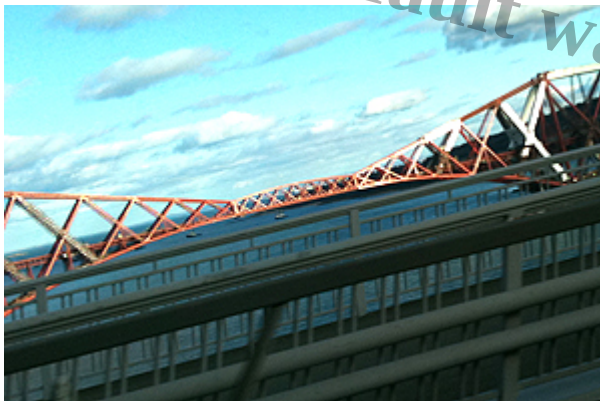


Transilience

Description

Build bridges that link across chasms and break down walls that divide communities: these are the spatial symbols of transformation towards reconciliation and unity, ie transilience as a movement from one place to another. Who would deny that communities need to seek common ground and unite in shared purpose? The authors of the papers in a recent issue of [EAR](#) (The Journal of Edinburgh Architectural Research) dare to think of other strategies for leaping into the unknown or the different. There are many ways of linking domains of difference, of effecting transilience, the bridge providing the most obvious. Architecture also offers steps, tunnels, gates, doors, windows, walls, ramps by which citizens negotiate differences in spatial function, character, and ownership. But following Vitruvius we can add machines of force, catapults and ballistae, to the architectural repertoire. These are the devices by which one leaps over and plunges through walls.



Forth Rail Bridge, Scotland

The structure of the catapult as a means of projecting from A to B invokes further surprising metaphors, those of music and sound. Vitruvius describes the catapult as if it were a musical instrument in need of careful tuning: “the loops of the strings are put through the holes in the capitals, and passed through to the other side; next, they are put upon the windlasses, and wound round them in order that the strings, stretched out taut on them by means of the handspikes, on being struck by the hand, may respond with the same sound on both sides.” Thus with tight wedging, catapults are tuned to the proper pitch by musical sense of hearing (Vitruvius, 1960, pp.308-309). Music and sound provide metaphors for understanding how we negotiate difference, as a subtle tuning operation, transilience as the means of producing segues within scales and melodies.

To invoke sound in bridging from A to B is also to invite the reflections of mathematician, musician and architect Iannis Xenakis, who brings the acoustical architecture of the crowd into spatial play: “Everyone has observed the sonic phenomena of a political crowd of dozens of hundreds of thousands of people. The human river shouts a slogan in a uniform rhythm. Then another slogan springs from the head of the demonstration; it spreads towards the tail, replacing the first. A wave of transition thus passes from the head to the tail. The clamour fills the city, and the inhibiting force of voice and rhythm reaches a climax. It is an event of great power and beauty in its ferocity.” They are

the laws of the passage from complete order to total disorder in a continuous or explosive manner?• (Xenakis, 1992, p.9). Gaps are created and negotiated by explosive, stochastic, pulsing and wave-like processes, with political impacts. To update the ballistic impulse, in his account of the displacement of Philippine President Joseph Estrada by a civilian-led coup in 2001, Vincente Rafael highlights the role of the crowds of people communicating by mobile phones: “The power of the crowd thus comes across in its capacity to overwhelm the physical constraints of urban planning and to blur social distinctions by provoking a sense of estrangement. Its authority rests on its ability to promote restlessness and movement”• (Rafael, 2006, pp.305-306). The crowd emerges as a technology activated by the capabilities of mobile electronic communications. Note the reference to estrangement. These technologies do not only bind, unite, and ensure accurate flows of information, but amplify the contest between the familiar and the strange. Such is the potential of transilience as architectural trope, particularly when we dispense with the static, the unitary and the entirely safe.

Rafael, Vincente. “The Cell Phone and the Crowd: Messianic Politics in the Contemporary Philippines.”• In *New Media Old Media*, edited by Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Thomas Keenan, 297-314. London: Routledge, 2006.

Vitruvius, Pollio. *Vitruvius: The Ten Books on Architecture*. Trans. Morris Hicky Morgan. New York: Dover Publications, 1960. Written c 50 AD.

Xenakis, Iannis. *Formalized Music: Thought and Mathematics in Music*. Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992.

Category

1. Architecture

Tags

1. architecture
2. bridge
3. disjunction
4. sound
5. transilience
6. Vitruvius
7. Xenakis

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