Lens and Will

Sigurd Lewerentz's way of travel

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Abstract: Throughout architectural history, outstanding architects have often been outstanding travelers. Sigurd Lewerentz, a legendary figure in Swedish modern architecture, is undoubtedly one of them. Lewerentz, who started his independent architectural practice in 1910 and died in 1975, lived during an exciting period that saw the emergence of many revolutionary technologies. Like his fellow modernists, Lewerentz embraced them. But unlike his peers, his passion for new technologies radically extended to his travel - he only used a camera to document things, rather than drawing in sketchbooks. Based on the concept of aura proposed by the German thinker Walter Benjamin, a new perspective to understand Lerwerentz's photos is proposed. And by reflecting on previous studies of two important sacred buildings designed by Lewerentz, namely the Resurrection Chapel and the Church of St. Peter, this paper presents some alignments between the photographs and the designs, which reveal Lewerentz's approach to learning from travels.

Keywords: photography; architect's travel; Sigurd Lewerentz; architectural design; modernism

I. Introduction

Proved by various architects from different places and times, travel endures as an imperative way of learning architecture. Through countless studies of the architectural historian, as well as the confessions of the architects, we saw new ideas emerge from the travels, more aptly, from the past. In the XX century, the Graeco-Roman region, especially the antiquity there, has always been the

most appealing destination for European modernists. This intensive exploration of the ancient world could be traced back to the eighteenth century when the German connoisseur, Johann Joachim Winckelmann greatly provoke the obsession with Graeco-Roman antiquity in public. In this trend of the voyage, more than merely driven by the desire of collecting, the travelers also displayed "a new technical interest and a desire to imitate … the Grand Tour was undertaken to view these ancient landscapes, but also to find among the evocative ruins and their architecture which was to change the face of most European cities."[1] Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, who was later known as Le Corbusier, is an emblematic figure in the such milieu. Even for Le Corbusier who articulates his thought a lot, his travel documentation is still worth noting for compensating what is either intentionally or unconsciously excluded in his own narrates. Numerous studies dedicated to Jeanneret's journeys to Italy, Greece, Serbia, and Turkey, which was known as his "voyage to the East", demonstrate that his travel experience was embedded in the subsequent design under the name of Le Corbusier. For instance, his journey to Romania to which he barely referred also proved to be a crucial inspiration for his design. His encounter with Cula, a type of Romanian vernacular house, "bore immediate fruit for his parents' house in La Chaux-de-Fonds."[2] The architects' travel forms an indispensable piece of the jigsaw puzzle for future generation to decipher their design philosophy. Furthermore, if the somewhat enigmatic transmutation from travel documents to innovative architectural ideas is palpable, we might, then, surmise that the travel documentation is reversely the most truthful unvarnished interpretation of the architect's design philosophy.

Sigurd Lewerentz, a name that is relatively obscure internationally, is undoubtedly among the greatest architect of the XIX Century. As a Swedish architect who only did projects in his home country, he gradually arouses great interest in architectural firmament worldwide after his death in 1975. Compared to architectural historians, critics, and practitioners show a lot more affection for Lewerentz. For an architect who "could sit for a long time just looking at a common nail and asking himself how many ways it could be used"[3], there is a particular romantic ambiance around him. Other than the emotional aspects, his projects do inspire many talented contemporary architects, like Adam Caruso and Valerio Olgiati. However, reviewing previous studies of Lewerentz, there is no such thing as a motif or manifesto that was pointed out partially because of the inconsistency in

[1] Alain Schnapp, "The Crisis in Mediterranean Archaeology," in *The Discovery of the Past: The Origins of Archaeology* (London: British Museum Press, 1996), 258–74.

[2] Judith Bing, "Le Corbusier and the Romanian Cula," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 76, no. 2 (June 1, 2017): 146–53, https://doi.org/10.1525/jsah.2017.76.2.146.

[3] Colin St John Wilson, "Sigurd Lewerentz: The Sacred Buildings and the Sacred Sites," *OASE*, Essential Architecture, no. 45–46 (1997): 64.

the style of his works[4]. More relevantly, he wrote little. The only identified written material of him is an essay explaining his Woodland Cemetery project. Unfortunately, the piece was never finished and presented in a fragmentary manner. For this gifted but silent architect, there is certainly an enigma to his works. However, what Lewerentz did leave is many photographs taken by him during his various travels. So, for Sigurd Lewerentz, other than directly analyzing his works, decoding his great inspiration, that is, his travel photos, is a promising way to grasp the intellectual process embedded in his design.

II. Previous research

Reviewing previous studies on Lewerentz, there is not much that relates to his travels. Janne Ahlin's *Sigurd Lewerentz, architect*, the first widespread monograph on Lewerentz, contributed greatly to his international fame but devoted few notes on his travel. After Ahlin's book, there was a burst of interest in Lewerentz. The British architect and historian Colin St John Wilson published the book *Sigurd Lewerentz: The Dilemma of Classicism* in 1989, "which turned out to be a cult object and was vital in shaping the view of Lewerentz abroad."[5] The book provides enlightening and profound narrates of Lewerentz's design philosophy based on the author's visit to Lewerentz's projects but excludes his travel. Entering the last decade of 20 century, Caroline Constant published *The Woodland Cemetery: Toward a Spiritual Landscape* in which Lewerentz's design process was analyzed comprehensively based on meticulous analysis of tons of sketches and drawings of the woodland cemetery project. Again, the travel is barely noted.

The lack of interest in Lewerent's travel in early research may have been due to two factors. On the one hand, Lewerentz traveled frequently and no pattern was ever discovered. In the latest monographic study on Lewerentz, Johan Örn noted a CV of Lewerentz from the early 1930s that indicates he would take a trip in Europe, mostly to Germany, France, Italy, or England annually except for years of the First World War.[6] For such fragmented and random excursions, neither mapping of his traveling routes nor a chronological narrate could be made. On the other hand, there is a lack of relevant primary materials. As noted by Gennaro Postiglione in an essay about Lewerentz's journey to Italy, "a number of black and white photographs … are the only evidence of the journey (or journeys) that Sigurd Lewerentz made to Italy."[7] Even for the most-investigated

[4] Kieran Long, Johan Örn, and Mikael Andersson, *Sigurd Lewerentz: Architect of Death and Life* (Stockholm: ArkDes, 2021).24.

[5] Long, Örn, and Andersson, *Sigurd Lewerentz*, 31.

[6] Ibid., 68.

[7] Nicola Flora, Paolo Giardiello, and Gennaro Postiglione, "Journey to Italy," in *Sigurd Lewerentz* (Milano: Electa Architecture, 2002), 35.

journey of Lewerentz, any form of resources other than travels photos is scarce as such.

Fortunately, the preserved "black and white photographs" of Lewerentz are considerable. Most of the photos are not recognizable for places, but as mentioned above, a series of them that portray Italian antiquity does indicate a journey to Italy in 1922. (Initially, the time was deemed before 1915 when the competition entry for the woodland cemetery was submitted, because the proposal for the cemetery seems to be inspired by the Via dei Seplocri in Pompeii. But now this date was identified as 1922 by a link between one of Lewerentz's sketchbooks and his photographs pointed out by Ingrid Campo-Ruiz[8]). This journey to Italy was considered the most intriguing one and was examined in several pieces of research. Nicola Flora, Paolo Giardiello, and Gennaro Postiglione's *Journey to Italy* is one notable piece. Another is Luis Moreno Mansilla's *Beyond the Wall of Hadrian's Villa Parrhasius'Veil: Lewerentz's journey to Italy*. Based on Lewerentz's photo of Italian antiquity (fig. 1), they both pointed out Lewerentz's keen interest in architectural details from which they manage to distill Lewerentz's design philosophy - the former concludes as "reduction to essentials"[9] while the latter ends up as "always starting from the detail."[10] However, in a bigger picture, while the photos of Italian antiquities are examined meticulously in these two studies, the photos from other trips are excluded. To explore Lewrentz's journeys in a broader dimension, it is worthwhile to also include the photos that have different content from antiquitarian ones in the discourse.

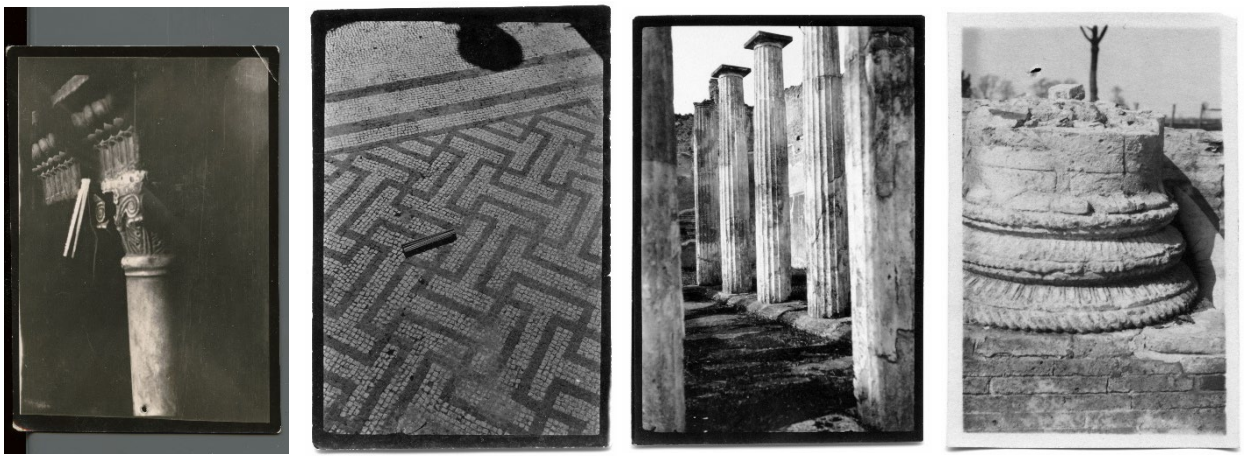

Figure 1. Photographs of the journey to Italy (Italienska resan, ca. 1922, ARKM.1973-103-150-002, ARKM.1973-103-150-183, ARKM.1973-103-150-027, ARKM.1973-103-150-088, Arkitektur- och designcentrum, ArkDes, Stockholm.)

[8] Ingrid Campo-Ruiz, "The Separating and Connecting Nature of Architectural Limits.," *Esempi Di Architttura*, no. 3/1 (2016): 41–51.

[9] Flora, Giardiello, and Postiglione, "Journey to Italy," 35–44.

[10] Luis Moreno Mansilla, in *Parrhasius' Veil: Lewerentz's Journey to Italy*, 9H, No. 9 (Cambridge: 9H Publications, 1995), 10-12.

III. Photograph as documentation

In the time of Lewerentz, when photography was gradually secularized with the development of camera manufacturing, taking photos was, however, not a common choice for recording travels among architects. Drawings remain a mainstream way of documentation. Few architects have replaced hand drawing with photography as completely as Lewerentz did to document his travels. Lewerentz's embracement of photography echoes Lewerentz's study and career development around 1910. During Lewerentz's early study periods, Lewerentz is not dabbled in photography. Like most of his schoolmates, he sketched during his trips. There are several colorful paintings as well as a few drawings with neat brushstrokes depicting buildings or scenes in the ArkDes' collection (fig. 2). Entering the second year of the century, like some of his schoolmates who felt the teachings at the Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm outdated, Lewerentz left the academy to study at the Klara School which was led by progressive architects Carl Westman, Ragnar Ostberg, Carl Bergsten, and Ivar Tengbom who dedicated to new technology[11]. Although there is no direct evidence that Lewerentz's studies at the Klara School contributed to his embracement of photography, we can surely be convinced by his rebellion that he was subjectively interested in pioneering techniques and was faithful to modernity. Photography, as a representative emerging technology back then, was naturally accepted by Lewerentz to record his travels. In addition, it was in the same year that Lewerentz posted an ad for his studios in the Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter*[12], signifying the start of his successful independent architectural practice. With money at his disposal, the young progressive architect acquired his camera.

Figure 2. Early travel sketches of Sigurd Lewerentz. (Reseskiss, 1906-1907, ARKM.1973-05-00013, ARKM.1973-05-00010, ARKM.1973-05-00007, Arkitektur- och designcentrum, ArkDes, Stockholm.)

[11] Long, Örn, and Andersson, *Sigurd Lewerentz*, 48.

[12] Ibid., 45.

Throughout the travel photos taken by Lewerentz, we see his boundless curiosity about the built environment. Ancient ruins, vernacular houses, infrastructure, and even some random small objects are all subjects that would be captured by Lewerentz's lens (fig. 3). Among them, historical and vernacular ones stand out for their considerable amounts. Notably, the photos of these two genres present a diametric disposition. In the case of the historical ones, especially those that portray Italian vestige, there is a strong intention for depicting certain components rather than the overall complexity. In a photo of Petti Palace (fig 4.), the plinth built with coarse masonry becomes the absolute protagonist of the picture instead of the imposing façade. Meanwhile, there are many photos that record fragments like apertures, chapiter, plinths, and patterns of flooring from which we can hardly recognize the whole subject. In contrast, in the case of the vernacular genre, the overall shape of the vernacular house is frequently profiled whereas fragment content becomes minor.

Figure 3. A wide range of photographic genres of Lewerentz. (Okänd Resebilder Stockholm, Sverige, Italien mm Exteriör, ca. 1910-1975, ARKM.1973-103-168-134, ARKM.1973-103-168-363, ARKM.1973-103-168-538, Arkitektur- och designcentrum, ArkDes, Stockholm.)

In previous studies regarding Lewerentz's journey to Italy, whether it is Flora's stress on the extensive use of close-ups,[13] or Mansilla's cliché about Lewerentz's preference for pure texture rather than imposing façade,[14] the fundamental problem with them is that they base their arguments on a complete disregard for the development of photographic technology at the time and ultimately attribute the features of Lewerentz's photographs exclusively to the subjectivity of him. Likewise, if the discourse is extended to the differences between the framing of the historical genre and the framing of the vernacular genre, it should not be simply concluded that Lewerentz's subjective attitude shifts towards vestige and vernacular house on account of his inconsistent framing for them. What is missing here is the capacity of the camera that was held in Lewerentz's hands.

[13] Flora, Giardiello, and Postiglione, "Journey to Italy," 37.

[14] Moreno Mansilla, "Lewerentz's Journey to Italy," 12.

To analyze Lewerentz's interesting photography, I would like to introduce the concept of "aura", proposed by German thinker, Walter Benjamin, in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. To illustrate the aura, Benjamin gave a scenario of one resting on a summer afternoon. The aura is experienced when a mountain on the horizon leaps to the eyes and a branch casts its shadow over the body[15]. Poetic, yet eloquent, Benjamin pointed out that the aura is the very uniqueness of things and the reason why we still need to be somewhere in person rather than simply indulge in the photos. In terms of reproduction, Lewerentz's photography is no exception in expelling the aura. However, if we look beyond the inherent reproductive properties of photography and focus on the purely functional nature of photography as a travel record for the architect, we could also perceive the revival of the aura in his photography.

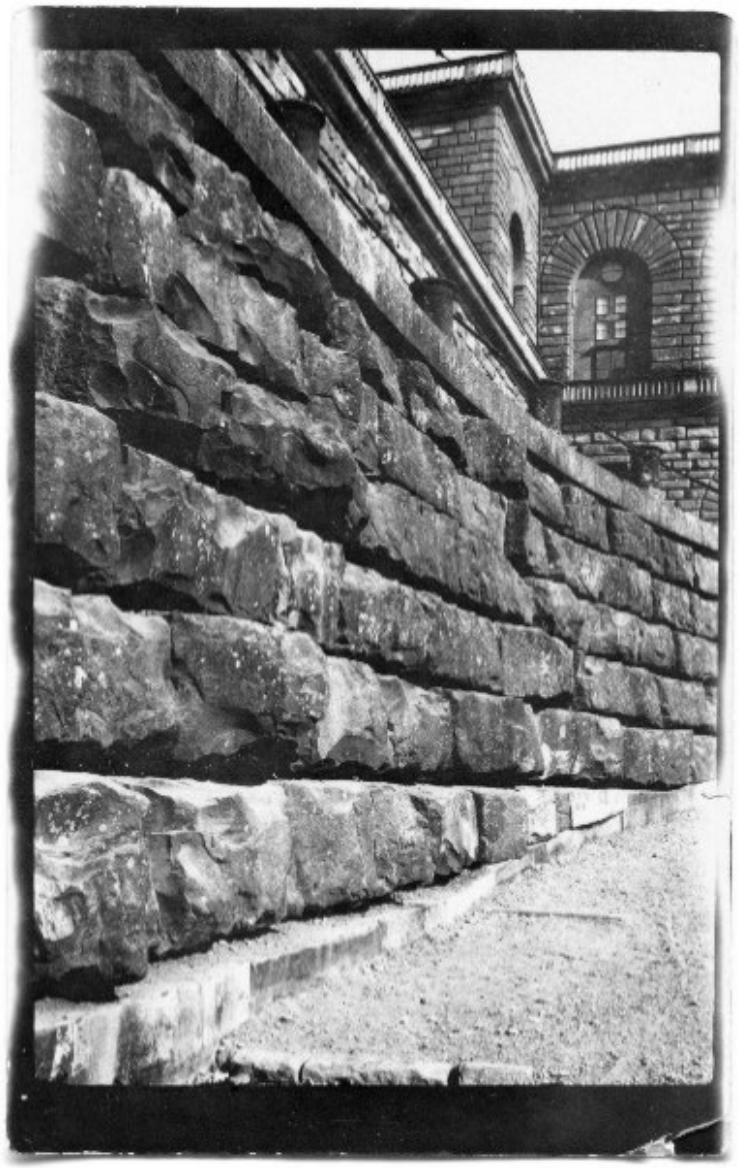

Figure 4. Petti Palace in the lens of Lewerentz. (Italienska resan, ca. 1922, ARKM.1973-103-150-175, Arkitektur- och designcentrum, ArkDes, Stockholm.)

[15] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illumination*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 217.

3.1 Decay of the aura

In the second decade of the last century, with the advance of the portable and easy-to-use cameras, exemplified by VPK produced by Kodak, photography was not confined to professional photographers anymore and began to prevail in a wider public. Throughout Lewerentz's travels, the photographs are full of tilted horizons and unstable subjects, as if they were taken at random in a hurry (fig. 5). Above all, given the need for portability for travel and the casualness of the photographs, Lewerentz was very likely using one of the popular models of portable cameras. And this type of camera only has a fixed lens. (Back then, zoom lenses were not widely available on cameras. And interchangeable lens cameras were still only available in the lineup for professional photographers in which the ease of use and portability were not considered by the manufacturers). The relatively long focal length of the lens could be the most prominent but disappointing factor behind Lewerentz's "preference" for close-ups and textures that were shown by his photo taken in Italy. In addition, the fixed lens could also explain the different framing inclinations between the historical genre and the vernacular genre. It was extremely difficult for Lewerentz to capture the "imposing facade" of a huge mansion in a compact old Italian town, as opposed to a cottage in a rural or suburban area. Thus, to a certain extent, Lewerentz does not have complete freedom to choose between panorama and close-up, but rather the confines of space and the objective correlation between focal length and angle of view thrust him closer to the Italian monuments while bringing the whole cottages into Lewerentz's len. This process is mostly driven by the lens rather than the things that are photographed. While the lens brings "things closer spatially and humanly", the uniqueness is lost, and the aura decays.

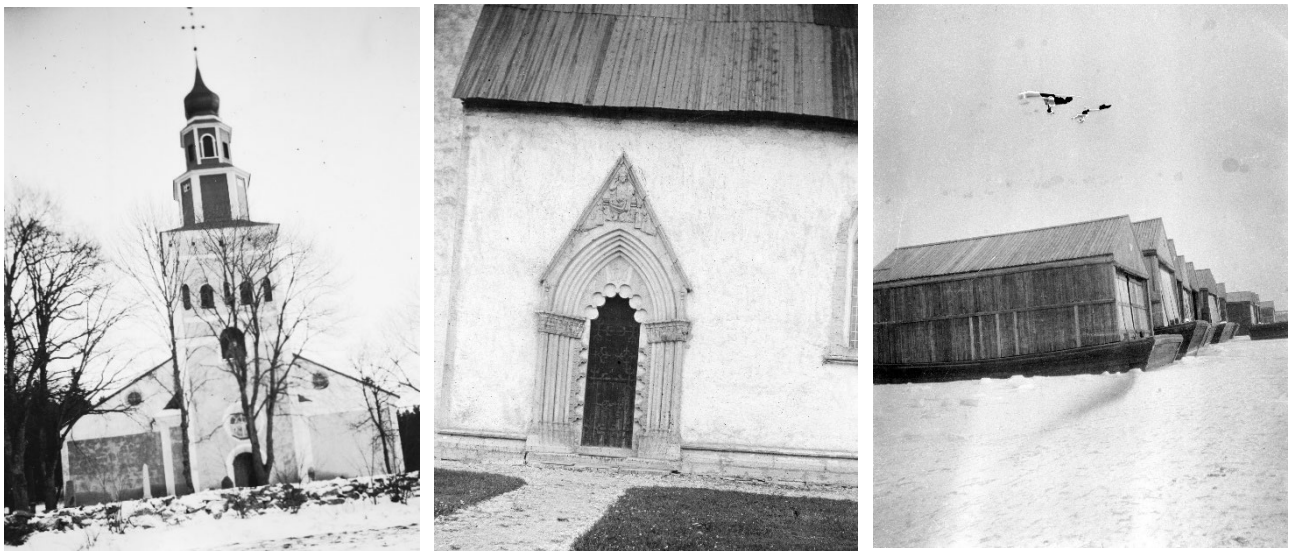

Figure 5. Snapshot-like travel photos of Lewerentz. (Okänd Resebilder Stockholm, Sverige, Italien mm Exteriör, ca. 1910-1975, ARKM.1973-103-168-518, ARKM.1973-103-168-438, ARKM.1973-103-168-147, Arkitektur- och designcentrum, ArkDes, Stockholm.)

3.2 Revival of the aura

As mentioned above, Lewerentz's photographs are not confined to a particular type of architecture or a particular area. For the viewer, his photographs are all-encompassing but at the same time extremely difficult to identify, because everything captured by Lewerentz's lens was highly decontextualized from its original properties like function, region, and even scale. In that way, A pure formal connection is established among things that are even diametrical. For instance, covered by Lerwerentz's lens, the Petti Palace and an unknown vernacular house are extricated from their contexts and show surprising consistency – nothing but merely juxtapose of calm fine masonry and stark coarse one (fig. 6). Another instance could be a set of photos depicting different unknown cottage with pitched roof (fig. 7). Although these vernacular houses are different in various aspects, including but not limited to the surroundings, scale, exterior wall finish, region and probably the time when Lewerentz encountered them, they all have an almost identical architectural expression in Lewerentz's photos - big pale exterior walls with proportionally small apertures. Taking this further, these photos erase any context of the rural cottage but express only the entity of pure chunky monolithic massing. Once again, the images are so reductive that only pure architectural figuration is left in the end. Indeed, according to Benjamin, everything reproduced by a camera lost its aura. But unlike the mass-based reproduction discussed by Benjamin, Lewerentz's photos were never intended to depict something reproductively, on the contrary, the characteristics of the original were reduced to a minimum but his personal indigenous sense or perception which is deeply intertwined with pure architecture was amplified. If the aura is something that can only be experienced somewhere in person, the aura that Lewerentz felt did not glide away but was recorded by his lens – the aura revived.

Figure 6. Decontextualized photos that present the same theme. (Left: source see in figure 4; right: Okänd Resebilder Stockholm, Sverige, Italien mm Exteriör, ca. 1910-1975, ARKM.1973-103-168-497, Arkitektur- och designcentrum, ArkDes, Stockholm.)

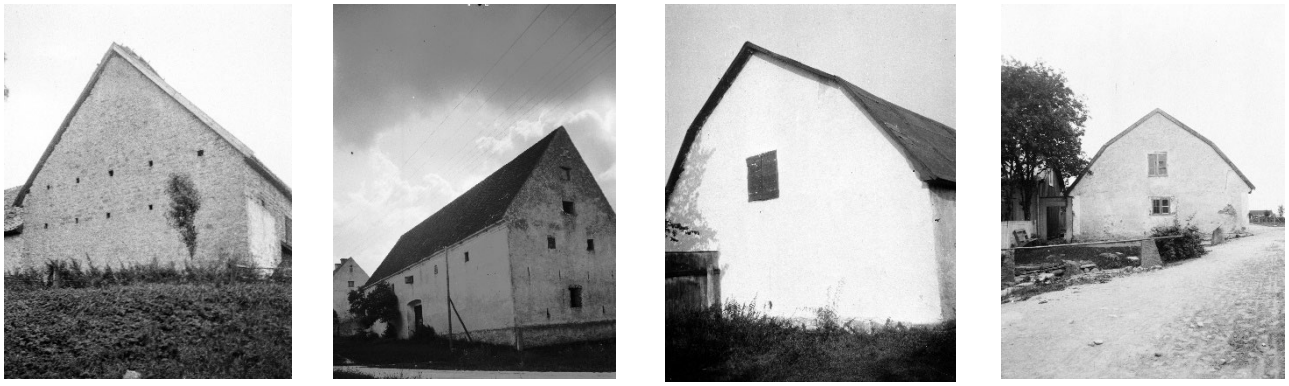

Figure 7. A series of photos of different cottages that present identical architectural figurations of monolithic massing. (Okänd Resebilder Stockholm, Sverige, Italien mm Exteriör, ca. 1910-1975, ARKM.1973-103-168-182, ARKM.1973-103-168-504, ARKM.1973-103-168-177, ARKM.1973-103-168-301, Arkitektur- och designcentrum, ArkDes, Stockholm.)

IV. Photographs as inspiration

Back in the nineteenth century when photography emerged as a nascent invention, photographs were used by artists, especially portraitists as technical aids[16]. David Octavius Hill is a forerunner of this trend of exploiting photography. As noted by Benjamin, it is not the effort that Hill put into his paintings but his predilection for photography that gave his name to its historical place.[17] *The Disruption*, as the most well-known piece of Hill, is a typical photography-aided painting. This oversized painting that measures 1520 centimeters by 3450 centimeters portrays over 400 faces of churchmen to commemorate the founding of the Free Church of Scotland. Hill took portrait photos of every churchman separately and ultimately merged them into one painting (fig. 8). As a result, this laborious work is "more a photomontage than a painting in appearance."[18] Just like how Hill used the photos as ingredients for the overall composition, we could find a similarly straightforward approach of montage in some of Lewerentz's travel photos and his early designs, for instance, the Resurrection Chapel in the Woodland Cemetery. While the overall presence of the building retains its enigma, several referential connections between some architectural details and some travel photos are perceptible and traceable. Needless to say that the flooring is inspired directly by the mosaic flooring photographed by Lewerentz during his journey to Italy.[19] Another instance that is rarely noted is the big window on the northern wall of the nave. The consoles of the window recall an unknown window photographed on the same trip to Italy (fig. 9). Lewerentz's appropriation of it

[16] Sara Stevenson, "David Octavius Hill and the Use of Photography as an Aid to Painting," *History of Photography*, no. 1 (March 1991): 48. https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.1991.10443131.

[17] Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," *Screen* 13, no. 1 (1972): 6.

[18] Stevenson, "David Octavius Hill and the Use of Photography as an Aid to Painting," 47.

[19] Long, Örn, and Andersson, *Sigurd Lewerentz*, 70.

is almost identical to Hill's painting of the churchmen's faces from photographs, both being very direct iconographic reproduction. However, when more of Lewerentz's projects, especially those that were designed in a modern style with fewer decorative elements are investigated, we see a certain obliqueness between the references and the corresponding design. The Church of St. Peter in Klippan is such a manifestation of the obliqueness.

Figure 8. Photographs as technical aids for David Octavius Hill's *The Disruption* (Photoseed, 2014, https://photoseed.com/blog/2014/08/23/permanence-of-disruption/)

Figure 9. A large window in the Resurrection Chapel in reference to the windows recorded in the Italian travels. (Left: Italienska resan, ca. 1922, ARKM.1973-103-150-175, Arkitektur- och designcentrum, ArkDes, Stockholm; right: photo by author.)

When Lewerentz got the assignment of designing a new church in Klippan, he was already 79 years old. However, it is this unpretentious brick church designed by an architect who was already in his

twilight years that provokes a craze among critics and pioneering architectural practitioners. And two aspects of the church were constantly noted and analyzed – its brickwork and the columnar support in the center of the nave. For both aspects, despite being unprecedented and extremely innovative, we could find some of Lewerentz's travel photos that strongly echo them. However, unlike how Lewerentz "quoted" the pavement and the consoles in the Resurrection Chapel, we do not see the exact form documented in the photos being faithfully reproduced but the "architectural aura" in the photos getting embodied and obliquely represented.

Figure 10. Unique brickwork of the St. Peter's Church in Klippan. (Photographs by the author.)

Figure 11. Indigenous masonry. (Okänd Resebilder Stockholm, Sverige, Italien mm Exteriör, ca. 1910-1975, ARKM.1973-103-168-011, ARKM.1973-103-168-353, Arkitektur- och designcentrum, ArkDes, Stockholm.)

For the brickwork, as one of the contemporary advocators of Lewerentz, Adam Caruso accurately summarized: Lewerentz unfamiliarized one of the humblest materials, brick, "resulting in walls where bricks are more like the aggregate within a conglomerate structure, rather than distinct, stacked masonry units (fig. 10)."[20] This unique brick surface effect has once been noted by Colin St. Wilson as a recall of ancient brickwork of Byzantine, Persian and indigenous vernacular buildings.[21] However, no confirmed evidence was ever shown in previous studies to actually prove that Lewerentz had been inspired by the Byzantine or Persian reference, but there are, thankfully, a photo of an obscure cottage and another one of a parapet in Lewerentz's travel photo collections that resembles the similar interesting texture of black solid blocks embedded in an organic matrix of mortar (fig. 11). Technical yet poetic, the texture that was originally created by random stones in the vernacular references is represented trough uniform brick by applying unconventional tectonic rules - no brick is cut and the mortar is applied unevenly. As for the intermediate columnar support, we could see a similar representation. In a rarely noted excursion to Gotland, a small island adjoining Stockholm, Lewerentz was so obsessed with the sanctuary space of the historical medieval churches there that he photographed dozens of them. By juxtaposing these photos, again, we could see consistency in their depicted content. It is not about any decorative details but only the powerful presence of a column in a monochromatic secluded room (fig. 12). And this distilled architectural figure could have inspired Lewerentz to erect a single imposing column in the sanctuary of the St. Peter's Church (fig. 13). Admittedly, the column, as structural support, is a very constructional working-out for the relatively big span in both axis of adopting a square plan rather than traditional rectangular one. But just as Wilson pointed out, the true genius here is that the T-shape column and the girders resting on it imbue the space with startling symbolic effect by irresistibly recalling "the central symbol of both the New and the Old Testament – the Tree of Knowledge and the Cross of Redemption."[22] Astonishingly, Wilson's argument of symbolism is also perfectly appropriate for Lewerentz's reference taken from Gotland, especially when it comes to the recall of the Tree of Knowledge as the column combined with ribs of the vaulted roof almost reminiscent of real truck and branches (fig. 12). Confronted with the echoing symbolic structural element of the medieval churches and Lewerentz's church which have divergent styles and were built in different materials, we have to note that Lewerentz made a successful representation of the

[20] Adam Caruso, "Sigurd Lerwerntz: A Material Basisis for Form," *OASE*, Essential Architecture, no. 45–46 (1997): 91, https://www.oasejournal.nl/en/Issues/4546/SigurdLewerentz-1.

[21] Colin St. John Wilson, "Sigurd Lewerentz and the Dilemma of the Classical," *Perspecta* 24 (1988): 68, https://doi.org/10.2307/1567123.

[22] Ibid., 67.

“aura” that he once documented from the former.

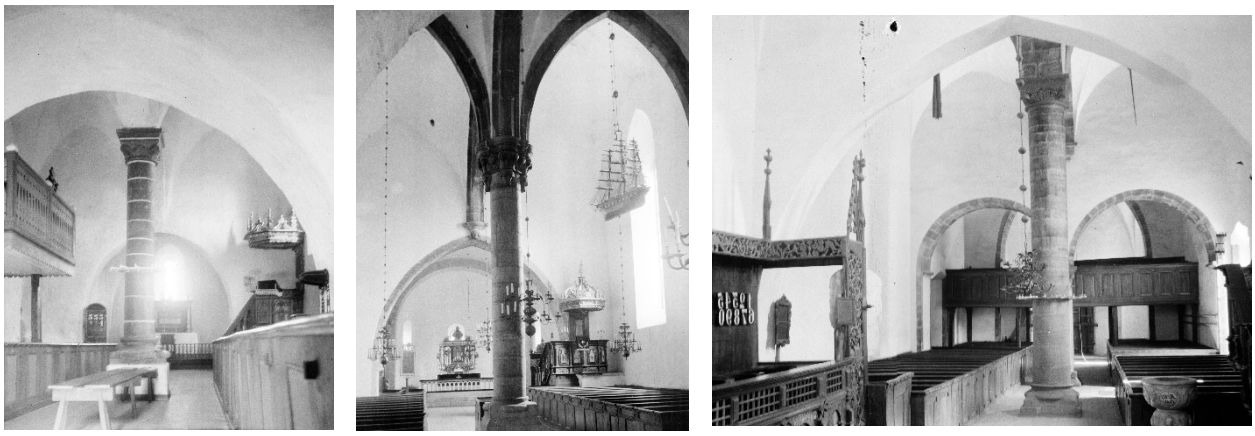

Figure 12. Churches on Gotland photographed by Lewerentz. (Okänd Resebilder Stockholm, Sverige, Italien mm Exteriör, ca. 1910-1975, ARKM.1973-103-168-416, ARKM.1973-103-168-423, ARKM.1973-103-168-425, Arkitektur- och designcentrum, ArkDes, Stockholm.)

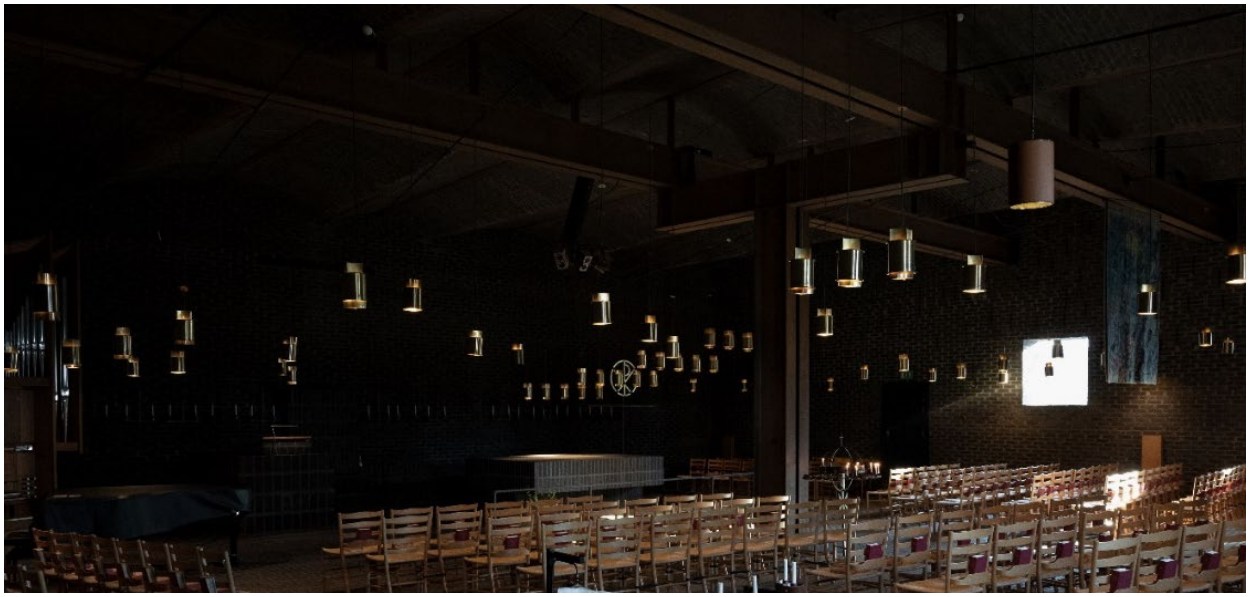

Figure 13. The symbolic column in the St. Peter’s Church in Klippan. (Photograph by author)

From reproduction to representation, the way of getting inspired is more oblique in the Church of St. Peter compared to the Resurrection Chapel. But rather than ascribing this subtle inconsistency to the maturity of Lewerentz’s design philosophy over the years, analyzing it under the premise that Lewerentz’s core philosophy of taking photos and getting inspired has barely shifted is more open to discussion. I would like to suggest that while on the one hand, Lewerentz always got iconographic inspiration from his travel photos, on the other the occasional obliqueness is because of the very nature of the creative process of architecture. According to the British architectural historian, Robins Evans, compared to painting and sculpture, the particularity of architecture is that architects do not work on the ultimate subject directly but inevitably through a medium like

drawings.[23] Thus, just like there is a space where the meaning would glide when translating one language to another, something unexpected and surprising either good or bad could occur in the architecture albeit with the absolute accuracy of drawing.[24] If we take Robins' argument a step further, photography, as another concrete medium for conceiving architecture like drawings, the referential virtue could also be oblique sometimes naturally. In Lewerentz's case, even if he intended to reproduce the aura embedded in his photos in the first place, the different tectonics involved in the actual construction condition from the reference would only allow representation. When the architect wandered on the construction site in Klippan and stared at the bricks, the matter of actually building something took over, foreshadowing the obliqueness. And Lewerentz, true to Wilson's words, has an unusual talent in metaphor, in other words, finding the similarity in dissimilarity. Therefore, with the photos in mind, the aura from some remote places could be represented and fuel Lewerentz's charming architecture.

V. Conclusion

"Which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art,"[25] wrote Benjamin. For Lewerentz, he audaciously embraced the debatable new invention, and in return, the Italian antiquities, the cottages, and the churches on Gotland leave their locales to be received on his drawing board. But what real intriguing here is that it is not the exact entities but the architectural figurations distilled from them being received. Confronting a blank sheet of paper, Lewerentz would look through his photos with his mind hovering around their architectural aura. He could always find something relevant and inspiring for the project, such as the consoles for the Resurrection Chapel, the masonry, and the symbolic column for the church in Klippan. Like a recipe book, the significance of his travel photos is straightforward as that.

Being in Lewerentz's building, however, one might immediately deny the notion that what was created by the architect is just a collage of references. More sophisticated and obsessive, on the basis of discrete references, Lewerentz creates something concrete pervading the space. And in St. Peter's Church in Klippan, it is something sacred. At this point, we have covered the ground that could provide a way of understanding this abstract design philosophy. For the sake of explicitness, I would like to draw an analogy between Lewerentz's design and a core concept of the ancient Chinese poem called Xing. In brief, Xing is "saying something else inspirational and associational

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[23] Evans Robins, "Translation from Drawings to Building and Other Essays," in *Robin Evans : Translation from Drawing to Building and Other Essays* (London: Architectural Association, 1997), 153–93.

[24] Robins, "Translation from Drawings to Building and Other Essays," 153-93.

[25] Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 217.

first so as to lead to what the poet is going to sing."[26] "Sere sere reeds grow, white dew frost slow. The one I seek, across the flow. Upstream to cross, too far to go. Downstream to cross, mid-flow shoal they show." This beautiful poem titled *The Reeds* is all about someone the poet craves but most of the ink is spilled on a specific scene – frosted reeds by a stream. With Xing, "when much has been said, more is left to be pondered over."[27] The key here is the vividness of "something else inspirational and associational." To convey the right emotion, the scenery elements in *The Reeds* are carefully selected by the poet. The reeds, the dew, and the stream fit in with each other, and together, they render an illusional sentimental background for "the one" and leave the readers an appropriate vivid place to project the unrequited desire for "the one," Similarly, the auras that Lewerentz represents in his design are never facile, on the contrary, they interlock with each other properly. As if the dew frosts on the reeds to gleam, the central column stands in the enclosure of the unique brickwork to emanate its symbolism. The roughness and the heaviness of the brickwork that springs from vernacular masonry amplify the presence of the column greatly. Together, the seemingly irrelevant auras immerse us in the enigmatic darkness that is as vivid as any medieval church on Gotland in terms of evoking sacred emotions.

In the compelling essay by Caruso, we read: "Like Matisse, who advised young painters to cut off their tongues and communicate with brush and canvas, Lewerentz was famously laconic. … He built."[28] Indeed, as an architect who spoke little. His designs explain themselves and speak for the architect. But to get closer to the master, there is more than that - he traveled and he took photos. Looking through Lewerentz's photos, we could feel the aura that once moved him. As the correlation between the photos and the designs shown in this paper, the will that drove him to press the shutter is the will of him as an architect who built. For the next generation of architects, Lewerentz has left behind stunning masterpieces, but perhaps even more significant is that he has revealed the profound meaning of travel and shown an enlightening way of learning from it.

[26] Xi Zhu, Shi Jing Ji Zhu (Hong Kong: Hua mei shu ju, 1951).

[27] Rong Zhong, "Preface," in The Poets Systematically Graded (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1983), 92.

[28] Caruso, "A Material Basisis for Form," 90.

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