

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE SECTION

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A building is consumed through the body's orifices — as image, sound and smell — just as one passes through the building's orifices. The way that a building impresses our bodies, with all its weight, is what we call an architectural experience. It is this architectural experience, which is expressed in a building's section.

In section, the outer and inner are expressed simultaneously. The mutual levels of the rooms are seen in relation to one another. The width of a room is seen in relation to its height. The heights of the windows and spandrels relate to the depth of the room and describe the incident daylighting.

The vertical plane relates information about the structure, the material thicknesses and construction, as well as how the forces are carried by the foundation and the earth below.

The plan is also a section. A horizontal one. One the layman can use as a map to orient himself. With this the architect can collate the plan sections' opposing features up through the various levels. This play with plan oppositions is so fundamental, that it is a common feature of both baroque, classicism and modernism.

In section, architecture's three fundamental ontological elements make themselves heard: The Body (building body/ own body), Light and Gravity.

However, If the section is a representative form, where the substance of architecture is expressed, one is inclined to ask if there is an architecture of the section. Cort Ross

Dinesen and Birgit Skovfoged Østergaard's project »The Ziggurat« raises this question.

In this project, the contour of the building rises to meet the oldest and most elementary of all building structures: The Ziggurat. They meet in a section, raised as a spatial X.

The project opens with the architectural experience presented as a body gesture. The body admits this experience through the arm, hand and pencil as a sketch on paper. The first sketches preserve this impression of the experience as an introductory outline in space. An outline. Distension. Speed and hesitation.

The sketch's contour outlines are transformed by the structure's dimensional prosody as a mahogany building raised through the rotation of the section.

In this mahogany gestalt, a meeting takes place between the body's way of receiving gravity and the organization of the construction.

The body's way of experiencing gravity, as so precisely expressed by Le Corbusier in «Le Poème de l'angle droit», can be equated to a bag's relationship to its contents. It is what the tired body senses when it sinks into an easy chair or has just eaten too much.

In its original form, the building structure is a pyramid or cone, built up of discontinuous segments. Step by step. Course by course, From the heavy foundation to the top of the roof ridge.

In »The ziggurat«, the structure and the gravity of the mass meet as two diametrically opposed movement across the X.

A slab with large ziggurat-shaped steps supports the mahogany dump with its suspended gravity. »The ziggurat« thus allows gravity to appear as a bodily experience that leads one's thoughts to Mailol's sculptures in the parterre garden in front of the Louvre: These sculptures seem heavy, despite their being suspended above the surface of the foundation.

The steps of the ziggurat slab cut diagonally into the dump and point up toward the continuously folded surface at the top of the figure.

Across the opposite diagonal, the clump corresponds in its heavy, self-embracing self-sufficiency to the angular ziggurat form's liberation from the continuously folded surface at the top of the gestalt.

Read vertically, the section reveals two bent diagonals.

At the top of one of the vertical sequences, the continuously folded surface's twisting appears as an S-shape. At the base, this development wraps around the heaviness of the dump.

In the other vertical sequence, the ziggurat's discontinuous structure spans upwards. At the base is the ziggurat formed slab. It supports its stair piles on two sides, while one of the side surfaces remains flat. This flat side reveals that the ziggurat slab is part of a cloven figure, with the other part being a corresponding ziggurat slab, running in the opposite direction. In other words, it steps inwards from top to bottom. The other ziggurat slab contains the incised stairs in a smaller scale between the Ziggurat's steps. It is this slab that twists itself in the independent ziggurat at the top of the figure.

The incised stairs, at a smaller scale, are repeated in the ziggurat's sequences. Then the stair incisions are repeated in the same diagonal at a higher level in the figure. They are marked both on the inner and outer side of the ziggurat slab's angular folding. They mark the scale and the jump in scale, while denoting the inner with the outer. They reveal the fact that the stairway is the human body's most fundamental manifestation of the building structure. In the stairway, the construction is united with the body's efforts to overcome gravity. It is this that supports the building dump, and it is this that helps the body's dump up the slope. It is also this that impresses the slope as a physical effort. It reveals the gradual breakdown of the continuous pitch and speed.

In this way, the body's building measures the building body, while through its marking also connects with and penetrates it. In this way the body is led into the construction as an interior that becomes an exterior, and an exterior that becomes an interior.

The section thus remains as both a connector and a divider. Or in another sense, an affirmation as a creative gesture.

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