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Autor: Klettner Soler, Beatriz

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POETRY, LANGUAGE, ARCHITECTURE, TOWARDS AN INTROSPECTION OF MARTIN HEIDEGGER'S PHILOSOPHY

Beatriz Klettner Soler

The essence of poetry in architecture often survives unmentioned. It is felt, nonetheless, as a palpable tension. In poetry, words form a sentence. That sentence's order; its characteristics give a meaning to it, project sensations, thoughts and questions. Architecture is created in a similar way. The principle of this essay is trying to understand architecture through the philosophical lenses of Martin Heidegger's work. The analysis of his writing, as I comprehend it, keeps a deep focus on the creative process, and its relationship to poetry and language, and in its extension, to architecture itself.

I THE ORIGIN OF THE WORK OF ART

Martin Heidegger defines origin as «that from and by which something is what it is and as it is.» When speaking of the origin of work, and consequently of a work of art, it is the work itself that first lets the artist emerge as a master of his art in a bilateral loop. An artist is understood as a person of the creative field. The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other. Similarly, poetry finds its origin within the poet, and the poet finds his origin within poetry.

When putting architecture under the microscope, due to its deep relation to the creative work, the same logic applies.

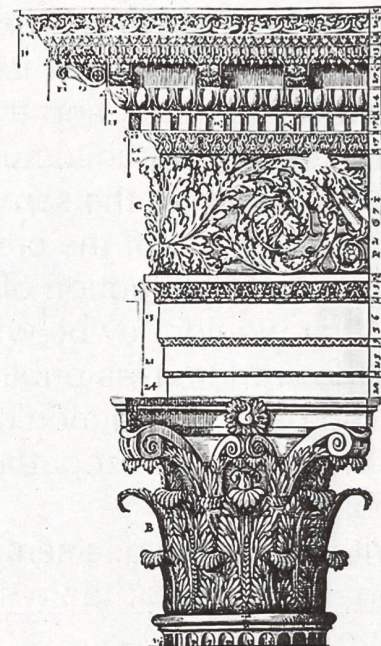
A key element of the creation process is the thing – what Heidegger understands as the reduction of all works: «All works have this thingly character. What would they be without it?» Through this statement, he also refers to how the work makes public something other than itself; it manifests something other; this action constitutes an allegory. «In the work of art, something other is brought together with the thing that is made, the work is a symbol.»

With this in mind, a sentence, as well as a column, are equal to the notion of «thing», and both of them stand for a bigger meaning than its objectified reduction.

In order to sense the tension of the relationship between the thing and its interdisciplinarity, I propose the equation of one of the verses of T.S. Elliot's Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock interacting with a Corinthian column.

Pour les trois cents d'ill, j'irai dans les sentiers,
 Pour les trois cents d'ill, j'irai dans les sentiers,
 Pour les trois cents d'ill, j'irai dans les sentiers,
 Pour les trois cents d'ill, j'irai dans les sentiers.

For I have known them all already, known them all:
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall
Beneath the music from a farther room.
So how should I presume?



B TS Elliot in Conversation with a Corinthian Column
Collage by Beatriz Klettner Soler

«It seems almost as though the thingly element in the art work is like the substructure into and upon which the other, authentic element is built.»

II THE ESSENCE OF THE THING

Words are also things. To speak is therefore, to transmit things.

It exists a nature by which things are done, the essence. The essence is found in the word, the verse and the stone. Such essence can only be described as the key element that differentiates a thing from another, a meaning from another, or a house from another.

«The work, therefore, is not the reproduction of some particular entity that happens to be present at any given time; it is on the contrary, the reproduction of the thing's general essence.»

III LANGUAGE

«To talk about language is presumably worse than to write about silence.»

Language is not only an enclosing of words, it is, as before mentioned, a collection of things. It is evident that a building speaks a language as much as a poem.

The conception of language means to dig into the idea of the nature of language and to distinguish this idea properly from other ideas.

When we understand the nature of language in terms of expression, we provide a more comprehensive definition by incorporating the concept of expression, «as one among many activities, into the total economy of those achievements by which man makes himself.»

Consequently, the expression of oneself is done through the element of the thing, being spoken, written or constructed. It balances the essence of the thing, and the energy to create and communicate. Architecture thereafter can be understood as the expression of the spoken word, as much as the written is the transcription of speech.

IV THE TENSION BETWEEN POETRY AND ARCHITECTURE

Poetry and architecture, even if deeply connected, work as different entities. Their relationship works as a juxtaposition of meanings, and helps us better understand each other. On the other side, a friction takes place, a strong tension between the fields, as in a painting by Mark Rothko, using two colors, two positions in one, producing the end result of a single work, be it a building or a poem.