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Where does the sign rise?
By Luigi Pellegrin
1992

We almost never say it in words.

For a long time we have been questioning mostly the expression of writing that was its derivation.

The sign rose-which did men began to question silence and obtained stases of noise prevent any truth from erecting itself to a steady wall, to a dogma.

The sign rose to grasp the invisible.

At that time the conflict between the neurotic myth of the ego and the other, the foreign ego, was neither accepted nor wished.

That is said again quietly, and renewed, by Bacon: «There is always one behind my back who points». Thus everything happens in silence. Sign is a way of realizing the partial reply of the questioned silence, by using both the hoarded, stored visual and the traces of signs left by cosmic fluctuations, biological movements «beyond» ourselves.

To obtain it we use the availability of hands for agility and for biological memory.

Sign started perhaps in order to sign the world with what is human; in order to realize it, they choose fragments of invisible absolute, of what is beyond material living.

Fear and pride and others cover negatives, in documentation and in the rolling of everyday life, the essence of that exists, its being essentially made up of invisible entities; from the particles, of which physics speaks to us, to gravity, to neutrinos, to the flows of the calls of love, to the reasons of tides, to the whole of one hundred, a thousand parts that invisibly govern us.

There is an essence that is governing us, even though we came to maturity as «MATERIALISTS».

Mainly for us humans, specialized in mechanical sortings and bothered by the invisibility of the soul, invisibility is still an essence to be reduced.

In fact, it is everyone's last frontier.

But this invisibility leaves traces; these are traces of perceptions, shadows of casts.

Skilled hands sometimes succeed in witnessing them as «fixed» signs; signs offered to the eyes - and to be matched.

To be matched to the miniprogram produced by each of us, without wanting to do it, in favour of, or against, man as a system. First there was SIGNING.

Long ago it became DRAWINGS.

We are certainly inside the design.

They who engraved the rock in the Val Camonica and who dug mile-long trenches in Peru, were men of Sign.

Of pointing.

Of fixing their attention and their bodies in order to' prepare themselves to receive DIRECTION.

It was -perhaps the direction of physical salvation, or of protection from bad flows, or of going towards the sky armed with a passport-image, or other of something else again.

Indeed, it was also the direction of the ambition of the human system; the ambition of getting hold of fragments reflecting the sublime arcane that all the pre-Primitives imagined to be contained in the ABSTRACT and behind it.

Their Signs were only and always fragments transformed into a partial and readable Code of the ABSTRACT.

The figuration of merely human systems occurred later - later - at a time when man began to isolate himself as a system and thought it was convenient to set himself up to a superior entity.

Therefore he began to draw himself; disclosed figuration of his presumed superiority.

That was perhaps also the beginning or the reason of the subsequent and present practice of introspection, which is only specialized in fragments (also called psychoanalysis, and a yearning for scientific fragmentarism) which is the unavoidable reaction to any mythicized, synthesis.

Within Western Culture it is hard to accept that SYNTHESIS and hindrance may coincide if compared with the vital practice of flows. At least it must be accepted that there are times of nutrition of fundamental fragmentarism and times of synthetizing rest (like winter). But this is partially significant.

At this moment it is significant to coagulate again meaning and function of the time of signs and of the subsequent time of design.

It is significant to review, to remember how many fundamental premisses for the *external development* of the human system (philosophy, literature, science) derived from the impulse to SIGN.

Today, immersed as we are in the big soup of transient, fundamentalist, deleterious, inert and vital, uncontrollable, it is worthwhile remembering one difference.

One draws with his hands, using matter.

A matter being part of the Sign, changes.

That is a fact.

How many moulds of wanted or known eternity are real within the Signs of men of yesterday!

Sign was and still is, indeed, the marriage of real and abstract.

It is always at the same time a fragment of cosmic biology and of the biology diversified into various species of terrestrial living. That must be so, since Sign is always a INDICATOR.

Is it a real indicator even at the moment when NEO-CHAOS dismays the «neo-infant» (W. Blake)? Has modern man, passing from a geo-centric point of view, or point of desired belief, to a helio-centric one (which is frail, open to the systematicity of chaos), the right to a different dismay and to the sterile plausibility of refusal?

In fact, now, that indicator, DESIGN, is a hooked axis.

It points at where to go and at the possibility of twisting in stasis.

The axis of the direction is not yet occupied; no sign is on the axis.

It is a terrible symptom. It indicates that someone, or something must die, go off the scene to become dung.

The reversed hook shows a portion of rupture with the future.

But it is more than that; it is also a critically unabsorbed consequence of the next to last and last mutations.

At the time (1492) of the upheaval of the world's dimension, the discovery of the American dimension, also the first mutation of design occurred.

A part of design went out of itself. The discovery of the rules of perspective introduced the mechanical "consecutio" into design and strengthened the wish of reproduction. It legitimized

it. It was said that also dreams could be partly reproduced (it was not true). The mechanic who constructs the image. Later, CAD was derived: delegating the construction of the image outside oneself, without hard matter, either engraved or shadowed by hands - An overturning.

More over the horizon's expansion occurred in more directions. There is no longer a terrestrial nor metaphysical centre. The viewing's direction may penetrate almost up to the infinite. If you take away the "almost", it rolls into a black hole. The size of man meets one fragment at a time.

These are the two conditions that must question the future of drawing.

When I was an adolescent, maybe by chance, I met the Italian package going from Leonardo to Raphael and Pontormo, and I stopped at Bernini.

At that time I thought that was also our world.

After that I began what we call education. On that path I met only L. Sullivan. He told me that the steady space around a point was evaporated.

Later on I met the evolution of our century.

In my mind I see again the drawings of the big Italian package. They were capable of miniaturizing the image of a universe.

Now, around us, I only see the capability or the wish to magnify the micro, that is a surrounding which cannot think of reassuming synthesis, unless by cheating.

This exhibition obliged me to think about designing: that thought says that I only have to begin once again.

I show partiality, continuously noting down flows around some or more fragments. Voluntarily partial? Yes.

The presence of these drawings which do not state a centrality, a marked synthesis will not nourish old or new dogmas. It is a contribution unconsciously searched.

Watching is forbidden to him who looks for the reference to «the trace / of eternal value».

Place and centrality: two categories that for some time have been dissipated. Even the memory of their function is fading away; they also served to prepare for death, if one were to know.

Around me, and you, there is a space that does not resemble anyone; alien servants are parked there.

Today, here, in Stefania's place, the witness of our NON-PLACE. Drawings done from the time the NON-PLACE has become eloquently efficient.

We destroyed many places. There is perhaps no real place left for humans in this season, that is to say that it is not possible to build architecture (my profession) starting from the remembered roots.

I am thinking of a real place like the womb for a newborn child, or like chaos for families of galaxies.

A place is real if its emptiness is democratically open to flows of differing energies, or if, on the contrary, it is an absolute density having secured the servitude of enormously available surroundings.

Man who made fire using two stones created a place.

Yes, ways are different.

It becomes difficult to be part of a place, when alienities are present. Alienities are the shapes that cannot undergo mutation.

Alienities are cumbersome, passive, obscuring what is around and inside us. We do not have a census of those, most alien ones, which installed themselves inside us. Those which park around mankind, have a place that they, by volume, make less a place. They own it, the almost-place, by heaviness or by supreme indifference.

How to push them aside?

How to make them levitate?

If they stay, they produce a horizon that does not foretell a beyond.

I entered Stefania's space.

As it is rationally logical, there is no tree here.

I do not know clearly whether I am contemporary with machine boxes or vice versa.

I try to remember the tree; it, who does not know the splitting between roots and flowers, tells me it remembers the roots of the idea of a place.

Signs on white, the walls of Stefania's place.

White, that allows the promise of a non-definition if it is stained with signs, can also house the shadow of what is constructed, I do not know whether it's biological or alien, that helps to coagulate the qualities for men.

The shadow of what is constructed. I do not know whether it is that which. I began drawing, without knowing it.

I thought I saw habitable shapes in the space; a way of enjoying the earth planet as an adult; partial detachment from breasts.

I have not drawn for some years - I did not want to pretend, foolishly, to keep on thinking as an architect in a time which is able to live badly, without "place".

A few years ago I again started to draw, still without knowing it, the «before» of the possible project, the place where the project might occur.

Was it like visualizing a fragment of the thinkable phisionomy of the universe?

Was it like checking whether the alienity (the artificial) produced by man projected into the availability of space, is less alien?

I did not ask.

I know that the Australian aborigine's face and the STEALTH's silhouette dwell together easily in my mind.

They are perhaps two phases of PRIMORDIAL; primordial A and B.

Those drawings on the walls may also be seen as two primordials put together.

We determined the NON-PLACE as our abode.

That amount of place which exists, is occupied by Alienity, MACHINES and codes that produce thoughts against man. Is the NON-PLACE designable?

No, it is not suitable to receive the idea of a design.

Do Architects design?

Yes, in various ways and - they say out of silly spite - above all when they cannot build.

In this case it is said that there is a hiatus, a positive or negative misfitting between designed proposal and acknowledged need, wanted by the persons of this time.

But what is said, only refers to the drawing aimed at a sub-architectural design.

Not all of the architects' plans aim at building.

This statement is easily misunderstood, or understood in a reductive way, mainly nowadays (in a time of para-architectural velleities). One of the reasons for that is the current idea of what an architect is.

Above all, Architects are not well aware of the function, or rather of the vocation that transforms a man into an architect. People think that an Architect started being a constructor. But later on he grew up organizing the beauty of what he built. It has also been true, above all in our sector of civilization, for the last 4 to 6 thousand years. But architecture had appeared a long time before; when a place was recognized as being different, as being a prince it. That result was part of one of the last crops that gave rise to a very long season of forming, overlapping and destroying of features; the various, infinite manifestations of biological intentionality.

During that season, among the ancestors still being nourished daily with Earth and Chaos, the necessity or ambition arose to give birth to an interspecies feature, neither mineral, nor vegetal, nor human, nor merely chemical, nor merely physical, nor eternal, nor transient. Therefore a species among species was decided, offering reception, witness and strengthening to the rolling of light, of eruptions and long shadows and immense cold.

It was after the big ice age. In their ambition as humans they decided a new place, a steady one among changing places. A constructed place by way of a renewed chemistry (somewhat like the enriched plutonium of our days) matching the dynamic reception of the energy which joins us terrestrial beings to the non-terrestrial, the force of gravity.

To use gravity to give shape to the place and to contain in it that most precious energy, the most difficult to produce or impossible to steal: psychic force.

Gravity, undertow, reception made up by psychic emanations.

It was the idea of the first princely space, Architecture.

A place which should not be touched by noise by tempest by passing away, by the mutation phase, death

They well understood that the real material to realize that first princely place was SPACE, the void of physicalness allowing all the invisible to visit it, to impregnate it.

Much happened about that idea of place-space later on. Also forgetfulness.

Also forgetfulness that that place was the necessary complement of the other place, the place of everybody's birth.

Is it legitimate if someone draws in order to witness scraps of that idea of space?

Is it legitimate if someone links some pre-ancient scraps with the last «species» that came among us?

Can the artificial alienity that is surrounding us, TV, fax, automobile, transistor, bulldozer, laser etc., be conjugated with the sweetened presence of plurisecular mannerisms? NO.

Decoration applied to box-shaped masonry, is wholly dominated if confronted with the energetic density of the contemporary artificial. Contemporary artificial is the winner; it is able to destroy.

It dynamically confronts itself with the idea of energy condensation or of material transparency, that is to say, the non-resistance that those remote Ancestors succeeded in erecting in order to give a visible substance to their being a group, a society. Anyway, two energies are opposed: the primordial and the hyperartificialized; two big projects. The first one gave the energy for the second one.

Let us recall it.

Luigi Pellegrin