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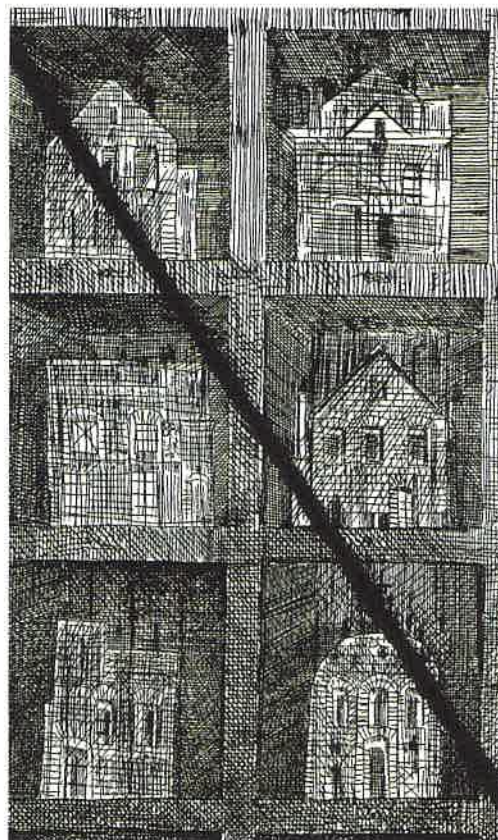
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TROJAN HORSE FESTIVAL JULISTE | POSTER, 2016.



ALEXANDER BRODSKY, ILYA UTKIN, CANCELLED
6/21/90, L'ESPRIT DE L'ESCALIER, 2017.

VIESTI AKATEMIASTA INTERCEPT FROM THE ACADEMY

NEW ACADEMY

VIIME VUOSINA SUOMEEN ON SYNTYNYT NEW ACADEMYN KALTAISIA UUSIA, AKTIIVISIA, TUTKIVIA RYHMIÄ JA TOIMIJOITA. SEURAAVILLA SIVUILLA JULKAISTAAN KOOSTE PÄÄTOIMITTAJA MIKA SAVELAN NEW ACADEMYN TUOMAS TOIVONEN, NENE TSUBOI JA LEONARD MAN KANSSA KÄYMÄSTÄ KESKUSTELUSTA. NEW ACADEMY ON VASTANNUT KESKUSTELUN TOIMITTAMISESTA, JA SE ON LADOTTU OHJELMAN PAMFLETTIMAISEEN TYYLIIN. KESKUSTELUSSA SIVUTAAN NIIN KULTTUURISAUNAN SÄNTYÄ JA TOIMINTAA KUIN ARKKITEHTUURIN, PRAKTIKKOIDEN, TYÖTAPOJEN, OPETUKSEN JA NYKYTYHTEISKUNNAN LAAJEMPIA KYSYMYKSIÄ. *ark*

IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, NEW, ACTIVE AND INVESTIGATIVE GROUPS AND SPECIAL VENUES HAVE EMERGED ON THE FINNISH ARCHITECTURAL SCENE. SUCH IS THE CASE WITH NEW ACADEMY. PUBLISHED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES IS A CONVERSATION BETWEEN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF MIKA SAVELA AND TUOMAS TOIVONEN, NENE TSUBOI AND LEONARD MA FROM THE NEW ACADEMY. EDITED BY THE ACADEMY AND LAID OUT IN THE STYLE OF A PAMPHLET FROM THE PROGRAM, THE DISCUSSION LOOKS INTO THE TOPICS OF ARCHITECTURE, PRACTICE, MODELS OF WORK, EDUCATION, SOCIETY AT LARGE – AND HOW THE THE ACTIVITIES AT KULTTUURISAUNA HAVE DEVELOPED OVER TIME. *ark*

Discussion at Kulttuurisauna 23.2.2018

Mika Savela / ARK It could be said there is a very strong “trope” or a pre-existing model on how to be an architect in Finland, all the way from how you get accepted into architecture school, how you get initiated into the profession, how you might start entering competitions with your friends and maybe win one, and how your career is launched in that way. This also relates to how successes are measured and how architecture is validated, and what sort of counts as proper practice. But at the same time in the architectural culture at large in exhibitions, biennials and universities, we have many other types of projects that seem to be taking the idea of practice into other directions in the field. We might talk about educational practices, research practices, social practices, curatorial practices and so forth. Yet all these various activities can be grouped under architecture. With this in mind, I felt that your particular practice or practices you’ve engaged in might be an interesting subject for conversation in our magazine, especially because we are all here in the Finnish context. The conversation also relates to a question we’ve tried to ask from others as well, namely, what does it mean to be an architect today? I wonder if you could in some way chart how you’ve ended up where you are now? And if you can trace your thinking of practice along that path?

Tuomas Toivonen Retracing our paths to this point could be done in several ways, depending on what kind of narrative we are after... We thought we would focus also on the New Academy, which is why Leonard is here.

Nene Tsuboi We can go backwards from now. Kulttuurisauna opened for bathing five years ago, and we have been running it with Tuomas since then. The first New Academy programmes began a bit earlier, while it was still a construction site. Before that, we had an architecture office.

TT We had a strong urge to start something of our own in 2005 with Nene. We had already been working for several years together in a loose arrangement at Anteeksi, people with different backgrounds sharing a big space...

NT I’m a graphic designer, and you were working with Tuomas Siitonen...

TT ...doing some interior work. I had been working in Rotterdam...

NT ...that’s going really far back. I thought we should start with the sauna...

Leonard Ma You need a brief prehistory though, to get to why we are here...

TT When I came back from Rotterdam I felt allergic to architecture for quite a while. Then, my project became an urban one, driven by an urge to give Helsinki a more metropolitan pulse. I sang about the city, tried to put together its imaginary soundtrack, and was on-air weekly discussing its issues, culture, planning and politics. I was a commentator, trying to create a discussion and through that, influence the city. It’s difficult to be a commentator-in-the-field, though. I stopped the radio work and started NOW with Nene. We had no commissions. Our project was about creating the kind of working environment that we wanted for us and our collaborators. For the next five years or so, we would do any kind of project, from buildings to objects, master-planning to manufacturing, from turn-key conversions to curation... trying to see an opportunity to pursue something meaningful or interesting in every case. But somehow, through that experience, we also realized that there are hard limits to being a consultant.

NT That maybe it's not for us.

MS I have also been thinking about the idea of defining one's practice... does practice really correspond to an office? Or is an architectural office also just the most conventional framework for an architectural practice?

TT I think this is something that we struggled with all the time. Our idea was "to have an architecture office", but can this office make films? Publish its own books? Have opinions? Or be a consultancy? And then you end up having such a fragmented idea of what your practice is, trying to reformat everything to fit into some arbitrary framework like "the architecture office". I think there was this liberating moment when we understood that although we were very involved with the discipline, it didn't necessarily mean that "an office" was the only possible format or platform for our projects. That, yes, we can have an enterprise, but the enterprise can have a different relationship with the discipline than how an office normally works.

LM But I don't think you would have called it the "discipline" at that point.

TT No probably not, but there was this idea of using architecture directly to transform our immediate surroundings, and that was one of the early impulses to build a building. By using the entire spectrum of what we know, and the things we can do, as well as our labour and work, whether organizing or designing or negotiating or imagining. To pull it all together and then apply that directly to something that could become a vessel capable of taking us somewhere... so somehow constructing a building started to appear as the logical next step.

NT I remember the feeling. As an office, we were always brought in to answer a question or to respond to a problem, and then your job is to do something, but you never do exactly what they are asking for, but something that we think they should do. Or in competitions, perhaps we would focus on another, parallel question that they never asked, but that we thought was more important. And that is how we tried to develop our own language as a practice. And then we got tired of this very unfruitful relationship with society.

Making this new building and then framing our practice within it was a way of escaping that former position. We could be on the other side, not the one being asked, but the one to decide and initiate. So instead of working on projects that resulted in some images on our website and a new paragraph on our CVs, we could work directly on our daily life, our daily conditions.

TT We felt frustrated with the idea of selling architecture as some kind of service, especially when the dignity and integrity of the thing we assisted in producing was often of little concern to anyone else.

So instead, what if our architecture worked directly for us? Building the sauna was a way for us to take control of the means of production. Every visitor comes here for what the building provides: a series of spaces with specific properties and a particular atmosphere. But to make it work required our continued presence. A kind of animist or shamanist attitude – becoming servants of the thing we had summoned. Or constructing a kind of prison you can voluntarily inhabit.

So, during the construction phase, our "architecture office" evaporated, and we became builders. The construction site eventually became a public building, and its operation became our practice. The south wing was already being used as a classroom in January 2013. We opened the sauna for bathing in the late spring, on Mayday.

Since then, our livelihood has been running the bath, and it has freed us to pursue other types of work and activities. A kind of Arendtian idea of labour, work and action – to be tied to the repetitive routines almost necessitates to have some other vector existing on top of that. Even during the office years, we had an idea of the practice being sometimes... not exactly a school, but there was an interest in working with architectural culture, trying to learn things together, and also contributing something to the discipline – a collegial dimension. So, when planning the building, it became clear that the bath and the academy should coexist, as they used to in antiquity. In retrospect, I think the academy was appealing, as it also offered a way to remain engaged with new ideas, to go back to school ourselves, to stay alert and to remain curious.

NT The kabinetti was built for that. The school started with a winter school for Carleton students and a joint studio with Aalto students also. At the very beginning, the building was still under construction, there was no heating or running water, just a portacabin toilet. It was very rough, but for us it felt as if the building was nearly finished.

MS The Spartan school...

I have the sentiment that architectural offices in Finland today are experiencing a change in culture. We are getting these very large corporate architectural tendencies. Offices are becoming simply places where people go to work, whereas in the older office culture of Finland architects would feel like they were part of a lifestyle, really. I'm thinking of couples in architecture, for instance, the Siren family, and how you hear about the interweaving of their practice and family lives, their kids and employees all in a home/office entity. In this way, it's a big step away from that older idea of practicing to these other directions and architects becoming merely parts of much bigger projects. In the process architects are also becoming complicit in all sort of other developments that are not theirs to control anymore. So, when you earlier speak of a certain sense

NEW ACADEMY ON OMAN
MÄÄRITELMÄNSÄ MUKAAN
ARKKITEHTUURIN JA URBANISMIN
OPETUKSEEN KESKITTYVÄ OHJELMA.
SE TOIMII AALTO-YLIOPISTON JA
VIRON TAIDEAKATEMIAN STUDIO-
OPETUKSEN PIIRISSÄ MUTTA
INSTITUUTIOIDEN ULKOPUOLELLA.

NEW ACADEMY IS – IN ITS OWN
WORDS – AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM,
FOCUSING ON ARCHITECTURE
AND URBANISM. IT OPERATES
INDEPENDENTLY, COLLABORATING
WITH STUDIOS OFFERED AT THE AALTO
UNIVERSITY AND THE ESTONIAN
ACADEMY OF ARTS.

of liberation, is it also about reclaiming the narrative, or trying to take hold of what architecture is?

LM Perhaps as a way to introduce my history, I was part of this first class, and this change you describe in Finnish office culture is an experience I went through right before coming to Finland. In Canada we've been doing this type of integrated design office for several years, and I joined this boutique office right at the moment they were being absorbed into a six-hundred-person office. The partners were really enthusiastic about this change: that we were now this integrated design firm, finances would be more stable, we could collaborate more directly with the engineers; that it would become this environment for producing better architecture. It was important for me to go into this environment right after the recession, on the one hand, to have the experience of being seduced by this smooth image of practice, but also having older colleagues in the office talking about how half the office was laid off two years ago. It helped me question what architecture is and what an architect does. How did the work of an architect seem so disposable?

Because being in this kind of corporate office, working with very nice people, on projects that weren't particularly exciting, this mode of practice really appeared fragile to me.

As I became more immersed, it seemed as if in the drive to be more 'professional' in practice we were surrendering everything that was meaningful about architecture. It really felt most of the decisions were made just because there was this assumption that this is simply what you should do, or this is what was published in a magazine, or that this is what the client wants, or that this was how we made the deadline. There was no capacity for any kind of doubt or questions about the status quo that allowed one to meaningfully engage with any kind of substance.

MS In my personal experience, I've noticed that over time certain projects have accumulated that I might have reflectively started to call a practice, or include under the title of a practice. Simply put, only making projects, makes them real. Can you relate to this thinking, and how is a disciplinary practice formed in your view?

TT I always thought that the idea of a practice implies that there is also something that is not-a practice, some kind of thinking, or intellectual framework – you could call it theory – that mediates the way to interact with the world. It also implies a particular way of seeing the world, and understanding your context. It also determines how you position yourself in it, and how you perceive the contours of possibility, your potential room for action. Practice represents how this framework is used, how the position is then acted out, how your work is focused on fulfilling, and reifying it. Making it do things, making it have an impact, transforming

the context to resemble it. Theory and practice have a capacity also to transform your life – not only how you work, but also how you live, how you think and feel. This is why education is so important, and why we should remain intellectually enquiring and keep addressing the urgencies that are around us.

MS In talking about practice vs. theory, I think it is interesting how here in Finland, and perhaps elsewhere too, almost anything written about architecture is very easily perceived as theoretical, at least according to some loose definition. In these conversations, I tend to reply that in my view writing is more often conceptual than theoretical, about trying to put the things we do in a context.

LM I can really relate to this feeling because in Canada there is this expectation that real architects build (which is also quite prevalent in Finland), that somehow theory or writing is lesser than realizing a building.

MS Or publishing...

LM This is what's so fascinating about first working in a corporate office, because building becomes such an automated process that there is no longer anything mysterious about it – it's not really that hard to build a building. At least to me, it became clear that the architect wasn't a project manager, or engineer, or sustainability consultant, not to mention that there actually are all kinds of new consultants that erode any illusion of professional competency in building. Increasingly I feel that the architect's role is to generate a certain kind of consensus, and this consensus can be produced in many ways. Some are easier, but precarious like relying on charisma, or fame, but it can also be produced through reasoning, and for that theory can become really important.

I find one way to talk about 'practice' and 'theory' is to consider the almost humiliating experience of designing. It is there that you feel how precarious your position as a designer is – nothing is stable, there are no universal truths. If you're from a successful office that wins a lot of competitions and gets into publications and exhibitions it doesn't quite hit you in this way, because there is no desire to really doubt what you are doing. But if you work in the kind of office that is financially stable but unremarkable, you realize how easy it is to lean on certain buzzwords or assumptions that have been filtered down, and in turn these assumptions also become very frustrating because no one else is interested in challenging them. So, you feel trapped in that your architecture isn't being particularly lauded, and at the same time you don't have the tools to break free.

So, to say that the inside connects with the outside, why is that good? Or that the building is heterogenous vs. homogenous – why is that good or why is that bad?

If cities are for people, who are those people? These kinds of assumptions are so powerful that they become unquestionable. I feel the New Academy became a way for us to create a context to challenge these assumptions, and that became easier once we produced some kind of distance from the traditional definition of an office. At the same time, I feel students are also really receptive to architectural discourse when thought about in this way, because they feel this humiliating moment of design very directly. We've always been teaching under the guise of theory, but it's a particular kind of theory, because there is always a need to relate it to the present moment.

TT Yes, and to contextualize what you are doing – for the contemporary moment, but also for the non-contemporary moment, to another “now”. We've often looked into history – not to feel a nostalgia for some other time – but in order to challenge the present. Every moment in history represents a time where the things that seem normal or possible appear different. History reminds us that the status quo is the most ephemeral thing, although the “reality of our surroundings” often seems overpowering. This leads to a loss of the idea of the neutrality of architecture. There are no neutral positions... As “context”, “history”, “the public” are all constructs, we should be careful and precise when using them. But as they are constructs, they can be constructed. As you are interacting with the world through your work, then your work also becomes a mirror of what you understand as the world. Ultimately, you decide what kind of public or audience your work addresses, constructs or imagines. Think of Ungers having set up a bust of Schinkel, just behind his desk, so that Schinkel is overseeing all of his drawing. While the Schinkel bust was put on a high pedestal, to look over Unger's shoulder, I think when standing, Oswald Mathias and Karl Friedrich were actually at eye-level. I think our imagined audiences are powerful, they define the arena that we operate in.

It's something that I had to address of during my radio work, because being on air is the most abstract moment. You're in a small dark padded room with no view, just some equipment, and you must imagine the listener, the audience, the city beyond it. But there you are, maybe talking about city politics and setting up a discussion – imagining your disembodied voice, simultaneously speaking all over the city, heard by people in different situations, or perhaps no-one is tuned in to the frequency. In the studio, there is no evidence of a public dimension. It must be imagined and performed. The same goes with this magazine [ARK], as the editor, you must develop an idea of the reader, which is a very particular kind of abstraction. Everyone has some idea of the reader or the listener or the audience, or field or context – so that this or that move makes sense.

History is a context for everything you are doing. Of course, you can look at your classmates and how they practice or see what kinds of building they are doing, but

you can also go the library and look at what civilisation has been doing so far. You are, in fact, a colleague of Engel. It provides a perspective and a reference point beyond the totality of this contemporary moment.

MS There exists perhaps a larger trend that everything designers do has to add value to something. I'm thinking about the type of projects receiving funding at universities, where art, architecture or design are portrayed as tools for something rather than existing in their own right or pursuing their own critical interests. This thinking portrays these disciplines as seemingly belonging to everyone. But at the same time, their innate meanings are not universal and things that are interesting to some are not meaningful to everyone in the public realm.

LM Linking back to some previous points, I think this is why we've been trying to really be independent of the university, not just physically, but also in our intellectual positioning. The role of education is very different now. You go to school to get the training to get a job, and there is this increasing professionalization in the curriculum. The university faces the pressure of training professionals, and everything that doesn't fit neatly, is immediately suspicious. Especially when it comes to history and theory this means that much of the foundational disciplinary work is marginalized because it is not immediately useful. Why learn about Tafuri when you can learn Revit or Grasshopper?

This is connected with the idea of history and collaboration, because even for offices where there is this one leader, they always say they collaborate with a team of people. It's the same with the corporate offices who are so eager to present their team of wonderful people. But isn't it much better to collaborate with Ungers instead of that guy over there? History or theory is not looked at this way, and discourse is not viewed in this way, and it also requires foundational teaching that is not really done anymore.

MS If we would iterate some of the different strains of activities, there are projects that you undertake that can be described as architecture, building design, design at large, teaching, running a sauna, etc. How do you settle on things to pursue?

TT I'm just not sure about the idea of ‘a practice’... Looking at the various overlapping things we are doing, it could be framed in several different ways. We have a ‘spatial practice’ running a sauna – which involves all the daily routines and some managerial and dimensions. Here, we work with our bathers – they are the people we are loyal to – and they are representatives of an imagined culture of bathing that we are trying to summon. Together with them, we can activate the structures we have erected to represent these practices, rituals and gestures.

NEW ACADEMYN TOIMIPISTEENÄ ON
HELSINGIN MERIHAASSA SIJAITSEVA
KULTTUURISAUNA. VUODESTA 2013
TOIMINUT YLEINEN SAUNA ON TULLUT
TUTUKSI MONILLE, JOTKA OVAT TULLEET
SEURAAMAAN KESKUSTELUJA JA
LUENTOJA TAI OSALLISTUNEET STUDIO-
OPETUKSEEN JA SEMINAAREIHIN.

THE ACADEMY IS HOSTED BY
KULTTUURISAUNA, A BUILDING
PERCHED ON A PUBLIC PIER IN
MERIHAKA, HELSINKI. OPERATING BY
DAY AS A PUBLIC BATH. SINCE 2013 THE
SAUNA HAS DEVELOPED A FOLLOWING
FOR THEIR OPEN TALKS AND LECTURES,
AS WELL AS STUDIOS AND SEMINARS.

Then there's the New Academy, a 'teaching practice'. Every term we've worked with a different set of students (and institutions), but also we've been developing a set of themes and methods that interest us. So, the courses plot a trajectory of inquiry and urgency. Each student group is very small, but looking at all the alumni students, the visiting classes, and the people who've been to the lectures, who have read the publications over the years, this broader circle of people, so it has been building up little by little.

MS A secondary cycle...

TT Working on a limited scale quite slowly has really become the only way to work for us. It's informed by our limits – there is no aspiration or possibility to expand the bathing, nor to have classes five days a week. And then there are several publication or research projects that we are working on with other people – like Åbäke or Markus Lähteenmäki, working with Alexander Brodsky and Ilya Utkin to publish cancelled etchings, Nene's work with Dogma's book series, or going to factories to make artefacts with Oiva Toikka, replicating Wirkkala's axe... These have been very slow processes.

Maybe the "meta-practice" has been how these different activities and projects relate to and contribute to each other, while having their own logic. You can go from one frame of thinking to another, or from one mode of working to another, but keep everything separate, autonomous. When the sauna is open, there are publications on the table, but the bathers don't need to be aware of the scope of the Brodsky project behind the book.

NT Each activity stands independently and they all have their own logic that needs to be protected from the other work. They follow their...

MS ...Own histories.

TT Yes, and Leonard and I both have our "architecture practices." I've focused on very simple housing projects, developing a way of building, and a certain way of working with a builder, and maybe also to develop a way to work as an architect which is "post-office".

MS Post-practice?

TT Since I work solo, do most of my drawings here at the cashier, or at home after dinner. Ironically, I've built more after I dissolved the office, than when I had an office and we really tried to get a lot of building commissions. Either it is a symptom of architecture pushed into such a hostile corner that you can't make a living with it anymore, or...

MS ... Maybe it's the reverse of how there's maybe an architect somewhere that does window schedules all

their lives and then in their spare time they do some water colour paintings.

TT Yes, something like that... But since I can only do a limited amount of this work, what kind of projects do I then want to do? What kind of architecture or housing do I want to be involved in making? And with that work, what am I contributing to?

I am most interested in investigating how to make buildings that can address the issues we – and not the market – can identify, but still make possible within this market-reality. How can we re-design the financing, managerial aspects, construction and ownership in a new way? That's the architecture where you can make a difference. It's not exactly what I've been doing, but the way I've been working has given me a much better vantage point to ask those questions and really be able to think about them.

LM This is where I may be much more naive or idealistic than you, but I really think that this is where the line between the various practices dissolve, in that it's much easier for you to make a decision now. And that's because all the other things inform and compliment each other in unexpected ways. I think the line between 'practice' and 'theory' blurs because I'm sure everyone has this experience of being in the office and no decision gets made until one week before the deadline. The most difficult thing about architecture is how you decide that this is the right thing, or that this is good.

MS Or that it is even what you want to do...

LM Exactly, making decisions is actually what takes much more time than making the drawings or models... this is where I think theory and practice are inseparable and so important.

MS Throughout our discussion we've circled around about the idea of going back to the things done, or even as Nene mentions "finally coming to a starting point" even after various projects. This somehow leads my thoughts to the concept of archives. What kind of a relationship do you have with past activities and work?

TT I think Nene feels strongly about this... we are both allergic to looking at past things, but at the same time everything you do fits into a kind of structure that has been in the making already for quite long.

NT We're about to move out from the storage space we've had for more than 10 years... and all of the previous office's material has been put there. Our plan is to go through everything and re-organise it. I'm not "allergic" to past things, but it needs to be sorted out. Documentation and process materials can disappear, but the effects and results of processes are indelible. Every outcome of work, whether it's a publication, or an object, or some other kind of manifestation, is the

physical archive of the processes that created it. Some projects like Unbuilt Helsinki, which I did with Åbåke and the Museum of Finnish Architecture, still keep on resonating. It was something that the entire palette of our practices has swallowed – and it's still digesting... I mean processes like that. And we met Leonard through that project. He worked on the bronze model of Kazuo Shinohara's entry "Stages" for the Helsinki Contemporary Art Museum competition in 1993 and we exhibited the model at Kiasma in 2012.

LM With this archive question, I feel differently because there is a lot of work I'm not ashamed to admit I'm a bit embarrassed by, but at the same time I can trace back to a certain moment where I had a set of work that was pointing in one direction, and I have absolute confidence in that work. I can see projects that were building blocks for other projects. What's so difficult now is that you don't have much control or are aware of the control you have over what enters into the public discourse. This is precisely why I feel I have to be very careful about what I do – what would get published, or what is worth writing or lecturing about. Just because your project wins a competition doesn't mean you should publish it. This is really important because you live with this project forever. Even though you may feel a project was validated by this competition and therefore it's a good project, you need to have the chance to validate it for yourself.

This is difficult because it is only when you begin to establish a framework for why something is what you want to do, that you can have this sort of confidence in your work. I think what's fascinating is that I can trace things back to a certain moment that took place here, where I can feel a certain awareness of what I am doing. I don't know how to fully articulate what clicked, but with the teaching, I really want to try to create this moment for others as well.

TT Sometimes, these moments looking back at past works can be enlightening, especially revisiting projects you are not so excited about at the moment. It's an opportunity to reconsider it from your present position. What would you do differently? What would your terms of engagement be? By changing perspective, or testing something in another context – you can have a dialogue with yourself, and it helps in developing a critique of your own work. I had started my studies in '93 under Pallasmaa's new regime in Otaniemi, and I remember the disorienting contrast when visiting TUDelft in '98. The intellectual climate was very different. The same truths didn't apply.

LM We've talked before about this experience of going to a different school, and for me it was the exact opposite – maybe it's a generational thing... You go somewhere else expecting something radically different, but it ends up exactly the same. I feel there is a remarkable homogeneity to architectural education now, aside

from small pockets in schools like the Angewandte and Mendrisio. Today there are a set of pedagogical values that are simply regarded as self-evident and that becomes very dangerous when there is no capacity to provide critique. When I look back at the projects that I would want to erase, I'm very cynical about those projects because I feel that they aren't shaped by me but by these seemingly universal and unquestionable values, there is a lack of consciousness or self-awareness.

TT After my BA, I went back to work in Rotterdam, and when applying for internships, one of my professors warned me: "don't come back with the Dutch disease", as if I was going into dangerous, toxic territory. Should I go, I should stay clean – not only for my own sake – but for all of us. It's like we have been distilling and refining this thing called Finnish Architecture for 150 years, and you shouldn't risk contaminating it with some unwanted "foreign" elements – be careful what you bring back home. And the best way to be intellectually protective is of course to not to be intellectual at all...

Having had a childhood of moving to a different school or country every two years, I had the opposite instinct from my professor: immunity comes through exposure, and that experience will eventually make you stronger. And even if you become sick, it's not that dangerous, it's only architecture.

I think theory works like a vaccine. And with the New Academy, we've tried to develop an alternative curriculum that produces a deep contrast, so the students can re-examine what they know and how they work, and why they are doing things the way they are doing.

LM It's also important that we don't just do 2-3-day workshops, but we try to build a relationship with the students. We've all read similar things and have a foundation that is built over time. Many students we have for a year, or even a year and a half, and it's then that you feel you can really talk about architecture. We're not looking at Pinterest or trying to figure out how to use software. But it's really slow and takes time that is not easy to come by.

MS What about the idea of agendas in architecture? Are there outspoken pursuits? Teaching the universal truths?

LM The question of agendas vs. 'universals' is in this sense, very postmodern. In that the universal is still seen as something totalizing and incompatible with freedom, it is why when people look at anything modernist in an unsexy way like Merihaka, they think it is oppressive or 'Soviet'. Instead of universals, what has replaced them today is a type of 'common sense' like 'sustainability' or 'liveability'. For me this is even more dangerous because it is simply accepted or assumed unquestioningly.

In our teaching we've tried to be very careful in navigating around this problem of the universal, because

VUOSIEN VARRELLA NEW ACADEMY ON KUTSUNUT TILAISUUKSIINSA MONIA TUNNETTUJA ULKOMAALAISIA PUHUJIA JA AJATTELIJOITA, KUTEN ALEXANDER BRODSKYN, JEAN PHILIPPE VASSALIN, ELIA ZENGHELISIN, KELLER EASTERLINGIN JA PIER VITTORIO AURELIN. NEW ACADEMY VOISI KUVATA ERÄÄNLAISEKSI EPÄMUODOLLISTEN KOKOONTUMISTEN JA TÄHTILUENTOJEN VÄLIMUODOKSI.

OVER THE RECENT YEARS, THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROGRAM HAS HOSTED A SERIES OF INTERNATIONAL GUESTS AND THINKERS, INCLUDING ALEXANDER BRODSKY, JEAN PHILIPPE VASSAL, ELIA ZENGHELIS, KELLER EASTERLING AND PIER VITTORIO AURELI, AMONG OTHERS. ONE COULD SAY THAT NEW ACADEMY BALANCES SOMEWHERE BETWEEN BACKYARD GATHERINGS AND KEYNOTES WITH INTERNATIONAL NAME RECOGNITION.

of course what you teach is universal in the sense that there is inevitably one narrative. It is not neutral because it is put together, arranged, edited, curated. At the beginning we tried to overcome this by choosing a topic and each coming up with our own lecture about it, so that there would be multiple voices. There are obvious limitations to this, as inevitably there is some kind of consensus, but also because it is not always coherent. One idea that has been helpful is Foucault's idea of genealogy – Tuomas' earlier point about history touched on this as well. For Foucault genealogy was an approach to history that is not understood as a trajectory (teleology) with a transcendental observer. Rather history is considered from the perspective of a subject and traced backwards, so that things we see as 'natural' can be questioned by looking at their histories.

The problem of the universal has also been our entry point into what would be called 'theory'. While there is a link to practice, I don't think it is 'operative' in the traditional sense. Rather theory is seen as a project of establishing a terrain, of attempting to make sense of the world. Because even if it is an impossible task, it is one worth trying, as there will always be something to learn. Disciplines outside architecture such as philosophy, sociology, history, economics are extremely important in this regard, because even if they are far away from a specific building or project, it's only with an understanding of the terrain that it is possible to intervene with any kind of rigour, and that terrain needs to be constantly re-evaluated to remain relevant.

MS I feel that younger generations of architects are seemingly pursuing more socially aware and political topics, still calling it architectural discourse, or practice...

LM One reference I often use now is Alexander Galloway's idea of being a weak foundationalist, which is to say that you have no dogma except this one small dogma-x, with dogma-x referring to some type of coherent view of things. For architects this dogma tends to be that 'everything is architecture', which becomes problematic because it is then difficult to question what architecture is, or even to express any kind of doubt about the role of architecture in society. It is important to choose one's dogma-x very carefully, otherwise it is very easy to get caught up in the good intentions of architecture to address social and political issues. The role of the architect is always in flux, and the role architecture can or should play in society cannot be taken for granted. I find myself not particularly interested in architectural discourse as a whole, but I am very interested in particular trajectories of discourse that attempt to answer the question "what is architecture?" by also considering everything that it is not.

NEW ACADEMY LECTURE SERIES 2013–2017

2013

A PERSONAL ARCHITECTURE

Sami Rintala | Monday 21 January

Alexander Brodsky | Monday 4 February

David van Severen | Monday 25 March

(Organised with support from the Aalto University)

2014

A THOUSAND ISLANDS

Keller Easterling | Saturday 8 February

Angus Cameron | Saturday 1 March

Pier Vittorio Aureli | Saturday 22 March

(Organised with support from the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and Newly Drawn)

LIVING/WORKING: HOW TO LIVE TOGETHER

Pier Vittorio Aureli | Monday 24 November

(Organised with the Helsinki City Planning Department)

2015

URGENCIES

Giovanni Piovone and **Michele Marchetti**

Monday 2 February

Shumi Bose | Monday 9 February

Maros Krivy | Monday 9 March

Andreas Rumpfhuber | Monday 16 March

Francesco Marullo | Monday 30 March

Adam Caruso and **Helen Thomas** | Tuesday 7 April

Martti Kalliala | Monday 13 April

(Organised with support from the Aalto University)

PRACTICE IN DISPLAY:

ALVARO SIZA – SOCIAL LANDSCAPES

Markus Lähteenmäki and **Manuel Montenegro**

Monday 10 August

(Organised with Drawing Matter)

Jean-Philip Vassal | Friday 16 October

(Organised in collaboration with Artek)

2016

AN ARCHIVE CHRONICLES SEMINAR

Leonard Ma

Markus Lähteenmäki

Gabriele Mastrigli

Under the Pyramid:

A Preview of *Cancelled*, an edition of prints by

Alexander Brodsky and **Ilya Utkin**

Saturday 3 September

2017

THE SOCIAL CONDENSER

Elia Zenghelis | Monday 12 June

Michal Murawski | Monday 19 June

Fabrizio Ballabio | Monday 4 September

Pier Vittorio Aureli | Monday 21 August

Tahl Kaminer | Monday 27 November

(Organised with support from the Alfred Kordelin Foundation)