Landscape as a Model of Architecture: A Contemporary Imitation

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Abstract. The act of designing architecture is based on the use of various models chosen as referents. Such models may come from architecture itself or from the arts like sculpture, painting, music, literature, and so forth. They usually provide the components for architectural design. This stance leads to the notion of architectural design as the construction of a new order derived from elements, examples, or prototypes verified in time by virtue of experience. Thus, the praxis of the design process is mainly referred to as a conscious imitation of models. The thesis of this work is that landscape constitutes one of these models. Landscape should be considered a contemporary model for architectural imitation because it is a concept that reveals a dynamic reality oriented towards the future. The values of landscape produce a wish to emulate it, to assimilate it. In a renewed object–subject relationship, landscape proposes itself as a paramount issue for architectural design. This paper contextualizes and explains what comprises such renewed mimesis and why landscape is a subject that provokes a desire for active emulation in contemporary architecture.
Keywords: Imitation; mimesis; landscape; model; architectural design.

[es] El paisaje como modelo de la arquitectura, una imitación contemporánea

Resumen. La acción de proyectar en arquitectura se basa en utilizar modelos elegidos como referencia. Estos modelos pueden venir de la propia arquitectura o de artes como la escultura, la pintura, la música, la literatura, etc. Todas ellas proporcionan materiales para el proyecto de arquitectura. Este planteamiento lleva a una idea de proyecto arquitectónico como construcción de un nuevo orden a partir de elementos, ejemplos o prototipos verificados a lo largo del tiempo por medio de la experiencia. La praxis del proceso de proyecto está referida a una imitación consciente de modelos. La tesis de este trabajo es que el paisaje es uno de estos modelos. El paisaje se puede considerar un referente a imitar por el proyecto arquitectónico porque es un concepto que revela una realidad dinámica, orientada hacia el futuro. Los valores del paisaje, perfectos e imperfectos, producen un deseo racional de emularlo, de parecerse a él. En una renovada relación objeto-sujeto, el paisaje se propone como un tema primordial para el proyecto arquitectónico. Este artículo contextualiza y muestra en qué consiste esta nueva mímesis y por qué el paisaje provoca un deseo incoativo de imitación.
Palabras clave: Imitación; mimesis; paisaje; modelo; proyecto arquitectónico.

Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. Modern architecture and landscape. 3. Landscape: A duality between image and reality. 4. A new kind of contemporary imitation. 5. Landscape as a model for architectural design. 6. Architecture transformed into landscape. References. Acknowledgements.

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1. Introduction

The ancient and enduring relationship of imitation between architecture and nature finds its current translation in the contemporary notion of landscape, regarded by architectural design as a renewed model to imitate that surpasses the pre-modern imitation of nature. Landscape makes it possible to configure a structure of relationships that the architectural design reconstructs to define its own space of belonging: a cultural, historical, aesthetic, and contemporary framework through which architecture acquires meaning. By means of the praxis or the practice of the architectural project rather than a theory or conceptual abstraction, landscape is rediscovered as a model to be attained by architecture itself.

The aim of this essay is to unravel the structure of influences that landscape creates and in which architecture acquires a contemporary sense. The centrality of landscape as a specific object of study assumes values and connotations that transcend individual disciplines and specific fields to advance to a speculative theoretical level. The concept of landscape considered in this research is not merely limited to the natural landscape or even as an architectural/urban landscape, neither landscaping or landscape design. The notion introduced for landscape is much wider so its sense should not be taken for granted. For these reasons, this work is developed in line with several points. The first heading is a brief study about the slow decantation of landscape as a working theme for modern architecture. The ensuing epigraph establishes how the concept of landscape is understood nowadays as a duality between image and reality. In the next point the new concept of mimesis in contemporary thought and the novel kind of contemporary imitation are developed. Then it explains what is meant by architectural design and how landscape has become a model of imitation for architectural project, shown some examples of recent oeuvres and projects. The main contribution of this paper is the contemporary significance for imitation in architecture, investigating landscape as one of its models.

2. Modern architecture and landscape

Twentieth-century avant-garde architects were not used to regarding landscape in itself as an issue. It is virtually absent in their writings or notebooks, except as a health-oriented or recreational idea. They understood the term landscape as something specific to painting or literature. The pioneers of modern architecture had other priorities. However, when analysing the work of vanguard architects with a different point of view, one would rediscover the modern roots of landscape as a sort of prime matter for architectural design. This became apparent, firstly, from their years of training, such as in the way they look at landscape from a visual and pictorial perspective and, lately, from when they presented their works as figures in a landscape that act as a background, assuming a nexus between subject and object in the classical sense.

Kenneth Frampton observes three indirect approaches to the theme of landscape in the oeuvre of modern pioneers. The first is linked to the reinterpretation of Greek architecture and can be identified in Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe. The French-Swiss architect demonstrated his awareness of landscape's evocative power when he placed his buildings, e.g., Villa Savoye, using the landscape as a background—directly visible from inside by means of the *promenade architecturale*, as if it were a painting exhibited in the house itself. The German architect approaches landscape through the use of an aesthetics of sorts in which the natural and the artificial merge into a single element, as in the Farnsworth House. The platform on which the continuous space of the house is displayed becomes wider as one experiences a landscape that flows and enters the house. For Mies van der Rohe, landscape is an ethical valuable concept considered as something positive and it begins to be considered as a model to achieve.

The second modern approach to landscape derives from Eastern architecture, particularly from the Japanese domestic tradition, and it is characterised by the intimate dimension of internal space and the pertinence of the garden. Examples of this sensibility include the American works of Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra[2]. A third indirect approach of modern architecture to landscape is represented by the work of the Mexican architect Luis Barragán that stems from a fascination with the tradition of Mediterranean architecture with its internal courtyards and gardens (Frampton, 1991, pp. 42–61).

As for Frampton's contribution, one would add other implicit approaches to landscape performed by modern architects. In these cases, a space depicts a kinaesthetic experience in addition to the visual one like the Woodland Cemetery built in Stockholm by Erik Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz and the Kaufmann House or Fallingwater by Frank Lloyd Wright where the horizontal layers are sustained by the vertical axis of the stone chimney. The rational horizontal volumes seem to float, while the vertical mass, symbolic and idealistic, made of irregular masonry is strongly anchored to earth. An opposition of values—rational/horizontal vs vertical/emotional—as an indispensable ingredient of harmony and beauty, of the sense of intensification of perceptual experience and as an analogy of the ability of architecture to become landscape as well.

But the real forerunner in the understanding of landscape as a contemporary theme of architectural design was the Greek architect Dimitris Pikionis. In his design of the access pathways to the Acropolis and Philopappos Hill, this architect removed the classic boundaries between subject and object. He designed a new landscape entirely made of stones that prefigured the architecture. In other words, Pikionis reconstructed architecture by using a mythical landscape that had been lost and was now rebuilt fragment by fragment, as if by magic, in a process in which landscape and architecture were transformed into an inseparable whole. (Fig. 1—Fig. 2).

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[2]   About similarities between oeuvres of R. Schinler and R. Neutra and traditional Japanese architecture, see also Almodovar and Cabeza-Lainez (2018).
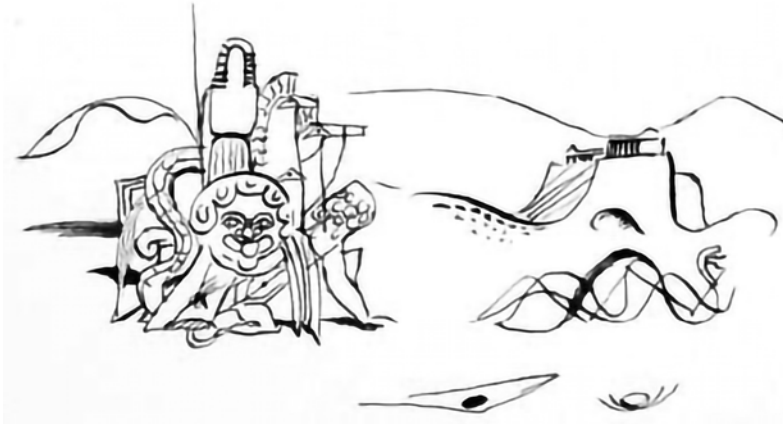
Figure 1. Dimitris Pikionis, sketches from the 'Attika' series, 1944.
(Source: Dimitris Pikionis Archive / Benaki Museum).

Figure 2. Dimitris Pikionis, pathways of the Philopappos Hill and Acropolis surrounding
area (Athens, Greece), 1954-1957. (Source: Quaderns d'Arquitectura I Urbanisme 190).

These architects, with their brave new vision, planted a seed that would eventually
bear fruit at the beginning of the 1970s, when landscape was consciously employed
for the first time as design theme. As harbingers of these new perspectives, two
Italian architects, Roberto Gabetti and Aimaro Isola, built the *Unità Residenziale
Ovest* (West Residential Building) in Ivrea (Fig. 3). The building is located amongst
the undulations of the ground around a green hill where the architects proposed a
return to nature that they said 'is impossible although it exists, and even more, we

experience it' (Pedio, 1973). Gabetti and Isola's proposed research consists in a form of architecture that does not produce an imprint on the terrain and is not downloaded on it but seems to grow out of it. They created a new landscape with a new presence by using an architecture that is brought to the point of merging the foreground and background, which is a fundamental characteristic of the contemporary point of view (Fig. 4).

The main reference point of this project is landscape which is considered a modern, dynamic prototype in evolution. The landscape is no longer experienced by looking at a painting or reading a page of literature. The emotional experience that a landscape stimulates arises when one is encircled by it and can move freely around it; such an experience gives definitive form to a certain hankering for freedom that constitutes one of the aspects on which a landscape's beauty is based (Quesada-García, 2019, p. 12).
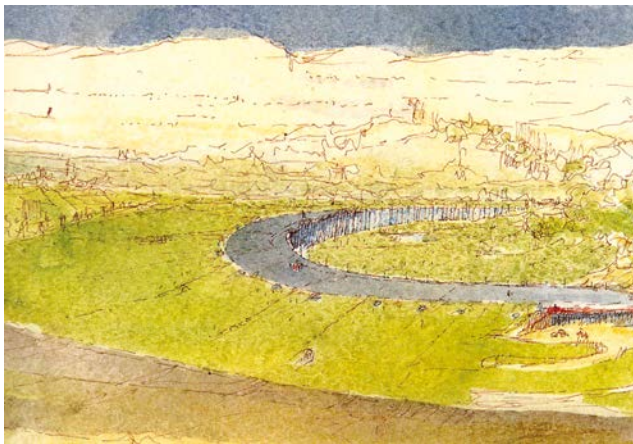

Figure 3. Gabetti & Isola with L. Re, *Unità Residenziale Ovest* sketch (Ivrea, Italy), 1965. (Source: Gabetti e Isola studio).

Figure 4. Gabetti & Isola with L. Re, *Unità Residenziale Ovest* sketch and building (Ivrea, Italy), 1968-1971. (Source: Gabetti e Isola studio).

The rediscovery of landscape in the last 40 years stems not only from ecology but also from geography, anthropology, philosophy, and architecture. At the beginning of the 1990s, landscape, with all its ambiguity and lack of definition, became one of the preferred subjects in the contemporary debate on architecture. Franco Purini (1991) claimed the importance of 'restoration of the landscape', and Aimaro Isola (1993) highlighted 'the need for architecture'. To solve the equation between both, it is necessary not to take the nature of landscape for granted. This is paramount for understanding the essence of landscape in order to use it as a material or theme in architectural projects as we will discuss in the next point.

3. Landscape: A duality between image and reality

Almost all current interpretations of landscape have been framed in the philosophical context of the linguistic paradigm. A French geographer, Augustin Berque (1994), maintains that landscape as a concept did not exist in Western culture until the term appeared in a language that described its meaning. This predominance of linguistic paradigm referring to the concept of landscape hinders a true comprehension of its nature because it overvalues some significant elements and ignores the experience that can be directly extracted from it[3]. Landscape cannot be understood only by means of words or by any other conceptual knowledge or speculative disposition. Landscape is perceived in various complementary ways but especially through the experience of the persons who live or perceive it; hence, the success this concept has had in the arts.

Landscape is not a synonym of nature. In the 18th century, human beings became aware that nature had finally been dominated, and they somehow felt transcendent to the world and acquired the ability to escape from nature and observe it from the outside. At that precise moment, landscape became autonomous from nature. Nature as an eternal, aesthetic, ideal, and complete and immutable model was transformed into a landscape, a new dynamic, imperfect and constantly changing model. Landscape does not possess a static firmness; it is always undergoing transformation because, like human culture, it is constantly evolving. Frank Lloyd Wright said that mutation is the only immutable characteristic of the landscape (Kauffman, 1962).

The genesis of the term *landscape* shows how the presence of human beings, of its signs of anthropization, is a fundamental element to understand this concept since it induces a significance beyond strictly naturalistic considerations. Landscape incorporates a social component that assumes the anthropic character of the places built by human beings, which transcends the aesthetic vision and goes beyond the understanding of the territory as a natural substrate modified to a certain extent. Simon Schama adduces that myths are enshrined in landscape as a result of personal and collective remembrance, ever changing and mutating, with a surprising resilience over time and a capacity to influence human institutions (Schama, 1995).

Landscape is not synonym of Arcadia. As occurs with the history of culture, landscape can also have positive or negative connotations, and in those, one finds

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[3]   I do not share the linguistic premises of A. Berque that make the existence of a concept contingent on the existence of a term that names it. Medieval and Renaissance painters did not know the word *landscape*, but that does not mean they lacked panoramas or places at which they were able to look, recognize, and paint.

good and bad examples. Landscape is an imperfect subject, too, with a stratification of meanings, in which a detailed look reveals a deep agreement, a decoding, that arises from ancestral memory. Landscape means both an omission and a conquest of human beings.

Figure 5. René Magritte, The Human Condition, 1933. (Source: National Art Gallery, Washington DC).

'This is how we see the world', René Magritte declared at a conference in 1938 to explain his painting *The Human Condition* (Fig. 5). In it, a painting has been superimposed on the scene he describes as without having any distinction or discontinuity between the two: 'We see it as if it were outside of us even if it is a simple mental representation of what we experience inside'. What is beyond the lenses of our mental perception, Magritte says, requires a drawing before we can correctly discern shape. It is culture, convention, and the cognitive act which complete the drawing and gives the retina an impression of the qualities that we perceive as beauty.

The current concept of landscape goes beyond the old dichotomy of subject and object by acknowledging the limits between the physical and phenomenological world, which came to be viewed separately during the 18th-century Enlightenment. Nowadays, the concepts of subject and object have been rediscovered as interchangeable. These concepts are now immersed in a world characterised by complexity, interaction, and interference. A landscape is capable of merging the difference between form and content, and it is a place in which image and reality overlap.

The works and texts of authors such as Richard Long, Nancy Holt, Walter de Maria, Robert Smithson, and others Land Art artists blurred the meaning between

the representation of the landscape and the intervention in the landscape. The latter does not produce a work of art but rather creates a scenario where an event takes place and the subject's experience is involved (Raquejo, 1998). Thus, an overlap and coincidence between art and landscape is established by virtue of which art has no value other than itself, i.e., such works do not represent the landscape because they are the landscape. Art no longer means looking at an object but experiencing it. The contributions of photographers such as Mario Giacomelli, Luigi Ghirri, Alberto Schommer, and Jean Arthus Bertrand have set a new layer in the multiple meanings of landscape[4]. In landscape, human beings become invisible, but his gaze remains.

The writer Francisco Ayala (1996) summarizes that notion well with one of the most accurate contemporary definitions of landscape: 'Landscape represents and signifies a reality that is an invention of human beings' (pp. 23–30). Meaning that landscape is capable of signifying an object through its images and endowing it with meaning through a set of signs.

The values projected on a landscape mirror those of contemporary society and are a consequence of the historical, social, and cultural framework in which it exists. Landscape means an overall and imperfect harmony of aesthetic, economic, emotional, and cultural values that trigger an incipient and rational desire to encompass it all—not just look at it—by individuals who experience it.

Landscape is a universal reference, susceptible to change, whose truth is not manifested through a conceptual understanding but via a specific type of action or experience. As is the case with architecture, landscape must be experienced. It cannot be merely narrated; hence, the affinity that the field of architecture finds with landscape. It can be regarded as a contemporary and attractive example to emulate because it presents concrete values that could have pretensions of validity for more than one occasion[5]. In this sense, landscape embodies, to a greater or lesser degree, a prototype that represents an ideal of imperfect though necessary beauty. For all the previous reasons, meanings and strata, landscape is a place where space is an object of experience and a subject of desire at the same time.

The relations between architecture and landscape become apparent in the praxis of architectural design when this one incorporates imitation in order to collect the values inherent in a landscape. Therefore, it is necessary to establish what one intends by an act of mimesis and how to perform this new kind of imitation.

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[4]   In 1980, Gabriele Basilico, Gaddo Morpurgo, and Italo Zannier organised in Bolonia an exhibition titled: *Fotografia e immagine dell'architettura*, a year later they did, also in Bolonia, the exhibition *Il paesaggio. Immagine e realtà*. In Spain, in 1993, the Bilbao Metrópoli 30 association organised a photography exhibition with works on the city entrusted to authors such as G. Basilico, J. Bink, C. Canovas, B. Gilden, and C. de Andrés. Also, the contributions of Alberto Schommer (2002) and Luigi Ghirri were an important reflection about the influence of photography has on the current perception of the landscape (Mussini, 2001).

[5]   The profound signification that landscape takes on in this project means that the landscape becomes both an exemplar and an example for the architectural project by regarding it as an end in itself. In the example of the newly created landscape, all of the understanding and truth of the concept of landscape are deployed with greater plenitude than in the linguistic and abstract enunciation of any rule or theory. If the rule illustrated by the example is practical and not theoretical or technical, then the example demonstrates that a certain fact is valid. The example is an element alien to abstraction; it directs people to the concrete. From a logical-conceptual perspective, it is unthinkable that something concrete could, at the same time, be common to all things; hence, from this point of view, the concrete can never be universal.

4. A new kind of contemporary imitation

The Baroque architect Francesco Borromini paraphrased Michelangelo by saying, 'Who follows others never goes further than them'[6] (Borromini, 1993, p. 30). He states the need to surpass the model, reinterpreting it through new architectural and linguistic codes, and he seems to anticipate the future death of imitation during the Enlightenment period, foreseeing a new model of imitation that will emerge three centuries later.

From Seneca and his famous postulate *Omnis Ars Imitatio Naturae est*, (All art is an imitation of nature), when he took Aristotle's thought, mimesis has appeared throughout the ages and in all pre-modern thinking, art, and related disciplines. There were basically three types of pre-modern mimesis: the imitation of ideas, nature, and the ancients. Imitation is one of the notions that pervaded thought until the 18th century. With the advent of enlightened modernity and humanity spurred on by scientific breakthroughs, human beings were unleashed from the ideas of thorough and complete perfection, thus putting an end to the timeless and static reality of the pre-existing models.

With such individualistic momentum of human beings, modernity replaced the model-copy chain that had spread for centuries with a different structure based on the autonomy of the subject or unique consciousness in which the ancient link played no role. Having existed for circa two millennia, the concept of imitation suddenly disappeared from thinking, and an emerging interpretation identified imitation with literal, banal, simian, or childish copying, erroneously assimilating the act of emulation with the result obtained from thoughtless repetition.

However, by the end of the 19th century, several authors, such as Mallarmé, Collodi or Wilde, began to introduce in their schemes and texts a new kind of reverse imitation. Carlo Collodi, in *Le Avventure di Pinocchio* (1883), revisited Ovid's *Metamorphoses* both in the myth of the cave and in that of Jonah, but the important fact is that he added a new unknown character: a fairy with imperfections who became ill and impoverished, unlike the immaculate and unattainable fairy of the fable tradition in which Collodi was inspired. The pristine archetype and perfect ideal model began to fade and be substituted by something that can be imperfect like human beings. A few years later, in 1889, Oscar Wilde said, 'If nature had been comfortable, mankind would never have invented architecture' and concluded his book, *The Decay of Lying,* with his famous sentence: 'Nature also imitates Art', inverting the Aristotelian postulate.

At the end of the century, Mallarmé penned *Mimique*, which was published in *Divagations* during 1897. The French writer proposed the figure of a mime artist who, after playing his role, creates the script of what he had acted; that is, he performs an inverse mimesis that imitates nothing. In the essay, '*La double séance*',

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[6]   The original quote, written in 1656 in ancient Italian, follows: '*E regoli ricordarsi, quando talvolta gli paia che io m'allontanai dai comuni disegni di quello che diceva Michelangelo, principe degli architetti, che chi segue agli altri non gli va mai innanzi. Ed io al certo non mi sarei posto a questa professione col fine d'esser solo co-pista, benché sappia che nell'inventare cose nuove non si può ricevere il frutto della fatica se non tardi*'. (When sometimes it seems that I move away from the usual designs, remember the rules that Michelangelo, prince of architects, said that those who follow others never go further than them. And, certainly, I would not have cho-sen this profession in order to be just a copier, although I know that, inventing new things, it is not possible to receive the fruit of fatigue soon but late).

from his book *La Dissémination*, Derrida comments that Mallarmé's text revealed a kind of new non-Platonic mimesis. He quotes that Mallarmé maintains the basic structure of mimesis but without referring to a Platonic or metaphysical interpretation (Derrida, 1975, pp. 279–91). A fourth and original type of imitation of prototypes with imperfect models and a reverse mimesis act, not known until then, appeared in Western thinking.

In the second half of the 20th century, social philosophers (Adorno and Girard) and literary critics (Derrida, Ricoeur, and Genette) made a series of relevant contributions to the theory of imitation. The characteristic common to all of them is the placement of imitation at the centre of a new way of thinking, instead of linguistic paradigm. Philosopher Javier Gomá theorised on this contemporary mimesis in his General Theory of Imitation (Gomá, 2003, pp. 329–91).

Under the pre-modern concept, it was necessary to imitate an ideal model to arrive to perfection. The new mimesis is not associated with pre-modern, dually structured imitation (model-copy) that presupposed the existence of a complete given reality preceding mankind that was also offered as something eternal and steadfast. The product of today's imitation is no longer a copy or an object, but it is a subject that never reaches the model selected, though in the act of mimesis has obtained hope to achieve it. Moreover, the model is not an object or thing to be imitated, as it is a subject that is capable of inspiring a mimetic action in another subject in a rational, conscious, and free manner. The contemporary model is susceptible to evolution, change, and progress. This model is not a static, perfect, and complete object, as it was perceived in classical antiquity.

The act of mimesis is moved by desire—that is, the wish to assimilate with the subject chosen to imitate rationally. This novel concept of an imitative act never implies a simple repetition with reductive or perhaps negative connotations. In other words, imitation is not a synonym for copying or plagiarising. The modern mimesis act is now an intersubjective practice that occurs between two subjects and not between an object and a subject as occurred in the pre-modern era. The freedom and reciprocal subjectivity of this imitation that Gomá proposed did not exist in the old pre-modern imitations.

According to this new theory, human beings live immersed in a world of models. Persons constantly imitate; thus, what we face are examples surrounded by examples. Ideally, a person would render the fact of imitation acceptable and do so in a way that is free, rational, and ethical. Through reason, the imitative act is capable of recognising a prototype from amongst the myriad of existing models, understanding the prototype's essence, communicating its rules, and extracting an experience of imitation from it. We can only advance when we can recognise from amongst the plurality of examples that surround us those models worthy of imitation that, due to their principles and characteristics, we desire and select in a conscious, rational, and free manner to produce, with the materials that they provided, a new order that shapes our contemporary identity and projects us into the future. (Fig. 6).
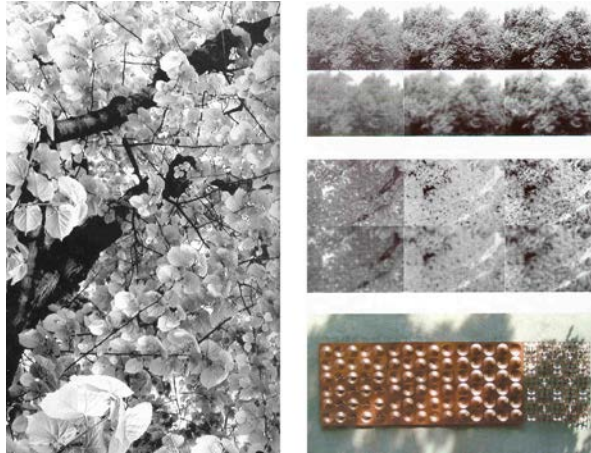
Figure 6. Herzog & de Meuron, Sketches for Young Museum façade, (San Francisco, USA) 2001. (Source: H. Suzuki, El Croquis 109-110).

5. Landscape as a model for architectural design

Thus far, the substance of modern imitation and how landscape is understood in contemporary times have been discussed. Afterwards, it is necessary to establish what is meant by architectural design, a praxis characterized by rationality and desire. Designing is an act aimed at achieving a certain degree of precision, strictness, and formal coherence within a given aesthetical system based on the historical and cultural framework in which it is developed. According to architect and theorist Helio Piñón, taking into account the idea of the 'material' or theme around which the design revolves during the planning phase enables us to find the genuine principal purpose of a project, helping to recover a defining process in which the authenticity of a structure is both a determining criterion and the real value of the architecture (Piñón, 2005, pp. 6–10). The concept of the 'material' leads to the notion of a project as the construction a new order based on elements, models, or examples verified empirically in time and through experience. Landscape, art, science, or architecture provide valuable materials that an architect can use to overcome the initial phase of the project.

The exact limit that configures how the architectural concept is approached lies in its subjectivity. Designing is a subjective action oriented towards the finding of a formal consistency that provides an aesthetical character and identity as a work of art. Such an identity can be found in the interaction of the formal, primary material structure and not in the mere nature of the material. An architectural work's identity, as a basic condition of its aesthetic quality, is associated with its 'meaning' or how it stands in the historical and cultural contexts in which it is inserted, as well as how it faces conventions such as a hurdle or stimulant in the context of the architectural propositional. This is in close association with the 'consistency' that defines the

degree of formal coherence that the object acquires such attributes, in the context of a given aesthetic system, receiving precision and rigour from the newly created order. During an architectural project's design phase, a new order is conveyed through the confrontation of domains belonging to heterogeneous fields by means of an analogy that is similarly derived from what is considered modern imitation.

Looking at the design process in this way, landscape can be considered a reference because it is a dynamic and living subject oriented towards the future that proposes the desired and rational initiatives in the architect as the course of action. Possessing a reference neutralises hazard and rationalises the novelty of an unexpected and strange situation by assigning it to a more familiar, previously chosen, and tested example. As the subject assimilates the prototype example, this assimilation can be repeated in new situations, putting the accumulated experience into practice with it. The choice of landscape as a model during architectural design causes the final product to acquire coherence, meaning, and identity, all of which project it towards the future, surpassing the model and building new and unsuspected landscapes.

The direction of desire indicates the existence of a model that becomes attractive by means of its dignity, nobility, or beauty. Something is always desired which arouses the motivation that gives the model its shape. For the Brazilian Pritzker Prize winner, Paolo Mendes da Rocha, desire is the engine of architecture and therefore it is a basic component in the design process:

> The resources are scarce and not many are needed. Seven musical notes for all of the symphonies, twenty-five letters for the entire written works of Shakespeare and Lorca…. For today's architecture there is no need for infinite resources. Ideally, one would have few resources and a great vision of human wishes and ideals. What is missing is to satisfy the desire…. That is architecture which I am interested in. [Driven] by human needs and desires…in my work there is a desire and an experience looking for it (Mendes da Rocha, 2006, pp. 50–51).

In contemporary architectural design, landscape takes on a formal consistency that goes beyond any simple analogical configuration to become a model in which the concrete is an expression of the universal. Through the praxis, architectural projects uncover the underlying basis of landscape. In this way, landscape becomes a subject of desire for the project developer, which, amongst other factors, arouses or triggers the wish to select landscape as a model.

The desire for landscape means something different for each architect. Alvaro Siza's architecture is only listening to landscape. For Tadao Ando, landscape is the visible incarnation of a nature that is not static, perfect, and polished as portrayed by Western pre-modernity but a dynamic, living element in constant flux. For Frank Gehry, landscape is produced by the hand of humankind accepting its contradictions and its controversies, both the humble and the ugly.
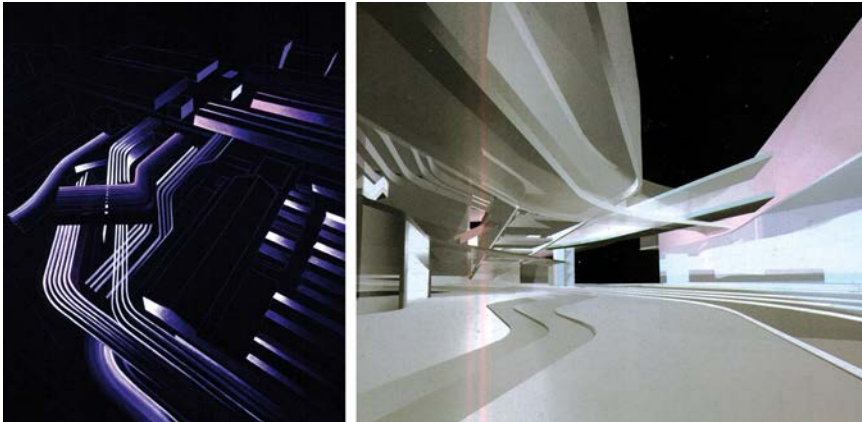
Figure 7. Zaha Hadid, drawings of MAXXI Museum, (Rome, Italy), 2010.
(Source: Zaha Hadid Architects).

The ever-opening configuration of spaces that Zaha Hadid projected could be an example of landscape's desire, as it puts the individual in a situation analogous to the emotional experience evoked by landscape. By allowing one to move unbounded through such a space, it shapes an aspiration for freedom that constitutes one of the central issues of the landscape. In this idea of liberty is where one recognises the contemporary architects who selected landscape as a subject and therefore as a model for imitation (Fig. 7).

The Swiss architects, Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, built new landscapes with an architecture that merges the echoes of nature and, on the verge of a hectic time, the slow time of the natural world is used as another construction material, depicting a sort of landscape that provides an almost timeless framework (like geological folds or the evolution of species) that counterpoints the convulsive turmoil of humankind (Quesada-García, 2018, p. 286).

Another example could be found in works designed by Enric Miralles, such as the Scottish Parliament, Edinburg, UK, (Fig. 8) or the Meditation Pavilion built in 1993 in Unazuki (Japan) in which pathways are unveiled through places where the ceiling is the sky and the architectural structures are used with greenery to form a new landscape by stimulating a concentration on nature.

Figure 8. Enric Miralles, drawings of Scottish Parliament Building, (Edinburg, UK), 2004.
(Source: Miralles Tagliabue EMBT).

Other recent projects further explore the relations between landscape and architecture. Such projects include the corridor that follows the course of the River Paiva in Arouca, Portugal. Laid down in 2015, this artificial pathway enters into a dialogue with the morphology of the place (Fig. 9). Landscape becomes a model when it is understood ecologically, operationally, and culturally, when its values have been investigated and the decision is made to adopt the model as a valid prototype for specific circumstances. In that case, architects use landscape as a theme, incorporating its different attributes in their work. Understanding the landscape as a dynamic and living element endows the landscape with a special significance that renders it a desired and sought-for subject that can be used as a reference during the design process.

Figure 9. Trimétrica, Paiva River, (Arouca, Portugal), 2015.
(Source: Image courtesy of Nelson Garrido).

6. Architecture transformed into landscape

The contemporary condition exalts *difference* as a way of revealing multiplicity and singularity, and *repetition* as a way of finding the precise structure of the conditions of the place (scale, dimensions, etc.) as a way of providing coherence (Solá-Morales, 1995). There is no longer a single architectural theory, but instead many practices are used by many architects. The results are different because the references, models, and procedures employed are diverse. However, despite the differences, some works reach a degree of typicality, normativity, and excellence that become exemplary. They achieve excellence when, using the necessary rigor, coherence, and precision, they acquire and combine, in an imperfect form, the consistency, aesthetic sense, and values that the chosen models proposed.

One of the main conclusions that can be drawn from this research is that landscape presents to architecture as a universal and concrete example. Landscape's truth is not manifest in a conceptual understanding or to any previous theoretical disposition. Instead, landscape is realized through the action of design. By virtue of the enactment of the architectural project, it is possible to reach a conscious and phenomenological experience of landscape that one yearns for and wishes to attain as a repository of the values of society. The conception of the architectural work, through the project, is an imitative action that chooses landscape as a model in a rational, conscious and free manner. Through praxis, contemporary architectural projects participate in the model's fundamentals. In this case study, landscape is understood as a metaphor with which the concepts of form and content and the limits between image and reality are overcome, and, moreover, the physical and phenomenological worlds overlap.

Another important conclusion to which we arrive is that the architectural project is never autonomous, as it always refers to models or prototypes that stimulate a desire for a modern mimetic act, which is a practice from which an experience is derived. Imitation is part of human nature and, as such, it can be accepted as progress. According to the theory of imitation herewith explored, the action of design uses reasoning first to decide which model, between sundry and numerous prototypes, it will refer to determine in detail the underlying laws of the selected model along with the project procedure and, finally, to figure out how to transfer such knowledge through planning and design, which are never acts of pure invention or creation alone.

Designing is a completely rational action that architectural projects undergo, not just once in an isolated moment, but repeated on many occasions. It develops in the course of architectural practices, which, in successive stages, provide an experience. With the knowledge derived from experiencing a project over time, one perceives the ever-increasing distance that separates the obtained result from the model selected as a referent. The final result never reaches the quality of the model chosen. In the stance of each finished project, one can apprehend, above all, the differences with the example or model that was selected as a referent. Dissimilarities are even greater than resemblances. If the resemblance that connects a human being with the model produces satisfaction and the hope of a full realisation, then the dissimilarity, borne by experience, demonstrates the real impossibility of achieving the values proposed by the prototype (Fig. 10).

Figure 10. Left: Vernacular architecture in Chiclana de Segura (Jaén, Spain). Right:
Santiago Quesada-García, 29 social housing in Hornos de Segura (Jaén, Spain), 1991.
(Source: Author).

Moved by architectural desire, a new investigation will begin for each new project, supported by the experience and knowledge accumulated from the example chosen for the development of previous projects. The architect's mission is to find, amongst the multiplicity of the referents, a normative model worthy of selection, an example that is valid for more than one case, which justifies its reiteration. To perform this, one needs to seek both the model and the rationale for selecting the model.

Architectural design would exist in a horizon of referents, one of which is undoubtedly landscape selected by virtue of its particular characteristics or structural principles and values, which make it an object of desire and a subject of experience. The contemporary concept of landscape possesses a special meaning that makes it one of the principal models of contemporary imitation by architecture. As a matter of fact, for architecture, landscape is one of the essential elements of reality to be imitated and for the contemporary architect, it is one of the principal models of imitation.

Every era has its own music and dialectic. Each society is expressed as words and musical notes. Each epoch engraves its features in language, music, or architecture. Civilisations have always built their most beautiful buildings on the basis of needs and desires that reflect their times. The identity of our time is architecture transformed into landscape.

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