

The ground plan and its pavement as an architectural horizon

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The statement “Those who have broader horizons often have worse prospects” was one of the aphorisms exposed by Stanislaw Jerzy Lec in his book *Unkempt Thoughts* (1959). It was a wish which the Polish poet and writer praise a specialization that could be questioned against the understanding and needed of more interdisciplinary and multifocal perspectives. This is an approach that, in the case of culture, is the opposite to the “usefulness of the useless”. With this idea the philosopher Nuccio Ordine made us understand the immunity of humanistic knowledge put in front of the barbarity of profit, abetting its necessary resistance face of any immediate present selfishness.

This controversy that invited us to think, appears after reading the 265 pages of the book *El suelo hollado* (2024) written by the architect José Francisco García-Sánchez, and published by the University of Seville and the University Institute of Architecture and Construction Sciences, belonging to the collection dedicated to Architecture.

His desire to look down at the floor, described in the title with the adjective “trodden” —that according to the R.A.E., means humiliated or put down— could be understood as the specific perspective that reduces horizons, was pointed out as “*unkempt thought*”. However, nothing could be further from the truth.

The look to that “trodden ground” is a categorical excuse to talk about the idea of universal architecture. Not only affect this to the pavement, but also permeate the spaces configured by the horizontal plane XY, that being perpendicular to the force of Earth's gravity, settled us in the world. That means, that is the universal surface which through the architecture of different civilizations foresee the conceptual and the material. It becoming the foundation of any physical and body contact with the build space. The plane, almost horizontal, is with which the man had broadened the haptic and phenomenological relationship recognized as his own background.

The book is defined just from its back cover, as “an illustrated history of pavements that reflects the condition of the soil as a phenomenological trace, archaeological record and, also, as a reference plane”. A qualification of the “illustrated history” that takes us back to the visual poem of the *Atlas of Mnemosyne*, where a constellation of selected images made by Aby Warburg called for unprecedented

historiographical approaches to Art, made with analogies, contrasts or even optical conflicts of interest.

Is the visual appearance and the iconography of the book that the author brings back to live. In addition, apart from represent an image of a specific pavement in the first page of each chapter, the author depicts in two specific pages a collage of photographs that focus the mentioned floor.

With this selection the writer confirms the graphic basis and conceptual connections that support his arguments. A total of 250 images from different disciplines and backgrounds that, maybe, randomly or after numerous readings, trips, or visits to exhibitions, bring to life the aim and critical thoughts of the book. Just for the election, exhibition and combination effort made for the writer, it is worth browse the book before its possible and future peruse. The book include own photographs and parts or complete paintings, performance, sculpture, combined with drawn plans or pavements constructive details pointed out in the essay.

The book has fifteen chapters, in whose titles the words “The floor” and “The pavement” are used accompanied by qualifiers or references. These fifteen chapters that, apparently, and according to the index, belongs to an identical category, however, could be structured in two different parts.

The first ten chapters study diverse themes unified by dualities, such as prints and memory, scale and form, drawing and representation, phenomenology and feet, body and pleasure, density and power, circles and landscape, communication and signals, inclination and nature, or carpets and superpositions. The last five chapters are devoted to the critical analysis of specific studies, such as Mies van der Rohe and the land as a reference plan, Gio Ponti and the color optimism, Carlos Scarpa and Venetian metaphors, Gunnard Asplund and the Smithsons to intermediate places and, finally, Alvar Aalto and Dimitris Pikionis to address the fragment archaeology.

The author's analytic interest can be immediately detected checking the works of architects whose floors and pavements have him interested the most. Even, those that he has frequently used to transmit enthusiasm and knowledge as a professor giving classes of Architectural Projects in different Spanish universities for more than a decade to now.

The book has a prologue headlined as “*Movimiento Inmóvil*” made by the professor of Architectural Projects of the ETSAM, Luis Martínez Santa-María director of the imaginative thesis awarded with the VII IUACC Prize for the Best Doctoral Thesis in 2022 and, who could be transmuted into this book. The thesis entitled *Pavimentos: Huellas fenomenológicas, registros arqueológicos y planos de referencia* (2020) took a challenging work of synthesis and arrangement with the aim of being more informative and ease its reading but, not less accurate or specialized. Also, this analysis of floors and pavements is a new one mechanism of architectural learning

that deserve this book, as it is stated in the prologue by the director of the thesis, despite of their silence or condescension, because the ground floor plans always represent the foundational stratum of “that immobile movement that we call architecture.”

The development of these first ten chapters can be understood through the view of the documentary *Power of Ten* (1977) in which Ray and Charles Eames presented a holistic vision of the relative size of things in the universe. This documentary was introduced by the author himself to talk about scales. A vision with which he shows interest in addressing everything, from the meticulous detail of a Byzantine tile to the urban pavement designed by Roberto Burle Marx's Seafront Promenades in Brazil. Approaches that, even can be used to visualize the real materiality, do not dismiss the analysis of the graphic expression itself that expresses subsequent intentions. Analyses that rise graphics to the category of impeller of future phenomenological impressions in the spaces conceived, collected from the beginning of the drawn project. Drawings that also explore densities and sections, not forgetting, from material stereotomies to utopian possibilities such as ideas related to specific air floors, for example, in the inflatable floors of Cedric Price.

This multifocal, multi-scalar or multidisciplinary perspective allows the author to move around both, the interior of architectures and the natural landscape artifice. This is something that encourages when it is referring to agricultural grounds such as those drawn in threshing floors, or to examples of works by Land-Art artists such as Richard Long or Robert Smithson, whose artistic strategies he does not want to stop involving in his aim. His gaze, which, prior, seems to be focused only on the interiors' floors, become blurred in wide horizons and scales that converge and are simultaneous. These are visions that do not ignore important decisions as the section angle that causes the phenomenological accent in provoked and intentional ascents of routes, such as the pilgrimage to the interior of the Ronchamp chapel (1955) by Le Corbusier or the ascent to the church of Saint Peter (1966) in Klippan by Sigurd Lewerentz. There is a section in “The inclined floor” where, according the idea of movement in *La Fonction Oblique* (1964) by Paul Virilio and Claude Parent, seems odd that, in the architectural field, the unique unsettled revolution is the transposition of the horizontal floor into an oblique one that would force the destabilization of way of human leaving.

Textures, exact traces, palimpsests, identities, or blurred limits are the characteristics depicts in the last five chapters. There, the author focuses on specific examples that he does not want to stop analyzing in a critical way paying attention to their floors. In all of them, it is worth learning from the analogies founded in selected and outstanding pictures. There, the mechanism of perspective always arises as a pleasant shared interest. Maybe, only for these images combined with those of construction details, underlined by drawings and floor plans, it would be worth preparing a good lesson of Architecture. That is really what it is this book: a beautiful and precise Architecture's lesson.