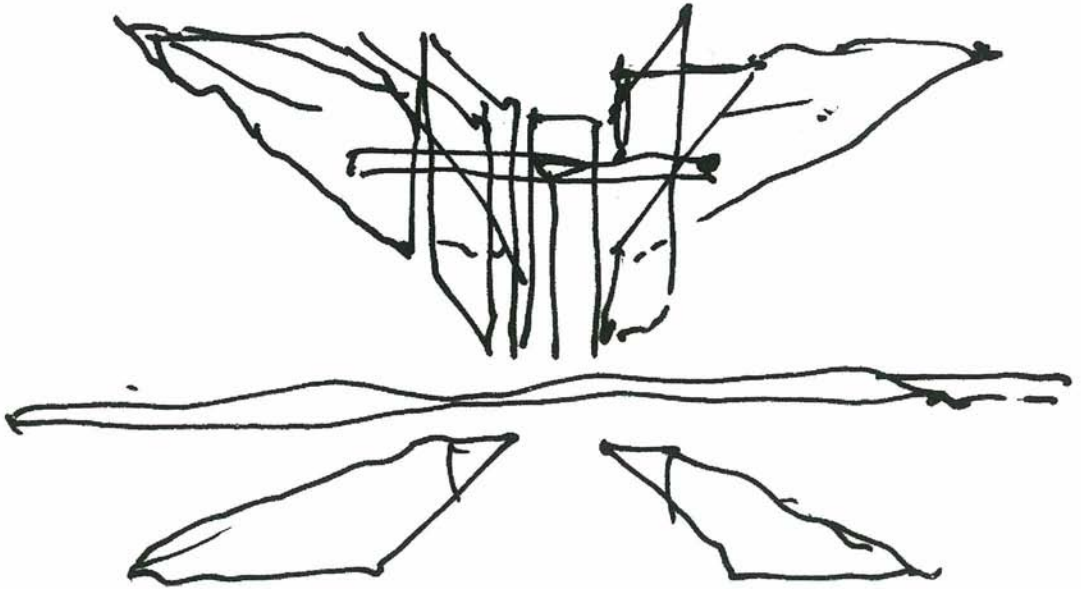


VIENNA
ARCHITECTURE
CONFERENCE
2010



IN THE ABSENCE
OF **RAIMUND**
ABRAHAM

Peter Noever / Wolf D. Prix Eds.

HATJE
CANTZ

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In the Absence
of RAIMUND
ABRAHAM

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Eric Owen Moss, architect, educator
and author, Los Angeles

Eric Owen Moss

Introduction

Ishmael's interrogatory to every reader of *Moby-Dick*:
"Who ain't a slave? Tell me that."
"Who ain't a slave?"

Maybe Raimund Abraham.

Flying out is different than flying in.
Leaving what we know for what we don't.
Exchanging what we recognize for what we won't.
We know who we are because of where we are.
Take away the where, and who are we?
Maybe Raimund can tell us.

The city is a double map.
It's literal.
It's figurative.

Patterns.
Directions.
Routines.

A method for those who sign up.
A system for those who sign in.

But Raimund's not a signatory.

The city, any city, builds the culture's rules.
Raymond denies the culture's rules.

We run in the city's streets.
We hide in the city's buildings.
Raymond runs, but he can't hide.

We know what happens to guys who draw their own maps:
Columbus, looking for India, lands in Cuba.
Raimund's his own map maker, landing in countries where no one else lives.

We're a world of affiliations.
We're a world of subscribers.
We're a world of allegiances.
Raimund doesn't affiliate,
Raimund won't subscribe,
Raimund's a man of non-allegiance.

Who we are is where we are:
City, neighborhood, street, home.
Thomas Wolf got it backwards:
we all go home again and again and again.

Except Raimund.
He's homeless.

Where we are is who we are:

The party says so;
The country says so;
Google says so ...

Raimund says no to so.

Predictability and comfort:
We all fit ...
We all fit ...

Raimund doesn't fit.

We have a past and a present and a future ...
The Internet says so ...
Raimund's not all over the Internet.
Categories, and frames of reference, and system definitions ...
Where do we fit the man who doesn't fit?

America?
Mexico?
Austria?

Or is it New York?
or Vienna?
or L.A.?
or Mexico City?

Maybe Cooper?
or Harvard?
or the Angewandte?
or SCI-Arc?

My place?
Your place?
Someplace?
Anyplace?
Everyplace?
No place?

Here's the answer:
No permanent allegiances.
No enduring relationships.
No obligatory friends or enemies.
The Raimund model is kinetic.
No final stops.
No ultimate destinations.

Raimund is a concert with Raimund as the audience ...
... well, almost ...

His compatriots?
Maybe Hejduk and Woods.
Adversaries? Maybe everyone else.

Plato, an architect by another name, taught us the form of the form never has a tangible shape ... it can't be built ...

Raimund Abraham's architecture is the Plato rejoinder: he argues, he can make the ethereal tangible—the geometric ideal is constructible, he says ...

James Joyce, Plato's collaborator, 2,500 years later, updated Plato with the Stephen Dedalus rule: solitary, insular, independent:

Nothing,
never,
no one,
other than tools which are "forged in the smithy of your own soul ..."

Raimund is the Platonic smithy.

I remember a number of years ago, architects at work on the Wagramer Strasse, a social housing competition in Vienna.

Raimund Abraham was one of those architects.

At an important juncture in the discussion, the developer, Mr. Spiegelfeld, delivered some banal critique of Raimund's project; instantly Raimund was up, and out of the room.

Forever hasta la vista.

An epiphany of the architect at work.

Please welcome Raimund Abraham, the Platonic smithy from everywhere, before he disappears out the door ...



f.l.t.r.: Peter Eisenman, Peter Noever, Vito Acconci, Wolf D. Prix, Thom Mayne, Eric Owen Moss, Lebbeus Woods, Kenneth Frampton, Andrea Lenardin Madden, Peter Kubelka, Alexis Rochas



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