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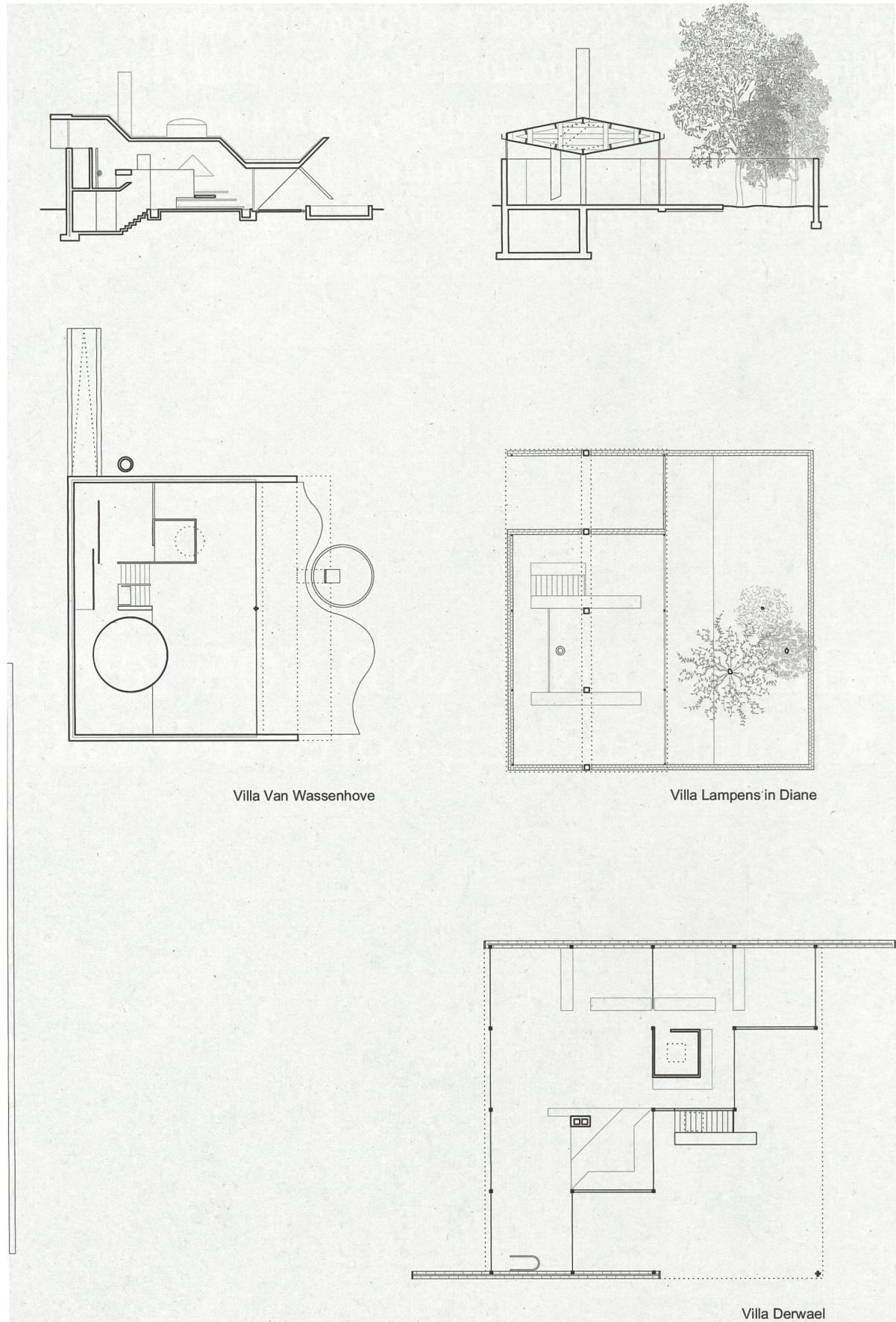
«If the core of the architectural project is about defining an order in spatial conception and giving to it an aesthetic and a meaning, then we must fix permanent agents as a matter of psychological and disciplinary survival on which, at times, we can rely on and restart from.»

WHERE I END AND YOU BEGIN

Kornel Lewicki, Lorenzo Vicari

► Kornel Lewicki, born 1992, is an independent architect based in Italy. Between 2016- 18 he was part of the editorial board of OSA, organising the programme of Resistance Resilience Relevance in the form of public talks and pamphlets. Graduated with a Master's degree in architecture in 2018 at Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio under the guidance of prof. Mario Botta, he collaborated with Christian Kerez in Zurich, and currently with Adrien Verschueren, at Baukunst in Brussels.

► Lorenzo Vicari, born 1993, is an independent architect graduated at the Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio with Quintus Miller. In 2015 he assisted the chair of Mauro Baracco at RMIT University in Melbourne. Between 2015 and 2018 he was part of the editorial board of OSA, organising the program of Resistance-Resilience-Relevance in the form of public talks and pamphlets. Former collaborator of Baracco+Wright architects in Melbourne, he is based in Brussels as a collaborator of Baukunst.

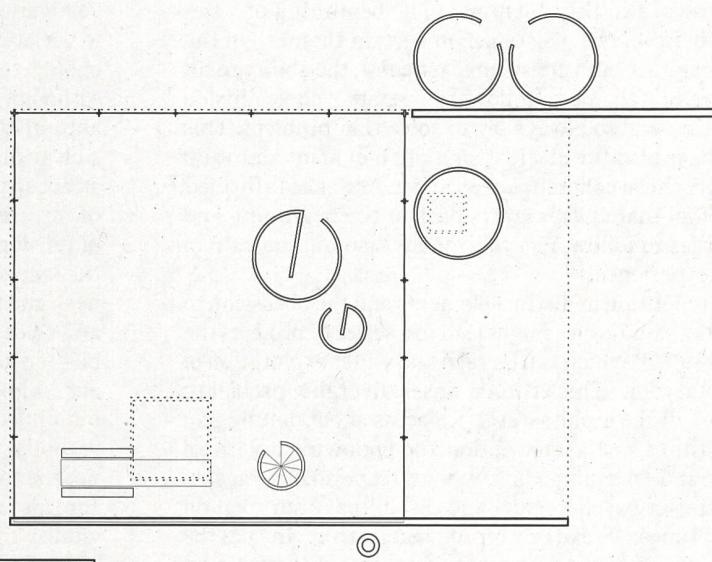
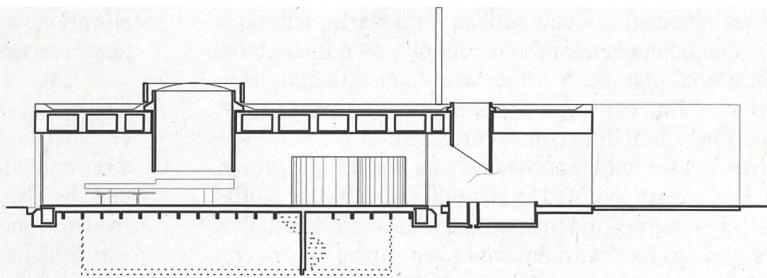


Villa Van Wassenhove

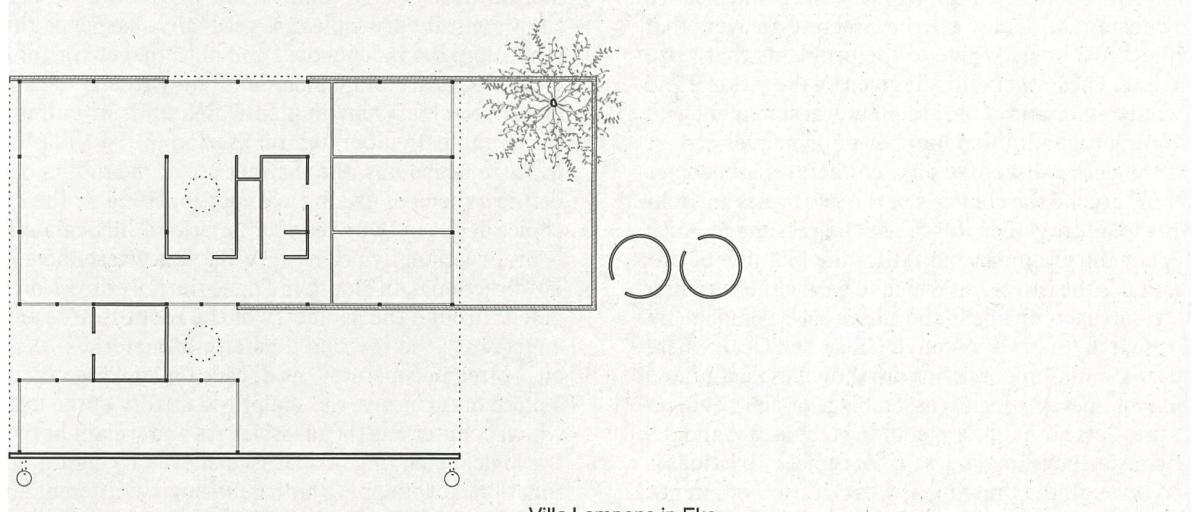
Villa Lampens 'in Diane'

Villa Derwael

Drawings reproduced by Kornel Lewicki
and Lorenzo Vicari (scale 1:250)



Villa Vandenhaute in Kiebooms



Villa Lampens in Eke

Drawings reproduced by Kornel Lewicki
and Lorenzo Vicari (scale 1:250)

Whenever one begins a new project — no matter what it is about — one opens Pandora's box of one's own intellectual and emotional history. A whole world appears and disappears in the blink of an eye: projects of one's personal past, those of others similar in context or intention, elements one has fallen in love with, approaches one is willing to adopt. As much as we are tempted to elaborate on familiar motifs, we are drawn to respond to contingent necessities and new desires. Face to face with our inner repertoire we are confronted with the dilemma of what to take with us and what to leave behind before closing the box.

I TRUST AND DOUBT

In his text *Architecture for Museums*, Aldo Rossi attempts to give a definition of a theory of architecture that is significant in regard to this dilemma: «The beginning of a theory is, I believe, the insistence on certain themes, on the part of architects and artists; in particular, the ability to hit the centre of a theme to follow, to operate a choice inside architecture and to always try to solve that problem. This insistence is also the clearest sign of an evident and valid autobiographical coherence of an artist. As Seneca affirmed, it is the fool that always starts back at the beginning and who refuses to follow, in a continuous fashion, the path of his own experience.»⁽¹⁾

The repetition of distinct elements and the obsession to rethink the same issues might lead to a series of projects the ultimate sum of which can be seen as a wider exploration of one pivotal topic. This attitude raises diverging problems: if the core of the architectural project is about defining an order within a spatial conception and endowing it with an aesthetic and a meaning, then we must fix permanent agents as a matter of psychological and disciplinary survival on which, at times, we can rely on and restart from. In fact, the more we try to dig out a system of constants, whose sum can be called a personal ordering apparatus, the more we must sustain the very intimate dichotomy between trust and doubt (both in ideas and form). Rossi, then, proceeds even further, stating that «The whole discourse of architecture, in all its complexities, could be included in a single discourse, reduced to basic statements. As such, architecture presents itself as a meditation on things, on facts; the principles are few and constant but many are the concrete answers that the architect and society give to the problems that arise through time. The immutability is given by the rational and reductive characteristic of the architectural statements.»⁽²⁾

Assuming that a limited number of principles can encompass the entire discourse on architecture, it becomes evident how crucial the choice is of the few topics an architect wants to address. For Rossi, not the reasons for such a choice, nor the grammar, but rather the plot line of this investigation is the canvas on which to weave the very first and last tassel that both opens and closes one's personal life-span of research. In his drawing *«il Gioco dell'Oca»*, where many echoes of his Pandora's box are shown in a calibrated and subtle manner, the logical assemblage of one's own obsessions prevents both the danger of the *tabula rasa* and the risk of inconsistency. Rossi's arsenal of typical variations is displayed through the drawing as a declaration of intents: what appears to be merely a refined sum of plans, sections,

elevations and perspectives turns out, instead, to be a fantastic construction of his own intention within architecture.

«Chutes and Ladders» becomes for Rossi a metaphor able to explore out the spiral of his own thought and œuvre. Just as in the game the different cases are displayed as a rational and playful succession that leads players to the end, he also displays the conception of an architecture as the continuous refocusing on very few personal principles and reasons.

II JULIAAN LAMPENS: SOME SORT OF EMOTIONAL AFFAIR

In the case of Juliaan Lampens the continuous confirmation of his own plot line and the perseverance to act on a very limited number of principles result in a purely spatial investigation. Considering his houses as a series of thematic variations, one can define a way of living that is refined enough to offer a precise reasoning on architectural thought. Although far removed from Rossi's drawing speculation and auto-analytical precision, in Lampens' plans too, at least, a clear disposition of constants can be found: roofs as abstract spatial defining elements; walls as elements capable of forming an instinctive yet extremely controlled agent of tension between inside-outside, between the house and the landscape, between horizontality and verticality, lightness and darkness, vastness and enclosure, compression and release... a whole set of features that a posteriori can be seen as a deformation of the same intention. For Lampens, thinking architecture does not mean to limit it to the building elements, the facades, the columns. All this is only secondary. In every house of his, the fundamental aspect is not the form but its reversal, the space, the emptiness that spreads out rhythmically between the walls, that defines the vitality that is more significant than the walls themselves. This obsession to signify the void is for Lampens a rational and aesthetic aspect that every project can achieve and around which each of his houses revolves. Pursuing emptiness, geometry and elements reduction — as in a sort of a maniacal exercise of repetition — his houses talk the same language and define similar conditions for space-living. From his very first concrete house, *House in Eke*, to the more abstract spatial composition of *Villa Van Wassenhove*, a few constant principles are gradually sharpened through repetition: the independent and objectual character of services blocks around which fluxes flow freely; the absence of a spatial hierarchy in plan which finds its culmination in the radically liberated realisation in the *Villa Vandenhante* in Kiebooms; the abstract use of the roof in order to define a piece of ground without touching it; the careful choice of one or two axes of orientation (*Villa Vandenhante* is bi-directionally oriented, *Villa Van Wassenhove* is mono-directional, in *House in Diane* the only direction is provided through the geometry of the roof towards an inner courtyard); the restricted palette of materials; the kitchen — often in concrete — as a space for cooking rather than a piece of furniture; the sculptural quality of the drainage, which counteracts the massiveness and weight of the roof; the logical blending of spaces, achieved by continuity and functional overlapping both between the different areas of the house and, in a broader sense, between interior and ex-

terior spaces; the high degree of indefiniteness of privacy in relation to freedom, that opens up the wildest possibilities in spatial conception.

Working with such a limited plot line of ideas need by no means lead to monotony: indeed, the fewer principles are taken into account, the more intellectually consistent the narrative becomes.

The effort to identify the sparse set of principles expressed in Lampens' houses, leads to a simple observation: the enclosure, the definition of the void, the space the body moves through, is the essence of architecture and it is around this centre that every other feature in architecture spins around. Starting from this thought, a second one follows suit: space is a subtle matter, more stable than style. In this way, Lampens' material treatment can easily be ascribed to a certain era, while the simplicity and the main characteristics of his spatial approach are, so to speak, absolute and freed from nervous fluctuations (trends).

II.I SPINNING AROUND SURFACE, STRUCTURE, SPIRIT

Surface

Although the core of architectural experience is the movement a certain space imposes on a particular user with precisely calibrated proportions and lighting condition, the first medium through which a building communicates remains the surface of its skin. It is the superficial that gives the building its character and sensibility. In the houses of Juliaan Lampens, surface is an agent of truth: shunning any kind of decorative artificiality — no cladding whatsoever is allowed — sight and touch are pleased by materials that do not pretend to be something else. Where walls are made of rough concrete it is because of structural and spatial reasons (the lower wall in Lampens' own house stiffens the roof and gives to the space its grotto kind of character); where walls are made of brick, they have been freed from structural obligations and their role is to define, direct and encircle space; steel pillars are purely structural, placed to follow the geometric composition of the plan, usually hidden in the window frame to enrich both emptiness and lightness. Such a way of employing surfaces generates buildings that are completely drenched in their extended and absolute context.

Structure

The simple principles that define the architecture of Juliaan Lampens can be summed up in two main spatial categories: the definition of a space by abstraction (covering it) and the delimitation of the space by a pragmatic encirclement of the living space. Although he mainly starts from a precise grid, the use of a mixed system of both pillars and walls, gives Lampens a high degree of freedom in the composition of space. Structural and spatial thought are always in a relationship that is both bijective and necessary.

Spirit

A sense of heart-warming is well achieved when visiting a house conceived by Juliaan Lampens. The reasons for this

feeling are numerous: It is worth mentioning the great care taken in working out the details, the dimness of the interior spaces (so dim that it literally pushes the inhabitants outside, towards the landscape), the joyful ease of lingering in such empty spaces, the presence of sculptural pieces of furniture, the light tenderly brushing a rough concrete wall. But the most sublime part of this experience is given by the purity of these houses: They always are an expression of the human spirit — of a sense of belonging — materialised by a simple and direct reflection on living conditions, necessities and rituals.

III PERSISTENCE AND DISSOLUTION

When questioning such an attitude and the tension that exists between what is systematically confirmed in a practice and what instead gets lost along the path, we should understand the dichotomy between doubt and trust as an intimate reasoning which leads to persistence or dissolution.

The broader a series of projects gets, the higher is the risk of losing the coherent development of those principles which Rossi has described as rational and reductive statements on architecture. The crux lies in the liminal gap between persistent intentions and honest dissolutions of false desires. There is no space for self-indulgence. This gap is not a stable equilibrium, rather it is in the tension of its movement that one can progressively find more precise equilibria and orders. When defining one's own personal ordering apparatus, it is necessary to accept the non-definitive, mutable character of this possession and to embrace the condition of an equilibrium that is constantly reached, lost, rediscovered and redefined.