PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THE ART OF THINKING WELL
THE ART OF LIVING WELL
THE ART OF BUILDING WELL
THE ART OF DRAWING WELL[1]

Pyrmont Incinerator by Marion Mahony, Photograph by Peter Mallat circa 1987

EVERYTHING we do as architects is based on drawing. In his elegant 'strenna' The Virtue of Architecture, Marco Frascari gives us the doctrine of Vita Beata, beatific life, his canon connecting mind, body, building and architectural construct. The drawing is one part of life, and intrinsically linked to how we live. Draw your child, friend, partner or lover. You will both remember this forever.

We straddle two technologies, the analogue and the digital. Those who can remember the Apollo moon landings learnt to draw the traditional way, with 2B, 2H and rapid-o-graph, using reassuringly crude instruments which required care and maintenance. More than one of us has a little tattoo from a dropped 0.25mm pen. Our Space Shuttle generation all learned the new way with keyboards and screens, first in 2D green or monochrome, now 3D colour, photographically rendered. But the builders still use Makitas and Estwings.

The modern masters are known also by their drawn work. Le Corbusier's beautiful sketchbooks, part travelogue, part analysis. Mies Van de Rohe's prophetic imaginings of glass prismatic structures. Eileen Grey's fluidly technical sketches and Marion Mahoney's scrolls of Canberra. Scarpa's beautiful codified drawings, dense palimpsests of plan, section, detail, richly informative to the craftspeople he guided.

The contemporary masters work differently. Jean Nouvel failed his architectural thesis as it contained no drawings. Koolhaas passed his with inventive hybrid collages. Gehry designs with card and paper as much as the computer. Zaha Hadid's catalysing Hong Kong peak project was not drawn on computer; it was a series of gouache paintings. The technology of BIM seems rather dull in comparison.

Drawing is our craft, yet the buildings existed before the drawing and outlive them. Little remains of architectural drawing prior to the Renaissance. Western architecture's greatest works, the Gothic cathedrals, were built by master masons with little more than the human eye, the stringline, the plumb bob, a series of canons, and rules of measurement and geometry. Piranesi's astonishing academic drawings imagine and unfaithfully record in exquisite detail the majesty and detail of Greco Roman architecture. He enabled an entire world to understand its beauty and reproduce it. As Paolo Tombesi explained at the recent State Library exhibition on this eighteenth century visionary, it was a treatise on building technology, and it allowed others to access that technology.

A counterpoint, Paul Virilio in Bunker Archeology (1975), shocked a post-modern architectural generation obsessed with drawing. His tract on the concrete architecture of war, using only photography and writing, was a deferred Dadaist moment in Architecture, when the artifice of codified practice was blown apart by the celebration of the found object and the destruction of the idea of beauty. But how beautiful a moment and what a beautiful shock it was to read that book.

Pallasmaa writes of the importance of drawing, the connection between the eye, the mind and the hand, through the drawn line. I believe in this. I believe in the importance of the delineator in making a new world from nothing, in describing their ideas through the made image. In making things new.

Drawing out the new from both the infinite boundaries of space and the grounded senses of the body.

As old as a trace in the sand or a line scraped into a rock, or a piece of charcoal or ochre. It is an ancient technology that connects thoughts to things. It is an ancient human touch – the electron cannot replace that.

with love to Rachel Hurst

PETER MALATT
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[1] Frascari, Marco The VIRTUE of Architecture P12. **References** Frascari, Marco - The Virtue of Architecture 2009. Virilio, Paul-Bunker Archeology 1975. Pallasmaa, Juhani - The Eyes of the Skin 2005.