This is the published version of a paper published in *EGA: revista de expresión gráfica arquitectónica*.

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Altés Arlandis, A. (2010)
Scores and Images. On the Insufficiency of Representation.
_EGA: revista de expresión gráfica arquitectónica, _2010(16): 211-213

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:
http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:umu:diva-80986
The steps leading down to the river which were never depict- ed elsewhere except on Father Tosca’s plan. In the background is the recent gateway known as Puente del Real. Biblioteca Valenciana.

1. View of Puente del Real taken from the lithograph by A. Guesdon dated 1899. In this well-proportioned, extremely realistic image, Guesdon conveys the beauty of the bridge with two wide ramps, one at each end, and the steps leading down to the river between the sixth and seventh arches. The statues of the saints beneath the canopies can be seen. The parapet is shown running the full length of the bridge except for the steps down to the river and canopies. Neither the benches nor the ornaments are shown: rather strange in such a de- tailed illustration.

10. Lithography by Antonia Casteluchó dated c. 1890. The minute detail on this remarkably accurate print shows Puente del Real with its benches at the ends flanked by slender pinacles. The curved seats, the decorative stone moldings em- bellishing the railing and even the painstaking carving of the canopies. In the foreground are the ramp leading down to the river and its parapet decorated with the characteristic balls that have survived to this day. Museo de la Ciudad.

11. State of the flight of stairs leading down to the river in 1894 on Puente del Real. Part of a photograph taken by Antonio Espulgas and the first image of the steps to show the outline of the railing made entirely of stone. Biblioteca Valenciana.


13. Photographs by J. C. Sigüenza dated 1944. On the left is the new statue of St Vincent the Martyr sculpted by Iga- cicio Pinazo Martínez and on the right, the one of St Vicent Ferrer by Carmelo Vicent Suria. Archivo Histórico Muni- cipal de Valencia.


16. Puente del Real in the first half of the 16th century. The flight of steps between the sixth and seventh arches enabled pedestrians to descend to the riverbed from the bridge. Removed in 1968.

18. Canopies installed on the bridge in 1862 to shelter the stat- ues of St Vincent Ferrer and St Vincent the Martyr.

19. Puente del Real in the mid 18th century.

20. Bridge decoration, 1750 a.-: ornamental stone moulding on both sides of the benches, 32 in all b.-: Inverted, ornament- al stone moulding on parapet, 26 in all. c.-: Pinnacle mounted on the corners of the bridge. Four in all.


“The translation of this paper was funded by the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, Spain.”

**SCORES AND IMAGES. ON THE INSUFFICIENCY OF REPRESENTATION**

by Alberto Altés Arlandis

The general qualities of Peter Zumthor’s work, an ex- tremely careful, sensitive, slow and respectful craft, make his nearly perfect architecture a very interest- ing object for analysis and research. All the more so in these times of vertiginous production and an al- most blind exaltation of the new and the original, a time when the discipline of architecture, and con- sumer society in general, are moving more and more away from constructive traditions and from the wis- dom of master builders. His work is a somewhat ‘resisting’ position, a fruitful and hopeful moving forward against the current, car- ried out on the basis of a very special reading of the place and its traditions, a very wise and precise se- lection of materials and a desire to approach techni- cal and sensitive excellence in each and every as- pect of the process and the built result. In the face of the categorical and simple nature of the bodies that form his architecture, in the face of its spatial and compositional clarity, in the face of his exquisite manners when it comes to dealing with ma- terials, and also, of course, in the face of the special care he dedicates to the ‘construction’ of his draw- ings – conceived by him both as working tools in or- der to approach the final architectural object and as paramount elements in the design and construction processes – it seems appropriate and relevant to stop briefly around a few fragments of his work, his thoughts and his attitude in an attempt to approach the keys of that ‘resistance’.

While the ‘globalized’ architectural discipline con- tinuous its immersion in a trend that privileges quanti- tative and mediated experiences, Peter Zumthor’s small office/workshop in Haldenstein – a small village in the swiss Graubünden – works by slowly develop- ing each assignment to the last detail, always privi- leging the quality of the final result as the maximum value and top priority. Regardless of the rash global competition to attract the media, Zumthor carefully chooses his clients, does not allow the re-printing of his own monograph and proves himself very reluct- ant at the time of accepting interviews. Often, he af- fords certain moments to take some distance and re- flect critically about his own creative activity and about the essence of architecture, what has led to a number of texts, concepts and categories that are extremely interesting from the point of view of rep- resentation. The text that follows explores and revis- itsome of those ideas and categories through a reading and a translation of some of his texts that tries to relate them to his work. More particularly, the article “Partituren und Bilder. Architektonische Ar-

---

1/ In the process of writing this text, we have used the information obtained in a recent exhibition on Peter Zumthor at the Kunsthaus in Bregenz, and more importantly, the text “Partituren und Bilder. Architektonische Arbeiten aus dem Atelier Peter Zumthor. 1985-1988” published by the Architekturkabinett in Luzern, as well as an article by Robert Fabich entitled ‘Sieben Bilder zur Ökonomie der Aufmerksamkeit oder wie sich Ort und Welt gegenseitig nähern. Zum Haus Liliane und Valentin Luzi von Peter Zumthor’ (seven images about The Economy of Attention (Delicateness) or How The Place and The World feed each other. On the House for Liliane and Valentin Luzi from Peter Zumthor).
the reading and understanding of a reduced number of ideas, concepts, conditions and relations, while allowing the observer to complete the rest of the real object by means of his/her imagination. Such procedures nevertheless mark and ‘manipulate’ this process of reconstruction through the presence of a number of chosen essential features.

Project-Drawings (or Design-drawings) as reduction - Die Projektzeichnungen als Reduktion

Representations operating by means of fundamentally reductive mechanisms are those that Zumthor has decided to include in a category named ‘project-drawings’ (‘Projektzeichnungen’) to which the attached drawing of the thermal baths in Vals belongs too. (fig. 01)

The selected ground floor drawing reduced the amount of information presented significantly, making a quick and clear reading of a few important ideas and elements possible.

The drawing stands out because of the strong contrast of the presence of a big black mass representing the mountain. Walls and other constructive elements that are either in contact with the site, underground or partially underground are included in that mass. The ‘blocks’ containing different zones and functions that organize and define the spaces of the baths are represented also in black.

The black masses of these walls include and merge all technical layers, reinforcements and concrete structural elements, stone walls, installations and services, finishing layers and other elements that are not explained. (Other drawings, as will be shown, are left for that purpose.) The result is that those ‘blocks’ that organize space are immediately perceived and understood as such very clearly, as a series of ‘black boxes’ containing a defined ‘program’ or function. The extreme contrast of these black masses of the walls with the whiteness of the rest of spaces and with that of the openings through which interior and exterior of the black boxes are related makes possible a quicker and easier identification of access points and glazed openings. Almost automatically, a relationship of proximity and sameness is established between the black of the mountain and the black of those block walls. A relationship that allows imagining the building almost as a massive and solid block of local stone that has been excavated and drilled according to programmatic and spatial needs. The mountain (intact natural stone) is represented in exactly the same way as the walls (transformed and processed stones).

This radical way of representing the small volumes that configure the building facilitates its identification with the place, inducing the establishment of sensory and material relationships with the mountain. The drawing itself re-presents and already alludes to some of the characteristics of the architectonic space it will generate, the weight and gravity of thick walls, the massive and solid character of stone, the calm and shadowy darkness of the various bath rooms, etc… Water, fundamental in the organization of the building and the conception of the design, is represented through a third color, grey, that helps softening the black-white contrast while still standing out as a differential element. It is then easy to associate it, almost automatically, with water areas, quickly understanding the building as a whole and the diverse functions of the black ‘boxes’.

The spatial information offered by the drawing is completed with a set of continuous projections lines indicating height changes in pavement, steps, ramps, stairs, etc… along a second set off discontinuous lines, representing height changes at the level of the ceilings above. All of them are printed in black in order to differentiate them from the thinner and lighter grey lines of the furniture, to which a smaller degree of importance and presence has been granted. The forcefulness with which the drawing is transmitting the most relevant information is only possible thanks to the efforts and precision dedicated to a thorough reduction down to the ‘minimum expression’ of most details, taking away unnecessary noise and avoiding interferences. Small rectangles and circles have been thus used to represent simply and clearly pipes, taps, wastepipes and drains or skylights; arrows indicating upward movement in stairs and ramps have been reduced to a couple of lines representing the head of the arrow, eliminating its axis line that could have interfered with other lines or complicate the reading.

An equally minimum graphic language is used to represent furniture and other auxiliary elements, which despite being reduced to the simplest outlines are still easily recognizable and quickly identified, while still contributing the necessary information to understand the specific function of each space. The same process of simplification is applied to indicate ‘cutting’ plans corresponding to each of the sections that go with the ground plan, by indicating only the edges of those plans in both sides of the drawing so that there are no lines interfering with the drawing or generating any confusion. This process of reduction of the drawing is taken to such an extreme that someone may even miss a graphic device that could indicate the difference between interior and exterior spaces, what could be seen as a somewhat reasonable objection. There any nevertheless a few reasons to support the execution of the drawing as shown: on the one hand, the in-between or undefined character of the outside pool that includes a part extending into the inside through which access to the exterior takes place; on the other hand, the fact that this line is directly aligned with and determines the border between interior and exterior, what would make impossible the inclusion of another line or set of lines that could indicate this transition graphically; and finally, the possible reading of the building as a solid and whole stony space that has been excavated, so that the relationship between interior and exterior becomes secondary, and thus not so important or relevant as to be represented.

The result of such a process of reduction, condensation and synthesis is a forceful and radical drawing, almost violent, that explains with a formidable clarity and definitiveness the ‘excavated’ nature of the building and the position and function of each and every one of the parts that constitute it as well as the relationships between them and the way in which the surrounding circulation spaces and other areas around them work.

It is an efficient and effective drawing, synthetic and highly explanatory, with a relatively great ability and power to communicate when compared the small amount of graphic elements that have been used.

Approximation, reduction, materialization – Annäherung, Reduktion, Verwirklichung

Zumthor defines at least three different categories of graphic representation that present architecture or make it appear in different ways but have nevertheless a common aim of materializing, realizing the object that is represented. The ground plan drawing of the thermal baths in Vals shown (fig.01) is a very clear example of the intermediate category of project-drawings (‘Projektzeichnungen’), which are usually general and temporary representations of one or several important ideas. These drawings are normally thought for third parties, clients, developers, institutions or competition juries, and their main aim is to bestow a temporary paper-presence on the devised architecture so that it shows the essence and charisma of the object in question. All that is not possible to represent takes on thus a very important role. It is the same for the spaces reserved for ambiguity. If these elements are used carefully and rigorously, they can induce the observer to complete what is missing by means of personal associations and intuitions, that will nevertheless adjust to the expression of the drawing – whenever it is an efficient and successful drawing – and thus to architecture itself, maintaining at the same time the mystery of the desire for the real object that is yet to exist.

The sketch as an approach – Die Entwurfszeichnungen als Annäherung

In a previous phase of the design process, which is nevertheless extended and interwoven with the others, Zumthor defines a fundamentally operative category of drawings that has a constant presence along the design process and includes all the drawings related to creative production that he calls Entwurfszeichnungen. This category includes sketches, draft drawings and other drawings that appear as small
traces of a process of approaching and discovering the wanted object. (fig.02) Drawings of this type hold the keys, successes and mistakes of such a process of approximation and in most of the cases they also 'hide' the most valuable information 'in-between' the lines, requiring thus explanations for the un-initiat-
ed. Observing and reviewing them constitutes thus a revealing experience, comparable for Zumthor to that of reading a journal.

The third category refers to technical drawings, either for the building site or working drawings (Werkzeichnungen) which are specially important and essential for Zumthor since they ‘quadratize the boundless geometrical-technical abstraction of the architectonic idea’. These are drawings that define the position of each part within the whole with precision, their measurements, materials, surfaces and finishes, as well as the connections, meetings, links and joints between them. They are close to the nature of anatomic drawings, displaying a certain interior tension, a certain mystery that the finished and built architectonic bodies will not reveal anymore (vanishing lines, hidden geometries, material fric-
tions, internal forces…). Drawings in this last category are precise and de-
tailed. They do not try to seduce or convince any-
more, they are addressed to skilled staff that will give a material form to the object designed. They are marked by certainty and trust, setting the very exactness to produce simple and uncomplicated things, to contribute simple and honest solutions to concrete problems. It is probably that very same honesty and simplicity, combined with his rare sensitivity, what al-
low him to approach the intrinsic essence of the ob-
ject I have to create, hoping the built work is precise enough for the designated place and function, and it develops its strength without needing any artistic ele-
ments’, approaching the ‘hard core of beauty’. This is what happens in the design for the Luzi house, situated by the edge of the old core of Jenaz, a little village in the Swiss canton of Graubünden, within a dense area of narrow streets, full of robust country houses (Bauernhäusern) and sometimes, solid, mass-
ive and old wooden constructions (Blockhäuser), dark, almost black, burnt by the sun. (fig.04)

The street slopes down slightly just before a carefully executed natural stone base stands out. The volume of the parking space is set back relating to the base-
ment of the house. Three more floors are built above it. The first one of them holds the common entrance and a so-called ‘Enligrervohnung’ - an independent and fully equipped dwelling unit within another dwelling, usually used to receive guests, host elderly relatives or to be rented, similar to the English ‘grannyflat’. The sec-
ond one holds the main ‘living’ floor, and the third one holding the bedrooms. (fig. 05, 06 and 07).

Peter Zumthor has noted the following about it: ‘such was precisely the main idea or concept: that one could go directly to his/her room form the living or dining room, resulting in a set of stairs and an inde-
pendent access for each person, for each room. It is a sort of a ‘feeling of dwelling’, a sort of intimacy, which I might have learnt in the mountains. They might remind me of those old open staircases that might have served in the living room’s chimney.

Some other time, Zumthor explains the two main mo-
tivations regarding this house: ‘in the heights, not very far from the path to the new building, there is an old school. A school. A beautiful, magnificent, simple and uncomplicated ‘Strickbau’. It was built but one of the most important architects in the Graubünden at that time, who also built several other hotels in St. Moritz and Davos. It seems reasonable that an architect pro-
duced simple and uncomplicated things. And that is just what I wanted. Facing a problem and answering with something simple and honest. Preferably from anonymity. This was my personal motivation. The oth-
er one was more related to construction, to the con-
stuctive simplicity of the technique/tradition/art of ‘Strickbau’. When one studies it and looks at it, one re-
alizes its truly archaic nature. This building system made sense in the 17th century when windows on bear-
ging walls were still small, but the bigger the windows became, the weaker the ‘Strickbau’. And we have found a solution for that in this house’ (fig. 08 and 09)

Zumthor solves this paradox through the use of sol-

d and massive blocks in the corners and complete-
ly glazed central volumes. Six-meter wide openings equipped with sliding doors, protected from the el-

ements by means of deep terraces that speak of the clients’ desires regarding light and space.

Peter Zumthor: ‘these spaces are like cinema, all four views are magnificent. Nothing bothers. It is extraor-
dinary. It is like cinema.”

**IMAGES**

2. Sketch from the preliminary design phase of the Thermal Bath in Vals, taken from “Peter Zumthor Therme Vals” Ver-
lag Schiedegger&Spies, Zurich 2007.
   (Drawing taken from “Peter Zumthor Therme Vals” Verlag Schiedegger&Spies, Zurich 2007).
sociation, Helsinki.
6. Ground plan sketch of Luzi House, taken from Zumthor, Pe-
8. Ink drawing by Juan Guardiola as part of an exercise on Haus Luz in the 2006-2009 edition of the course EDA 4 (Architectural Graphic Expression) part of the official cur-
culum of the ETSAV School of Architecture, in which the author of this text participates as a teacher.
9. Felt-tip pen drawing by Natalia Pérez as part of an exer-
cise on Haus Luz included in the 2006-2009 edition of the course EDA 4 (Architectural Graphic Expression) part of the official curriculum of the ETSAV School of Architecture, in which the author of this text participates as a teacher.