

IRRATIONAL PAVILIONS: OLYMPIA SCARRY  
ARCHITETTURA IRRAZIONALE: OLYMPIA SCARRY  
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*Torrione INA*  
Piazza Vittoria 10C · 25122  
Brescia, Italy

[tide is in]  
[c'è la marea]

Rationalist architecture is quietly irrational, grappling with *illusory* notions of certainty, scientific and mathematical artistic grounds that reach upward, scraping skies and the bones of all the Roman gods gone before them; Neptune and the owl of Minerva flying against the wind at pink-pearled dusk, their understanding of rationality revealed just that little bit too late. Yet, here we are, among the gorgeous algebraic lines of *Torrione INA* on the fertile lands and unblemished waters of Brescia, art-deco arches and blue-green glass moving heaven and earth to lead Italy in its architectural pursuit of being the tallest in all of Italy. And it succeeded, briefly.

Change weighs so heavily.

Or let us be specific, it remains tall, with fascist curvature and vaulted heights, a skyscraper projecting *fixed* authoritarian, imperialist inclinations. Olympia Scarry, looks over Pythagorean rants and the motifs of fascist aesthetic mathemes, deciding, in *uncertainty*, that there can be no fixed, unequivocal depiction: architecturally, aesthetically, or historically. We're forever at the mercy of nature's pulling tides, gravity, grace, and boastful materiality. Scarry climbs the metallic stairs of the *Torrione* edificio with varied materials: pink onyx, acetate repurposed, the cool, milky surface of selenite, excavated crystal meteorites, and iterations of salted scent from western highways—so many unstable abridgments with their material unpredictability.

Onyx, a silicate mineral, layering bands and bands of alternating colors, amulets of black sardonyx, no two exactly the same, ebbing and flowing at the hands of every moody season. Scarry presents a photograph of the stone with its dignity of movement, examined closely under the scrutinous talons of a microscope; its currents and variations are of our concern. Tipping ourselves so close to the image, we fall into an abyss, inspecting the agate's nanoscopic waves and ghostly ripples. We become one with Scarry's stone, in union with matter as we stand and sweat inside it, bodies assuming the wind and seafoam that carved its inflections. How does it feel to know the geological tremors of the earth that breathes imperceptibly?

Imperceptible until it isn't.

Olympia Scarry has an addiction to materiality, its formations, biological roots, alterations, and the shelters in which they might form. Geo-specific iterations of something less defined. Sheltering on the rooftop, less assured, Scarry arranges tremors of her speculative philosophy with its magnificent

unattainability. Nothing remains the same, and thank god for that. Blushing sea sand and bioluminescent plankton nibble and breathe on her pink salted sculptures, lined and marked by shifting tides, as liquid scent springs from a silvery aluminum reservoir. The scent evaporates with a quiet sensation, creeping into every hairline fracture of a building so hearty and straightforward. Yet Scarry teaches us to hear the sound of vapor, rarefied photosynthesis of expanding sunlight and whispered heartbeats at rest. Her artistic finches remind us that our bodies, earth, and histories preserve themselves with an invisible undulating motion, whether we like it or not.

Unbeknownst to us, *Torrione INA* takes its cues from the deepest recesses of tectonic plates, pulsating beneath our corroding bones, a building entirely at the mercy of nature. Rationalist architecture is quietly irrational. Photographs of ultrasounds distort and abstract bodies, themselves infinitesimal, elbows and knees pressing against the pavilion of a womb and its shrinking availability. Humans floating in pools, preserved like formaldehyde, she recreates the womb's material formations with a video of onyx in a plastic container filled with flowing water—under mezza-luna, the work casts its sleek, fluid monument to change and growth. *Torrione* nor Scarry can outrun the shifting lithosphere, the earth's mantle that accretes over the irrational delusion that we are any bit in control. Under the totalizing force of a skyscraping edifice, she excavates a meteorite, rough, atomic crystal structures that fall to earth repeatedly, unapparent to sun-blinded eyes. Around its belly, a yellow elastic band squeezes, wrapped just once, attempting to contain the motions of belting nature and failing miserably.

History is, by nature, heavy and falls to the ground.

From the point of no return, Scarry ties up water-marked pasts and architecture in lime green rope with a double sailor's knot so good it's inescapable. *Torrione*'s unflinching prestige as a structure that was once upon a time the tallest in Italy is now marked by water, wind, and the quavering movement beneath us all.

Humans stir, particles grow, and architecture yields to the mercies of nature's breathtaking gesticulations. Olympia Scarry has given thought to making materiality unceasing rather than clear, with patient rooftops of glorious examinations of nature's interference. And she'll succeed briefly. Nothing stays the same.

And thank god for that.

[tide is out]  
[la marea è fuori]