see how a procedure involving the spatialization of time, the time of the cosmic clock of the orbit of the sun captured by the gnomon, becomes the founding act of the city. I will also show, however, that in this procedure a deeper conception of time as memory gets lost or forgotten, the time of the rituals of the founding of the Roman town. In these rituals a clear idea of remembrance steered the spatial gestures and figures of the inauguration of the place of a new community. This forgetting seems typical for the proto-functionalist Vitruvius.

Central to my observations will be an interpretation of the relation between the Latin word *tempus*, meaning both time and the weather (or the season), and the notion of the *templum*, the figure marking the area of divination in the rites of the Roman settlers founding a new town. I will argue that this *templum* (from Greek *temnein*: to cut, to sever), severing a sacred from a profane domain, is still the substance of every architectural line and that despite all the efforts to make the *templum* a purely functional spatial frame, what we actually still frame in architecture is always time. It is the time of waiting and of promise, a time inhering that special “while” of the surveyor and the augur, awaiting the signs of the gods in the *templum in caelo* to translate them to a *templum in terra*, the saved and safeguarded enclosure, in which the life of a new community would find its place. This waiting implies attunement, hope and situatedness in the sense of a finding oneself somewhere, somehow and at some time. (Martin Heidegger’s *Befindlichkeit*) It implies a communal past and an open future (a beginning). It is exactly the idea of attunement that makes every architectural frame a necessarily ornamental one, ornament understood here as both dress and armor, an attunement to the occasion, the celebration of a being (stretched up) in time, a being into the “while.” It is for this reason that in Vitruvius “tuning” (mood) takes the relay of the architectural orders, at the same time forgetting and materializing the time of waiting and of promise originally framed in the earthly and celestial *templum*.

I will then proceed enumerating the different architectural frames to show what forms of time were and are implied. We may think here of the wall and the roof as the instrument of privacy (of privatized time desynchronized from the urban community and its Gods); the floor as the cutting off from the earth and the hearth as an opening

up again to a terrestrial past (according to Semper when kindling the fire we remember the first time the human settled down on the floor of the earth, communing around the fireplace); finally the window as the reincarnation of the *templum in caelo*, the frame in which the great gods of the sky, the Gods of the weather and of chance, had to appear.

In my text I will distinguish between closed or closing frames (the wall/the roof/the floor) and open frames or frames opening up (doors, windows, spaces delaying their closure). The closing frames define inner spaces and constitute spheres or moods, immunizing space and materializing a past bearing the activities taking place in the room in question. The open frames recut the closure or distract the definition of the inner space to reopen that space to an undetermined future.

One of the questions to be answered will be what past or memories are involved when we build, what events in human history contribute to this architectural being into the "while"? Is it merely the decision of a limited group of people who desires to build a communal house for their activities? Is the stretch of time larger, does it imply great cultural events which may crystalize in building typologies (like in Kahn)? Or still further: does this past time also pertain to a natural history of which the human is a part, a creative evolution organically resonating with the material constellation of a building (like in Wright)? What historic decisions do we repeat when the wall rises?

Inversely, concerning the open frames: what drives us towards the window again and again? Is it merely the glance, satisfying our curiosity about what happens outside? Is it a beautiful vista ready to distract us? Is it the weather that might soon engage us in a futile conversation about hours to come? What happens when we silently stand near the window sill captured by a Bachelardian reverie? Standing in or into the light we find ourselves in the open, in that hour in which things are not yet decided. We are wreathed by the aura of the possible, by the "whiling wide" (*die verweilende Weite*, Heidegger). Even when prompted by a desire for entertainment or information, or by a longing for forgetfulness, and regardless the curiosity that might be at stake, what eventually carries us towards the window is the light as this clearing (*Lichtung*) in which we re-tune to an open future.

And the same is true for passing a door. Whatever functional path we follow, whatever habituation or habit drives us through that opening, still there is a minimal of the undetermined or the unknown of a real life-line that pulls us to the next room.

In the same way we must rethink the question of typology. Types define buildings according to habits or human institutions finding place in them. They tend towards generality, towards form. As such, they are the products of a past. However, they need a certain vagueness, otherwise they would completely lock up the future in

the past. For that reason Louis Kahn re-invented *poché* as the necessary thick and vague zone that any building type needs in order to remain open to the future.

Where the closed frames, the *templa in terra*, materialize a past and decide about inside and outside, what is and what is not, the open frames are *templa in caelo*, reopening the closed frames unto the unforeseen, the indefinite. It are the frames of becoming, re-loading us with hope and promise.

I will end my discourse by arguing that in our secularized era the frame of the *templum in caelo* will necessarily become a *templum* framing meteorological phenomena. Having entered what has been announced to become the “century of the weather” or the “meteorological age” (Michel Serres), architecture can no longer escape its destination to be a discipline of space *and* time, the *tempus* as the weather. It has often been said lately: what was once the quiet background of our lives, the weather, has now come forward and stepped onto the stage to become the leading personage in the play of our lives. We are no longer the actors. The roles have been exchanged: we humans have become the public, the weather has become the main actor (Michel Serres). A future architecture will have to deal with this strange paradox: it will have to be an armor, saving and protecting us from the new rough and changing conditions of the weather, from the *tempestas*, and at the same time it has to celebrate this weather as the element, the true time or true “while” of our lives. The architecture of Prospero.

After “the great neglect” of the modern movement, abstracting architecture as much as possible from concrete environmental conditions, this would mean a fundamental reconsideration of buildings as weather-machines. Such a new architecture of the weather will have to invent new typologies to accommodate the enjoyment of the new weather conditions—new impluvia, new solaria and new “ventulia;” it will have to put to the test new materials closing buildings and resisting the coming *tempestas* (*climate change*), while at the same time opening up in a visual, acoustic and tactile sensibility and in a capacity to receive the weather and age meaningfully; it will have to reconsider the theme of the silhouette as the true cut and meeting zone of earth and sky, a new *templum in caelo*; finally it will have to invent new ornaments, fit to celebrate the weather. Every building will become a cascade, framing and ornamenting the streams, gushes and gusts of the *tempus-tempestas*.

In my discourse, examples of Wright, Scarpa, Koolhaas, Holl and Herzog and the Meuron will serve as the stepping stones to this new architecture of the meteors.