

For a clear and unprejudiced appropriation of the real, the perception strategy may consider: awakening all the senses and engaging human thought and intelligence; maintaining an integrative distance from the object observed; and guaranteeing a permanent dialogue between it and the natural phenomena, whether geological, meteorological, mineralogical, or botanical (materials, landscape, form and space, texture, colour and light as perceive by the senses).

To observe, rather than just look at (in the sense of appropriation), may involve a mediating tool, such as drawing, photography, or writing, as a way of looking with greater attention.

To observe with an informed gaze rather than just looking, mobilising the mind, analytical intelligence, the ordering sense, and also the sensitivity, we may invoke one of the previous tools. That’s why the Grand Tourists drew, photographed and/or wrote while travelling. Sketches, photos or texts don’t replace reality, but they explain it better than a simple direct experience. These tools introduce a lens between reality and its representation that helps to decipher all its enigmas and reveals its sensitive whole.

Drawing, like writing or photographing, is not understood here as a talent that some are born with, and others are not; everyone can learn to draw, photograph or write, and all can benefit from its usefulness, regardless of artistic merit.

Another reading lens is to know how to listen, rather than hear, which involves silence as an essential condition. Without silence, when confronted with a different reality, we tend to just hear ourselves, our perspectives, and rely on rational thinking, instead of being open to listening to what the other is really sharing. This process is a repetition that embodies academic, conservative, and reactionary tendencies and excludes the pursuit of originality. It is a thick wall against active listening and the possibility of original thought – reinvention. Discarding prior reasoning is the only way to avoid hearing the same discourse repeatedly and to recognise intelligence and knowledge in other geographies and cultures openly.

● This way of regarding travel, transversal to different generations of architects with various political, economic and social contexts, and appealing to travellers inside or outside the field of Architecture, with different ages and education levels, is, in reality, a way of life, in which Man and Architecture coexist in symbiosis.

Attention to differences and diversity, paired with attention to long-lasting traditions, aspects and forms of cultural intersection, underlines the complexity and richness of the architectural phenomena in Europe. Considering European architecture, namely experimented during the organised Grand Tours, we were able to value moments of cultural encounter but also to clarify the specificities of Portuguese architecture and the identity of the Porto School practice (with regard to siting, ways of inhabiting and organising built space, to current construction and singular buildings, to materiality, ornamentation and architectural language, etc.).

The Grand Tour today pursues a wide range of lessons, namely magisterial lessons, which can be guided and discovered through different matters, individual interests and sensibilities.

I myself like to sacrifice many things, to see only that which attracts me immediately, to pass by chance without a map and within an absurd sensation of discovery (Siza 1988, p. 15).

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On the use of travel for architecture

– Lamberto Amistadi

Travel is a good thing; it stimulates the imagination. Everything else is a snare and a delusion. Our own journey is entirely imaginative. Therein lies its strength. It leads from life to death. Men, beasts, cities, everything in it is imaginary. It’s a novel, only a made-up story. The dictionary says so and it’s never wrong. Besides, everyone can go and do likewise. Shut your eyes, that’s all that is necessary. There you have life seen from the other side.

(Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Journey to the End of the Night*, 1932)

This contact with the overpowering is her first encounter with travel’s disconcerting ability to strip the hard shell of habit from the heart, leaving only the bare, fertile kernel.

(Stefan Zweig, *The Post-Office Girl*, 1930-38, published posthumously in 1982)

As Céline reminds us, travel is certainly useful in life, but it is equally useful for architecture students, since architecture, like some other arts, has a privileged relationship with the imagination. This privilege concerns the fact that imagination is part of the creative process which generates the work within the circle formed by the triad of imagination (conception)-representation-realization. This triad plays a part in both the production of the work itself and as an extremely useful and effective method of teaching/learning architectural design; in both cases, it concerns the problem of the beginning, i.e. where the construction of the work actually starts.

The relationship between architecture and image is much more complex than, for example, in painting. The complexity in which architecture is expressed can be achieved starting from either a single image or a group of images that represent a fragment of the final work, intercepted at any point in the production cycle we have mentioned: the work can start indifferently from the sketch of a detail on a sheet of paper, from a photograph of another work or a landscape or from seeing them in a film frame, a typological plan, or an idea for a façade. But since humans are a “symbolic animal” – *animal symbolicum* (Cassirer 1944) – they have learned, since the days of the Altamira caves, to build a stable relationship between words and images, which has allowed them to expand their imagination in a mutual exchange with both the written and spoken languages: architecture has benefited from the tales of Ibn Battuta, the Berber traveller who, in the 14th century, spent over 30 years travelling through Africa, the Middle East and Asia, recounting his experiences in a chronicle dictated on his return – *Al-Rihla (The Travels)* – with an image of the mosques of Delhi and Damascus and the temples of Hangzhou, but also of the inventions of Pliny the Younger (“If we think of Schinkel’s reconstruction projects for Pliny the Younger’s villas, where the descriptive and evocative trace of the letter indicates a step-by-step itinerary, a list of relationships that make the forms appropriate [...]”, Semerani 1991, p. 46):

You are surprised that my Laurentine, or, if you prefer it, my Laurens country-house, is so particularly agreeable to me. You will cease to be surprised when you are made acquainted with the charms of the villa, the advantages of the situation, and the stretch of sea-coast.

And so the description begins:

As you enter, there is a vestibule, plain but not mean; next a hall with columns, rounded in the form of the letter D, enclosing a small but pleasant space, an excellent retreat against stormy weather, being protected by glazed windows and still more by overhanging eaves. Facing the middle of it is a courtyard of cheerful aspect; next, a rather handsome dining-room which projects on to the shore, so that whenever the sea is raised by the south-west wind, it is just wetted by the last spray of the broken waves. (Lewis 1879, pp. 60-61)

Based on this meticulous description, in 1833, Schinkel drew up plans for a villa, whose appearance was the result of a fusion between the literary influence of Pliny’s account and his own trip to Italy in 1804. It was thanks to the Grand Tour, which took him to the ruins of the temples of Syracuse and Capri and whose sketches were collected in his architecture manual *Das*

Architektonisches Lehrbuch, that Schinkel (1979) was able to experience the essence of the classical world, which he transferred into an original architectural language.

“Architecture is the transposition of other works of architecture [...]” – wrote Francesco Collotti (2017, p. 57) in a beautiful essay on Schinkel’s travels.

And what about travel? Travel measures the Mediterranean. Diocletian’s Palace redesigned by the Adam brothers, transposed to England in the Adelphi Terraces neighbourhood. Istrian stones brought to Venice by Sanmicheli and Sansovino. Those from Provence arrive in Algiers with Fernand Pouillon. The house of the ancients lives on in fragments in Palladio’s work, itself a sort of International Style ante litteram, re-emerging like an underground river in the English countryside.
People travel; places remain.
Architecture made with other architecture, measured, dismantled, reassembled, transfigured; and since we are architects who have declared a certain genealogy, we will never say deformed.

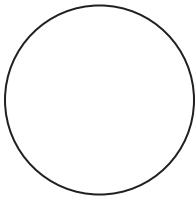
The dazzling power of the landscapes of southern Italy would claim many victims, especially among British and German travellers. Following in the footsteps of Goethe (1816), whose travel memoirs from Italy in 1786-87 were published under the title *Italianische Reise*, Paul Klee visited Rome in 1901.

(“Impatience drove me at once to the famous sights, first to Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel and to Raphael’s ‘ <i>Stanze</i> ’.”) and Naples in 1902:
Arrival, Sunday, March 23d, in the morning. That evening, San Carlo: <i>Mefistofele</i> . Monday, the harbour; in the afternoon, Posillipo.
Tuesday, San Martino-Corso Vittorio Emanuele. German Consulate, Aquarium. In those three days I saw so much that my account cannot even remotely keep up with it. (Klee 1964, p. 97)

In June 1902, upon returning from his trip and after also visiting Florence (“We consoled ourselves with wine, too much wine, and ended up in the demimondaine café on the Piazza Signoria. Soon the company we had been wishing for was sitting at our table. A pleasant, dark creature and a real whore, painted and prettied up and yet unattractive”) the assessment is contradictory:

6.3.1902. My Italian trip now lies a month behind me. A strict review of my situation as a creative artist doesn’t yield very encouraging results; I don’t know why, but I continue nonetheless to be hopeful.
Perhaps from the realization that at the root of my devastating self-criticism there is, after all, some spiritual development.
Actually, the main thing now is not to paint precociously but to be or, at least, to become an individual. The art of mastering life is the prerequisite for all further forms of expression, whether they are paintings, sculptures, tragedies, or musical compositions. (Klee 1964, p. 119)

Returning to the usefulness of travel for architecture and for life, one could say that travel acts in two ways. One concerns forcing the formation of the individual through experience; in this case, it is the great tradition of the *Bildungsroman*, according to which young people acquire awareness of themselves and the world through the vicissitudes of life, and this applies in general, “whether they are paintings, sculptures, tragedies, or musical compositions”. It concerns the role that Emanuele Severino attributed to school, namely that of being a place of vigilance, where one learns to be alert, preparing the individual to overcome the alienation inherent in contemporary society (Severino 2005); which is Zweig’s exhortation in the epigraph “to strip the hard shell of habit from the heart, leaving only the bare, fertile kernel”. At the beginning of the millennium, Edgar Morin (2000, pp. 45, 50), reflecting on a possible reform of education, placed among the fundamental points that domain of life mentioned by Klee, namely, education as “apprenticeship to life”. Quoting Durkheim, he wrote: “As Durkheim so aptly put it,



1 “The cultural model is once again the linguistic one. Gottlieb Frege takes up the analogy between architecture and language with the metaphor of the core and the shell, where the core represents the structural invariant (which does not change in the translation from one language to another), while the shell represents the superficial, iridescent element. The idea of a deep structure and a surface structure is a conquest of modern linguistics, but what Noam Chomsky clarified is that this structure is composed of layers which divide it into different levels, i.e. it occupies a stratified ‘formal space’ which provides different levels of depth.”

the purpose of education is not to give students an ever-increasing amount of knowledge, but to ‘create within them a profound inner state, a sort of polarity of the soul that guides them in a definite direction, not only during childhood, but throughout their lives’”. Education should introduce learners to that lucidity, Morin continued, which “is in itself inseparable from an initiation into the omnipresence of the problem of error”.

The second type of usefulness of travel for architecture and life concerns, in a more specific sense, the teaching/learning of architectural design from a technical point of view. As we said, travel is a great way to accumulate a personal repertoire of images from which to create one’s own architectural language or world (if it is true, as Wittgenstein said (1964, §5.6), that “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world”). Technically, this material can be brought back to the surface and used in different ways and at different levels. These different ways refer, fundamentally, to what Goethe (1983) defined as the “associative faculty of the mind”, which, precisely due to this mixture of objective images and intuitive associations, he called “objective imagination”:

Certain grand motifs, legends, millenary traditions impressed themselves so deeply on my senses, that I kept them alive and operative in me for forty or fifty years; seeing these beautiful images over and over again in my imagination seemed to me the most desirable of treasures, because they continually changed appearance without changing substance, and matured into increasingly pure forms, into increasingly clear representations.
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This sentence highlights what was mentioned earlier, namely, that images accumulate in different ways, in space and time, and that travelling afar in geographical space has something in common with travelling far away in one’s own individual time, flowing along the entire arc of our existence to the original regions of childhood. In *The System of Objects*, Baudrillard (1996) recorded as “Reverse Projection” everything that projects us outside ourselves, far away in time and space, and brings together, for example, toys, antique objects and exotic objects: for modern man, being “abroad” involves a plunge into the past, in which the anteriority of forms and construction systems refers to the world of childhood and toys and introduces the unpredictability of an event into the homogeneity of categories (Amistadi 2017, p. 47). Then, as we were saying, these materials, these fragments of thought gathered on our travels, must be retrieved from memory, composed, transformed and transfigured “Into something rich and strange” (Shakespeare 1998, p. 27) or at least new:

<i>Full fathom five thy father lies; Of his bones are coral made; Those are pearls that were his eyes; Nothing of him that doth fade But doth suffer a sea-change Into something rich and strange.</i>
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If it is true that – as Ernesto Nathan Rogers wrote (1997, p. 171) – composition means “putting together various different things to make one”, then this composition takes place by grouping elements at different levels (Chomsky 1965; Amistadi 2022, p. 127¹). We can imagine the space containing these levels as a formal space (Carnap 2019) which unfolds along a vertical axis that Algirdas Greimas (1982, pp. 327-328) called the “syntagmatic axis”. The term ‘syntagmatic’ refers to the way in which elements are grouped into words and sentences according to a linearity, which “is only one mode of manifestation, either temporal or spatial, of the logico-relational structure – and is, therefore, atemporal and aspatial – that is syntagmatic”. This means that the arrangement of syntactic relationships along an axis takes on a gno-seological and therefore didactic value in and of itself. The elements of architecture can be recomposed along the syntagmatic axis in analogy with written language, where, after the union of letters has generated words, the words come together to form higher-order units, called syntagms (“make”

and “love” become “make-love”, the meaning transcends the meaning of the individual words that make up the syntagm). Similarly, the architectural words “column” and “lintel” are combined in the trilithic system, which, by replicating itself through addition, gives rise to more complex discursive units such as the portico. These discursive units can in turn be combined in more or less rigid and contiguous relational chains. If the assemblage aggregates heterogeneous parts paratactically and the compositional density makes use of spatial pauses that erode the continuity between the parts themselves, the montage establishes contiguous connections where the parts are juxtaposed without interruption, in contact with each other (Amistadi 2025).

In conclusion, we could say that travel appears to us in its essence as a disturbing event (Vidler 2006; Amistadi 2015), defined by Freud (*Unheimlich*) as something familiar that becomes “foreign” and generates the anxiety necessary “to strip the hard shell of habit”. But then, we cannot but agree with Francesco Collotti, who sets as limits on architecture “made from other works of architecture, dismantled, reassembled, transfigured” that of deformation, while originality itself should be referred much more to the originality of the position along the syntagmatic axis than to the object itself: It is my belief that it is more important today to teach/learn how to establish new relationships between existing things than to produce new ones.

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A Complete Picture

– Liene Jākobsone

Architecture can be approached through many media and in many ways. There are the traditional technical drawings – plans, sections, elevations, details – which architects are trained to read and which contain a great deal of precise information. Through them, we can mentally reconstruct a building and form an image of its spatial structure, even before seeing or visiting it. Yet this mental image always remains different from lived experience, just as analysing a program never equals inhabiting the spaces it describes.

Today, however, photography has become the dominant medium through which architecture circulates. The endless stream of images across platforms and publications creates the illusion that we know buildings from all over the world, past and present. Photography offers a seductive sense of realism, yet it is often misleading: we see the same canonical viewpoints repeated, the context remains cropped out, details are selectively framed, and the flat image becomes an icon rather than a true representation of a spatial condition.

A building or a space is only fully grasped when it is experienced in person. This bodily encounter with architecture is what ultimately brings together all the other kinds of information we have about it. Seeing a space with one’s own eyes, moving through it, sensing its scale, light, and atmosphere produces a richness of impressions that cannot be transmitted through images alone. As Juhani Pallasmaa argues in *The Eyes of the Skin* (1996), spatial perception is not limited to vision: smell, touch, sound and bodily movement all play an essential role.

At the same time, physical presence is not enough on its own. For architects, understanding a building requires examination of drawings, data, and other representations. Architecture is therefore always read through a combination of embodied experience and other sources of information, neither of which can fully replace the other.



Being on site – present, immersed in a place – adds another crucial dimension to architectural understanding: context. Donna Haraway’s notion of situatedness can be taken quite literally here. Architecture cannot be separated from the local and embodied perspective from which it emerges: from the geographical, social, cultural, and political conditions that shape it. To grasp the logic behind architectural decisions, we must consider factors such as climate, history, power relations, embedded ideologies, everyday habits, and other intangible forces that frame a building.

This requires a certain mental displacement from our own position—an effort to imagine ourselves in the place of both the users and the architects. Who designed this? For whom? With what intentions? Under what constraints and circumstances? What challenges were faced, and how were they addressed? How is the building inhabited and experienced? How does it develop and transform along with time? These questions never have universal answers. What is appropriate, meaningful, or even necessary in one place may be irrelevant – or entirely wrong – in another.

Travelling allows us to encounter these situated realities firsthand. Yet this demands more than detached observation. It requires allowing oneself to be shaped by the place: tasting local food, speaking with people, listening to stories, paying attention to language, customs, and histories, without imposing premature judgement. Only then can architecture begin to reveal its deeper, contextual meanings.