



IN-BETWEEN SILENCE & LIGHT: THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL SEARCH FOR THE [ARCHI]TECTONIC

Monastery. A place to slow down, dwell, craft, think, meditate, to retreat in solitude.

With my mentor and friend [angel] Marco Frascari in my mind and heart, I humbly propose this ontological story[telling] of my year-long monastic architectural [spiritual] journey. It may come across as poetic, vague, murky, ephemeral. If that is in fact true, maybe I am closer to the essence than I thought.

Architecture dwells in the physical realm in which the human condition can dream, imagine, create, and make. However, modern society seems to replace dreams and creativity with the hyper-chaos of ocular-centric scenography and superficial commodity. Evolving forward or progressing rapidly toward the future is not always beneficial to the human condition. As in the Eastern philosophy of 'wabi-sabi,' it might serve humanity in a deeper, more [spiritually] conscious way to 'devolve toward nothingness.'

Having shared my intentions and journey with Marco back in 2010, I begin my story with my 35-day [900km] pilgrimage on the Camino Santiago de Compostela. My deep personal search into the phenomenological realms of Silence, Light and Shadow started to prepare a metaphysical foundation in which I begin to slow down and find a [re]connection back to the physical earth as well as a universal [re]connection to space and time.

I continue my journey on a more tectonic search, starting with the monastic ruins in the United Kingdom, Catholic monasteries in Europe, Orthodox monasteries in the Balkans, and finally living a few months in three Zen Buddhist monasteries in Japan and Korea. This ontological experience into the realm of the [archi]tectonic offers a dualistic approach to the actual making of the spatial and built environment, as Marco describes this duality in the concept of mental 'construing' and physical 'constructing' in architecture.

During this intentionally slow physical and spiritual journey [pilgrimage], I was continuously confronted with Marco's tacit understanding of our existential human condition, that "architecture exists because of light, palpable material light [lume materiale]." It is this phenomenological realm that gives the human experience its true and honest architecture.

I hope my monastic architectural journey [story] will inspire humanity to [de]accelerate down from the hyper-chaos of the contemporary, superficial, image-based commodity and consumerism, and allow my fellow human beings to dwell on an existential and phenomenological [self] awareness as well as our [spiritual] journey in the human condition.

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