the 44 lectures

Volume One: 1-14.

THE WINTER CAMPAIGN

scripted for

in three volumes by

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PREFACE TO THE 44 LECTURES.

Researches towards a General Architecture of Decoration, Building and Urbanity.

I do not call these 44 Lectures "written". Writing does not inscribe three to five illustrations per page, all with long captions. Writing Architectural theory in text alone is futile. This is why I call it "scripting" and name them "Lectures". I would have called them 'iconolects' if the word had existed. More on this in the Introduction to Volume 1.

Geoffrey Kipnis, in a Lecture to the RIBA, confirmed that no intellectually persuasive Theory of Architecture has ever existed. So when my own generation, which began their studies soon after WWII, decided to create an Ur-Architecture which would assimilate the 9,000 years of the phenomena of that name (including 20C Modernity), we knew that we would have to effectively 'theorise' this Medium.

Architects, when they 'theorise' tend to 'prove' their idea by building it. While this may 'prove' or 'disprove' a thesis to an Architect, it is insufficient for those, the vast majority, who have not received our peculiar training. Yet the convention has arisen that Practitioners do not write theory. Theory is written, in a curiously 'Scholastic' manner, by those who do not work at inventing Architecture. James Stirling, my second and third-year tutor from 1956-58, was generally admitted to be the best architect in the world when he unfortunately died in 1992. He advised "Never write about your work, John. It will only emasculate you". This peculiar state ensures that Practitioners no longer even read Theory. Theory is merely discussed by Theoreticians.

There is a simple reason for this. It is called the project for an *"Architecture Autre"*. This is an 'Architecture' (so called), which owes nothing to the 9000 years of Architecture's prior existence. These 9,000 years are now bundled as "Historic Architecture". What we build now is called "Modern Architecture". "History and Theory" as the academic category is termed, often bridges-over into the forbidden zone of the nine millenia. But Practice does not. So what is there for the Practitioner to read about?

It is argued by the devotees of *L'Architecture Autre* that this 'line in the sands of time' (usually placed at 1900), must be drawn for many reasons. One must "serve the masses" and so avoid elitism and the arcane. One must cope with all the machines, pipes and wires. One must advantage Building by using the new structures and materials. One must accept the sheer 'bigness' of contemporary projects. One must be 'Green'. One must reduce costs. One must be flexible. One must use mass-production and machine-production. One must invent a New Style for this New Era. One can go on almost indefinitely. All of these are argued to be reasons why the study of Architecture prior to 1900 can be of no use to the future of our own lifespace.

These 44 Lectures argue, one by one, that all of these so-called imperatives are advantages that can best be exploited by an understanding of Architecture based upon the study of ALL its examples - not merely those built over the past 100 years! The only people whom this 'line in the sand' advantages are the architectural ignoramuses and incompetents who pretend to 'educate' the young, and the no-longer-so-young architectural ignoramuses who throw-up the trash we must live-with today. *L'Architecture Autre* was a desperate move, based upon the collapse of the *Ancien Regime* after WWI. It had some 'truth' then. Today it is ignorance, charlatanry and fraud.

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44 LECTURES ON THE 'WAR OF THE ARTS OF PEACE':

Introduction to 'THE WINTER CAMPAIGN'.

Whenever it rains on a wintry day, and the streets around Marble Arch become cold and grey and greasy, shining with wetness, my mind returns to the late 1940's when post-WWII Britain had won the war but was about to lose the peace. The Empire that Churchill had fought to save had been mortgaged and the reward of its 'subject peoples', who had joined and died to fight the Axis, were due for their ultimate reward: the ending of Imperial British rule. "Wars", as Canning remarked during the conflict with Napoleon, "are fought on credit". London's credit was always good. When we won we picked up the global possessions of France and Spain to add to our mercantile monopoly. This time the credit was spent and the rewards were losses. The emergent nations, once outside the Empire, chose their own trading partners. Our monopoly was broken.

Marble Arch is the part of London I have known since 1946, when I 'came home', at the age of twelve, from British India to a country that I had never known. I remember workmen digging-up the pitch-pine paving blocks on Oxford Street. They had been laid centuries back to muffle the sound of iron-bound carriage wheels and covered over with Trinidad Lake asphalt when that started to be imported around 1900. The 'WINTER' volume of these 44 Lectures is a 'landscape view' of the world that I found when I began my Architectural studies at the Central London (Regent Street) Polytechnic, two stops along the Central Metro Line down that same Oxford Street.

It always seemed to be raining. We never shed our boots and raincoats. Most 'gates' in this 'landscape' were chained and padlocked. We Neophytes were not allowed to plough the field marked 'Architecture'. Nor could we enter the woods called 'History'. In fact there was almost nowhere that we were allowed to go that was not mined and wired and marked "The Past", and "No Entry". As Professor John S. Walkden of the Central London Polytechnic advised us at our first and last meeting with him: "Architecture is no longer a literary subject". I understand now, a half-century later, that he was a disaffected Classicist who restricted his academic work to administration. Professor Walkden, if Pluto allows your bloodless shade to ghost this planet once more, visit The Live Oak groves of Main and Sunset, Houston, Texas, drink of the etiolated arterial fluid of the Architectural Professors of Rice University and visit Duncan Hall. You may feel in JOA's best building, finished in 1996, the faint stirrings of your long lost, and endlessly mourned, 'Classical' vitality.

The Polytechnic preferred literary virgins. It was unique in its avoidance of the customary 'booklist'. "We collected", as the late Peter Smithson famously observed, "Catalogues". The only gate that would open led to a field marked "the Market". With a bit of luck, and some curious husbandry, a crop emerged that harvested as 'High-Tech. *Architecture Autre* was born much earlier, in Paris after WWI. It was a sickly infant then. The 'Modern' was overshadowed by the 'Moderne'. But in 1950's Britain, after WWII, *Architecture Autre* (with the emphasis on the *Autre*), became an absolute Orthodoxy. No other crop could be grown.

Back in 1955-6 we spent nine months just learning how to draw with line and colour. We learned sciagraphy and how to construct card and wood models. We laboured to construct perspectives and to water-colour them - all by hand. This was before we knew anything about building construction or formal composition. Right at the end

we were asked to invent a garden kiosk. Architects cannot learn by building buildings. They are too big, too slow and too expensive. We imagine them with drawings. We communicate our imaginings with drawings. They may, today, be digitally recorded. One may attempt an immersive pseudo-experience. But no Architecture is real until it is built. Architecture that is not yet built can only exist in the imagination. We learn how to draw so that we can think Architecture fluently by drawing our thoughts. The Media of Representation come before anything else. If one cannot play the instrument all subsequent work is useless.

But we were brought to understand that this first year of drawing and painting was merely a means to the end of being able to 'present' a design so that it would seem both 'real' and 'attractive'. These same skills would then, after his five years of doing 'Practice-Designs', enable the young Architect to obtain his first employment making the exactly-detailed drawings on which all building contracts used to be signed. Unfortunately our Instructors were either too illiterate to know how essential this year of painting was to the culture of Architecture itself, or too persuaded, as was John Walkden, that, as he put it: "Architects lost their charisma (and their Authority), when they abandoned the 'Orders'." For the seemingly-unknown function of these 'Orders' was to 'frame' the picture planes' of ceilings, walls and even floors that had been 'envisioned' by the very graphical techniques we neophytes had just mastered!

Most of the best Architects of the Italian Renaissance, the high point in the Architectural history of Europe (in which I include the Ancient Hellenes), began their work as painters, if not also sculptors. Leon Battista Alberti judged Painting to be of greater critical importance than Architecture to the development of civil society. Alberti was a literary man. He wrote *De Re Aedificatoria* to make sure that Architects understood their part in the scheme of the Western Rational State that was emerging from the chaos of Feudalism. He advised them to "read no other book".

Mark Jarzombek has pointed-out Alberti's understanding that Architecture existed to situate (I would even say 'steady', as in home-stead), the iconography of the 'truths' which it was capable of 'scripting'. The Architectural device used for this 'steadying' were those 'Orders' (there were five of them according to the Orthodoxy), which John Walkden mourned. These 'truths' (Alberti called them *Philosophia*), were more easily, more cheaply and more sophisticatedly inscribed graphically - that is to say with drawings and paintings. This was not to say that Architecture, as 'building', should eschew whatever narrative 'scripts' that it could carry. It was merely to recall that Architecture's main syntactic and semantic ambition was to employ its intrinsic narratives to promote the extrinsic narrative structures of painting and sculpture.

This then, was the peculiar state of drawing and painting back in 1955. We all became expert in its capabilities, but for the cognitively trivial reason of being able to draw-up a contract to build some illiterate box. We had no idea that an iconically literate medium, such as it had been, more or less, until WWII, would require its inventors to be able to draw and colour its iconically literate DECOR - properly termed *DECORUM*.

Can it be surprising, then, that the advent of the computer, which enables anyone to make a drawing whether he has the skill in his hands or not, has led to the abandonment of drawing and painting, let alone model-building, from the primary education of the Architect? First, in the mid-20C, the Architect, for entirely ideological reasons, abandoned the use of an 'Order'. Then at the century's end, he abandoned the skill of depiction. Is it any wonder, now that *anyone can invent the contract drawings for*

a building that Architects expect the imminent demise of their Profession? But why should it not die when Architecture has? And who is to blame for that but practising Architects and their Savant-Philosophers and 'Historians'? None of them, even the most excellent ones, have been able to save the Medium from its present collapse.

But, apart from being in the 'wrong time' we, the London cohort of 1955, were also in the 'wrong place'. John Harris, Emeritus Keeper of the RIBA Drawings Collection, confirmed in his book 'The Palladians' that Britain's Clients and their Architects had never much understood the difference between the outside and the inside of the buildings whose Architecture they bought-in from Italy. They never much mastered the scripting of ideas via iconically-structured 'Decor'. William Kent, Lord Burlington's principal Architect for thirty years was described by Walpole to be, as a painter, "below mediocrity". That was 200 years ago. We were now in the 20C. But this island's Architectural Culture was just as ignorant and just as incompetent. We still looked out of the window instead of up at the ceilings of 'painted' interiors. The page 17 of Lecture 31: "A Flowering", treats this tendency by the 'Test of Gluteus Maximus'.

John Harris describes the original 18C garden layout for Kew Palace. Its centre was an island surounded by a modest lake. The island harboured a shepherd and shepherdess with sheep. This was the Island Albion. It was securely protected by water and was home to all that was pure, natural, modest and innocent. Around it looped a drive bounded by an enclosing shrubbery. Set into the obscuring greenery there were a sequence of timber-built and painted 'temples'. These recalled, in a cut-price and sketchy way, the monuments of the Asiatic cultures of Mohammed, Confucius and Imhotep, together with those of ancient Rome and Greece.

London was already the biggest city in Europe, perhaps the world, and Britain was well on the way to building her commercially-fuelled Empire by this time. Trade's attitude to materials in the raw was uncomplicated. But political entry had to be obtained to the human cultures that controlled the territories from which commercial products could be extracted. It is here that London, though by no means uniquely, developed that charlatanry which always accompanies selling. We sold blankets to the American Indians, cottons to the Asian Indians and ponchos to the natives of Argentina. We sold, even more famously, glass beads instead of genuine jewels whenever we could. Dealing with cultures of which we had little or no knowledge, we developed a certain talent for fakery, for detecting the parts of a material culture which we could imitate by mechanical reproduction back home with our industrialised means of production. An unfortunate effect of these substitutions (of which we remained mostly unaware), was the destructive effect of commercially undercutting the work of native craftsmen. For these were not merely purveyors of 'beauty' or 'fashion', but of the very culture itself, through the systems of signs and symbols inscribed into the artefacts they produced.

After lunch, one could venture forth from Kew Palace into its garden. One 'perambulated the globe', passing the evidences of the foreign artifice and artificiality which enabled Britain to sell our manufactured pseudo-culture in return for their raw materials. At its centre, secure and innocently simple, was Albion, the Child of Nature. Britons were secure. Nature could not be faked. It was the work of God not Man.

Why, one may ask, did these great Asiatic cultures let us Europeans in? Well, we had gold and we had ships that could make war. In the last resort we would bombard the port that refused us the right to install a 'godown'. In any case, our method was always to woo the ruler. Revolution was never part of our Imperial ambition: merely trade

and the offer of 'Protection'. Britain, after we had decapitated our Monarch, was as Pitt remarked; "..run on sound commercial lines". We were given its Capital by the Globe. London's job was to whistle-up a Dividend. The Navy ensured payment by 'due date'.

Cultures use Architecture to confirm and stabilise themselves. They use decoration and iconically narrated ideas to enrich and fill-out these structures with the ideas that founded, generated and motivated their culture. Imperial, trading, Britain like all cultures, pursued these policies. Our role was to de-stablise so as to restore balance with our own product-fetishes. Our 'Architecture' was one of movement, exchange and fashion. If we had a 'lifespace culture' it was never Urbane, never even Monarchical, and certainly never Republican. Lecture Eight: 'Deco Denied' discourses how the greatest urbanistic monument of the Empire on which the sun never set was designed by Britain's top Country House Architect as a suburbia of Bungalows, dedicated to a village politics of private consumption. Lecture Three: 'The End of Urbanity' confirms that Patrick Abercrombie, author of the famous 1944 'Plan for the County of London' was the President of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England. Lecture Thirty-Two: "A Lost world of Progress" informs that Thomas Mawson, the first President of the British Institute of Town Planning, was a Plantsman who wrote books on garden design.

The general trading-fabric may have needed longevity. One needed to pay-back the capital investment on the ports and railways. But this did not imply any stability to the culture itself. It could never be allowed to settle. Darwin, British himself, by travelling around the Empire as an entomologist, confirmed with his Origin of Species, in 1859, the 'Death of God the Designer'. The American Economic Crash of 1929 introduced the 'End of Progress'. The discovery of Belsen in April 1945 confirmed the end of the 'Perfectibility of Man'. The dropping of the Bomb in August 1945 ended any idea of war as an heroic activity. Science and Technology, the twin ideals that supported Architectural Modernism, appeared to be as capable of evil as of good. The 'white modernism' of the 'Heroic period' was no longer inherently benign. In 1955 the Old Ideals were dropping like leaves from the dead tree of Western Civilisation. What was left to look up to, to look forward to?

If this novel, fascinating, tragi-comic 'reality' of the human condition was to be revealed, and we were to achieve a certain nobility by revealing it in public, then our story must be told. Architecture used to be the medium through which such 'hidden realities' were revealed (and mainly to the 'interior'). In our innocence, I and some others of our post-WWII generation, aimed to invent an Architectural 'Universality' capable of entering the work of Corbusier, Mies, Wright, Aalto and even Buckminster Fuller into a generalised , even 'generic' medium. The effort required that one hunt down every and any attempt at an Architectural 'Modernity' and subject it to analysis. This is recorded throughout the 44 Lectures, but especially in Lecture 9: 'What Taboo?'

A semiological level of this universality, as is described in Lecture 3, 'The Great Escape', had been achieved by 1961. While never carried-through to a state which might please a professional linguist, it allowed me what I needed. This was an 'equalised' access to all Architectures, anywhere, and at any time. I needed this if I was to not only decrypt the Medium but re-build it into an effective contemporary tool: a tool that could satisfy the dictum of L. B. Alberti that "Architecture was the paradigmatic Medium of Civilisation".

Universality came easily to me. My father had been born in Cawnpore, India, and my Mother in Rosario, Argentina. I was born in Malaysia. We registered the extreme limits of the tsunami of London's capital that had swept Britons, our language and

our culture, all over the globe. The Architecture of Mogul India was, if anything, more familiar to me than that of England, or France, or Finland. They were all both equally promising or equally useless to my needs. One of the key components of my architectural decryption of Hellenism is a Vedic cosmogony received from J.C.Kuiper, a Dutch ethnographer working in Indonesia. And why not? Mesopotamia was their mutual origin. My access to these Architectures was through travel. But I came to know them mainly through my slow purchase of over two thousand, largely 'old', books.

The 44 Lectures appear set out as an Academic Year - with Winter, Spring and Summer Terms. This 'Academicism' is a disguise. I have lectured only very occasionally. These 44 Lectures are not primarily verbal, or even visual. They are the invention of a Practitioner, not a Professor. I call them "the Practitioner's Revolt".

I am interested in the How, What and Why of inventing Architecture in the barren desert of the *Architecture Autre* 20C. Talking about Architecture is a largely useless activity, as any Architectural Academy will prove and any Practising Architect (what the Savants call a 'Practitioner'), will confirm. The Architectural Academies have filled-up with clever Musicologists, Physicists, Psychologists, Pugilists and other experts in everything except Architecture - a medium in which they have neither training not practice. They have neither skill in the Medium nor, one must observe, much interest.

The Savants see themselves as assisting, in the Marxist manner of the Intellectual Midwife, in what has become the main project of 'Modern' Architecture. This is to birth *'L'Architecture Autre'*. I use the French term because to do so is to assist the idea of an Architecture that is 'strange', 'other' and *unheimlich*. What is desired is an Architecture that is NOT - that is to say *NOT ARCHITECTURE* as it has been known, more or less, for the last nine millenia. One may observe the utility of a body of knowledge, like Anthropology, which excludes any direct cognisance of Architecture as such. It begins with the promise of an Otherness which is generic. These are the Savants and these are the Academies which currently train the 'Architects of the Future'. Mies van der Rohe advised: "Never talk to your Client about Architecture". The contemporary Professor is strict in this discipline. From 'Baukunst' to Koolhaas' "Age of Trash" is a straight line.

These Lectures are, speaking bibliologically, some 500 'double-page spreads'. They have to be 'scanned'. One should begin by allowing the eyes to wander over their profusion. It is why I say that these Lectures have been 'scripted' rather than 'written'. It would be natural to observe, first of all, the profuse (some 3,000) illustrations. Architecture is closer to Graphics than to Text. Architects conceive graphically and communicate their instructions graphically. This too has gone out of fashion with the Architectural Academies and their many Professors who can neither draw nor build - only talk and compute. One might then read one of the long captions to some Graphic. These are all printed in a Burnt Umber Palatino Italic Bold in ten point. They are uniform - as opposed to the Main Text, which is as animated as the page of a Tabloid.

The Graphics are extensively textualised, which may offend those who believe, as Le Corbusier suggested, that Graphics should be 'pure' - that is to say 'meaningless'. The text, in exchange, is graphically agitated by changing point size and type face and even colour - from paragraph and sentence and even word to word. Nor are these adjustments entirely 'logical' in their detail. But these 'pollutions' are not without purpose. Whereas I suggested that talking about Architecture was often fruitless I do also believe that 'theory' entails the 'understanding' of one Medium by conceiving of its 'ideas' in another. The act of translation illuminates an idea like no other.

Buildings and words being so far apart, as Media, I bring to my aid, in these Lectures, a third Medium, which I call 'iconocryptic'. These are neither buildings nor their merely graphical models. An Iconocrypt might be called, in Vedic metaphysics, Architecture's 'subtle body'. They are images (which proximates them to Buildings), but they are images which have been generated verbally (which proximates them to Text). This is why I prefer to use the word 'iconocrypt' to denote them.

I describe the invention of this process in Lecture Six: 'Tricorso'. It was provoked by the need to 'publish' the ideas in JOA's first two large projects. The ideas were 'hidden' in the buildings. I knew that only 'iconocrypts' could reveal them. But how to invent them? Miscegnation and pollution (of the hemispheres), is the norm, integration the ambition and an Iconically Engineered Lifespace the Project.

The creative imagination works best in darkness because it has to. What else can one do when it is dark except go to sleep and dream? It is why I associate this WINTRY first Volume with *VENUSTAS*, customarily the last of the Vitruvian trilogy. *VENUSTAS* is uninterestingly translated as 'BEAUTY'. My key to unlock this Latin riddle is the expression *"Pulchritudo splendor veritatis est"*. Keats said "Truth is beauty, Beauty Truth". Being English, and unused not to bright sun but to the inky shadows real brightness throws, he omitted the word *'splendor'*. Splendor means 'shining'. "Beauty is the 'shining' of Truth". Picasso understood this when he said "Art is the Lie that shows us the Truth". Kant would have agreed. We cannot aspire to apprehend 'the truth' that is to say 'what is'. This is the 'meaning' of SHADOW. Reality is beyond being visible. We can, however, somehow apprehend it through the illusion, the bright imagistic solarity of Art, or whatever Medium it is that 'shines' for us.

This was the epistemological error of *L'Architecure Autre* as it 'Turned towards Engineering'. Appearances can never be 'real'. It shows a strange ignorance of Science that 'the turn' occured at the very moment physicality vanished from Physics. It was Goethe's quarrel with Newton's theory of colour that Newton downgraded 'appearance' to be a 'secondary reality'. Appearances, especially if 'artificial' and even more artificially 'coloured', correspond not to Things, as the Haptics of High Tech fancy, but to Ideas. "Appearances", when taken to the level of symbols, "lead" as Ricour proposes, to "thought". "Thinking is", however 'subconscious' "always of "something". These "somethings' can be most efficiently evidenced by words. 'Appearances' are, therefore, not so much 'technical' as 'textual'.

This is the function of *DECORUM*:- it inscribes the 'shining' of that *splendor* implied in the Vitruvian *'VENUSTAS'*. I place it in Volume One because its technique must be the first thing an Architect masters. It was the first of the techniques we used to learn. One will never emerge from the darkness of ignorance and incompetence without it. Depiction is a component of the three masteries which enable the practice of the 'Tricorso'. The others are Building and Writing. It is the technique published in AA Files No. 2 (wholly ignored at the time), and used in JOA to generate the iconology of our own Iconic Engineering, or Decorative Surface-Scriptings. Its Emblem, an Eye inside a Mouth upon a Hand, all cut in stone, is on the back cover of this Volume One.

***VENUSTAS* offers the student the greatest difficulty. He must begin with it because it will take him the longest to master. '*Splendor*' is coloured Black, the symbol of darkness, ignorance and the infinitude of the Imagination.**

'*VENUSTAS*' is a fitting subject for the WINTER CAMPAIGN.