

Postmortem: Building Destruction

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The art of building contains the finer art of destruction.

To be human is to build, but human beings also have an enigmatic fascination for the destruction of their own fabrications. The incendiary beauty of a burning building is both awful and awesome, making us beholden in a kind of a catatonic grip something we understand vaguely, and whatever we seem to understand, we hardly acknowledge. Why is there such intractable lure for the coming down of a building/construction? The demolition of Veterans Stadium in Philadelphia in 2004 was a spectacular event that heralded a crowning moment. The implosion was televised for two whole days as a magnificent theater of dismantling. "It was so cool," many spectators exclaimed, while nearby residents bemoaned the vanishing of a dear landmark. Perhaps this was destined as the life-cycle or utility of a building runs out but buildings have been marked for an episodic downfall so that new wonders may arise. The iconic demolition of Pruitt-Igoe Housing in St. Louis (1972) and the drowning of Mies van der Rohe's Crown Hall in Stanley Tigerman's photo-montage marked the passing away of a regime in anticipation of a new one. From the sacrificial ashes and rubbles rises the unashamed rhetoric of the avant-garde. Nietzsche is invoked.

It is important, at the outset, to set out the following typology of building destructions: *nihilistic* (most famously, the apocryphal scene of Nero playing the lyre while the city burnt, or Pompeii ravaged by a natural disaster), *tactical* (triumphal destruction of cities from Alexander to Genghiz Khan, the blitzkrieg of Second World War, or the demolition of Babri Masjid in India), and *transitional* (Pruitt-

Igoe). I am trying to keep the tactical or nihilistic apart from a fourth one: what I provisionally describe as ritualistic or conceptualized destruction. I do not intend a sociological explanation for all building catastrophes, but I am drawn, like moth to fire, to provide a risky metaphor here, to meditations on contrived destructions.

If a building ends with construction, some begins anew with its annihilation. This essay is a narrative on ritualized destruction, how various practices and performances of de-construction convey a significance contrary to the immediate or literal phenomenon of destruction. If tectonics (*techne/poiesis*) is about appearing and making appear, destruction is about the presencing of an absence; it is not simply an antimony but making appear of an otherwise. A vivid example is the blowing away of a Tibetan sand-mandala after its meticulous construction. Or, the weaving of baskets by Abba Paul, a Desert Father, and burning them at the end each year. Such phenomena may be approached by a number of terms: sacrifice, death, dismemberment, disappearance, "un-building," or "anarchitecture" (Gordon Matta-Clark). Destruction means a second chance, or in theological term, a resurrection, or in ascetical sense, an alchemical transformation, leaving one body for another.

The fine art of un-building makes a convergence of body and building. A contrived destruction of the building-body is one of the oldest and recurrent motifs in architecture. The body constructed in the tectonic framework of a building, or building formed in the ligaments of a body, both fall victim to a homicide or *baucide*, as the case may be. Body and

building are bound together in a bond of violence that re- or de-form each other. The ritual destruction of buildings is found in diverse situations: Many emblems on Greek temples are lithified versions of sacrificial objects. The Ise Shrine in Japan is taken apart and rebuilt every twenty years. The Hindu mandala is created on the dismembered body of a mysterious being upon which arises temples or cities. Rituals for gaining adulthood were performed through breaking down special huts. The roof is a favorite trope of destruction: Shamans or Buddhist *arhats* conceived illuminative ecstasy as breaking through the roof. James Frazer notes how Dieris of Australia tore through the roof of a special hut to initiate the arrival of rain. There is, in short, blood on the body of architecture.

In the following sections that involve narratives of demolition, dismemberment and disappearance, I intend to perform five post-mortems on departed bodies of architecture.

The narratives were selected on the epistemic question of whether destruction can be studied. If we are to propose a theory for building destruction, the narratives suggest both a horizon for such mysteries and provisional cartography of architectural violence. There are few questions that I will hold in abeyance, for a later analysis, but they shadow the narratives: Does destruction precede construction? Or, is construction followed by destruction? Is destruction implicit in construction? Is destruction antithetical to construction? I list the following anticipatory observations for reading the narratives:

Destruction is a beginning. The enactment of destruction has a contractual relationship with pre-established norms and practices. As with Edward Said's meditation on beginnings, I would like to say there is intention and method in such systematized mayhem. In other words, there is a method to the madness. Every beginning is an occasion of violence, and it is embedded in the ritual of building.

Destruction disrupts normativity; it involves a transgression or transcendence for which normativity is a required benchmark. Destruction triggers, as in Derrida's reflection on death, a "rhetoric of borders." The sense of destruction as an end invites an analogy with death. "Seneca describes the absolute imminence, the imminence of death at every instant. The imminence of a disappearance

that is by essence premature seals the union of the possible and the impossible, of fear and desire, and of mortality and immortality, in being-to-death." Thus, re-citing Seneca via Derrida, destruction is imminent in building.

Destruction is purposeful. Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Offret* (*The Sacrifice*, 1986) ends with an incendiary destruction of a house. (In fact, the end does not begin well. During the final shoot, the house-set burns down while the camera jams. The house had to be rebuilt so it could be burned again). In a driven meditation on the macrocosmic scope of human annihilation (nuclear catastrophe), and its microscopic reach into the lives of the individual, the father in the film pulls together the material possessions of the family and burns the house down as a kind of barter to save the family. Is this cataclysmic or cathartic? Is it a sacrifice or surrender? Compared to Michelangelo Antonioni's nihilistic and spectacular destruction of the consumerist house in *Zabriskie Point* (1970), the burning of the dwelling in the eponymous *Sacrifice* is an Abrahamic gift.

As with Siva's bipolar cosmic dance, destruction is ambiguous. Destruction is implicated in a doubleness: it is both a silencing and a recovery, a death and a rebirth. Its paradoxical kinship with creation is not only non-extractable, but also necessary, as many artists have noted about their art, that every act of creation is mirrored in an act of destruction. This oscillation between creation and destruction is present ubiquitously in the rhythms or proceedings of nature. The prosaic destiny of the deterioration of buildings receives a discursive doubleness in David Leatherbarrow and Mohsen Mostafavi's notion of "weathering."

Destruction is performative, and as such it is materially tenuous (although it needs materiality for that very performance), making it both unsettled and unsettling. That is why, the art of Matta-Clark or Andy Goldsworthy that are literally performed for destruction relies on the photographic medium for their rhetorical reproduction. The ontology of destruction requires a human agency in the performance and practice.

"WHY DID THE MONK BURN THE TEMPLE?"

Yukio Mishima wondered, as did millions of people, when the news got around that a monk at Kyoto's

wondrous temple had burnt the temple down, “why did the monk do that?” One sultry summer night in 1950, an acolyte priest Hayashi Yoken struck a match to a bundle of dry sticks and threw it at the most beautiful edifice on earth. The building burnt to ashes. Few things are known about Hayashi. The club-footed monk stammered, and before proceeding to burn the temple, went on a drinking binge and visiting prostitutes. But that did not explain why he torched Kyoto’s sacred shrine.



Figure 1: Kinkakuji, The Temple of the Golden Pavilion (source: author and <http://maizuru-walker.hp.infoseek.co.jp/zatsugaku/047/index.htm>)

That led Mishima the writer to his own reflection on the mystery of destruction, and to write a fictionalized version of the events that led to the climactic incendiary moment. Mishima’s story, *Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (1956), recreates the stammering priest Yoken as the fictional Mizoguchi. The book is finally an essay on the question of beauty and the beautiful and what is one to do when is beholden to a thing of beauty that not only confounds a visual apprehension but also challenges a conceptual comprehension.

But if beauty is here, can its obverse be far behind. Mizoguchi was both ugly and irresistible. He stuttered, dragged his foot, and presented himself as a miserable creature, a kind of hunchback of Kinkakuji. And that also, as Mizoguchi began to observe, made him an object of people’s attention even if that was surreptitious or unacknowledged. In a chain of actions that are both contemplative and concatenated, Mizoguchi homologized himself with the Golden Pavilion. The object of veneration and the subject of revulsion become alter egos.

The homology is however fraught with ambiguities. Mizoguchi wondered which one was the “real” Kinkakuji, the temple that his father had described so lovingly when he was a child, the model of the temple that he had seen in another precinct, the Kinkakuji that he serves, or the idea of that temple

that sediments in the soul of a beholder? And if the destination of a thing of perfect beauty is annihilation, which one is to be destroyed?

The golden phoenix that perches on its roof is both a poignant and ironic reminder of Kinkakuji’s burning destiny, its convulsions of destruction and rebuilding. Kinkakuji was rebuilt after Yoken/Mizoguchi destroyed it in 1950. It was destroyed during a war in the 15th century and rebuilt after that. The rebuilding was not exactly like the ritual dismantling and reconstruction of Ise Shrine.

Yukio Mishima’s own life parallels an itinerary of careful construction towards a ritualized annihilation. Identifying his own body as the national/ist ethic, Mishima built up his corporeal body, athletically and militaristically, to represent a perfect vision of the nationalist destination. But, in 1970, thwarted by the course of the body politic to gain credence for his nationalist vision or to enact a theatrical termination of such edification or both, Mishima committed *seppuku*, a self-ritualized suicide. In the *Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, Mishima makes complex conjunctions by invoking Buddhist ideas of transitoriness with social and nationalist ethics, all of which comes at a particular historical moment in war-torn Japan. The ambivalence of post-war chaos of Japan and gravitation towards incendiary illumination of social situations was reflected in Mishima’s first staged play *Kataku* (*The Burning House*, 1948), drawn from a Buddhist fable in the Lotus Sutra about house/mansions, sins and defilements.

Epilog: “When you see the Buddha, kill the Buddha.”

“THE RAFTERS ARE SHATTERED”

The young man, emaciated but resolute, sits under the fig tree in a forest, determined not to move until he has found the light. He sits cross-legged but erect, eyes closed but focused, with only one objective: the truth. For eight years he has roamed the forest for the truth. He has subjected his body to various trials if only truth would show. He remained standing on one leg as a form of penance. He went without food for weeks, his skin and bones were indistinguishable, and neither was truth.

Six years earlier, he was a prince in a palace, a lucky guy who had it all. Yet, he left home, re-

nounced as people would say, so home or *gaha* could be abolished forever. Home has not left him; it clung to his body like a leech caught after one has come out of the pond from a bath.

So he sat under the bo tree, the young leaves twinkling like green stars at the gentle breeze, determined not to stand up or open his eyes until what he sought has been found. Then at the end comes the brilliant moment, something that would signify the penultimate episode in an operatic journey. At a point in the meditation, a deep realization dawns on him, and he exclaims: "The rafters are shattered, the ridge-pole is destroyed, and the architect will no longer erect the house (*gaha*) again."

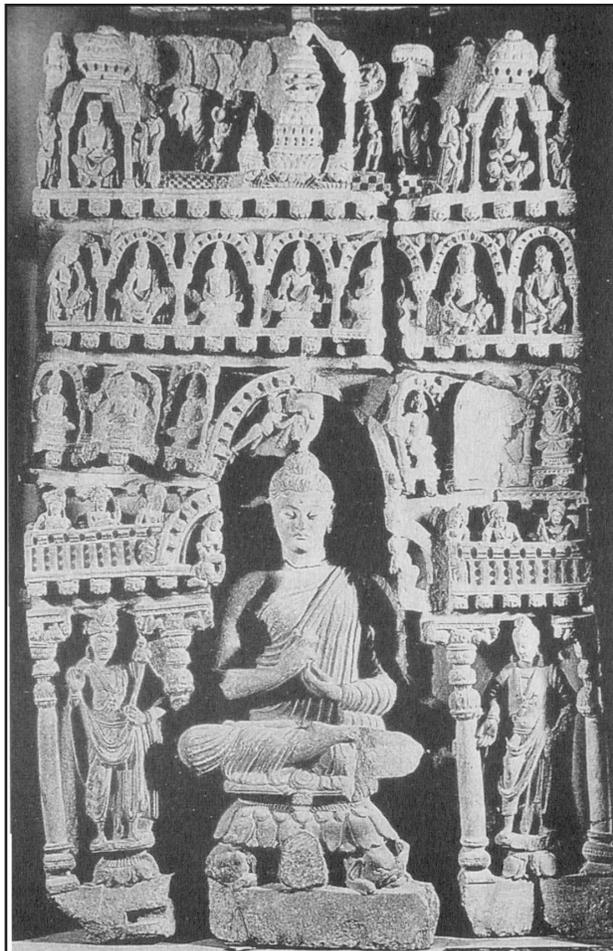


Fig. 2: The Buddha under a "distended lintel" (from *Gandharan Art in Pakistan*)

That is the only statement attributed to the Buddha describing himself the highly enigmatic and

ineffable event of attaining *nirvana*. Literary and artistic representations will struggle with recreating that condition, but the verses describe arriving at the ascetic *telos* in cataclysmic terms, as a dramatic destruction of the body. And what is also significant is that the destruction is carried out in the descriptive framework of a building.

Two notions are embedded in that cryptic statement. First, there is the body and building reference where the body is conceived of as *gaha*, home or house. And, second, there is the ushering of the dismantling of that structure. Two consequential questions emerge here: Why a building imagery for the body? And, why is the event rendered in a cataclysmic manner?

Gaha is the villain in the description. *Gaha* is home in its normative sense, implying being in the world, socially, familiarly and phenomenally. The Buddha's statement is the most vivid expression of the violent destruction of *gaha*. And what is the consequence of this climactic condition? The moment coincides with the final goal of asceticism, or freeing oneself from the tethers of the world. But this is part of a series of key episodes in the ascetic journey. The climactic nature of this event is premised by an ascetic conceptualization where the body is like a hut, whose existing lineaments and ligaments must be shattered before the enlightened life can begin. Clearly this is a vivid body and building association where the body-building is conceived of particularly as a "final" hut. The house-body stands as the last bastion in what appears to be a single minded pursuit of the ascetic to literally de-construct the existing structure of life.

In Buddhist sense, the destruction of the "last" hut is an ideograph of nirvana, the climax of renunciation. The cataclysm, using the trope of the shattered hut, basically inaugurates a new life in the teleological narrative where the old parameters are nullified. The narrational content is based on, first, the ascetic body being homologous to a building, and second, the body being primarily conditioned by socialization, must now be transformed radically.

The great ascetic experiment works through a simultaneity of the occupation and "destruction" of the body-building. It is not truly a destruction, however the rhetoric may be, but a radical reconstitution or transformation, where "something"

remains, but the old measures of identity are no longer valid. The so-called destruction of the hut is comparable to attaining a "non-conditioned" mode of existence, akin to a "second birth," of dying to this world and being born again in order to create another "human," a body more purified and superior. The Buddha once used the example of a chick breaking out of the egg-shell as a "second birth." Mircea Eliade explains that "to break the shell of the egg is equivalent... to breaking out of the samsara, out of the wheel of existence." After the shattered *gaha*, there is *nothing*, for it is coeval to a condition that is totally ineffable, or as one text mentions, *asamskrata*, or unconstructed. Stella Kramrisch describes that un-constructed condition as arriving at "zero-point."

Epilog: "I refuse a roof" (Buddhist ascetic declaration).

THE TEMPLE OF UN-BUILDING

The town was a luminous artifact, an ideal representation of upright citizens, celestial gods and the institutions of man. The town was an emblem of Apollonian Virtues, and of Laws and Principles. On the liminal side of that illustrious town, on a site at the far outskirts where tall, green trees surrounded a dank, marshy land, lay the temple. It was a wooden temple, with stocky columns and tiled roof on a wooden frame held together by lashes of ropes. The temple lay untended and overgrown with vines, waiting quietly, for the god to come.



Fig. 3: Dancing around the idol of Dionysos (Staatliche Museen, Berlin)

The women in town waited for the day when he would come. The women, wives, mothers or whores. Wife of a senator, mother of a general, sister to a noble person, or just a plain prostitute from the shadier part of town. They waited for the arrival of the god who comes from Elsewhere, the god who drives them mad. The god arrives and the city is tense. It's a time when the regular remains suspended and challenged. The official gods, the gods from the sky, look elsewhere, and generals, senators and merchants appear helpless as the women grow tenser. It's a time of the violence of "wellborn ladies," as Marcel Detienne describes.

The brazen god comes riding a leopard with prancing satyrs and maenads making music and flaunting various kinds of intoxicants. The god dances through the streets, from one neighborhood to another, with his raucous retinue following. The women run to the windows for a glimpse. Some run out of their houses, from their kitchen, from their afternoon nap, from attending to their children in the *aulae*. Some are young, some are old, dutiful wife of a senator, venerable mother of a general, chaste sister to a noble person, or just a plain whore. They run out of their houses and follow the god.

The party turns bigger and bigger. Satyrs, maenads and town women. They follow the gridded frame of the city streets, and after leaving the gates, take to the winding path that leads to the liminal location. The party arrives at the site of the temple, the old, sad temple that is waiting to be revived. Wine is drunk, dresses are loosened, bodies sway and swing. A goat is sacrificed, and its blood is mixed with the drink. The women shout the name of the god. The untying begins.

In a trance, in the name of the god, Dio-Nysos the Liberator, who came from nowhere and elsewhere, the women pounce on the temple. They climb and grab at the ropes tying the bundle of wooden posts that hold the roof rafters, they shake and pull in frenzy, their palms bruised and bloody. The ropes come apart, and one by one, the purlins fall, crashing to the ground, and soon the roof tiles, often one by one and often in the loud rumble of everything together. There are ecstatic shouts, the roof is no more, the temple is no more.

As soon as the temple is dismantled, it had to be put together again before sunset. The women, a

little weary by now, had to work harder to gather up the materials again, and climbing the precarious scaffolds prepared to rebuild the temple. One woman or another, a little dazed by the drink and the euphoria of enthusiasm, and the strain of carrying building materials, trip from an upper level of the platform and come tumbling down. And in a frenzy that is as ferocious as before when they began, the other women would jump down and pounce on the poor, fallen woman, and pull and tug at her until her limbs are severed. Thus the temple and its builders and un-builders would enter a curious and volatile relationship of building and mayhem, of death and birthing, recalling the genealogy of the god himself.

The whole ritual of sacrifice is structured around designed death and demolition, and consequent reconstruction. At the root of the bacchanalian destruction of the temple is "ecstasy" or "enthusiasm." "The Bacchic ritual produced what was called 'enthusiasm,'" Bertrand Russell notes, "which means etymologically having the god enter the worshipper, who believed that he became one with the god." The intoxicating drink facilitated the enthusiasm but more than that it was a rapturous oneness with the spirit of the god who transgressed the customs of the city and inverted the roles of citizenship and duty, ecstasy and responsibility, and the sacred and the sacrilegious.

[The above tale is a collage of many things Dionysian. Marcel Detienne discusses the ritual practice of the roof destruction and its rebuilding from an island at the mouth of the Loire from a description by the geographer Strabo.]

Moral: Construction equals de-construction.

THE ORIGIN OF ARCHITECTURE IS IN A SLAUGHTER

History begins with monstrosity. Architectural narratives wrestle with it: From the paintings at Altamira to the lithified parts of sacrificed bulls on Greek temples, from the genetically hybrid Minotaur in Knossos to Le Corbusier's sketches. That the space of architecture is bestowed with the carcasses of beautiful beasts and unnamed monsters, hidden in its basement or concealed behind its walls, is a secret story told only around a camp-fire or by a brooding Poe. Monstrosities demonstrate, as Marco Frascari claims. Or, remonstrate.

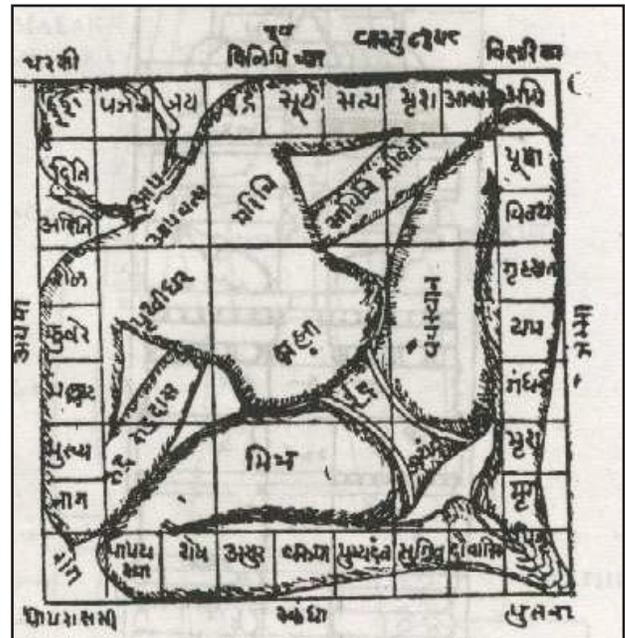


Fig. 4: Vastupurusa in the mandala

The story takes place in a geography that can no longer be located and a time that cannot be recalled:

The thing appeared suddenly over a cerulean sky, unnamed and unidentified. The gods, perturbed and perplexed, ganged up and brought the thing down. On earth. They laid him/her/it on the ground, each god holding a limb or an organ. The thing had no chance. Then the gods slaughtered the thing. The thing must have twitched a little for it put up little resistance, and then it was no more. The gods did not even bother to ask the thing its name. The gods simply proceeded to dismember it. After the deed was done, then they had a name for it: Vastupurusa, the Cosmic Man.

The gods assigned for measurement brought out their instruments, the thread, the chalk powder, the theodolites, and the tripods. On where Vastupurusa lay slaughtered and dismembered, each anatomical piece on a particular location, the gods drew calcified lines that caged each dismembered piece within a fine geometric grid. For each grid, the gods gave a name, a name that represented the property of that organ, with each grid presided by a god. A forelimb for one god, an elbow for another, one eye for one god, a foot for some other. So the thing that did not have a name, and could not be described, now had upon its demise not only

names and locations for its various severed parts, but also a designated divinity.

The navel was in the central grid, the source of things to come. The point of emergence for Brahma, the master deity of creation. The navel connected to the origin. The navel was the *mundus*, the *omphalos*, center of the earth, the point of the axis mundi around which things to come manifest. Thus on the dismembered body of the poor thing arose a grid of order and measure, and for each grid appeared property and character, and upon that superimposed system arose the mountain of finely cut stones and porphyry that was called a work of art, architecture. A city with a handsome temple. Or, a temple with a beautiful tower. From the murderous earth it rose once more to touch the sky.

Such is the origin of a mandala, of a worlding.

The place of beginning as a site of slaughter and blood sacrifice, and eventual construction, is central to many ancient practices. Marcel Detienne describes such a cosmogonic murder scene, an infanticide from an Orphic account of the death of Dionysus. The child Dionysus was slaughtered by the Titans, his body was dismembered, and the parts were thrown over a fire and roasted. The Titans were preparing to devour the victim's flesh. "They just have time to gobble it down, all except the heart, before Zeus' lightning comes to punish their crime and reduce the Titan party to smoke and ashes, out of which will be born the human species."

Awesome monsters and unnameable creatures are given lesser understanding than gods, for they form a convenient group of dissonant and perplexing elements. But the demonstration of monsters is a crucial creative act, and if creation on earth is to be considered a dwelling act, the making of a world, it is first and foremost existential. "I call monsters all original inexhaustible beauty," as writes Alfred Jarry. Marco Frascari traces the designation of *mostri sacri* in the Etruscan-Roman tradition of divination which considered monsters as "extraordinary events, celestial novelties, untouchable sacred signs of a possible future." They are enigmas that can be interpreted only with a vague precision, and understood only with apprehensive distance. But Frascari proposes another destination for such mysterious creatures. "Architectural monsters... are the extraordinary signs of an imaginative production based on

perception and knowledge." The highest function of a poet, or for that matter an artist or architect, or anybody involved in the act of production, is the invention of monsters. "An architect must subject the reality presented by nature to a host of legitimate deformations and unnatural relationships to produce monsters that are enigmas which express precisions." There is then always the possibility of a minotaur in the cabinet, wild things under the bed. To paraphrase Einstein arguing for another extraordinary being, even if there were no monsters, we had every reason to invent one.

Epilog: "For architecture, you may even have to commit a murder." (Bernard Tschumi).

THE LOST HOUSE

The Barcelona Pavilion was destined to be lost before it was built. It was already a ruin before it was history. Architecture, for Mies van der Rohe, was a gradual and relentless progression to almost nothing. *Beinahe nicht*. Not nothing, but almost nothing.

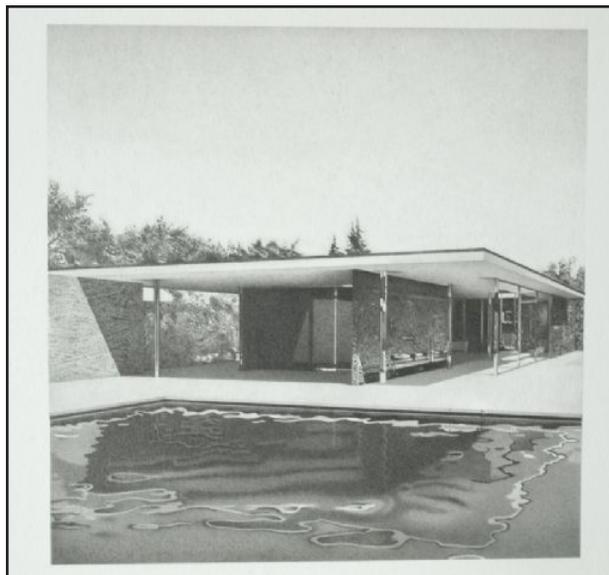


Fig. 5: Barcelona Pavilion (from the collection of the University of California, San Diego)

The Barcelona Pavilion is/was a house, "the house of the German spirit," an emblem of the modern house to come. With the modern house in 1929, one is already in a quandary. For such a modern house comes to terrorize the present, or as Jose Quetglas writes, the modern is a machine that anachronises

the present. "The modern house is the house where I don't belong," Quetglas continues, "which I cannot claim as mine, where neither I nor my imagination may venture..." The modern house dethrones the fundamental citizen of the house, the dweller, for "... the modern house... excludes me, because I am radically absent from it, because it is the house of the Other." And Rudolf Otto has pointed out earlier that the Other is a divinity or monstrosity, or some kind of bewildering phenomenon.

The Barcelona Pavilion or the Miesian house is a house that cannot be lived for it perpetrates a domestic violence. It is a forbidden house, un-dwellable, a house destined to dematerialize before it can be domesticated, but not before our domestic imagination has been terrorized forever (such is the consequence of all glass houses in their presiding over a domestic turbulence). Mies had already prepared for its dematerialization. The pavilion/house was built in stone, glass and steel with sheer planes that floated and stood precariously in "free" space. The unbridled space, the material minimalism, the constructive reduction, and the polished pillars were all decisive elements in an act of dematerialization. The chrome plated columns were polished many times over not only to conceal the joints but also to perpetuate the dematerializing effect of the mirror in the polished surfaces. The polishing was an act of mutilation: the array of reflections and transparencies hastened the disappearance of any tectonic logic or structural order. First, domesticity is denied, and then all architectural habits and conveniences are confounded. And finally the interior has been emptied out. It is a house of absence where bodies have been devoured.

Mies' house is not made of stone, glass and steel; it is, as Quetglas realizes, made of reflections. All that is solid is reflected back to oblivion. "The entire pavilion is a mirror." The whole house is a great disappearing act. Mirrors produce a hopeless desire, it reflects back an image and sucks in the desires, dissolving them in the space over there where none can enter. Quetglas invokes Rilke: "You mirrors, who go on emptying the empty rooms." Mirrors conjure the spirit of Narcissus, suffering the anguish of a split, and Medusa, the self-reflection of one turning to an inert form.

The house has no doors, and space flows in and out unheeded, and yet it is a resolute labyrinth made

of many reflective glass and marble that perpetually decenters and disorients. There is a constant anxiety in the visitor as all movements, materials and mirroring reflections hasten a perpetual dissolution. "In the pavilion, Mies was to stimulate the spectator to the utmost degree. Shall we go in then?" Where is this going? Rilke is invoked again: "Above us there's a house without doors. Is it open or closed? There are two paths. Neither of them leads anywhere." This is far more perplexing than Hercules's bivium.

The house of mirror reflects a struggle between excess and less. But is the struggle between the ordinariness of excess or the exquisite excessiveness of less? And is the house of absence about an infinite enrichment or systematic impoverishment, or far more disconcerting, the horror of emptiness, a *horror vacui*?

Mies has devoted a sustained contemplative and constructive energy to a dialogical relationship between excess and less, and between appearance and absence. He is certainly the most ascetic of all modern architects who has contributed to the theme of "nothingness" with its complex conjunction of excess and less, reductive and selective, and exquisiteness and exclusiveness. The idea of *beinahe nicht* suggests two immediate readings: a reductive aesthetic and architectural expression that could be characterized by the vogue notion of minimalism, and a more intellectual understanding of reductivism analogous to the ideology and practice of asceticism.

In an architectural sense, Mies' path towards "almost nothing," the art of disappearance, is made possible by two procedures: the minimalization in structure and materials, and further "dematerialization" of the materials one is left to work with. In any case, both procedures are attempts at dematerializing either physically (by reduction) or virtually (by visual effects) the very fundamental conditions of architecture: materiality and presence.

A house such as that can only be dismantled and dispatched. The pavilion is dismantled, Quetglas argues, because the modern house is empty, and the presentation of emptiness is the object of the representation. And, because the modern house is but a mirror, inverting all that it stands for including inverting itself. Finally, in a great disappearing

act, the house itself disappears. The actual house was dismantled after the exhibition and placed in crates, put on a train and shipped back to Germany. En route, the crates containing the dismembered house was lost in toto. A house that begins in disappearing can only disappear in full. No trace. And what is left are apparitions and haunting images.

A structure was rebuilt on the same site in 1986. The original does not exist. The imagination is pervaded by the ruins of the original. What exists is a simulacra. Or, a sarcophagus.

Epilog: Dematerialization matters.

I anticipated a method to the madness. But can we draw a conclusion with the Buddha, Dionysos, Mishima and Mies as protagonists? To speak of these names in one breath is a challenge. I would not hasten to make a singular summary by elaborating on what we already know, that destruction is a necessary condition for a spiritual rebirth or material transformation, or as Piet Mondrian wished, "ascension away from matter." This is fundamentally an evolutionary scheme involving change and "transvaluation" (Nietzsche) where "destruction of old forms [is] a condition of higher forms" and where dissolution is directed at the limitations posed either by matter, conventions or values. But where actually is the location of destruction in the metamorphic scheme? Is destruction about the violence of origin (Vastupurusa)? Is destruction the telos of a project (Buddha/Mies)? Or, is destruction a point of reversibility (Dionysos and Mizoguchi/Mishima)?

All the above narratives can be considered from a metamorphic perspective. But also what reveals itself as a common strand in the narratives is a kind of domestic violence, where domus or dwelling is the object of a relentless onslaught whether it is as obvious and literal as the modern house, or analogical as the body, or symbolic as the temple. By home, I suggest a universe condensed, home as house, temple or body. But the constructed containment is not quite stable. Domus is the primordial and perpetual site of the need to build and frame, and an equal need to transgress and transcend. They invite construction, yet we know they are temptingly tenuous and fragile requiring a frequent revision and reformation.

Destruction is therefore not simply a point of transition but a necessary complement, an active and calculated counterpart. Dwelling becomes an aporia precisely in its location between construction and destruction. Home and body seem to be the repeated site of ritualized destruction as both require meticulous construction, the nurturing of the body and the fabrication of home, when they are, at the same time, susceptible to rupture and tremor. The tenuous nature of the "living" body is captured in Andres Serrano's photographs of bodies in morgues with stab or burn injuries. The images convey not so much the macabre and grisly but the fragile containment of the built body. One could, in reference to "weathering," say the same thing for architectural bodies.

Dwelling returns us to burning, one particular destructive phenomena that lends itself to a discursive propagation. *To burn is to be*, as the ancient sacrificial ritual in the Indo-European traditions conveyed. The sacrificial act around the sacred fire is one of humanity's most ancient existential acts. It brought humanity, divinity, earth and sky into a precarious and precious conversation. The burning temple too is a fourfold as the famous fourfolding bridge for burning is the most ancient instrument available for dwelling. This is conveyed as much as in the phenomenology of fire as the technology of language. And reproduced in rituals and narratives. The name of the goddess of the hearth, Hesta for the Greeks, Vesta for the Romans, and *vastu* for Vedic Indians (meaning a "thing," a "building"), all had roots in the word *as*, which literally means 'to burn.' More importantly, the root is related to such existential terms as the German *wesen*, the English word *was*, and the Indian word that directly means existence, *astitwa*. The Indian word for architecture, *vastushilpa*, which in its congenial connotation means the art of architecture, or literally the art of existence, is in a more equivocal sense, the art of burning.

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