

(November 1st to November 7th, 2018.
Renaming, Reading and Space Intervention)

THE MAGIC OF THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

I've never seriously thought that global projects exist to save the world and mankind, and even less have I been able to design a system of my own... I increasingly feel I'm in the middle of a vast desert of ruins and it seems to me that everything I do, whatever project I may have in mind, immediately turns into a ruin: it becomes a solitary presence, which I myself understand less and less. Maybe what is left for me is to walk among ruins and possibly, by designing, my only destiny is to produce ruins - I mean, to produce designs that, without explanations, drop down among millions of others: designs of which I shall never know the rationale and connections, nor what holds them together.

(Ruins, Design Gallery Milano, Ettore Sottsass, 1992)

The Box will be The Bomitorium for one week. This linguistic intervention comes from a conversation and will be part of a conversation.

- How disgusting is this wine.

- I hate it.

- I don't usually like wine but this is specially disgusting.

- I kind of like red wine when it is served with food, but this one is bad.

- (spitting sound)

- Did you spit it?

- I would puke it. You know romans didn't drink anything else?

- Yes, but they had this room for vomiting.

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Latin's most misused word: Vomitorium

For Don Giovanni, there is no gap between desire and satisfaction (and hence no object of desire); he ' . . . desires and continually goes on desiring and continually enjoys the satisfaction of desire' (E/O, 1:99). But this description of Don Giovanni raises a question about the very nature of desire itself. Desire, of course, is a propositional attitude, one that takes an object: 'I desire X'. Desire also implies lack: I cannot desire a chocolate if I already have one. Furthermore, when I get a chocolate my desire is fulfilled: that desire, so to speak, dies. Of course, this is Plato's own model of desire, that pleasure is best understood as replenishment: when I am thirsty I drink water and I get pleasure from relieving that need. Of course, when I have drunk my fill my thirst is gone; so too is my pleasure. In order to have more pleasure, I have to have more need—and so the person who pursues the life of pleasure is likened to a leaky jar, necessarily consuming for enjoyment, but also, necessarily, developing a new 'emptiness', a renewed 'hunger'

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a new desire that can in turn be pleasurable sated.

(Kierkegaard's *Dancing, Tax Collector, Faith, Finitude, and Silence*.
Sheridan Hough, 2015. Oxford University Press. p. 44.)

This is the beginning of a RUIN.

Public munificence and municipal land ownership left the architect free to operate on his own terms, the Roman mind rose to the challenge of numbers and established a scale, and a method of handling the goings and comings of crowds, that probably had few rivals in any earlier type of city.

While Rome knew better than more modest provincial towns the indignities of overcrowding, it also knew the luxury of public space, generously carved into great structures. The sky was not so much their limit as their model. They gave to the bath or the basilica, at the moment of its most crowded use, a quality that made the presence of so many bodies inoffensive; for the space above lifted the pressure of the masses below. Looking upward, one could both breathe and see freely. Even today, a building modelled on the Roman baths, like Pennsylvania Station in New York, retains this noble quality or did until that structure was converted by its thoughtful guardians into a vast jukebox, disguised as a ticket counter, thus destroying at one vandal blow its aesthetic form and its capacity to handle crowds effectively.

The architectural element that embodied this new command of urban space for mass assembly and mass movement was a special Roman contribution. To this feature the Romans gave a name peculiarly apt in its reflection of their own character and practices: the vomitorium. The business of providing for the hasty emptying out of food was symbolically transferred to the great openings and passages in an amphitheater, through which the sated crowds could make a reasonably quick access without trampling on each other.

The scale of the public vomitorium, necessarily a gigantic one, established the dimensions for the other parts of the building. It was in dealing with swarming masses, counted in thousands and tens of thousands, that the Roman imagination was stirred to an almost poetic splendor that was all too often lost when it handled details. In beholding today the dismantled ruins of a great Roman building, like the Baths of Caracalla, or the Colosseum itself, we have an advantage, it is true, that the Romans did not fully enjoy: we behold these structures in their naked severity, stripped of most of their costly, ostentatious clothing.

(*The City in History. Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*.
Lewis Mumford, 1961. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, INC. New York. p. 223-224.)

[Long Silence]

This is the beginning of a RUIN. The mythical turns into the real, the real turns into ruin. They vomited so they could eat and they ate so they could vomit. The 'room for vomiting' excites the intellect of the crowd so much that the wide architectural passageways turn into a ruin. A semantic ruin.

Both semantic sides of the word, one stood, one collapsed.

The joyful metaphor collapsed, the literal etymology is standing.

The space for accessibility collapsed, the duality of spaces is standing.

The solidarity with the crowd collapsed, the selfish ostentation is standing.

Conformity collapsed, inventive is standing.

The architectural collapsed, the ritual is standing.

The antiquity collapsed, the liquid modernity is standing.

The show collapsed, production is standing.

Sea shell collapsed, confusion is standing.

The authority collapsed, the new authority is standing.