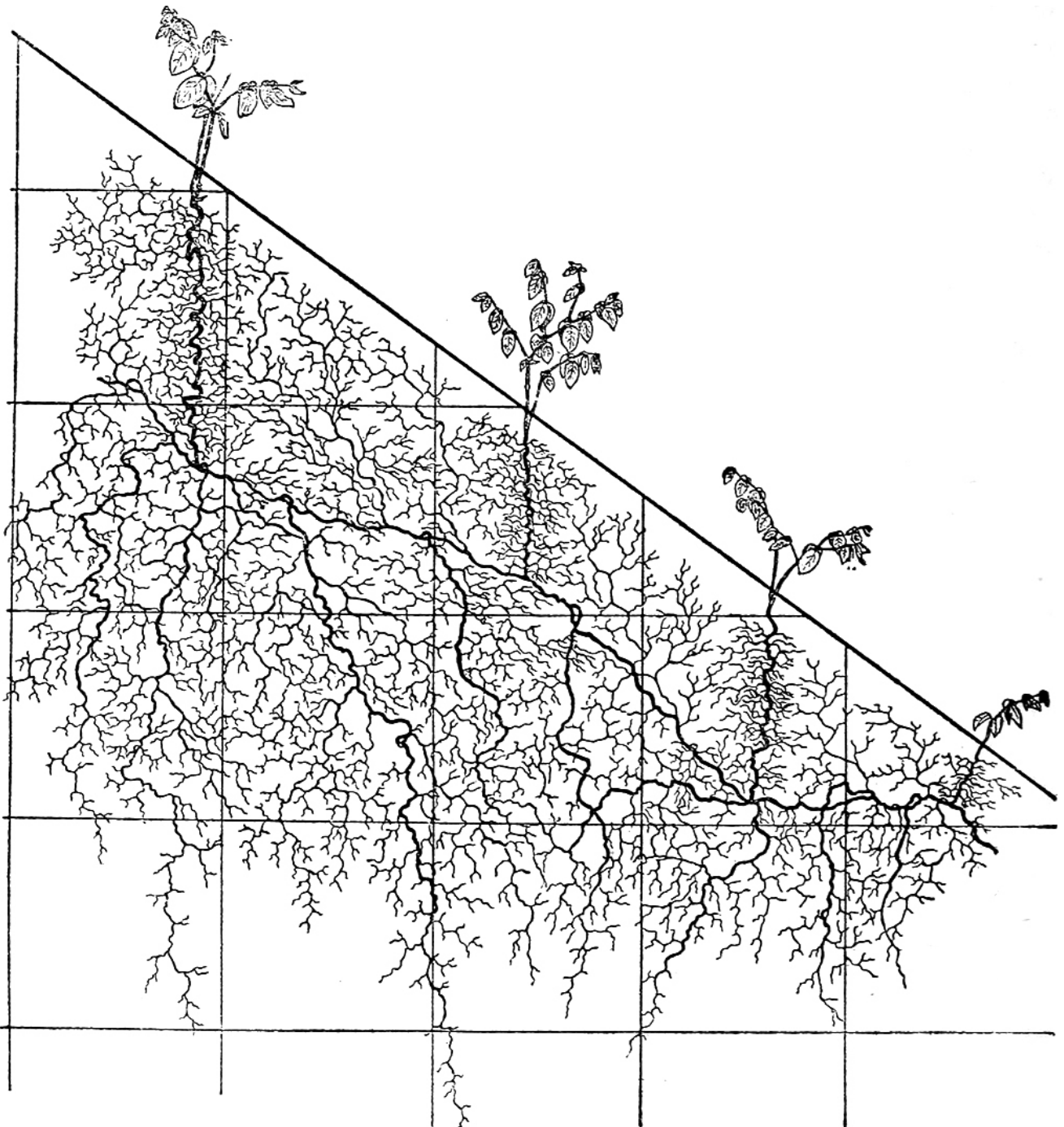


DE ARCHITECTURA

LIBER VIII

UMWELT



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*“After all, what is a law of nature as such for us? We are not acquainted with it in itself, but only with its effects, which means in its relation to other laws of nature — which, in turn, are known to us only as sums of relations.”*¹

The awareness of human activity as one of the main forces of transformation of the earth system has recently introduced us to a new geological era: the Anthropocene. At the dawn of understanding this paradigm shift, the concepts of “nature” and “culture” are now being revisited, which poses as many questions as it elicits opportunities for our discipline, calling for a repositioning of architecture amidst both nascent and exigent challenges.

*“Technology is no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing.”*²

Negotiating the implicit relocation of the Anthropos and mirroring the inexorable technological acceleration, will an architecture considered as a material assemblage, a set of devices that is traversed by energy flows, be able to reveal other types of relationship with our built and non-built environment? Will it be able to claim a decidedly hybrid character, assuming its potential as an agent capable of engaging emerging new ecologies; between humans and non-humans, subjects and objects, existing and new?

*“Every subject spins out, like the spider’s threads, its relations to certain qualities of things and weaves them into a solid web, which carries its existence.”*³

In order to overcome the perilous anthropocentric perspective on our environment, allowing excursions in unknowable worlds, a disciplinary understanding of architecture is put forward, that acknowledges the superimposing functional relations between subjects, objects and quasi-objects. Investigating their visible and invisible effects, built structures are described and designed as parts of networks of multifarious interdependencies, which exceed any attempt to grasp them in their totality, yet exclude deliberate autonomy.

*“No Ideas but in Things.”*⁴

Transversal and generalist in essence, located at the interface of different knowledges, architecture is understood as the art of composition. Its essential function is based on its ability to construct “proportions” between things and people, bringing together knowledge and material. In a deductive process of critical interpretation an architectural project is established from increasingly specific constraints, a nexus of interrelations, an actualization of presumed effects.

*“Whatever we call reality, it is revealed to us only through the active construction in which we participate.”*⁵

Straddling reality and fiction, incapable of carrying out the entire process of transforming reality on its own, architecture is fundamentally dependent on the representations it produces. Starting out from geometry as its main tool, architecture, uses reality as a projective force. It understands itself as a science of representation; as a place of the imaginary, a redistribution of the sensitive, and, sometimes, a constitutive element of our collective remembrance.

1 Friedrich Nietzsche; On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense

2 Martin Heidegger; The Question concerning Technology

3 Jakob Johann von Uexküll; A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans

4 William Carlos Williams; Paterson

5 Isabelle Stengers, Ilya Prigogine; Order out of Chaos

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ON ARCHITECTURE

The studio is conceived as a double investigation into the archetypal elements of architecture and into the challenges of our present age. By imbricating the contemporary and the fundamental a framework is set up, in which a critical reflection on what architecture might be today, can take shape. Research is envisaged as a project and the project is envisaged as research, therefore establishing a critical viewpoint is regarded as the primary act of building an architectural proposal. Stemming from the overarching approach of Vitruvius's Ten Books, the studio addresses a different theme each academic year. After *Performative Objects* in 19/20 and *Elements of Climate* in 20/21, in 21/22 the theme of *Umwelt* will be dealt with. This term designates a concept, originating in the early 20th century biology of von Uexküll, that abandons a unitary perceptual world in favor of many radically different environments, constituted by the living beings that inhabit them. Considering architecture through this perspective will be the principal challenge of this year's studio.

AUTUMN SEMESTER

The first semester will be devoted to the study of the architecture as a material assembly that is traversed by energy flows. Analysis of embodied energy is accompanied by investigations into the climatic performativity of various examples. Visible and invisible forms of energy will be traced and represented. Organized in a series of exercises that fuse study and design the progressive construction of an architectural language through drawings, models, and images will be undertaken. The work will take place in groups of two to five people in changing compositions. It will be presented as a collective display each week, punctuated by an intermediate review in week 7 and a final review in week 14.

SPRING SEMESTER

The work of the second semester will be based on the knowledge developed during the first semester, according to the contingencies linked to a site and a program an architectural project will be elaborated. It will be constituted essentially by engaging in a given built structure, which will have to be reinterpreted and adapted. The tools and methods will be close to those used during the first semester. The work will take place in groups. It will be presented as a collective display every two weeks and will be punctuated by an intermediate review in week 7 and a final review in week 14.

GOALS

The evaluation of the work will focus on the commitment, inventiveness, and quality that the proposals display, as well as the critical reflection that informs them. Particular attention will be paid to the issues of experimentation and representation, while both process and result, narrative and argument, the disciplinary and the non-disciplinary are valued.