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My parents Roy and Mirtha deserve my gratitude given with ample hands.

HOW TO WRITE A BUILDING

The following pages contain the imagination for a library to be built in the manner of a sestina. The question that titles the book and the work within has preoccupied me for a while and at this moment, it would be an error to say that a conclusion has been reached; ultimately, solutions only propel echoes, foretelling of the blindfold before our eyes, ignorance. There is only hope that the images here are for you, the reader, as crystalline as they were to me, the dreamer.

Abstract

The following pages contain the imagination for a library to be built in the manner of a sestina. The question that titles the book and the work within has preoccupied me for a while and at this moment, it would be an error to say that a conclusion has been reached; ultimately, solutions only propel echoes, foretelling of the blindfold before our eyes, ignorance. There is only hope that the images here are for you, the reader, as crystalline as they were to me, the dreamer.

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Beginnings (Axe to Paper)

Beginnings are always brutal. The first few strides are tense, the path unclear and fraught with obstacles; the hands move clumsily on the page and stability is much desired. As if we had forgotten everything, a beginning must be wrought in the same way iron is forced and shaped, with patience, cunning and wide open hands. These beginnings are the upturning of the soil. Perhaps only at this point, looking back at the work, does the work seem to have a cohesive quality that at the time was absent and now, that moment of initiation I see, was the ultimate act of forgetting. This idea is appeased for the most part with a feeling of new, of something I have not done, something that surpasses me.

At this point or at many points of the beginning we encounter fear. She comes dressed in gauzy rags of doubt and parades about us, flogging our egos and our convictions. Our senses are out of tune. The connections between the parts of the body are disjointed, out of reigns. We cannot be humorous. I suppose that after we have started many times, we might find ourselves making circles, in repetition; coming to the point that there is no beginning any more, only the repetition of a path.

Things make themselves known to us as we make them.

that which is abstract in the making will be abstract in the reading.
The Site

Architects work for the most part on paper, that is, we as builders make drawings, or build drawings to mimic buildings. This is a strange syllogism, for us, our paper is our soil. It is that which gets dirty during work and resists the labor: excavation, deep footing walls and stacks of brick, wooden joist and columns and the likes. This paper is rich with life, in imagination and the retention of this imagination. The paper chosen is important, one must judge it by the quality of its fiber, sometimes resinous and coated with a polymer base to create a supple but gummy ground for ink. A pen is chosen for its weight for the persistence and resonance of its ink, a deep black ink is preferred for heavy lines, those that carry the most weight in the drawing. A light wash describes the more tenuous bodies in the drawing, the gauzy firmament that separates the inside air from the air outside. Rooms are borne from qualities of material, from the taste of ink on the fingers and lead, or rather graphite. The supple qualities of a soft pencil, the softer the pencil the more careful we have to be handling its marking capabilities. A masterful hand can wield this instrument in the most sensitive way, where we are made to feel a thing not by its presence, but by its mark.

Now that I have explained a little of how I came to think about my paper, I can explain the conditions of the site chosen for the building. Lot 208 on south Patrick Street in Old Town Alexandria is surrounded on all four sides by an evident urban fabric. To the west is South Patrick Street, a major road for commuters and pedestrians traveling in or around Old Town. To the south is an 80 year old house with vinyl siding requiring maintenance to all its four sides every ten or so years. The east side of the lot serves as the back of the building so there are no deep parking spaces or alleys for the house walls, and so the sun is not filtered through the windows of the house. On the north side of the lot is an apartment building two stories tall, made of brick up front, and a newer addition towards the back made of wood. Based on observations, the building required that there be set backs from both neighboring buildings in order to protect the tenants to the north and an ample work space for the house to the south to be repaired and maintained in the future. The building was left with one major face to the west and one back face to the east and the site was oriented with respect to a north south axis.

[Sketches and diagrams of the site and the building are shown.]

[End of page]
The Sestina

The Sestina is a form of poetry invented by Arnaut Daniel in the twelfth century. It consists of six sestets (six-line stanzas) and an enneазymic tercet (nine-line stanza). The structure is complex and requires careful attention to the placement of words and syllables.

The Sestina follows a specific pattern for its rhyme scheme. Each line of the sestets repeats words from previous lines, creating a cycle of six words that are reused throughout the form. The enneazymeric tercet serves as a conclusion and brings the poem to a final resolution.

The Sestina is known for its mathematical precision and its reliance on exact rhymes and word placement. It is a challenging form to master, but its rewards can be significant, especially for poets who enjoy intricate and demanding structures.

In its original form, the Sestina was a lyric poem that celebrated love and the beauty of the world. Over time, its structure has been adapted to suit a variety of subjects and styles, but its core elements—six sestets and an enneazymeric tercet—remain constant.

The Sestina is a testament to the power of language and the human capacity for creativity. It reminds us that even in the most complex and seemingly impossible structures, there is room for beauty and expression.
The drawing

Drawing is the act of bringing to bear, a making, a writing, an imperative, sketching that occurs in imagination. It is the act of marking and measuring, the act of putting marks on paper and making things that can be read and comprehended. Drawing is dialog between the ideation and the materiality, between the marks and the memory, the ideas and the timeline. By using the drawing, the event becomes a document across time and space. Drawing can capture the essence of the model thing and create a memory of an event that can be remembered, analyzed, or otherwise comprehended in number lines. The memory of drawing, when read, creates a space for contemplation, a space where one can imagine another world. The memory of drawing, when read, creates a space for contemplation, a space where one can imagine another world.

brick wood and stone
Recreation

I ran across this word as looking at a rose growing outside the main entrance of school, at a personal moment when the rose spoke gently to me, to not let me be afraid. In a moment that lasted a few seconds, the rose seemed to speak, the wind, and the sun, and all seemed to become one with the rose, which then shimmered with the light of the sun. The rose seemed to be a messenger from the earth, to speak to the soul, to give words of hope and strength.

A rose is a symbol of love, beauty, and purity. It represents the essence of life, the spirit of wisdom, and the power of transformation. The rose is a flower that has been cherished for centuries, and its beauty is enhanced by its fragrance. The rose is a symbol of beauty and grace, and its colors are a source of inspiration and delight.

The rose is a symbol of purity, and its beauty is a source of inspiration. It is a flower that has been cherished for centuries, and its colors are a source of inspiration and delight.

In making this simple act of naming, we recreate ourselves in something beautiful like a carnation and make the thing less foreign for now it is no longer a stranger to us but rather more familiar, because we can know it through our body, because its body comes into being like our own body.

The solemn act of naming is the same as when we draw. We call lines that are heavy in our drawings walls, or better yet solid lines matter. By sheer metaphors our drawings have qualities that our own bodies can feel. Hence solidity, translucency, coarseness, permeability, hollowness, are qualities we understand and represent in the drawing as a form of recreation or play. For our bodies can relate to these sensibilities making the drawing clear, readable, or understood.

Rhyme:
At the end I realized something which I had forgotten a long time ago. The purpose of any kind of making is to make something of beauty. I have no time here to discuss in depth what modern aesthetics means by beauty, although the concept affects me. I am not really sure yet what it encompasses. But if we leave beauty out of the realm of the idea and bring it into the world as a thing, in my case a project drawn on paper, what does this represent or better yet, what does beauty mean to the object being made?

The concept of beauty is a virtue, a thing possessed that I believe gives it beauty. And I learned this by failing in certain parts of the project and achieving it on others. There was a real struggle in each instance to understand what I was doing and how I was doing it. I have been working on the project for a long time, and it is not ready as yet and it is uncomfortable. But I have been working out all the knots of the idea and trying to find the way out of it. If I had not been working on it, I would not have realized what I had been doing. The holes became obvious.
my paper tastes pink at 8:30 pm. bright blues imbue the air and the clouds drift perfumed in light.
2. Sketchbook (August 2005): Section detail at the meeting of the roof and wall.
5. Model (September 2005): South east view of the model.
7. Model (August 2005): Looking out from the main reading room towards the roof.
2. Model (June 2005): First test attempting to understand the arches at a larger scale.
3. Model (September 2005): Focus plan view of the model.
6. Model (September 2005): Entry way ramp descending into the library with hinges and glass block wall at sides.