

## **A Convergence of Traditions: Saint Lawrence Chapel, by Avanto Architects**

### **Abstract:**

*Debates on the actuality of modern architecture by new contributions could be considered by critics as a deviation from its essence. In such a context, some works by Finnish studies exhibited at the Museum of Finnish Architecture in Spring, 2015 provide fresh approaches with their proposals and interest us here to reconsider architectural modernity with alternative readings. Project ideas are fused and converge towards new proposals in a process of continuity, from which only the concrete buildings experience, with enlightening phenomenal qualities, redeem us. We concentrate on a chapel by Avanto Architects in which interests from the second generation of modern architecture and the masters of Nordic Architecture can be appreciated.*

**Keywords:** *architectural competitions, modernity and representation, nordic architecture.*

The work of seven Finnish teams was exhibited in the National Museum of Finnish Architecture during the Spring of 2015, under the heading *Suomi Seven: Emerging Architects from Finland*, reconsidering continuities of Modern Movement, scale, new housing types, collective services buildings –schools or churches- amongst other issues.<sup>1</sup> We choose the Chapel of Saint Lawrence by Avanto Architects for detailed consideration.

### **Modernity and postmodern complexities.**

Whilst searching authenticity in Nordic Architecture, Nils-Ole Lund recalled the neglect of gestural subtleties after Gunnar Asplund's death in 1940, favouring settings, clear constructions and final consistency: such in the case of Sigurd Lewerentz.<sup>2</sup> Modern Architectural matters seemed difficult to explain, since functionalist, organic, vernacular or Critical Regionalism values were recovered, together with the constructivist avant-garde or Merzbau/Dada themes.<sup>3</sup> Since tradition and individual talent do not combine well, some authors suggested a revision of the previous order, differentiating evaluations of sincere expression, technical excellence or the exhibition of significant emotion.

The limits of the relevant spurred spatial and personal experiences, routes in haptic or space-time behaviour and local realizations during the 1980s. Given the conflict between universality and traditional cultures, a pragmatic reasoning for Critical Regionalism was given by K. Frampton, as response to perceptions by Paul Ricoeur.<sup>4</sup> Our concern here is a sensitivity that could turn discourse into a path, rather than into a theory, as Giancarlo De Carlo and Bernard Rudofsky suggested in 1951 referring to *spontaneous architecture*, in sharp contrast with foreign, internationalist ideas, subjected to scrutiny by Colin St. John Wilson in figures such as Lewerentz (1885-1975) and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), and in two Modern traditions (the disciples of Peter Behrens and Theodor Fischer), with respective attitudes towards environment and heritage.<sup>5</sup>

Tradition and history were treated with precision by Juhani Pallasmaa, as complex phenomena, questioning dialectically modern attitudes owing to the convergence on them of diverse sources of architectural production.<sup>6</sup> The users' experience, uniting body, work and perceptive space, was appropriate, linked to the act of proper erecting, poetical and full of sacral character, according to phenomenologists. The profiles of Mies and Lewerentz in the perspectives submitted for the competition project, under the motto Polku, path, as well

---

<sup>1</sup> *Suomi Seven: Emerging Architects from Finland*, Museum of Finnish Architecture exhibition, Helsinki, 24.3.2015–17.5.2015.

<sup>2</sup> Nils-Ole Lund, *Nordic Architecture* (Aarhus: The Danish Architectural Press, 2008), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Vilhelm Helander and Simo Rista, *Modern Architecture in Finland* (Helsinki: Kirjayhtymä, 1987), 46-52. Malcolm Quantrill, *Finnish Architecture and the Modernist Tradition* (London: E& FN SPON, 1995), 181-228. See chapters 8 and 9.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture. A critical history* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 313- 27. Paul Ricoeur, "Universal Civilization and National Cultures" in *History and Truth* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965).

<sup>5</sup> Colin St. John Wilson, *Sigurd Lewerentz 1885-1975. The dilemma of classicism* (London: Architectural Association, 1989). Colin St. John Wilson, *The Other tradition of modern architecture: the uncompleted Project* (London: Academy Editions, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Juhani Pallasmaa, "Tradition and Modernity: The Feasibility of Regional Architecture in Postmodern Society" en *Encounters. Architectural Essays* (Helsinki: Rakennustieto, 2012), 264-78. "The First Modernism was a utopian, idealistic, purist and demagogic movement, which drew its artistic strength from an innocent faith in a future to be brought about by new architecture and art...The Second Modern architecture is premised on a realistic view of culture unblinded by illusions... incompleteness, process, and imperfection are part of the new expression".

as their likely influence, make us cautious owing to the exceptionality of the first and the proliferation of the second. Could we relate these works?

### **Immediate context and other referents**

Saint Lawrence Chapel lies next to the cemetery near the homonymous stone church in Vantaa, one of the oldest in Finland. The ground and underground plans show a white reinforced concrete structure, harmonized by the plastered and White Paint, and in contrast with the slate that hides an underfloor heating system (Figure 1). Light wooden benches with clear design smooth the distinction between floors and walls, and roof lights reflect on glass ornaments, with brilliant flashes of light, simple and effective.

The bell-tower dominates the external image, at the South-West intersection (Figure 2). Blind walls towards North and East exhibit notable parallels, such as the Path of the Seven Wells by Lewerentz and the compact volume of the Resurrection Chapel. The bell-tower focusses and regulates the plan: a diagonal trace pointing at it defines concentric L-shaped walls, and, together with auxiliary courts, do generate chapels of varied function and size, as the little Urn Chamber or the Main Chapel, all lit from the courtyards, with Access from Sunset and exit towards South –towards the cemetery tombs, thus establishing specific domains for the ritual precinct and that of final rest. Observing with detail, these volumes nested in L-sequences exhibit walls that continue up to the rooftop, protecting from adverse weather conditions and gathering reflected roof-light.

Harmonious proportions, spread by Aulis Blomstedt in Finland, exhibit here a field of forces from the access until the graveyard exit, and the emergence from the underground towards light at the main level, already perceptible from initial sketches. A central block of services, at the underground and main level – the only perceived from the street-, allows tangential routes and location for the mechanism to rise catafalques with a careful transition from the underground upwards, contrasting darkness and glow with the patina produced on the peripheral filter and the copper protecting roofs. The Section West-East shows the connecting staircase between levels and pouring light on the walls, accommodated to place and materials, since the stone ribbons in gardens and courts were extracted on site (Figure 3). A foreshortening produced of the main structural walls can be seen from the cemetery in direction East -West, towards the graveyard. They recall Saint Marks backside enclosure at Björkhagen, breaking the idea of elevation or façade on both sides.

### **The paths of Lewerentz**

Lewerentz accessed, through Fischer, to the ideas of *Bund für Heitmatschutz*, in favour of a total, natural environment, though built and industrialized, with a syncretic fusion of the *simple-humble-practical*. A sort of redemption aimed to “*discover in the past forgotten organic, semantic potentials relevant to the perceived present and future needs of humanity*” in which he invoked “*the authority of the classical and the vernacular, presented as something new*”, searching personal building processes, more than form.<sup>7</sup> Precocious in progress and distance towards the past, the sketches and plans for the Chapel of the Holy Cross in Enskede (1930), with Asplund, or the cemeteries of Enköping (1930-32) and Djursholm (1932-33) still astonish by their modernity, even when compared with recent works of refined rationalism: once again the alluded convergence.

---

<sup>7</sup> Caroline Constant, *The Woodland Cemetery: Toward a Spiritual Landscape* (Stockholm: Byggförlaget, 1994), 21-28.

After differences with the Authorities for the Stockholm Cemeteries for incomprehension of the Resurrection Chapel, he was called back to design the chapel of St. Birgitta, a crematorium and the twin chapels of St. Knut and St. Gertrud at Malmö (1939-43). A unitary front fuse the variety of constructions behind these two buildings (Figure 4). A comparison of figures 2 and 4 lets us see an element of surprise in porticoes and patios and irregular rhythms fostered by canopies over the threshold. Roof pitches contrast sharply with the crematorium behind them, evoking the sketches and initial ideas produced in 1930 for the Chapel of the Holy Cross in Stockholm, signed with Asplund, who finished it, transcended in the first stages of these works, as well as the 1923 themes for the Malmö Cemetery Great Chapel (superbly drawn by Arthur von Schmalensee). Its parallels with the Resurrection Chapel place us in front of elementary volumes and austere proportions, to works like the Church of Corpus Christi by Rudolf Schwarz in Aquisgrán (1928), an author that Mies discovered in 1926 and whose impact is still of some consequence at the Carr Chapel for the Illinois Institute of Technology (1952): memorable austerity, as in the work that concerns us here.

Saint Knut and Saint Gertrud would be different without the alignment of columns and trees that unify the setting, imposing sights at awkward angles and paths between the porticoes. The diversity in the West elevation lets understand the chapels's freedom included within Saint Lawrence's frame, rather than a miesian affinity of their plan with its courts (ffigures 4 and 1).

Such structure was further developed in the compacity of mature works by Lewerentz: Saint Marks, Björkhagen (1952-56) and Saint Peter's at Klippan (1962- 66), especially the latter. Its structural singularity was compared by Colin St. John Wilson with Hosios Loukás, near Corinth, since symbol and structure are fused, though in different forms. A little steel girder (shaped as a cross, by supporting it on an only column) upholds all the roof beams. Surprise and quiet recollection are moving and transporting, rather than lurking, but without presenting such structure as *unicum*. As García Mansilla pointed, it becomes difficult to talk about *elevations* and separate the resulting structures from the environment; photographs made at Villa Adriana show his lack of interest on *forms*, instead of integrated atmospheres of architecture and greenery, constructive resources or columns like his works to come.<sup>8</sup> The mere contemplation of the adjoint plans, next to those of Saint Lawrence shows how much of the efforts from the *silent masters* for an authentic architecture remains in the Nordic tradition, underlining that it is inseparable from design and building activity (Figure 5).

The walk to the school followed by the children in the courtyard of St. Marks at Björkhagen is a passage, rather than a cluster, as vividly described by Henrietta Palmer:

"The fact that Lewerentz provides the church with two entrances -one for the mass, opening directly from the outside landscape to the church interior, like the entrance of a medieval countryside church, and one for everyday use, connecting the courtyard and the porch with the ceremonial space only through the church hall- *demonstrates the contemporary desire for simultaneously seeing the church as a space for everyday activity as well as a direct and dramatic high religious experience*".<sup>9</sup>

## Lessons from Mies, elusive mediator

---

<sup>8</sup> Luis Moreno García- Mansilla, 'La capella della Resurrezione' in N. Flora, P. Giardello y G. Postiglione, *Sigurd Lewerentz 1885-1975* (Milano: Electa Ed., 2001), 392-94.

<sup>9</sup> Henrietta Palmer, "Suecia: las últimas iglesias", *DPA* n. 26 (2010), 19.

Mies' silhouette in Saint Lawrence Main Chapel, at the crossing of routes from the main entrance and exit to the graveyard, has no easy explanation. Initial sketches by Avanto Architects and lighting from patios add misgivings to possible comparisons (Figure 6). Mies rooted universal referents for modernity, avoiding it as mere style. His explicit involvement on *spiritual* matters (*Philosophy and Culture*, in his own words), since he discovered the weekly *Die Zukunft* (The Future) at the atelier of Albert Schneider, widened after building Dr. Riehl's house and meeting his circle, Jaeger's work or that of Heraclitus; hence his dialectic and poetic sense, manifested when he published "*Bauen*".<sup>10</sup>

Hence, researchers on Mies differ, even on shocking issues: A. Culquhoun states that his main interests were "the techniques of idealization and mediation by graphic representation...His criteria were ideal and visual, not constructive; not even "visual-constructive".<sup>11</sup> Whilst K. Frampton sees his work as epitome of tectonic values and monumentalized technique.

"Here "representation" does not imply that something merely stands in for something else as if it were a replacement or substitute that enjoyed a less authentic, more indirect kind of existence. On the contrary, what is represented is itself present in the only way available to it", propitiating the essential nature of our making in the construction of our world.<sup>12</sup> Mies overcomes Boullée's distinction between architecture and building, fusing them as Baukunst: "The *bau*", he would explain, 'is the clear building construction; while the *kunst* is the refinement of that and not anything more. Architecture begins when two bricks are put carefully together'<sup>13</sup>.

An organic, structural order is unavoidable to turn form into a consequence of structure and not into a reason for construction. For Mies, structure is a philosophical whole, from top to bottom, to the very last detail, working on its possibilities and ambiguities: "I discovered by working with actual glass models that the important thing is the play of reflections and not the effect of light and shadows as in ordinary buildings".<sup>14</sup> Such reflections are clues to follow. Concerning the Concrete Office Building, he observed: "The materials: concrete, steel and glass...Reinforced concrete structures are skeletons by nature. No gingerbread. No fortress. Columns and girders eliminate bearing walls. This is skin and bone constructions".<sup>15</sup>

Saint Lawrence's main plan is more compact than Mies' concrete and brick villas (1923 and 1924). Any similarity vanishes in the interior-exterior relation to South and Sunset. The atrium at the concrete villa seems alluded at the entrance of Saint Lawrence, even next to water pools, though the diagonal visuals between horizontal plans, characteristic of Mies in this period, have their counterpoint on the gaze to ceilings and rooflights, and thus is shown on initial sketches, or the cout-house studies in the 1930s decade. As a matter of fact, the 1923 and 1929 milestones are full of intermediate experiments that allow an interpretation

---

<sup>10</sup> Emilio Lledó Iñigo, *El concepto poiesis en la filosofía griega* (Madrid: CSIC, Instituto Luis Vives de Filosofía, 1961). *Poiesis* originally meant making, constructing, building, later differentiated and sublimated. During the recent Seminar on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reconstruction of the Barcelona Pavilion, Fritz Neumeyer ascertained the interest of Mies on Jaeger's work, up to months before departing to America.

"Form is not the goal, but the result of our work. (...) It is our specific concern to liberate building activity from aesthetic speculators, and make building again what alone it should be, namely BUILDING (BAUEN). "Bauen", *G*, n. 2 (1923), 1.

<sup>11</sup> Alan Colquhoun, *La arquitectura moderna, una historia desapasionada*. (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2005), 179.

<sup>12</sup> Hans Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 35.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Carter, *Mies van der Rohe trabajando* (London: Phaidon Press, 2006), 7.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

<sup>15</sup> *G*, n. 1 (1923).

of Mies' work. The year 1923, ebullient with avant-gardes, led to objective, *sachlich* attitudes.<sup>16</sup> Voices in favour of a sensitive-conceptual treatment of functions were silenced. Goals would be social and technical. Categories used by Johnson for the Mies exhibition (1947) and by Richard Padovan can be updated for an initial framework.<sup>17</sup>

First, the Schinkel tradition provides the Romantic Classicism freedom dispersing the house as varied pavilions and pergolas, into a place with shared tensions. An honest programme, relating interior and landscape, is seen by Schulze and Neumeyer as a "principle of continuity", linking architecture and nature or designed garden. Accordingly, Navarro-Baldeweg interpreted this spatial interpenetrability or permeability between inside and outside, as relation between subject and object; perpendicular to the object, to the picture/architecture, offering resistance to the subject and determining routes and images.

Second. The influence of avant-gardes, connected with a second reading of continuity in Wright houses; that would be combined to fluid American spaces and to folding or sling walls and planes, transparencies and De Stijls counter-constructions, with reminiscence of constructivism, suprematism and Dada.

And third, a structural sense of building and detailing (from the work by Hendrik P. Berlage in 1912), and since 1926 onwards, with asymmetric spaces, new materials and minimum structure.

However, the indifferentiated openings towards the four directions of space as in the Brick House, or a pseudo-pyramid shaped structure of levels do not exist in Saint Lawrence. Its translucent quality, conditioned by the need of light (closed to North and East, with directional walls) and by weather brings us close to the Court-House Studies, the sequence of proposals for the House Hubbe or Projects as the German Pavilion in Brussels (1934) and the Museum for a Small city (1940-43), as support for a supposed miesian character of this Chapel, through the inseparable themes of pavilion, route and courts, leading, -if we followed the Smithsons- to several aggregation modes (Figure 7).

"Architectural form", "interior" and "vital intensity" were close for Mies in 1927, enhancing an intellectual system matured from the transcendental year 1926 and his Greek classical references. In this sense, the sentence "*life is neither static, nor dynamic, but embraces both concepts*" in the draft of the letter "On Form in Architecture", 1927, preserved in the MoMA is of great significance. In a previous letter to the Weissenhof technicians he was quite explicit: by stating that "*Building for me is an intellectual, creative activity, not in the details, but in what is essential*", a search for Architecture's real task, discerning between standardization and rationalization.<sup>18</sup> The structural skeleton with intentions of "habitability" and "use", transcending flexibility, unveils a rational synthesis of building and free use, understandable from the variations in plan for the residential block in Stuttgart-Weissenhof and the exhibition pavilions; the Glass Room and Linoleum, 1927 and Cafe Samt & Seide. Exploration of new materials is added to Building defined in expositive pavilions that unite a defined idea of construction, an exhibition that unveils the place on which it is settled, pointing a route, thus initiating new architectural ideas.

---

<sup>16</sup> Richard Padovan, *Towards universality. Le Corbusier, Mies and De Stijl*. (London: Routledge, 2002), 100.

<sup>17</sup> Cristina Gastón Guirao, *Mies: el Proyecto como revelación del lugar* (Barcelona: Fundación Caja de Arquitectos 2005. Enrique Colomé Montañés, *Material, espacio y color en Mies van der Rohe. Café Samt & Seide: Hacia una Propuesta Estructural*. PhD Thesis Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, 2014. José Altés Bustelo, "La Casa con patio en Mies van der Rohe", *Proyecto, progreso, arquitectura*, n. 8 (2013): 42-57.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Pommer y Christian F. Otto, *Weissenhof 1927 and the Modern Movement in Architecture*. (Chicago/Londres: University of Chicago Press, 1991). Mies' letter to Stuttgart Technical Services, 1926.

In 1929, two years prior to converting the Modern Movement into the International Style, wealth is shown as emptiness, and values -recognized three years before by Mies in Schwarz, Guardini and Whitehead, were turned into thunderous silence owing to its functional futility. There is no such radicality in Saint Lawrence, where everything seems to be in search of a measured modesty.

The German Pavilion at the Barcelona International Exhibition (1929), built with permanent sumptuous materials (Steel, glass, marbles, onyx...), did not last much. Its travertine base integrated the ensemble, anchoring it in place, but the real movement to follow was suggested by the position of the water pool, with perspective angles and a labyrinth of reflections, described by Nicolau Rubió i Tudurí, who represented it with closed doors, whilst Terence Riley, and Detlef Mertins disregard them:

*“The Pavilion only encloses space and even thus in a geometric and not a real or physical way, ... each chamber is only closed imperfectly, on three sides, by three walls.... These walls are quite often large and continuous glass panels... Some of these panels, of a dark and neutral tone, reflect the objects and people, in such a way that what we see through the glass is confused with what we see reflected there. Some rooms do not have roof: they are real semi-courtyards, where the space is only limited by three walls and by the horizontal water surface in a pool, but where it is retained by its geometry.”<sup>19</sup>.*

Reflecting on the unfinished and changing drawings, Cristina Gastón-Guirao reminds Mies' will reinforce the main episodes of the Pavillion route by means of visual landmarks, finally reduced to one, Kolbe's statue in the North Court, aligned with the visual axis, still reminiscent amongst the House Hubbe sketches (Figure 8).<sup>20</sup> The 1.10x1.10 m. modules for the pavement adjust its elements, position and relative value. A no lesser aspect is the function of glass surfaces, either on shadow or light, and their tone (darker or lighter) that one can relate to the Stuttgart Glass Room or the Tugendhat House, observing a closer sensitivity to Dada, than to Neoplasticism or suprematists, as A. Behne described, 1919, with prophetic emphasis:

“The Dadaists enacted the New Man by adopting fictional personae to parody social structures and conventions, often shocking their audiences in the streets and in the press, as well as in the gallery. Internalizing contradiction, chaos, flux and chance, Dada saw itself as *‘at one with the times, it is a child of the present epoch which one may curse, but cannot deny’*.”<sup>21</sup>

A setting to remain empty, that cannot be filled, *“it does not enclose but already closed space”*.<sup>22</sup> Hence its labyrinthic or enigmatic character, described by por Navarro-Baldeweg in, 1999; Alison and Peter Smithson in 2001, and Schulze-Windhorst in 2017.<sup>23</sup> Even though, paradoxically, “movement was a capital factor for the concept of form and space

---

<sup>19</sup> Nicolau Rubió i Tudurí, “Le pavillon d'Allemagne à l'Exposition de Barcelona”, *Cahiers d'art*, VIII-IX, 1929.

<sup>20</sup> Gastón, op. cit., 61.

<sup>21</sup> Adolf Behne, *Die Wiederkehr der Kunst* (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1919), 63.

<sup>22</sup> José Quetglas, *Der Gläserne Schrecken. Imágenes del Pabellón de Alemania*. (Montreal: Les Éditions Section b, 1991), 60.

<sup>23</sup> Juan Navarro Baldeweg, “El límite de los principios en la arquitectura de Mies van der Rohe” en *La habitación vacante* (Valencia: Pre-textos; Girona: Col·legi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya, 1999).

Franz Schulze, Edward Windhorst, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: Una biografía crítica* (Barcelona: Ed. Reverté, 2017).

in the Barcelona Pavilion”.<sup>24</sup> It was and still is such, for those who experiment it in a significant way, as described by Detlef Mertins “a stopping place on the road to becoming”.<sup>25</sup>

Several attitudes from different avant-gardes do coexist: Van Doesburg’s simultaneity and interpenetrability (a term that will be dealt with later), mixed in the Glass Room with ideas from Richter, el Lissitzky’s Proun and the treatment of materials by Moholy-Nagy. The sentences where Mies stops in Bergson’s *Evolution créatrice* point at the continuous change of life and the tendency of particular manifestations to remain behind. The following passage is significant for our purposes:

*“They are therefore relatively stable, and counterfeit immobility so well that we treat each of them as a thing rather than as a progress, forgetting that the very permanence of their form is only the outline of a movement”.*

But what Mies highlights in the book is here quite relevant:

*“This love, in which some have seen the great mystery of life, may possibly deliver us life’s secret... It allows us a glimpse of the fact that the living being is above all a thoroughfare, and that the essence of life is in the movement by which life is transmitted”.*<sup>26</sup>

As figures show, the eye can transform visual perception into a battlefield for ideas. The representative side of such architecture of silence can only be found in the link between life and space-time existence. The mineral quality of pure onyx wall is counterpoint of the translucent glass next to it: sumptuous and different materials limit a unique space, but they would be irrelevant without diversity and movement.

Everything is more simple and direct in Saint Lawrence: the exterior image is complemented inside with ordered passages within a clear space and apparently open plan, where the finishes offer empathy to users. The South façade, link of Chapel and graveyard, hardly shows disparities in the walls’ sequence, when looked at from the East, confused within a view that gives primacy to the bell-tower. But from the West, with the last lights of day, one can perceive a subtle foreshortening of spaces within walls, clearly differentiated on plan. This apparent freedom can be followed in the works by the authors previously mentioned. And, as we have seen, both approaches -that of Lewerentz and Mies- are fused.

Mies’ sketches for the interiors of Gericke and Hubbe Houses, still reminiscent of the constructions for Barcelona and Brno, exhibit transparencies later elaborated. Respect for exterior spaces is shown in notes written by Mies van der Rohe in 1933, preserved at LoC. When he states: «¿What would concrete, What would steel be without mirror glass?» he is informing us that he built and designed for the glass industry. When this conference is contrasted with an initial draft, we can see a significant evolution from a general statement (“*Only now we can articulate space freely, open it up and connect it to the landscape, thereby filling the spatial needs of modern man*”), changing later to a more specific and tectonic

---

<sup>24</sup> Franz Schulze, *Mies van der Rohe. Una biografía crítica* (Madrid: H. Blume & MOMA, 1986), 162-63. Sentence not included in the new and revised edition, Schulze and Windhorst, op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> Detlef Mertins, “Architectures of Becoming: Mies van der Rohe and the Avant-Garde” in *Mies in Berlin*, ed. T. Riley y B. Bergdoll (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2001), 132-33.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

attitude (*“Now it becomes clear again what a wall is, what an opening, what is floor and what ceiling”*).<sup>27</sup>

Comparing the following isolated volumes, only bound by shared referential spaces, as in the clusters by Lewerentz and the series of variations for House Hubbe, the Pavilions of Germany in Brussels (1934) already studied in this journal, or the Museum for a Small City (1942), the possibilities of combination between defined volumes –or their negatives– and the spaces between courts, it becomes evident that a search for a minimum structure is under way from 1926 onwards, and we must stress with I. de Solà-Morales that it is not minimalist.<sup>28</sup> Only from here a does it seem appropriate a new reading of Saint Lawrence (Figure 9).

### **The Other paths by Avanto Architects**

Even though Avanto Architects could be alien to this plot, their work is produced in a context where both characters from *Polku* are of interest. Mies will no longer speak about the will of the epoch, but about values and requirements, after discovering Rudolf Schwarz’s thought and work as pathfinder in 1926; his pivotal manual guides through simple archetypes: when illustrated with built works, we can reflect on the act of erecting, surrounded by sacrality, by changing its domain forever and allow the building experience to follow a procession or route.<sup>29</sup> When contrasted with specific examples, they share the competition project motto for Saint Lawrence (Path, *Polku*), especially the one named last and the transition between the two final ones: The Sacred (closed) Ring; Heilige Familie Kirche, Oberhausen (1955-58); The Open Ring: St. Michael, Frankfurt (1952-56); The Sacred Departure (Bright Chalice), St. Bonifatius, Aachen-Forst (1959-64); The Sacred Path (the Path): Fronleichnamkirche, Aachen (1929-30).

In such context, we should not reject the masters’ task in considering the relations between architecture and nature, altered by construction, especially the role played by Aulis Blomstedt, mentor of Aarno Ruusuvuori and Pietilä, at the School of Architecture in Helsinki or by Nils Erik Wickberg, editor of *Arkkitehti*, who insisted on the relevance of cultural phenomena, like architectural imagination.<sup>30</sup> It would had consequences in the work by Leiviskä, Helander and Pallasmaa.

The passage from Classicism to Romanticism and later functionalist change tends to ignore the spatial richness of some architecture, such as the late German Baroque and its consequences. ¿How could we explain Vuoksenniska, works by Timo and Tuomo Suomalainen, by R. Pietilä o J. Leiviskä that widened the spectrum of the Finnish tradition? We shall pause briefly with the latter: the Temppeiaukio/ Taivallahti Church, a happy ending in 1961 after a sequence of competitions, would correspond literally to Schwarz’s Bright Chalice, open to light and of difficult construction, unless the ceiling is solved: the Suomalainen brothers understood this situation by extending the topography and character of the place; without avant-garde collages, the rock cuttings were sufficiently expressive.

---

<sup>27</sup> Fritz Neumeyer, *La palabra sin artificio* (Madrid: El Croquis, 1995), 476. (13<sup>th</sup> March 1933, handwritten text kept in LoC.).

<sup>28</sup> Laura Lizondo Sevilla, José Santatecla Fayos, & Nuria Salvador Luján. "Mies in Brussels 1934. Synthesis of an Unbuilt Exhibition Architecture" *VLC arquitectura. Research Journal*, v. 3 n.1 (2016): 29-53.

<sup>29</sup> Rudolf Schwarz, *Vom Bau der Kirche (Heilderberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1938)*. See Samuel Joseph Drago, *Vom Bau der Kirche. Formulazioni teoriche e strategie compositive di Rudolf Schwarz*, PhD thesis Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> G. Griffiths, *“Finlandia: el sur y los símbolos de enculturación”*, *DPA* n. 26 (2010). R. Connah, R., “Persona obscura: relejendo a Reima Pietilä”, *DPA* n. 26 (2010), 78-85.

The project for the parish church of Malmi (1967) by Pietilä, was the literal image of a “rock” in section and elevation, expressing both a limit site and an emergence to light in elevation and section. It could have been an extension of the achievements in Dipoli, and even though forgotten until Mica Moraine, official residence of the president of Finland at Mäntyniemi, its spaces below ground and Merzbau leanings are remembered. A relatively recent project by Avanto Architects, that is, the expressive volume of Löyly, with a different social programme, but sharing the location on a physical border, updates technologies and traditions (Figure 10).

To understand the challenge faced by Avanto Architects two churches in Vantaa can be considered to contrast the approach: firstly, the synthesis by J. Leiviskä for the Myyrmäki Church and Parish Centre, 1980-84, an inspired work where the interest for De Stijl and late German Baroque ideas are fused in spaces and intermediate plans, in a *complex interpenetration and sequence of volumes*. It appeals to imagination, surrendered to the ambiguous and incontrollable, since rational laws are useless to elude an existential experience. The railway line on its North boundary imposed a limit, where roof-lighting and height resulted on several plans generously lit and free-falling towards Southern light, accommodating an extensive programme in an elongated building, that suggests an interactive vibration of spaces and levels.

In second place, the Hämeenkylä Church, by Jokela and Kareoja, 1992 sets a tense composition between the body of the bell-tower and the Church brick wall, with a fortress-like appearance, to which a staircase provides access in a ceremonial procession from the access at the bottom of the stairs, the church threshold, the parish centre and, finally, the Church. We can see the solution provided for Saint Lawrence much better by comparing these contexts and the requirement of a difference, with interior brightness and placid movement in that unavoidable path that the chapel represents.

And, as a conclusion, the hybrid character of contemporary proposals, with allusions to masters from the Modern movement and commitment to remains of local traditions, is offered as a great opportunity. The convergence of diverse traditions remains in the excellent memory of Finnish architects, and their sense in optimizing an enduring path. Let this be a respectful homage to them all, in the centenary of their great country's birth.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Altés Bustelo, J. "La Casa con patio en Mies van der Rohe". *Proyecto, progreso, arquitectura*, n. 8 (2013): 42-57.
- Behne, A. *Die Wiederkehr der Kunst*. Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1919.
- Carter, P. *Mies van der Rohe trabajando*. London: Phaidon Press, 2006.
- Colomé Montañés, E. *Material, espacio y color en Mies van der Rohe. Café Samt & Seide: Hacia una Propuesta Estructural*. PhD Thesis Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, 2014.
- Connah, R. "Persona obscura: relejendo a Reima Pietilä". *DPA*, n. 26 (2010): 78-85.
- Constant, C. *The Woodland Cemetery: Toward a Spiritual Landscape*. Stockholm: Byggförlaget, 1994.
- Colquhoun, A. *La arquitectura moderna, una historia desapasionada*. Barcelona Gustavo Gili, 2002.
- Drago, S.J. *Vom Bau der Kirche. Formulazioni teoriche e strategie compositive di Rudolf Schwarz*. PhD Thesis Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, 2015.
- Flora, N., Giardello P. and G. Postiglione. *Sigurd Lewerentz 1885-1975*. Milano: Electa Ed., 2001.
- Gastón Guirao, C. *Mies: el Proyecto como revelación del lugar*. Barcelona: Fundación Caja de Arquitectos, 2005.
- Frampton, K. *Modern Architecture. A critical history*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1985.
- Gadamer, H.G. *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*. Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Griffiths, G. "Finlandia: el sur y los símbolos de enculturación". *DPA*, n. 26 (2010).
- Helander, V. and Rista, S. *Suomalainen Rakennustaide - Modern Architecture in Finland*. Helsinki: Kirjayhtymä, 1987.
- Lizondo Sevilla, Laura, José Santatecla Fayos, & Nuria Salvador Luján. "Mies in Brussels 1934. Synthesis of an Unbuilt Exhibition Architecture" *VLC arquitectura. Research Journal*, v. 3 n.1 (2016): 29-53.
- Lledó Iñigo, E. *El concepto poiesis en la filosofía griega*. Madrid: CSIC, Instituto Luis Vives de Filosofía, 1961.
- Lund, N.O. *Nordic Architecture*. Aarhus: The Danish Architectural Press, 2008.
- Navarro Baldeweg, J. "El límite de los principios en la arquitectura de Mies van der Rohe". In *La habitación vacante*. Valencia: Pre-textos; Girona: Col.legi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya, 1999.
- Neumeyer, F. *La palabra sin artificio*. Madrid: El Croquis, 1995.
- Padovan, R. *Towards universality. Le Corbusier, Mies and De Stijl*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Pallasmaa, J. "Tradition and Modernity: The Feasibility of Regional Architecture in Postmodern Society". In *Encounters. Architectural Essays*. Helsinki: Rakennustieto, 2012.
- Palmer, H. "Suecia: las últimas iglesias". *DPA*, n. 26 (2010).
- Pommer, R. and Otto, C.F. *Weisenhof 1927 and the Modern Movement in Architecture*. Chicago/ Londres: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

- Quantrill, M. *Finnish Architecture and the Modernist Tradition*. London: E& FN SPON, 1995.
- Quetglas, J. *Der Gläserne Schrecken. Imágenes del Pabellón de Alemania*. Montréal: Les Éditions Section b, 1991.
- Ricoeur, P. “Universal Civilization National Cultures”. In *History and Truth*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965.
- Rubió i Tudurí, N. “Le pavillon d’Allemagne à l’Exposition de Barcelona”. *Cahiers d’art*, VIII-IX, 1929.
- Schwarz, R. *Vom Bau der Kirche*. Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1938.
- Schulze, F. *Mies van der Rohe. Una biografía crítica*. Madrid: H. Blume & MOMA, 1986.
- Schulze, F. and Windhorst, E. *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: Una biografía crítica*. Barcelona: Ed. Reverté, 2017.
- St. John Wilson, C. *Sigurd Lewerentz 1885-1975. The dilemma of classicism*. London: Architectural Association, 1989.
- St. John Wilson, C. *The Other tradition of modern architecture: the uncompleted Project*. London: Academy Editions, 1995.

## LIST OF FIGURES

- Figura 1. Saint Lawrence Chapel. Avanto Architects. Main and basement plans.
- Figura 2. Saint Lawrence Chapel. Avanto Architects. Main entrance. Foto Kuvio.
- Figura 3. Saint Lawrence Chapel. Avanto Architects. Competition Project. East-West Section.
- Figura 4. St. Knut y St. Gertrud Churches. Malmö. Sigurd Lewerentz. West elevation.
- Figura 5a. Saint Mark’s Church, Björkhagen. Sigurd Lewerentz.
- Figura 5b. St. Peter’s Church, Klippan. Sigurd Lewerentz.
- Figura 6a. Competition drawing with Mies’ image in St. Lawrence Main Chapel. Avanto Architects.
- Figura 6b. St. Lawrence Main Chapel. Avanto Architects. Foto Tuomas Uusheimo.
- Figura 7. Variations on the House Hubbe. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.
- Figura 8. Reflections on the rebuilt Barcelona Pavilion. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.
- Figura 9. Variations on the plan for the IIT Chapel. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.
- Figure 10a. Section of unbuilt Project for Malmi Church. R. and R. Pietilä, 1967.
- Figure 10b. Myyrmäki Parish Centre. Section. Juha Leiviskä, 1980-84.
- Figura 10c. Löyly Sauna. Avanto Architects, 2016. Foto Tuomas Uusheimo.

## IMAGE SOURCES

**1, 3, 6a:** Avanto Architects. **2.** Foto Kuvio, **4, 5a, 5b:** The Swedish Centre for Architecture and Designs collections. **6b, 10c:** Photos by Tuomas Uusheimo. **7:** Cristina Gastón Guirao, 2005. **8:** Photo by the author. **9:** Ed. Reverté. **10a, 10b:** Museum of Finnish Architecture