

Lewerentz Fragments

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Preface

Sigurd Lewerentz' work presents a multitude of dimensions which have been subject to much speculation and interpretation. One could say he was an iconoclast, subversive even, marching to his own drum, not caring or emulating too much of his era's diverse trends. Or, interpreted in a Nietzschean way—working *against* one's time to be *of* one's time.

He has been referred to as a 'silent architect', with the brevity of his spoken word mirrored by his indifference toward leaving behind any written word about his work. His refusal to fulfill our expectations leaves us desiring more. Surely we are not meant to think his work remains shrouded in an impermeable solipsistic mystery, essentially vanished forever, merely because it lacks a codicil to clearly delineate its meaning and value?

This apparent detachment might be considered in a positive light, not as a negation of attachment but as a separation or a setting aside, the cultivation of a clarifying distance, that allows a deeply creative master such as Lewerentz to reach beyond his contemporaries and arrive at solutions all his own. Solutions which are different to the generic, hence indeliberately appearing as irritating, indifferent even, to the lay user, casual observer, and scholar alike. Indifference may appear similar to the monosyllabic: at first glance rejective, uncaring, not offering as much as the eloquent sentence—yet it forces us to ponder these few, carefully chosen words. Relative to architectural practice today, where branding is inseparable from design and there is no shortage of explanatory text, we are provoked and encouraged by what this indifference

suggests: a disinterest in the noise and distractions of the day, and the need for all of us to discover the silent architect within ourselves.

Perhaps the silence of Lewerentz is precisely what allows us to speak so expansively—in different ways, from multiple perspectives, with various intentions. In the absence of a clear reason, the curious mind takes over. Via our struggle to explore and attempt to explain, our interpretations breathe new life and meaning into Lewerentz' architecture, which as a consequence of his silence stands as a call for dialogue rather than discourse.

Lewerentz' architecture speaks to us in many tongues. It may be the language of liturgy, religious symbolism, and existential narratives, or that of mathematical calculation and proportion, site strategies, or approaches to space-making. It could be one of material logic, be it bricks, chips of stone, shapes of steel, or lengths of rope. Whatever the syntax, there is something to explore, read, question, and consider. With this in mind the editors have made no attempt to define categories for the authors or provide any direction on what they should write or how they should write it. One can say we were indifferent to any form of orchestration but perhaps insistent on the final package being loose enough to provide non-linear approaches; episodic fragments rather than a grand narrative. To facilitate this, captions are often omitted allowing images to be read independently of clarification or title. Rather than endnotes, citations and notes follow the text in the margin supplemented by small images offering specific context where warranted. For those who wish to decode the content, an image list is of course offered at the back of the book.

This book has no definitive thesis or objective. It collects and curates positions and interpretations, leaving the reader to make their own way. Ultimately it is an invitation to see Lewerentz' work through a variety of perspectives, from the general to the specific. Rather than being introduced to the architect per se, the reader will be introduced to a community of those who feel the work is worth writing about, investigating, and exploring. The world lays itself out to us according to our values and desires, and here, diverse value systems serve to enlighten some aspects while casting others in darkness. Some essays seek to explain, coming to conclusions through confident analysis and comparative research. Others maintain Lewerentz' obscurity by engaging mystery, flux, indirection, and pluralism.

For all of our agreement about his life and work, there is just as much to disagree about. What lies herein are pages to be turned with curiosity, like a journey with neither beginning nor end. Contrary to a typical monograph, it is neither chronological nor comprehensive. It is a collection of fragments in the form of words and images offering a multitude of perspectives from established scholars and new voices alike. For those readers who have already made an acquaintance (or perhaps, like the editors of this volume, have developed an infatuation), this book could be a debrief, an invitation, a challenge, or an affirmation. It simply depends on which essay you read, or which author's lens you choose to look through while contemplating the work. Ultimately, these differences are found by taking as a point of departure the architect's own indifference: to the rules of the past, the popular trends of the day, and to the scholars of tomorrow.

Lewerentz' most prominent legacy for those of us willing to contend with the work may very well be its receptivity well beyond the intended programs and functions his work attempts to satisfy. Rather than explain himself, he has left us his work to explore; by refusing to speak he has given voice to countless words, conversations, and experiences. Within the silence he left behind, Lewerentz' work screams, cries, whispers, proclaims, and converses. How we see it depends on a space, a season, or mood, where occupant and space are one organism, and aesthetics and ethics are one and the same. Lewerentz built monuments to our habitual daily acts and memorials to our rare but humanizing events of life and death.

He is the architect of many things, and these many things, without premise or limit, are the subjects of this volume.







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