

## Part 1: Plant-Based Architecture (2020.09.22)

### leitmotif:

If **space is to be active, form must be gestured**. The gesture of a building, inanimate brought to life, by a feeling conveyed, resonating, as an inquisitive raised brow or uninhibited sly smirk. In a house, as in a stone, **all things are living in the eyes of a child**, with the perspective that anything is possible, openness to consider, receptive. The sensibilities of a child is **creativity in youth**, full of energy, curiosity, playfulness, ...silly. With the Addition, the gesture of Villa Vuoto is augmented, a manifesto filling the void of a former pioneering tree, now with a **pliable sail, an architecture receptive to currents in the woods, measures, tensiles, a way to return**.

“**I am the absolute source**. My experience does not come from my antecedents, nor from my physical and social surroundings; it **moves out toward them and sustains them**. For I am the one who brings into being for myself this tradition that I choose to take up or **this horizon whose distance from me would collapse were I not there to sustain it with my gaze**.”

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Phenomenology of Perception, 1945)

It is through the gaze of a child, that Antoni Gaudí saw his work, his pursuit of a **living architecture**, structures built of masonry tiles that breathe life, by **returning to the origin of creativity** in the **exploring eyes of youth, experimenting with nature**.

### parti pris:

A fabric, a multitude of threads **woven** into a tapestry of interaction, memory, being. A greater whole, more than the sum of parts. Currents invisible to the eye, made visible by flow through all things, a **flow modified** by the physical characteristics, the pulse of life.

“You can... remember your life by the **shape**, the **weight**, the **color**, the **smell** of the clothes in your closet.”

Louise Bourgeois (Fabric of Memory, 1990)

**Tensiles** between things, paired connections, continuities, relational, narrative, **bound by proximity, envelopment, symbiosis**. **Reciprocity** between two points, a thread tied by the interaction, exchange, meaningfulness, bi-directional, bi-temporal, bi-loci. Holzwege (wood-ways), silk roads, fissures, gaps worn by layered use, firing neurons, to navigate the thickets, palimpsests as **traces**.

“What we call **forms**, whether natural or artificial, are **only the visible** trading posts of **integrating and disintegrating forces** mutating at low rates of speed. Reality consists of these two categories of forces which interact constantly in visible and invisible configurations. The **dynamics of continual interaction between man and his natural and technological environments**.”

Frederick Kiesler (On Correalism and Biotechnology, 1939)

By **weaving tensiles** (making connections) between sequential points (beings), **curvature** (**subconscious**) is made visible (**conscious**). Circular space gesturing currents with serpentine flow, spiraling vortex eddies gathering in recesses, fissures of form, weaving webs.

### manifesto:

**Weeds**, resistor, resilient, persistent, anticipated, patient, sustainable, capturing carbon, permeable, receptive, flexible, responsive.

### **The Way of the Seed**

Minimal essential **unit**, holds within a **tree**, waiting patiently, given over to the **flow**.

Enveloped in **soil**, infused with **water**, drawn to **sunlight, growth**.

Without name, without thought, without effort, **wu wei**.

### **Plant-Based Architecture**

A tree does not come from a seed, as much as a **seed is returning to a tree**. A **desire to reach up** into the sky, **to the sunlight**, stretching out, reaching, to the ends of the highest tips of branches, sprouting leaves, buds, seeds. It is as if the tree grows to this length, **to tuck everything it knows inside this seed**, the smallest essential package **unit for survival, on a journey to return to the ground**.

A seed does not come from a tree, as much as a **tree is returning to a seed**. A **desire to burrow** into the ground, **into the dark**, tunneling down, digging, to the ends of the deepest tips of roots, gathering nutrients, stiffen stalks, tree. It is as if the seed **remembers the dew on its leaves**, a memory waiting for water, **to trigger dormancy back to life, on a journey to return to the sky**.

In this **braiding**, tension between **reciprocals**, complementary pairing, a symbiotic weaving between seed and tree, being and universe; **domestication**, during the last great warming at the end of the last ice age ten thousand years ago, our greatest evolutionary leap, **taming of the wilderness**, taming of the wild beasts, taming of the wild grasses, taming of our wild children, taming of our wild spirit. Banding together, **living in settlements**, behind walls, separated from nature, under roof, hidden from the arc of the Milkyway galaxy, man and nature, what if **man returned to nature** as a tree to a seed? **structures grown as weeds?** without effort, as a seed to a tree.

“Hold out your hands and let me lay upon them a sheaf of freshly picked sweetgrass, **loose and flowing**, like newly washed hair.

In our language its call **wiingaashk**, the sweet-smelling hair of Mother Earth.

Breathe it in and you start to remember things you didn't know you'd **forgotten**.

In **braiding sweetgrass** – so that it is smooth, glossy, and worthy of the gift – a certain amount of **tension is needed**.

As any little girl with tight braids will tell you, you have to pull a bit.

The sweetest way is to have someone else hold the end so that you pull gently against each other,

all the while leaning in, head to head, chatting and laughing, watching each other's hands,

one holding steady while the other shifts the slim bundles over one another, each in its turn.

Linked by sweetgrass, there is a **reciprocity between** you, linked by sweetgrass, the holder as vital as the braider.”

Robin Wall Kimmerer (*Braiding Sweetgrass*, 2013)

Plant-based architecture, weeds in a museum, gesturing space, making a place less formal, more flexible affording any possibility; circular shelter, basket woven branches and bundled grass, scaled to the human body, organic gesture working with found materials; rectangular settlements, walled courtyards open to the sky, inward gesture, closing off in isolation, defensive, protective, possessive; **what is the gesture of a plant-based house?** how is the gesture expressed? most importantly, **what does the gesture express?**

The currents of life flowing naturally, meandering meridians in rhythmic oscillations, become perceptible in **gestures, expressions felt**, when **tensiles** between paired beings, layered into web of **woven** fabric, modifies the current flowing through, **activating the space**, resonating, receptive, responsive, intuitively and intrinsically, **as a plant absorbing sunlight, water, air, sprouting, growing, flowering**.

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With this great warming, as we prepare for our next evolutionary leap off-planet, domesticating new worlds beyond our atmosphere, will we follow the trees, walnuts wrapped in protective bark, slowness for sustained growth, deep rooted, steadfast, branching out, or will we follow the grasses, seeds carried in the wind, quickly spreading to a field, resilient, limber, responsive to slightest of breeze?

#### architecture:

**Villa Vuoto**, Matthew Schlueb (2004) Pittsburgh, PA.

**Weeds**, Yoshihiro Suda (1999) Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh, PA.

**Matthew Schlueb's childhood home**, builder house (1929) Columbus, OH.

**Articulated Cloud**, Ned Kahn (2004) Children's Museum, Pittsburgh, PA.

**untitled studio work**, Thaddeus Mosley (2020) Pittsburgh, PA.

**Bavinger House**, Bruce Goff (1955) Norman, OK.

**Rondavel**, indigenous (3000 b.c.) Sudan, Northern Africa.

**Lakota Tipi**, indigenous (9th century) Dakotas, North America.

**Park Güell**, Antoni Gaudí (1900-03) Barcelona, Spain

**Casa Batlló**, Antoni Gaudí (1904-06) Barcelona, Spain.

**Estereostàtic model**, Antoni Gaudí (1898-1908) Barcelona, Spain.

**Sagrada Família Schools**, Antoni Gaudí (1909) Barcelona, Spain.

**Untitled**, Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat (1984) Warhol Foundation / Basquiat Estate, New York.

**Addition to Villa Vuoto**, Schlueb (2020) Pittsburgh, PA.

#### bibliography:

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**Chuang-Tzu**, Fung Yu-lan (Springer, Heidelberg, 2016)

**sketches**, Matthew Schlueb (Villa Vuoto Publications, Pittsburgh, 2012)

**Braiding Sweetgrass**, Robin Wall Kimmerer (Milkweed Editions, Canada, 2013)

**Imagine a House**, Angela Gustafson (Out of the Box, Minneapolis, 2003)

**Spatial Archetypes**, Mimi Lobell (JXJ Publications, New York, 2001)

**6,000 Years of Housing**, Norbert Schoenauer (W.W. Norton & Co., New York, 1981)

**Tao Te Ching**, Ellen M. Chen (Paragon House, St. Paul, 1989)

**The Indian Tipi**, Reginald & Gladys Laubin (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1957)

**leaf shakings**, Matthew Schlueb (Villa Vuoto Publications, Pittsburgh, 2016)

**eave shakings**, Matthew Schlueb (Villa Vuoto Publications, Pittsburgh, 2017)

#### materials:

<http://finalmove.com/about/matthew-schlueb/events-lectures/architecture-in-the-modern-era-villa-vuoto/>

<http://finalmove.com/about/matthew-schlueb/events-lectures/plant-based-architecture/>

<http://www.schluebarchitecture.com/lectures/2020/vuoto/plant/>





**Villa Vuoto** brought to life through the eyes of a child, youthful creativity, gesturing form, activating space (Oskar Schlueb, 2011).

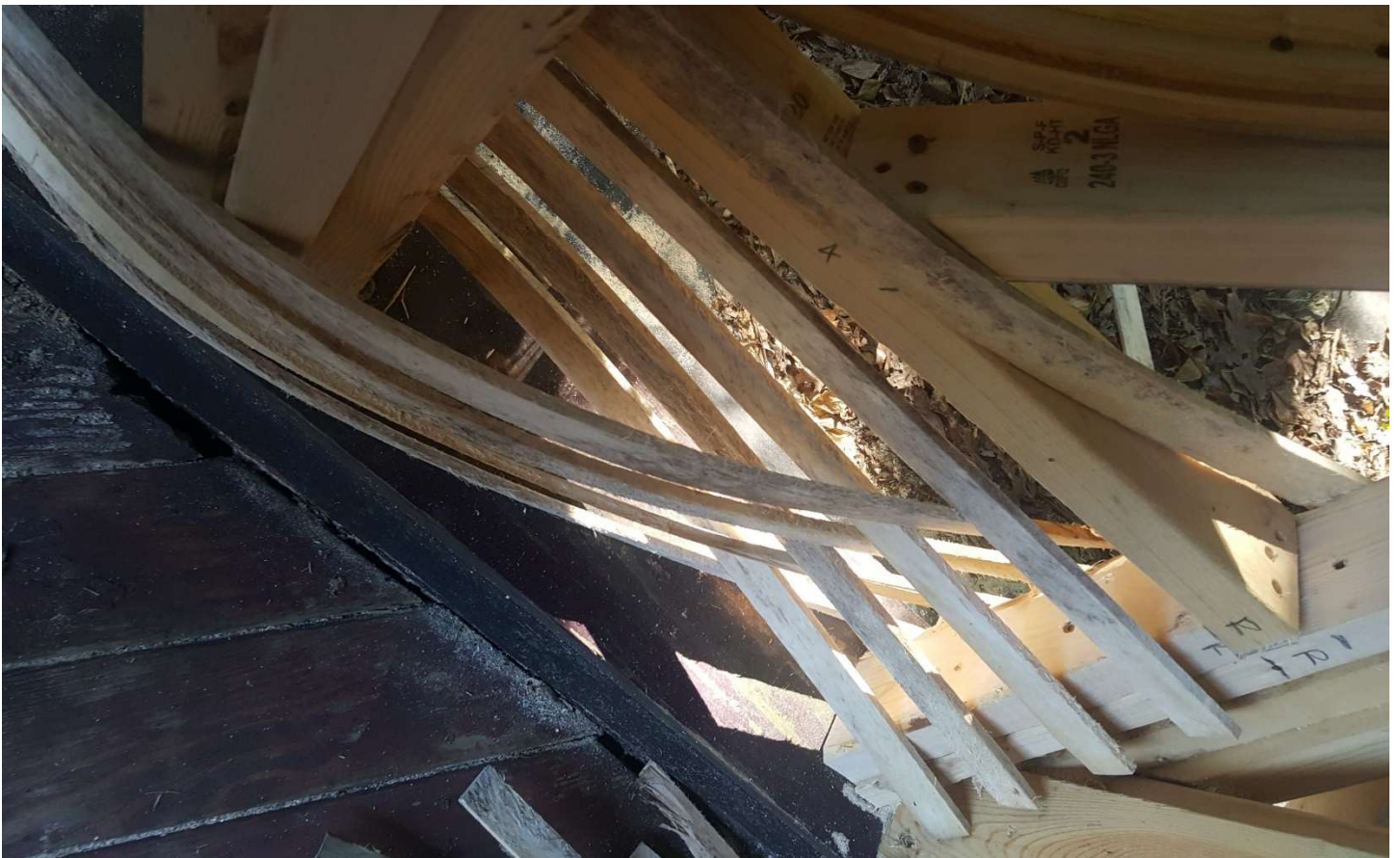


**String art** by Matthew Schlueb as a child, planting a seed for the study of tensiles and curvatures later in life as a practicing architect.





**Model of Addition to Villa Vuoto** (Matthew Schueb, 2020), gesturing a pliable sail, blown by the currents in the woods.



**Woven wood lath walls** for Addition to Villa Vuoto (Matthew Schueb, 2020), sequential tensiles making curvature visible.