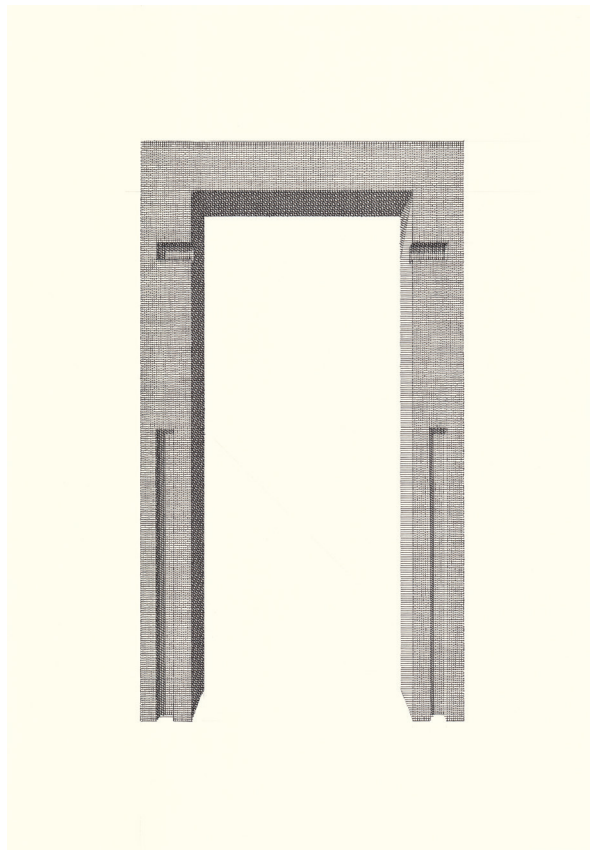


Pier Vittorio Aureli

Synthesis and Destruction

Private view: Thursday 9 December, 18:00 – 20:00

10 December 2021 – 29 January 2022



Pier Vittorio Aureli, Doorway 14, 2021, Rotring Rapidograph pen on Schoeller paper, 50 x 35 cm

Betts Project is pleased to present *Synthesis and Destruction*, an exhibition of new works by Pier Vittorio Aureli. This will be the third solo exhibition of the artist at the gallery.

'Doorways and Walls'

Synthesis and Destruction presents thirty-six drawings—'Walls' and 'Doorways'—by Pier Vittorio Aureli produced between 2020 and 2021. Made in ink on paper, the chiaroscuro style of the works lends a theatrical allure to their abstract forms. Crisp frames capture the contemplative movement of rapidograph pen on paper, as if caught in the act.

'Walls' (35 cm x 25 cm) portrays a series of twenty-one linear tectonic forms. Deliberately drawn in axonometric perspective, the resulting cross-hatched forms extend to the borders of the paper, omitting any information about what is inside or beyond the frame. Instead, the drawings seem to emphasise the primary purpose of a wall: that is, they mark the territory and coordinate the subjects, establishing a form of association that precedes separation. The fifteen works that make up 'Doorways' (50 cm x 35 cm), however, are drawn from a central perspective, holding the observer suspended between the two unrepresented sides. Both series bear references to elements found across a wide historical span, from Mesopotamian to Romanesque architecture. Persian caravanserais, Egyptian temples, Islamic palaces, mosques, and Cistercian monasteries may not seem to have much in common, but in fact they all share a fundamental characteristic that is quite different from the modern Western notion of architectural monument as a closed system: they all measure, map, and modulate, and thus define space by projecting particular states of association between constituent parts, subjects, and forces, onto the territory.

The series is part of Aureli's ongoing enquiry into elements of 'non-compositional' architecture, beginning with *The Marriage of Reason and Squalor*, a set of 50 cm x 50 cm ink drawings made between 2001 and 2014. In both the earlier and more recent series, the world is rendered as a series of architectonic fragments suspended between synthesis and destruction, and in this sense the work resonates

Giovanni Battista Piranesi's œuvre – in particular, the 'Egyptian Fireplaces' series, a collection of sixty-seven etchings published in *Diverse Maniere D'Adornare I Cammini* (Rome, 1769). Both Piranesi and Aureli address what happens when architecture goes beyond the format of a building, an epoch, or style; architecture is translated into a lexicon of tectonics and acts – rooms, walls, passages, enclosures – that present a state of timelessness. And yet within these drawings it is possible to find a subtle transition from a semantic reading of spatial elements to a semiotic one; a perpetual dialogue between recording and projection, between truth and beauty.

Similar to Aureli's other series, *Synthesis and Destruction* continues a personal project. They are chapters of an unfinished repertoire. A project that dismisses the traditional rules of design, predictability, individualism, and composition instead presents figurative fragments of a non-figurative architecture. Such a conscious deviation liberates the project, allowing it to instead dwell on a particular understanding of form that perhaps is best described by the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl as *Kunstwollen*. Riegl's concept of "will to art" not only suggests a formal language through which architecture can be deciphered, but also emphasises the autonomy of form; one that is liberated from historical determinations and suggests new possibilities. Aureli's 'Doorways' and 'Walls' points at no cryptic, symbolic, or allegorical values; they are intrinsically polemic and projective. Just like any contemplative act, his drawings make a commitment to architecture, one that follows a liturgical practice.'

—Hamed Khosravi, 2021

Pier Vittorio Aureli was born in Rome in 1973. He graduated in architecture at the IUAV in Venice and earned his PhD at the TU Delft in 2005. His main research focus is the relationship between architectural form, political theory and urban history. He teaches at the Architectural Association in London and is also Visiting Professor at Yale School of Architecture. Aureli has written many essays on architecture and the city, and is the author of several books, notably 'The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture' (2011), 'The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture within and Against Capitalism' (2008), and is the editor of the recently published collection of essays 'The City as a Project' (2014). Together with Martino Tattara he is the co-founder of the architectural office Dogma. Since its foundation Dogma has worked on the relationship between architecture and the city by focusing mostly on urban design and large-scale projects. This year, with Dogma, Pier Vittorio Curated an exhibition at the 2021 Venice Biennale entitled *The Opposite Shore. Retrofitting Suburban Settlements from Property to Cooperation*, opening at the central pavilion. In 2006 Dogma won the first Iakov Chernikhov Prize for the best emerging architectural practice. In 2013 an exhibition and accompanying catalogue, 'Dogma: 11 Projects' opened at the Architectural Association in London. Part of the Dogma archive of drawings and collages is in the collection of the FRAC Centre in Orleans.

Former exhibitions and lectures include those held at: *Loveless: Minimum Dwelling and its Discontents* (2019), the Design Museum, London; *Architecture on Stage: Pier Vittorio Aureli* (2017), The Architecture Foundation, London; *Pier Vittorio Aureli: Piccolomini* (2017), Betts Project, London; *Pier Vittorio Aureli: The Marriage of Reason and Squalor* (2014), Betts Project, London. Aureli's drawings are part of the Drawing Matter collection as well as private collections.

In order to provide a safe environment for everyone, government health and safety guidelines will be followed. We ask visitors to wear a mask.

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