

MEMORY VS. OBLIVION

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A wise man is someone who accumulates knowledge in his memory and, after processing it properly, retains it and then uses it appropriately. The *common ground* of architects is in their memory.

Memory is capable of recording and storing in it what is worthwhile in History. Of the History of Architecture and of the general History of men.

Memory has the capacity to provide this distilled, elaborated information to architects so that they do not invent gunpowder.

To take a leap forward, it is necessary to have the impulse that is received when, with one foot in the air, the other foot rests firmly on the ground, in memory.

In order to dream, it is necessary to have accumulated before, in memory, the material with which those dreams are built. Small children do not dream.

That memory that we human beings have, is the one that in the computers, in the image and likeness of the human memory, is contained in the CPU, in the H.D. A computer without CPU is nothing. Of course, human beings have memory, understanding and will. What in Scholasticism were called the powers of the soul. Because it is easy to understand how memory, aided by understanding, reason, and will, is what makes possible the creative work of men. In a very special way that of architects.

I was asked at the Venice Biennale 2012 to focus on the *common ground*, which I understood as memory. As I was asked to focus on the house, I tried to investigate the memory of the house.

An architect is a house. So I had titled and developed one of my last academic courses at the ETSAM in Madrid. And I used it again for that small pavilion in that Biennial: An architect is a house.

What and how is the memory of the house? What is the *common ground* of an architect when he builds a house? I have to confess that every time I make a new house, all the good houses in the history of architecture parade through my memory. Not to copy, but to take a step forward and try to do something different and better.

From Adam's house in Paradise, as described and studied by old Professor Joseph Rickwert, to the prehistoric caves. And in the hut of Abbé Laugier. But also in Palladio's Villa Rotonda. And also in the Moller house of Adolph Loos. And in Soane's house at Lincoln's in the Fields in London. And in so many others.

The houses you think about are often the houses that architects have made for themselves. Even if, as in the case of Mrs. Farnsworth, the clients are the owners.

And to order and focus that work, I linked the houses of the story to the 4 elements of Greek philosophy. Earth, air, water and fire. That translated to inhabit can be the cave and the hut and the boat and the ruin.

The cave, what first Semper and then Frampton identified with the stereotomic, roots the dwelling in the earth. The heavy, gravitational architecture speaks of man's dominion over the earth. We will identify him with the earth as the appropriate pre-Socratic element that fits him best.

The hut, to which Semper and Frampton attributed the tectonic quality, speaks of the change of place. Of the possibility of deciding the place where man wants to settle. In short, it speaks of freedom. And air will be the pre-Socratic element that best corresponds to it.

The boat, the raft, immediately brings to mind not only the arcane Noah's ark where the inhabitants of the earth survived the universal Flood, but also LC's Villa Savoie or Mies Van der Rohe's Farnsworth House, because both houses floated, they sailed.

And as for the devastating fire, which destroys almost everything, there is one thing it cannot deal with: the ruin. When archaeologists discover and analyze and enhance a ruin, they almost never speak of architecture. For it is architecture, the most fundamental of it that appears there. The most basic of the creation of architects, the traces that make the ruins exert on us such a power of fascination. The intensity of those few, elemental but radical elements of architectural creation.