

Martin

Marc Leschelier
Black Mortar

Please read this text carefully before you start your experience. If you have any questions or are not sure about anything, ask someone.

Keep this text in a safe place, you may want to read it again.

What constitutes *Black Mortar*?

A direct construction of an undesigned structure. *Doing* is in focus: the materiality and plasticity of architectural straight-forwardness. But more precisely, it is the documentation of the aforementioned. It is not a project, though it is a projection. The process of thinking-through is deliberately ceased at a certain point, from where on action takes over.

It is topologically placed somewhere in-between art and architecture, as it has more to do with potentiality than functionality. Still, it is never good to know the full potential of things, just to consider and/or feel it. Active ingredients are elements of fluid and solid nature. Keywords are anti-architecture and silica.

What is the recommended dose?

A previously agreed perceptual amount based on a protocol is recommended, even though the method itself may vary depending on the peculiarities of the situation. The dose should be voluminous enough to be able to be entered into, at least theoretically.

When should you be extra careful while experiencing *Black Mortar*?

When one of these three (sculptor, painter, architect) describes you; more or less than one is a slightly different situation. If, as environments, you prefer downtowns to outskirts. If you are a Viennese actionist and/or a neoclassicist.

What happens if I forget my dose?

If you forget to take your dose, remind yourself as soon as you remember. Then go on as before. Try and see if they fit together. If they don't, try again.

What are the possible side effects of *Black Mortar*?

You might start to see function in useless things (and vice versa). You might feel an irresistible urge to build, construct, erect, lay bricks. Specialists and brothers Diagrams (no relation) have noted that, "*Bricks, lay them down in a straight line / Bricks, build them into a wall / Bricks, very useful objects / They're not expensive at all / Bricks, we all take them for granted / Bricks, different colours and sizes / Bricks, I think I'll go out and buy some / They're not expensive at all*".

If you are concerned about these or any other side effects, talk to someone.

Text:

Artist:

Martin

Leschelier

Esko

How

Architecture is usually considered to be buildings or structures that are completed. In completion, they are what they were meant to be. The process of birthing architecture from developing a vision to handing over the keys is considered technical preparation. That's the case with life in general, too. Whatever might be said about "the journey, not the destination" and how feelings and aspirations, instincts and opinions are values in their own right, it's usually the opposite - the end result is what matters.

There's a certain conflict in the fact that on one hand, Leschelier wants to highlight space-creating selfless processes, the chaotic natural forces and their effects, but on the other hand his work is quite self-aware, strictly thought out and admirably purely conceptual and the author as creator is far from dead. The contrast is stark but dialectic: without guiding clarity of thought, the natural forces would not be observable, without the natural forces, the concept would be muted, anaemic.

Leschelier deliberately uses the most banal construction element - the brick. In its banality, the brick is the most accessible and the least expensive resource; it makes it possible to be liberated from the influence of market forces on an architect's work and deal in depth with materiality, the meta-level. This voluntary asceticism signals great artistic ambitions.

Leschelier says he is looking for something that is between architecture, sculpture and actionism and he convincingly gets very close to it, too. He wants to show how the world is formed out of its basic building blocks. He's a demiurge. What is beautiful and frightening at the same time is that there doesn't seem to be a gram of irony in Leschelier's works. Understandable: irony is a weapon for the weak. However, Leschelier takes himself and the world extremely seriously. He doesn't look at his and his colleagues' buildings with jaded eyes or accept human imperfection. He demands the original, not a copy. He asks, what else is architecture capable of? It's people like him who change the world.

Artist:

Text:

Kaunistarve

How

Leschelier

Marc

2000 BC

Marc scratches his back thoughtfully. With a stick, not his nails. This back-scratching stick is the newest in his long line of inventions. To this point, the hippest one of all is the night nest of leaves of the river-tree, which lasts longer than nests cobbled together from just any random tree. One can sleep there comfortably for as many as four nights, which allows evening time to be used for activities like watching the sunset and socializing with one's fellow tribespeople. Marc is truly proud of the nest; it's the star of his portfolio. He mumbles contentedly to himself, whilst scratching his back, and keeps an eye on the tribe's descendants at play nearby. It's his turn to be the adult in the village, the others have gone hunting.

The back scratcher is of course a gimmick, Marc decides, coming back to the here and now. Anyone could have invented it. The question comes down to patenting, business, promotion. He sighs heavily, brow creased, his forehead a bit higher, more rounded than those of his peers. His soul yearns for something big, something special. It wants everyone to be awestruck. For the descendants to realize there's something more than simple existence down by the river. Although Marc doesn't have the slightest idea what it could be. It's just that even back when he didn't have his adult name yet, he liked to think about things that didn't exist.

The descendants laughing and having fun a short distance away, Marc turns to look at the termite nest. The termites work in gangs. I'm alone. But I am bigger than the termites. Those are the thoughts whirling in Marc's head. The termite castle has seized his attention earlier, too. He even sees the termites as something like a tribe. It can't be that their castles are built purely from instinct. Marc doesn't share what he is thinking with the rest of the tribe, because he suspects he would be mocked or that they would judge him to have lost it completely - time to strand this guy in the jungle, enough of these innovative scratchers and nests. Our forefathers slept in the treetops and no one moaned, so adios Marc. Make sure you depart into the hereafter in a manner befitting the Riverfolk and give our regards to the forefathers.

"I must be totally paranoid," Marc decides to himself, gives his body a shake from his neck down to the stump of his tail (his mini-tail is his pride, since most tribespeople have long been born without a tail) and sneezes, driving away his anxiety and flashing the world his impressive canines. He concentrates. The termites run up and down the walls. Some carry leaves or other debris. They have dedicated trails. Everything follows a system. Marc thinks. He tries to think like a termite.

When the tribe comes home from the hunt, tired but content, they freeze at first. Their eyes can't establish contact with their prefrontal cortex. That's what happens when you're faced with something you've never seen before, that's never been described before. First, they see the stones. Then they see the clay brought from the river stuffed between the stones. The structure is flat and upright; it's not the kind of stone mound sometimes encountered on savannah trips. They come closer to check out the construction. Marc stands next to the structure. Look what I made, he says. It's a wall. Silence from the tribe. They're thinking, thinking hard. But their foreheads aren't as high and round as Marc's. "Marc, you're a weird bird, you know," says the chieftain finally. "You've blocked the view of the river. Here, come and help us field-dress the mammoth instead. And hand me that stick, my back itches, I'm all sweaty from the hunt."

Text:

Wetuk

Artist:

Leschelica

Marc

Hanna Larva

Leschelier's work reveals itself as an exquisite duet of brick and word. The more simplified the material and the technique of construction - indeed, the sculptural process resembles that of a playful bricklayer - the more intricate the discourse by which the work is bound. Committed to speaking from the perspective of an architect and in relationship to the discipline of architecture, his words labour to undo all ties to its solid foundation.

Conflict, refusal, removal and resistance are the words and forces at play underneath the work's physical manifestation. The latter may evoke the feel of a construction site, an intermediary space in which notions of *finished* and *unfinished* are made redundant. Leschelier nudges us to take note of the processual, messy and rudimentary phase in architecture, which may otherwise remain unseen by those for whom buildings are, simply, stable structures for inhabitation.

Veering away from the idea of function and use, the artist brings his attention to the bare bone structure of what it means to build. *Direct construction*, the name by which he calls the making, entails a series of solitary procedural actions. Spotlight falls on the physical energy of the body, a performative moment for which there may be no other witness than the artist himself. As words wither away so does the struggle to uphold. Now form finds its seeker.

Artist:

Text:

Kaljo

Moore

Leschelier

Magdalena

Marc's work fuses performance, video art, architecture, sculpture and construction. He filled us in on his activities and plans via Zoom. Something that will be so palpable, material and in situ is hard to describe in advance. Especially when the process of creating the work is a principal part of the work. On the basis of his earlier works, he can be said to have a very definite style and technique, and when he talks about the pre-architectural sculptural non-design object that he intends to create in Tallinn, some kind of idea takes shape in his listeners' minds. But only the end results of his previous works can be seen on Zoom. It would be exciting to know what his creative action will look like. Will it be fast and unrefined, or deliberated and precise? Will he yell and grunt, all covered with cement, or will we hear only a serious man's breathing and quiet sounds of stones being assembled into a wall? Based on the photo documentation, it could well be both. Some of the structures are massively rough and uneven, as if he did not know at the outset where the bricklaying would end up. But others seem carefully considered and sculptural structures laid according to a model. But even through the screen, all of Marc's buildings emanate massiveness, and raw energy.

I recall Bridget Polk's balance performance seen at this year's Riboca, in which she built, before a live audience, impossible-seeming towers of leftover construction materials and bricks found in the area. The meditative and quiet balancing of stones seems like the total opposite of direct construction action that Marc is involved in, but I see many similarities between them. The word "balance" characterizes both artists. One is quieter and the other perhaps carries more weight, but it is there for both of them as a sensibility. Their free self-definition as not just artist but also balancer of stones and architect gives them the possibility of taking a more expansive view of sculpture as such. Bridget and Marc are both physically present, in the middle of their materials - stones, bricks, mortar and dust. Participating in the creating process with their own body, leaving traces. Looking at the artefacts of both artists' creative process, the creators' presence can still be felt.

Artist:

Text:

Marcusik

Marc

Leschellia

Marc Leschelier studied architecture and now works mainly in the medium of sculpture and site-specific performance. He dreams of architecture as a discipline, which instead of bureaucracy and regulations is in a much more immediate dialogue with art. Leschelier wishes to create architecture without design, reduce architecture to a skeleton to understand its components and give brick and mortar autonomy. By placing his practice in counterpoint to architecture and its principal operating mechanisms, he defines his activity as direct construction and pre-architecture – thus, still through architecture. But if we leave aside all of the artist's own definitions, the structures he creates can be viewed as an aesthetic homage primarily to brutalist architecture and, to a lesser extent, to *arte povera*.

Leschelier executes his works in three main categories – reduced models, performances with physical experience, and life-sized prototypes. Be it a brick or stone laying performance or public prototype, his masonry constructions seem at times like the ruins and residuals of some ritual. Documentation of the work, manipulation of proportions and post-processing of photos and videos become key to the presentations of works.

At the Artishok Biennale, the experience of the work through its documentation starts playing a major role: the artist executes his direct construction on EKKM premises and to gain the closest possible access to the material of interest, he documents his activities using a GoPro camera in direct cinema style. Cameras thus become the equal of other tools on the “construction site” and they are on display at the Kai exhibition. Even though it is a so-called direct construction, we can experience it only via the screen.

Artist:

Text:

Maria

The creator feels awkward. He doesn't know what he wants. Brick and mortar no longer go together well. One is soft, flowing, the other hard and square-cornered. Why should they go together well if one wants to flow and the other seeks to be stationary? Yet the creator has a clear goal. They must become one, one way or another. But how to go about it? No answer is forthcoming, the materials are defiantly silent. Conflict can be sensed in the air. Yet the creator does not give up so easily. He has a clear goal of putting them together. "But why?" you ask. Why should they become one? The creator has reams of papers in this regard, everything is in writing. But his hands are full of work and the papers have been misplaced. He has to get by without them.

The creator takes a brick and places it on the ground. It seems to sit well, but something's missing. How about adding some mortar, a nice amount, whatever feels right? Yes. There's something here. Some sort of change of pace, contrast, one might say. Another stone. More mortar. The wall grows. The mortar is squeezed out between the bricks by their weight. The creator is on a roll. Mortar, brick, mortar, brick. Mortar and yet one more brick. Repetition is pleasant. Were those ideas on those misplaced papers needed at all? There is so much power in hands and repetition. The wall grows. Ah, and why a wall? I don't know. Just felt right. A simple structure. It just so happened. This wall. You can conceive of a number of additions. Don't have to, but can. Imagine a window in the wall. Or door. A door leading to an interior or exterior. But that's actually not all that important. There's a wall.

Artist:

Text:

Luiga

Mort

Luigia

Vitamin

Lilian Hiob:

Not that I feel at home in architectural history, but Marc's work made me think of Mies van der Rohe and his 'skin and bones architecture'. Marc speaks of deconstructing architecture and revealing the skeletons of buildings. It also seems to me that he is critical of architecture as a culture of copies. He tries to give each of his edifices its own face and identity and reveal something about the materials used in construction. Today's architecture is clinical and slick, but his works are like piles of architecture. They make me think of wartime ruins or that they have got on in years. Even as new, his objects look very old.

Siim Preiman:

What interests me most is that he is hands on. Architecture seems like a hierarchical discipline to me. You start at an office as a young architect, probably working on competition bids that are checked by someone else before they get submitted. If your project does happen to win, by that time you're likely to already have started on the next bid and the winning entry will be given to the so-called real architects for further development. Or the question of delegation. Even if one of your projects is realised, then it won't be you actually building it. Imagine, you go on site and see beautiful straight pipes coming from the right and from the left, but they meet in an ugly crooked joint. You have drawn a building, imagined how things will work, how they're made, but later it might be thousands of others working on that project. In the case of Marc, it is only him alone. Like he said - he is an architect and a bricklayer, he does everything by himself from start to finish. In the case of architecture, that's not necessarily usual.

LH:

Marc has said that in architecture, material is always subservient to the drawing, the geometry and proportional systems. He opposes to that. He says that he'd like his structures to be more human because contemporary buildings are increasingly colossal and materials are dehumanised, but when looking at his works, are they more human? Do humans want to enter them? Rather, they appear a bit eerie.

SP:

True. Instead, his edifices become a parallel for bleak and drawing-based architecture. It seems like in both cases, be it drawn up first or born in the moment, architecture is only the best of the options at hand. An ideal human-shaped space to use or to live in doesn't exist.

Text:

Artist:

Marc

Leschellia



Joanna

My first thought on Leschelier's work was that the artist composes poetry in material. If there is poetry in architecture or if architecture embodies poetry in any way, then this would be it. The artist's installations are picturesque, as if sketched in loose brush strokes. They are so photogenic that they work well as two-dimensional pictures but also as three-dimensional shapes, which is what they really are. In one way, Leschelier's works seem to be reflections of the past and in another way of the future. In any case, they are dystopian. They remind me of the prefab panel blocks constructed with great excitement during Soviet times in Estonian small towns - today they stand like ghosts, empty and derelict. But they are also like models for residential blocks created for the world's ever growing population - material clutter, human-made structures and possible destruction. Lacking flora or fauna; nothing is alive.

It is probably my favourite project at this year's Artishok Biennale. I like the author's established technique, considered philosophy and ability to push boundaries within his chosen discipline, resulting in specificity. The layeredness of Leschelier's work, the span across media and the balance between clarity of mind and intuition come across intelligently too. Concept doesn't exceed aesthetics, form doesn't cast a shadow over the idea. There is no meaningless coolness, the audience is not distracted by folderol. What I find important when experiencing art is believability and the realisation of the author's sincerity. Creativity doesn't always need to be very serious, although in the case of Leschelier that seems to be the case, but it should be honest and free from obvious copying of trends. For me, this work fulfills these conditions.

Artist:

Text:

Hoffmann

Moore

Leschelier

Bogie

repetition *n* **1** the act of repeating **2** a thing that is repeated **3** a replica or copy >**repetitious** *adj* >**repetitive** *adj*

repetition *n* **1** = recurrence, repeating, echo **2** repeating, replication, restatement, reiteration, tautology

unit *n* **1** a single undivided entity or whole **2** a group or individual regarded as a basic element of a larger whole: *the clan was the basic unit of Highland society* **3** a mechanical part or small device that does a particular job: *a waste disposal unit* **4** a team of people that performs a specific function, and often also their buildings and equipment: *a combat unit* **5** a standard amount of a physical quantity, such as length or energy, used to express magnitudes of that quantity: *the year as a unit of time* **6** *maths* the digit or position immediately to the left of the decimal point **7** a piece of furniture designed to be fitted with other similar pieces: *bedroom units* **8** *NZ* a self-propelled railcar

unit *n* **1** = entity, whole, item, feature **2** = part, section, segment, class, element, component, constituent **4** = section, company, group, force, detail, division, cell, squad **5** = measure, quantity, measurement

** Entries from the Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus Essential Edition, Glasgow: Collins, 2020.*

Artist:

Text:

Dravastel

Moit

Leschellia