Rarely has prognostication about the future come true, and when it did, it brought no good to the prophets. Cassandra, the most beautiful daughter of Priam and Hecuba, on whom Apollo had bestowed the gift of prophecy, was never believed by anyone. After the fall of Troy, which she had limpidly foreseen, she ended up as Agamemnon’s spoils of the war, and after she had repeatedly tried in vain to warn him, she and he were murdered by Clytemnestra. Laocoon, in guardia, fu uccisa con lui da Clitennestra. Laocoonte, che pur senza la dote soprannaturale di Cassandra aveva riconosciuto il pericolo costituito dal cavallo che i greci avevano lasciato ai troiani, wooden horse that the Greeks had left for the Trojans. He and his sons were killed by two giant serpents sent by Poseidon, to whom his priest was preparing to offer a sacrifice. Tiresias, the most reliable and efficient prophet of ancient Greek mythology – who predicted the death of Narcissus, revealed to the la morte di Narciso, mostrato ai re tebani il loro destino e perfino dal regno dei morti aiutato Ulisse – era Theban kings their fate, and helped Odysseus even from the realm of the dead – was blind. So it is cieco. Non è dunque il caso di azzardare congetture sul costruire del futuro. Meglio piuttosto avanzare not advisable to make conjectures on what building will be like in the future. It might be better to offer proposals for architecture (and urban planning, interior design, craft design and industrial design) that are based on the fact that the future cannot be predicted and that nonetheless, or maybe precisely for this reason, could be suited to it. What can be suggested to those who wish to build in uncertain times?
Five Proposals for Building in Uncertain Times. The first proposal: construct buildings that can be used well and comfortably. This might seem obvious. Vitruvius, the most important architect and theoretician of architecture whose work has been handed down to us from Roman antiquity, listed in his treatise of architectural virtues utilitas (usefulness) in between firmitas (solidity) and venustas (beauty). Francis Bacon, a philosopher and statesman during the English Enlightenment, believed that houses were built to be lived in, not looked at, meaning that practically it has precedence over beauty, unless one could unite the two. Gottfried Semper, possibly the greatest 19th-century precursor of modernism and the founder of the school of architecture at the Eidgenössisches Polytechnikum in Zurich in 1853, went by the motto sole artis domini necassaria (functional) necessity is the only mistress of art.

In recent decades, architectural culture, seduced by the intellectual experiments of philosophy, literature and the visual arts, has distanced itself from all of this. The self-evident truth that a building must be functional is now presumed to be a banality – not just banished from discourse, but positively ignored. Attention to the good utility of architecture is regarded as boring or conservative – the true avant-garde architect does not take it into consideration. In reality, the true avant-garde architect takes it into the highest consideration. Utility, and only utility, is the basis of his work, after which it is processed technically and aesthetically.

In his lectures on the theory of film montage, delivered in 1932 and 1933 at the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography in Moscow, the director Sergei Mikhailovich Eisenstein, certainly no conservative, warned that the compositional rules of a work had to be derived from the laws of reality, for otherwise one would fall into artificiality, oplification and formalism. Reality in architecture is nothing other than the task it has to fulfill and the reason for which it was created. This duty is not just material. It is not enough for a house to function; it must also be emotionally captivating to the people living in it. To be more precise, it must fulfill their emotional needs. To paraphrase the writer, painter and composer Alberto Savinio, it must protect not only people’s physical happiness, but also and especially their mental happiness.

The second proposal for building in uncertain times: build with parsimony. At first sight, this ascertainment may seem even more trivial and superficial than the first; for, apart from singular and extravagant cases of intense satisfaction, it is not evident how to give form to a dwelling, how to house in a suitable and arrange comfortably the wealth and industry of a house.

It would be so much better, in my opinion, for the architect to fail in the ornament of the columns, the measurement of the foundations (which all who make a profession out of building study much more) than in those fine rules of nature that concern the comfort, use and benefit of the inhabitants, and not the decoration, beauty or enrichment of dwellings (which are done only for the amusement of the eyes, without bringing any fruit to the health and life of men). Don’t you see, I pray you, that having not well appraised, arranged and furnished a dwelling, takes the inhabitants sad, unhappy and perplexed; in all sorts of disgrace and inconveniences of which most often we cannot tell the names, lest alone houses from whence they come. So it is necessary to say that it is allowed for many to give form to a dwelling, but to know how to well outfit and furnish comodamente, is opera di un alloggio, una cosa troppo difficile, troppo difficile.

The decay of lying, a work of 1895, it is possible that the historian and theoretician of architecture Francesco Bagnato is also worth noting (beauty). Francis Bacon, a philosopher and statesman during the English Enlightenment, believed that houses were built to be lived in, not looked at, meaning that practically it has precedence over beauty, unless one could unite the two. Gottfried Semper, possibly the greatest 19th-century precursor of modernism and the founder of the school of architecture at the Eidgenössisches Polytechnikum in Zurich in 1853, went by the motto sole artis domini necassaria (functional) necessity is the only mistress of art.

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Le seconda proposta per il costruire in tempi incerti: costruire con parsimonia. A prima vista appare che Vitruvio peremptorily demanded of architecture is far more than how to spend to advantage. The exhortation to build economically should not be misunderstood as an invitation to build cheaply. Hence the third proposal for building in uncertain times: to build last. The firmata that Vitruvius peremptorily demanded of architecture is far more than the condition of solid stability that characterises every good building. It is the tool that guarantees that all the materials and all the structures used in the construction process last as long as possible. This means that the cost of these materials and structures can be written off over a longer period, even when times are hard. In good times, the depreciation of a building can be calculated and conducted reliably by building with little invested capital and amortising the cost price rapidly. In uncertain times (and in volatile financial circumstances) this is not possible and also very risky. While even a well-constructed, solid building in any case subject to the condition of solid stability that characterises every good building. It is the tool that guarantees that all the materials and all the structures used in the construction process last as long as possible. This means that the cost of these materials and structures can be written off over a longer period, even when times are hard. In good times, the depreciation of a building can be calculated and conducted reliably by building with little invested capital and amortising the cost price rapidly. In uncertain times (and in volatile financial circumstances) this is not possible and also very risky. While even a well-constructed, solid building in any case subject to}

Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani

Wise economy consists not so much in knowing how to avoid expenses, for often these are not to be avoided, as in knowing how to spend to advantage. Non consiste tanto la prudenza della economia in sapersi guardare a salvo, quanto in sapere spendere con vantaggio.

(Proverbi di Giambattista Alberoni, 1710)
WHAT IS ARCHITECTURE? SHALL I JOIN VITRUVIUS IN DEFINING IT AS THE ART OF BUILDING? INDEED, NO, FOR THERE IS A FLAGRANT ERROR IN THIS DEFINITION. VITRUVIUS MISTAKES THE EFFECT FOR THE CAUSE. IN ORDER TO EXECUTE, IT IS FIRST NECESSARY TO CONCEIVE. OUR EARLIEST ANCESTORS BUILT THEIR HUTS ONLY WHEN THEY HAD A PICTURE OF THEM IN THEIR MINDS. IT IS THIS PRODUCT OF THE MIND, THIS PROCESS OF CREATION, THAT CONSTITUTES ARCHITECTURE AND WHICH CAN CONSEQUENTLY BE DEFINED AS THE ART OF DESIGNING AND BRINGING TO PERFECTION ANY BUILDING WHATSOEVER.

L’esortazione a costruire con parsimonia non deve essere scambiata per un rimprovero in economia. Infatti, la loro proposta per il costruire in tempi incerti richiede: edificare valor duraturi. La filosofia, che Vitrivio aveva perso nel perfezionamento delle architetture, è molto più di quella condizione di solidità che caratterizza oggi buon edificio: è il ricordo che garantisce che tutti i materiali siano ben curati durante la costruzione e durante il tempo. Possiamo intravedere in questi tempi economici violenti ciò che non è possibile e anzi molto rischioso. É vero che pur essendo un buon edificio costruito con solido, in questo valore finanziario, è comunque sottoposti alle oscillazioni del mercato, ma è anche vero che come valore d'uso (o anche come investimento a lungo termine) esiste nel tempo. Un esempio? Quasi ogni villa o casolare isolato che si vede nel tempo dimostra, infatti, che nonostante la crisi, la sua vita è stata ben curata e continua a funzionare perfettamente se viene mantenuta e sicuramente proprio il fatto che in vita e in città hanno altre possibili funzioni per il futuro. Edifici come questi sono poi un ottimo investimento a lungo termine (e in contesti economici volatili) ciò non è possibile e anzi molto rischioso. Edifici come questi sono poi un ottimo investimento a lungo termine (e in contesti economici volatili) ciò non è possibile e anzi molto rischioso.

A. Alberti, De re aedificatoria (1450)
divere use, even ones that we might not be able to imagine today. Only in this way can it break out of the limits of the purpose for which it was originally conceived and surmount the change. Only in this way can it be durable and at the same time always maintain its vitality.

In the 1920s, the architect Hugo Häring experimented with ground-plan geometries derived with scrupulous and apparently scientific methodology from the functions in question. For example, he drew tapering corridors, motivating their organic form by the fact that the traffic at the far end diminishes and consequently requires less surface. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, who shared an office in Berlin with Häring at the time, looked sceptically at the curious labyrinths and exhorted with kindly mockery, “Make the rooms big, Hugo, then you can do anything in them.” This is precisely what it’s all about: rooms in which you can do anything.

That is the secret of 19th-century apartments, and also of dwellings that are further back, which are now enjoying an exquisite renaissance as places of new forms of life. It is the secret of derelict industrial buildings and old factories, which are living a second and no less brilliant life as open-plan spaces. For this, extra space is key, or at least a certain generosity. Not unlike quality construction, this generosity is a way to ensure economic return, for it confers to the building a durability that resists crises, changes and times of insecurity.

The fifth and final proposal for building in uncertain times is possibly the most important: construct beautiful buildings. This may come as a surprise as it seems to contradict much of what has been suggested above, especially parsimony. But the beauty in question here is neither that of pasted-on decoration nor that of the grandiose sculptural gesture. It is the beauty of simplicity, which has its roots primarily in good proportions and perfect harmonies. This kind of beauty comes at no extra charge, but it requires knowledge, skill, care, effort and taste. It requires culture.

Why should we attach particular importance to beautiful architecture precisely in uncertain times? There are at least three reasons. The first is obvious: because beautiful buildings are effectively worth more than ugly ones. They can be put on the market at a higher price and are sold better and easier. These are no small matters or nuances. The Torre di Parco high-rise built by the architect and designer Vico Magistretti in the centre of Milan in the 1950s, Diversamente dalle scarpe, l’architetto è un campo in cui non si è mai intesi a muoversi e permettono mutamenti d’uso, anche impensati. Di qui la spinta proposta per il costruire in tempi incerti: costruire in modo aperto e neutrale. Questa raccomandazione non vuole precipitare la prima, quella della radicale utilizzabilità, al contrario. Un edificio deve essere esattamente e perfettamente funzionale, ma non rispetto a un uso strettamente specifico. Deve avere funzioni multipliche, poter essere rifatto e modificato, essere aperto a utilizzazioni diverse, utilizzazioni che oggi non possiamo nemmeno immaginare. Solo così può rispondere ai tempi della destinazione d’uso per la quale fu concepito in origine e sopravvis- vere al cambiamento. Solo così può essere duraturo e allo stesso tempo restare sempre vivo.

Negli anni ’20 l’architetto Hugo Häring progettò edifici geometrici plasmatici che deduceva con scrupolo apparentemente scientifica da funzioni in questione: disegni, per esempio, corridoi che si ristengano, mostrandone la forma organica con il fatto che il traffico alla fine dei passaggi diminuisce e dunque richiede meno superficie. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, che nel periodo di lavoro a Berlino con Häring guardò scettico gli sbiechi labirinti e commentò con benevolo scherzo, “Fa’ gli spazi grandi, Hugo, così puoi farci dentro tutto”. La seconda esistenza, non meno brillante della prima, come loft. Per questo necessità, questo carattere conoscitivo ingenuo, che la ignora, appunto per il suo carattere conoscitivo, ingenuo, che abbiamo detto auroreale. In essa, il singolo paga della vita del tut- to, e il tutto è nella vita del singolo, ed ogni azzardo rappresentazione artistica è stessa e l’universo, l’universo in quella forma individuale, e quella forma individuale come l’universo. In ogni aspetto di poesia, in ogni creatura della sua fantasia, c’è tutto l’umano destino, tutte le speranze, le illusioni, i dolori e le gioie, la grandezza e le miserie umane, il drama intero del reale, che diviene e cresce in perpetuo su se stesso, scivolando e gioendo.

Ma l’intuizione pura o rappresentazione artistica riprime con tutto l’essere suo allontanamento: o, anzi, non vi ripugna nemmeno, per- ché la ignora, appunto per il suo carattere conoscitivo, ingenuo, che abbiamo detto auroreale. In essa, il singolo paga della vita del tut- to, e il tutto è nella vita del singolo, ed ogni azzardo rappresentazione artistica è stessa e l’universo, l’universo in quella forma individuale, e quella forma individuale come l’universo. In ogni aspetto di poesia, in ogni creatura della sua fantasia, c’è tutto l’umano destino, tutte le speranze, le illusioni, i dolori e le gioie, la grandezza e le miserie umane, il drama intero del reale, che diviene e cresce in perpetuo su se stesso, scivolando e gioendo.

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Breviario di Estetica,
(Benedetto Croce, Breviario di Estetica, 1942)

Paul Klee (1879-1940), Castello e sole, 1928
[no. 201], olio su tela, particolare, Collezione privata. Credito fotografico: Giraudon/Bridgeman Images/Archivi Alinari

Paul Klee (1879-1940), Torre al Parco, 1953-1954
[no. 201], olio su tela, particolare, Collezione privata. Credito fotografico: Giraudon/Bridgeman Images/Archivi Alinari
La bellezza è l’armonia tra tutte le membra, nell’Unità di cui fan parte, fondata sopra una legge precisa, per modo che non si possa aggiungere o togliere o cambiare nulla se non in peggio.

(Leon Battista Alberti, LA BELLEZZA È L’ARMONIA TRA TUTTE LE MEMBRA, NELL’UNI-

Niente può essere aggiunto, tolto o cambiato da qualcosa che sia parte di una legge precisa, fondata su una precisa regola. 

C’è una seconda regola che dice che tutto deve essere fatto in modo che la bellezza non sia mai diminuita o aumentata. 

La Torre edifici belli valgono effettivamente di più di quelli uguali di poco conto o di sfumature. La Torre è importante perché attribuire un valore particolare alle多样化建筑必须依据精确的规则，否则无法保持其价值。