

Dreams of Kagawa

Neil Gillespie

Dreams of Kagawa

Dreams of Kagawa is a speculation
a reflection on the work of Peter Womersley

Dreams of Kagawa is an unsubstantiated paean
to the Bernat Klein Studio of 1972.

Dreams of Kagawa is just that

Zembla

Zembla is from the Russian, zemlia
meaning land.

Zembla is Nabokov's northern land of Pale Fire
a flickering land of half-truths

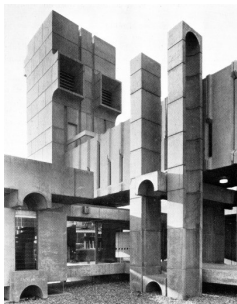
Zembla is a delusion of hyperborean culture, *beyond the north winds*
a hallucination of a contemporary cultured world



“in the North, the sun does not rise to the zenith but grazes things obliquely and dissolves in an interplay of light and shadow. The land consists not of clear massings and distinct spaces: it disperses as fragment and repetition in the boundless. The vegetation is not characterised by particular species, such as the stone pine and cypress but is instead network and thicket. And the buildings lose much of their figural effect: houses lie scattered and hidden.”

Christian Norberg Schultz¹

¹ Christian Norberg Schulze, *Nightlands, Nordic Building*, MIT Press, 1996



*Nuffield Transplantation Surgery Unit, Western General Hospital, Edinburgh.
Peter Womersley, 1963-8.*

Photograph, Sam Lambert from Guide to Exposed Concrete Finishes Michael Gage, 1970. London: Architectural Press/ Cement & Concrete Association.

Peter Womersley

the received narrative speaks of the early influence of Frank Lloyd Wright
the mature works speak of elsewhere

stylistically peripatetic
no Morandi searching the quotidian

aware of image
a gold jaguar

knowing
autonomous

High Sunderland, Selkirk knows of the Case Houses of California
Edenside Group Practice Surgery, Kelso recalls the clachan

Dingleton Boiler House, Melrose and Gala Fairydean Stadium, Galashiels
reaffirm the brutalism of Breuer's prisms

Nuffield Transplantation Surgery Unit, Edinburgh understands the Japanese Metabolists
Bernat Klein studio longs for the east



The Bernat Klein Studio

a spectre in the borderlands
an architectural Marsyas who challenged tradition
flayed to the bone through cultural indifference

as modernism withered
space that sought to improve lives
evaporated into a culture of self-satisfaction
consumption, form making and fake news.

truth, no more than a concept

Ruinlust

“ Without anyone to care for it, architecture always turns to decay, turns into an abandoned garden. And even with the utmost care, there is no escaping our living spaces - our own bodies - turning into abandoned gardens. There is no one who can indefinitely maintain physical life, physical space.

Is the abandoned garden the ultimate destiny of all man-made architecture?”

Hu Fang²

abandoned

once host to the genius of Klein
and a belief in creative practice
as a transformational and energising force

as society recoils from the progressive
to the ideologically desolate
the studio represents a moment of enlightenment
that briefly, brilliantly, illuminated the margins

as a ruin it resists occupation
and a fate as a designer country retreat.
better to remain mute
and attest to a time of shared optimism and ideas

“Ruins embody a set of temporal and historical paradoxes. The ruined building is a remnant of, and a portal into, the past: its decay is a concrete reminder of the passage of time. And yet by definition it survives, after a fashion: there must be a certain [perhaps indeterminate] amount of a built structure still standing for us to refer to it as a ruin and not merely as a heap of rubble. At the same time, the ruin casts us forward in time: it predicts a future in which our present will slump into similar disrepair or fall victim to some unforeseeable calamity. The ruin, despite its state of decay, somehow outlives us. And the cultural gaze that turn on ruins is a way of loosening ourselves from the grip of punctual chronologies, setting ourselves adrift in time. Ruins are part of the long history of the fragment, but the ruin is a fragment with a future: it will live on after us despite the fact that it reminds us too of a lost wholeness or perfection.”

Brian Dillon³

³Brian Dillon, *Ruin Lust*, Tate Gallery Publishing, 2014

A Speculation



*Kagawa prefectural Government Office, Takamatsu,
Kengo Tange, 1955 - 58*

Photograph Murasawa Fumio from Kenzo Tange, Makers of Contemporary Architecture, Robin Boyd, 1962, George Braziller Inc, NY and Prentice Hall International, London.

architecture travels in books

Aitken Dott, 1970's Castle Street, Edinburgh
drawing supplies and dyeline prints
the occasional architecture monograph
a time before vanity publishing

Aitken Dott served architectural practices in Edinburgh and the Borders
Robert Matthew Johnston Marshall, Sir Basil Spence
Alan Reiach Eric Hall and Partners, Michael Laird
Morris and Steedman, Campbell and Arnot.....

an influential book series occupied many of those New Town shelves
Makers of Contemporary Architecture published by George Braziller and Prentice Hall

Kenzo Tange, 1962, by Robin Boyd

Kagawa Council Building, 1955
trabeated, timber like in its tectonic assembly

Edinburgh University library, 1965, Sir Basil Spence
mirrors the stillness and otherworldliness of its Japanese ghost

but what of Tange's Sogetsu Art Centre, Tokyo, 1955?



A hyperborean hypothesis

concrete frames release the wall
Domino intentions are clear
yet there is an explicable accent
something more personal, more complex
more foreign.

Frank Lloyd Wright?
Fallingwater slips, overlaps and shifts
defying the ground

here
a tautness in the plan and section
a direction of beam and column.
a trabeated, tectonic form.
an allusion to a timber post and beam ancestor

a dream of Kagawa



Imprint of making

cast liquid stone
petrified surfaces reveal the timber formers

indelible marks that heighten the kinship to a northern wood
and a bond to Japan



gateways between the profane and the spiritual

concrete torii detached from each other
provisionally connected by glass

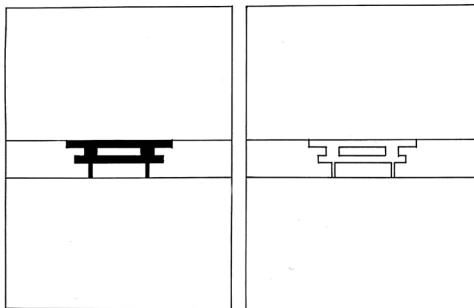
acting separately
they mirror one another

one frames the north, the forest in shadow
the other frames the south, landscape in sun

a shaded façade, melancholic, a portent of death
a sunlit facade, longs to open to the future.

once gateways to a world of colour, texture and pattern
to the high road of architecture

Drawing on Hinoki



The red of the Japanese temple gates, Torii, symbolise vitality and protect against evil.

Traditionally in Japan, people carefully prepared their own tombs ahead of their death. Their name was carved into the stone headstone. The incision was then painted red to indicate that they were still alive. On their death the carving was then painted black.

Two works on Hinoki.

Japanese Hinoki cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtusa*) is a coniferous tree, renowned for its fineness of grain. Hinoki has long been used as a material in the finest buildings.

A band of white gesso on each panel releases two rectangles of golden section proportions.

Drawings in Japanese watercolour, on gesso, on Hinoki represent the two facades of the studio.

One façade drawn in black, the other drawn in red suggest the studio is neither alive nor dead.

A black Torii faces the woodland to the north
remembers the past

A red Torii looks out to the south
imagines a future.

A room sits between past and future, the present.

A proposition for the Bernat Klein Studio

A room for architecture

A room for reflection
A room for drawing
A room for writing
A room for conversation
A room to dream of Kagawa

Available to architects of all ages
at all stages of their career
old and young
beginning a career
a moment out of a career
the end of a career

A talk
A drawing
A publication

An archive of ideas

With thanks to

Brian and Lesley Robertson of Zembla Gallery, Hawick

James Colledge and Michael Smith of Preserving Womersley for permission to use their wonderful black and white images of the Bernat Klein Studio

Laura Kinnaird for the design and production of the publication

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