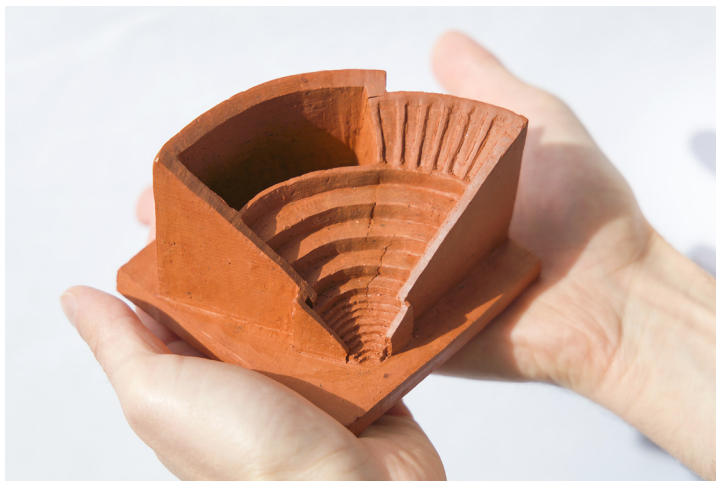


***APPROACHING THE
EARTHENWARE HERITAGE***

Accidental Archaeology of
Brick Buildings and Their Fragments



Amedeo Martines

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Brick Buildings and Their Fragments

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2022

MASTER OF ARTS – THESIS

Contemporary Design programme
School of Arts, Design and Architecture
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ABSTRACT

The thesis proposes a practical method to experience and acknowledge the Finnish earthenware heritage through a dynamic encounter of brick architecture in the municipalities of Helsinki and Espoo. The method follows a practice-led approach, where the direct experience of brick buildings and the materiality of collected fallen fragments accompany a solid learning process based on lived experiences, embodied knowledge, and reflections. The main advantage of this method resides in its capacity to generate new knowledge and develop an emotional bond with the artefact encountered.

The practice of encountering brick architecture enabled the author to overcome many initial problems and limitations that hindered the experience and recognition of the Finnish earthenware heritage, for example, the author's different background and culture, among many others. Consequently, the action of reaching a place, mapping its surroundings, and directly engaging with brick buildings allowed the practitioner to acknowledge details, architectural features, and specific historical traits that in our everyday life would, instead, remain overlooked and unrecognised. In particular, fallen brick fragments found along the perimeter of the visited architectures provided a clear hint of the condition, history, and a tangible link to their past. The initial action of gathering fragments evolved through critical reflections into an accidental archaeology. Hence, anonymous and meaningless broken pieces became valuable bits of knowledge and material connection to the earthenware heritage.

Through this method, architecture is physically encountered rather than theoretically studied, awakening a series of sensory perceptions, such as haptic experiences, impossible to acquire through theoretical studies or pictures. The knowledge gathered becomes not a product of a historical narrative or the result of someone else's voice but, on the contrary, deeply embedded and intertwined within the practitioner. This method highlighted the possibility of acknowledging the earthenware heritage from an intimate and experiential point of view, suggesting a concrete practice that can complement and expand theoretical knowledge.

KEYWORDS:

practice-led research, earthenware heritage, brick architecture, accidental archaeology, experience, materiality, Helsinki and Espoo.

P. 9

1. Introduction

P. 13

2. Methodology

P. 17

3. The limits of
the museum

P. 19

4. Towards the
cityscape

P. 22

5. Focus on
earthenware-
related buildings

P. 26

6. Explorations in
the municipality
of Helsinki

P. 38

7. A material
encounter

P. 42

8. The practice of
experiencing
architecture

P. 46

9. Living the
building

P. 54

10. Accidental
archaeology

P. 66

11. Findings

P. 69

12. Conclusion

1.

Introduction

Since I moved to Finland in 2019, working with local red clay has become my fundamental source of attraction. Despite having almost no experience with this material, its availability and malleability allowed me to gradually improve my technical abilities and develop interests for the Finnish earthenware heritage¹. In this thesis, Finnish earthenware heritage identifies the family of earthenware pieces produced in the Finland throughout history. In spite of the research focusing exclusively on artefacts from Helsinki and Espoo, many of them faced relocation, so I believe that the use of Finnish as an adjective is more appropriate than local, for example.

Whether my skills in utilising red clay grew over time, my knowledge about the earthenware heritage remained superficial, confined to the most relevant authors that characterise this world-known tradition. Perhaps my different background and probably, even more, the fact that I belong to a foreign culture

hindered my possibilities of acquaintance with this heritage, resulting in it remaining unreachable and distant. Another aspect that compromised the development of an emotional connection and understanding of the Finnish earthenware heritage was that images replaced the essence of the ceramic artefacts when studied theoretically. In fact, I noticed that pictures are incapable of giving back the materiality of the earthenware pieces and all the bodily perceptions connected to them get lost in these representations. These issues, which I believe also affect other practitioners, encouraged me to structure a method that would allow me to dive into the earthenware heritage, closely identify its features, and develop a solid bond centred on a personal and experiential level.

In the context of the thesis, the method for getting closer to the earthenware heritage took the form of a practice of encountering brick architecture. This was executed as a composition of walking sessions and visits to the municipalities of Helsinki and Espoo. I realised that the assessment of brick buildings and the practical engagement with the material provided a concrete link to the history of these earthenware artefacts. Hence, I understood that these encounters generated new knowledge and a deep emotional connection intertwined within the practitioner's experience. By illustrating my learning process, the thesis hopes to show a novel way to approach and acknowledge the Finnish earthenware heritage by providing a practical method to experience it directly.

The inspiration of designing such an approach originated during the three-month-long working experience at EMMA (Museum of Modern Art of Espoo) in the summer of 2021. On this occasion, I had the opportunity to assist several artists and develop together with them multiple projects as part of *Särkyvää - Keramiikka uuden äärellä* (translated *Ceramics Facing the New*)², an exhibition revolving entirely around ceramics.

Among the many collaborations, the relationship with Working with Soil was surely the most relevant for envisioning a potential way to approach my topic and laying the foundations for the thesis research. In the context of the exhibition, they analysed humans' relationship between soil and the environment through ceramic art. Their research showcased an active and open learning process, systematic cataloguing and documentation of soils, and several hand-built pots made of Finnish earthenware depicting the critically endangered species from Espoo.

In the project, my tasks mainly focused on the practice of documentation and gathering soil samples. This experience provided me with fundamental knowledge about working with local materials as well as mapping and understanding the Finnish ecosystems and natural landscapes on a personal level. Moreover, the careful practice of collecting soil turned out to be an exceptional way to map a specific environment and acknowledge features otherwise hidden and overlooked. This practice helped me to connect with my surroundings and develop a sense of belonging to a foreign territory through my own body.

My experience at EMMA inspired me to adapt the practice-led approach to my research purposes. Hence, instead of acquiring knowledge solely by reading about an unknown territory I applied a practice of embodied encountering a foreign cultural heritage. Therefore, the aim of the thesis is to illustrate the development of this approach, its validity for acknowledging the Finnish earthenware heritage, and its ability to bond and emotionally connect the practitioner to the analysed artefacts.

In the following, I will shortly introduce the development of the research. Firstly, I illustrate the methodology used. Hence, the way in which the thesis takes the form of

practice-led research since it is the practice that shaped the development and the theoretical foundation of the study. Second, I elucidate the aspects and the context that characterise the research. Specifically, the importance of feeling the materiality of earthenware encouraged me to move outside of the aseptic imprint of museal institutions and direct myself towards the urban environment. Third I discuss the possibility of acknowledging and instaurating a deep emotional bond with the earthenware heritage through a practice of visiting several brick buildings. Then, I argue the way in which the materiality of the fragments collected on the premises of the visited buildings connected me to the lifetime and condition of the earthenware heritage. Finally, I conclude by asserting that the proactive and direct encounter with brick architecture and its fragments can constitute a concrete method to acknowledge the Finnish earthenware heritage, grounded on an experiential and emotional practice.

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- ¹ Finnish earthenware clay is a low-fire clay native to Finland. It contains high amounts of iron oxide, which gives a typical bright red colour to the fired piece. Throughout history, as well as brick-making, it has been used to create pots, crafts, vessels, and artistic production.
 - ² Särkyvää - Keramiikka uuden äärellä (translated Ceramics Facing the New), 03.05.2021 - 07.08.2022, was an exhibition curated by Laura Kokkonen for EMMA, Museum of modern art Espoo. It was created by twelve artists and two artist groups, the works featured in the exhibition used ceramic art to explore the juncture of past and future (EMMA, Museum of Modern Art Espoo, 2021). For more information please visit: <https://emmamuseum.fi/nayttely/keramiikka-uuden-aarella/> Accessed date: 21/09/2022
 - ³ Working with Soil is an evolving artistic research project from the Empirica research group in Aalto University. It engages in actions and discussions of the relationship between humans and soil through collective work and interdisciplinary collaborations (Working with Soil, n.d.). In the context of the exhibition at EMMA the group was composed by Maarit Mäkelä, Riikka Latva-Somppi (from Empirica) and Catharina Kajander, Özgü Gündeşlioğlu. It also featured the sound artists: Noora Kauppila and Mikko H. Haapoja, and the research assistants: Amedeo Martinez and Julius Rinne. For more information please visit: <https://workingwithsoil.aalto.fi/> Accessed date: 21/09/2022

2.

Methodology

As argued by the artist and researcher Janis Jefferies (2012), practice-led research is an original investigation undertaken to gain new knowledge, mainly employing practices and their outcomes (p. 39). She continues by stating that the learning takes place through actions, reflections on the practice, and the way in which the practitioner engages with the analysed context (p. 40). For this reason, it is crucial that the practice uniquely sprouts from one's own lived experience, becoming consequently indissoluble from its researcher (Jefferies, 2012, p. 40).

In my case, the visit of several historical sites slowly developed a mindset and subsequently a “philosophy” that then composed the structural skeleton of this thesis. On the one hand, it is the continuation of a practice that allows the progress of the research; on the other hand, it is the discussion, reflection, and theorization of the undertaken activities that permit the conceptualisation of the study and its validity. In fact, practical

activity is always linked with theoretical commitments and presuppositions that both define it and guide its construction (Hannula et al., 2005, p. 101). However, such presuppositions are often latent or taken for granted; for this reason, engaging in practical activities can help visualise and identify them (Hannula et al., 2005, p. 101).

Among the many different passages delineating a theory from practice, American philosopher Donald Schön developed the reflection-in- and -on-action method. For this research, I found this method to be the most natural and appropriate. As argued by Donald Schön (1984), reflection-in-action is the active process of reflecting as something happens and the ability of the practitioner to adapt to unexpected features that may occur during the practice (pp. 128–136). Reflection-on-action is the subsequent process of reviewing materials, feelings and thoughts that happened during the practice, leading to reconsider and interpret the overall experience (Schön, 1984, pp. 275–283). Accordingly, these two complementary ways of reflection allowed me to structure a theory from a practical experience. Moreover, the transcription of these reflections enabled me to approach and compare theories from different authors and establish a relevant bibliography, especially in the field of aesthetics.

The Finnish ceramist and researcher Maarit Mäkela and textile designer and researcher Nithikul Nimkulrat (2018) emphasise the way in which the role of documentation can function as a conscious reflection on and in action (p. 3). They continue by saying that it helps to capture and communicate the processes and practical steps of the experience as well as portray the practitioner's way of knowing and learning. In addition, documentation helped me to facilitate, suspend, and grasp the dynamicity of practical activities. For this thesis, the employment of specific equipment made possible an extensive and precise documentation of the sites.

In particular, a digital reflex camera became indispensable for capturing the locations and their details. Photographic documentation functioned as a feasible tool to keep track of the processes during and after the practice. Moreover, the picture's metadata (time, date, location, and geotag) produced by the digital camera constituted additional valuable information when writing down the research. Furthermore, I employed an audio recorder mainly as a device for quickly registering my voice and thoughts, but sometimes for collecting particular soundscapes of the sites. Other essential tools included a notebook and plastic bags for transcribing and gathering material from the ground, such as fragments. I also kept track of my research through a learning log, an intermediary tool between the in-situ documentation and the final writing of the thesis. The log helped me to frame, observe and adjust my practice, as well as convey its processes and results to the thesis advisors.

Moreover, the development of the thesis and the design of the practice for experiencing earthenware architecture were inspired and intertwined with other two models: the Creative Survey and Archeology-as-Surface. Crucial for the conception of the thesis was the Creative Survey, which is considered as an alternate (not alternative)⁴ architectural site survey (Butterworth & Vardy, 2008, p. 126). It analyses architecture beyond its object-based discipline and understands it more as a relational construct, facilitating new interactions between users, sites, and architects (Butterworth & Vardy, 2008, pp. 125–128). This type of survey encouraged me to perceive architecture openly, as a context for discovery and experimentation rather than as an immutable and solid container.

Similarly, the practice of collecting fragments intended as a method for encountering the past in the present

draws inspiration from the Archeology-as-Surface approach. This alternative archaeological trope is “a process of working from the present and its surface assemblages across all the pasts and potential future that it contains”; it focuses on things which still exist and on aspects that would be easily overlooked or covered up (Harrison, 2013, pp. 50–52). The employment of this trope made me reconsider the role of the fragments, turning them from anonymous broken pieces into fundamental elements to access the history of a building, acknowledging its lifetime and condition.

In the following chapters, I illustrate my personal journey of encountering the earthenware heritage by introducing first the context where it takes place and the main steps that delineate the aspects of this practice.

3.

The limits of the museum

Among the many different places, museums are usually the most appropriate to gain an overview of the traits of a culture and admire the development of heritages. In the spaces of museums, visitors can travel through time by admiring the way in which a particular culture grew and evolved over the years. The showcased works in museums are, most of the time, unique and extremely valuable objects since they represent the last remains of ancient times, otherwise impossible to trace.

For this reason, to grasp the Finnish heritage, I decided to visit Kansallismuseo (translated National Museum of Finland), which is located in Helsinki, and displays historical findings from prehistory to modern times. Even though I felt very much fascinated by the Finnish historical traits, heritage, and cultural influences during my visit, I could not perceive the collections anywhere but through my eyes. The objects displayed remained distant to me in part because of my different cultural background.

However, more possibly because my experience was uniquely tied to my eyesight. In fact, the safety distance, signs, and vitrines, despite being transparent and almost imperceptible, blocked my ability to perceive physical, sensorial, and emotional feelings which old artefacts usually bring with them. I think these sensations are crucial for understanding and developing a close bond with a different culture. Surely, the curatorial team and exhibition designers are well aware of such problems since the quality of the material used for showcasing tries to limit as much as possible such aberrations. In addition, such apparatus help most of the time to elevate the artefact from the mundane to the treasured.

Moreover, the introduction of digital equipment, such as virtual reconstructions, augmented reality, and other interactive devices, the immersion into the collections is much more exalted than ever before. If, on the one hand, these elements, by displaying the “best side” of objects or by simulating their use, create a fluent, curated, historical narration. On the other hand, they inevitably create distance from the visitor who cannot physically access them anymore. Another feature that contributes to restraining my engagement and understanding of the objects is the fact that, in museums, the artefacts become decontextualised from their place of origin. They are isolated in time and space, exhibited in “aseptic” rooms; they become even harder to interpret in their own environment. Moreover as explained by the American philosopher Carolyn Korsmeyer (2019), the current comfort of admiring artefacts from museums blinds us to the role that touch plays and the engagement with bodily presence (p. 195). Consequently, after critically reflecting on my museum experience, I decided to move out and try to identify other potential environments where artefacts remain more open and physically accessible.

4.

Towards the cityscape

From the perspective of my research, the main difference between a city and a museum is a matter of scale. If the latter is a building which serves as a container for artefacts, curated small- to medium-sized objects belonging to different eras, a city is a similar kind of container whereas its artefacts are buildings displayed across the urban texture. In a city like Helsinki, it is possible to encounter an important variety of historical buildings at a relatively small distance.

Belonging to different periods, these constructions layered in styles, orders, and mindsets, share together the same environment and inevitably confront each other. If, on the one hand, their aesthetic and structural features create an intricate pattern of shapes and forms. On the other hand, the historical and temporal factors that result from the comparison between buildings, suggest an unexpected relationship with time, hardly possible to encounter in different situations.

Therefore, a mediaeval church can for example, lay opposite to a modernist construction, or a century-old house can be integrated into a freshly built library, and so on. For this reason, I realise that, unlike museums, the urban environment does not contain any linear historical narration, but a cluster of different temporalities happening more or less in the same space.

In the urban environment, history is opened, displayed, and levelled in the present; each building carries time in different ways. Differently from a museal object, these constructions can be visited, touched, and experienced almost without any particular expedient. Consequently, by visiting buildings, not only do we experience unique structural, stylistic, and aesthetic qualities, but in addition to it, we access different times by remaining in the present. In fact, often by visiting old buildings, we feel like we are thrown back in time, to a different era. While some of these architectures get renovated due to the particular old fashion of spaces, the ones that survive show features that are no longer in use, creating an unusual stylistic clash with the surrounding environment. Accessing these spaces is a dive into a living history and, consequently, an opportunity to experience and acknowledge closely its heritage through the materiality of the building.

The temporal relationship originated from a single building and between multiple buildings reveals the complexity and variety of the present and the way in which it materialises through architecture and cities. In the urban texture, time evolves from a steady linear flow to a complex network of different times cohabiting the same space. This highly enriched present is well described by Geoff Cox (2016), researcher in contemporary aesthetics and Jacob Lund (2016), associate professor of aesthetics and communications at Aarhus University, Denmark. They claim that the present, characterised by its contemporaneity, is the result of the

coming together of multiple different temporalities, not only in parallel but also interconnected to each other (p. 13). This interconnection is so much embedded in our everyday life that we hardly pay attention to it despite the fact that its relevance questions the concept of time and history as a succession of events.

Nevertheless, this system of times is much less complex and chaotic than it sounds. In fact, only by visiting the space of a building is it possible to experience and perceive its origin, its lifetime, and its condition in the future. In this way, it is possible to immerse in such a continuous share of various temporalities and experience past situations while remaining in the present.

The writings of the Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa (1998) inspired me particularly to envision buildings not as mere containers, but as guides for experiencing time and space through our body. He indicates the way in which architectural structures enable us to see slow processes of history and to participate in time cycles beyond the limit of the lifetime of an individual (p. 56). Therefore, the possibility to “time travel” through a building can be a unique opportunity to experience previous customs and different heritages without sacrificing sensations or experiences.

This was also true in my case. By visiting architecture in Helsinki, I was able to admire the stylistic and aesthetic diversity of a specific Finnish heritage but also conceptually dive into the past and possibly interpret and compare the cultural changes happening in the present. Despite its heaviness and physicality, architecture worked in my case as a concrete link to a culture different from mine. In fact, the possibility of freely visiting buildings erased that distance and allowed me to get closer to a heritage before totally unavailable.

5.

Focus on earthenware- related buildings

As explained in the previous chapter, the city turned out to be the most suitable environment to freely access artefacts and their heritage without any constraints or limitations. However, in the urban texture, the variety of elements, materials, cultural, and societal characteristics demand the identification of one optimal feature or material to be used for structuring reasonable thesis research. Moreover, by selecting a specific material to analyse, it is possible to track its evolution and mutation in the city and compare its use between various buildings throughout history.

For these reasons, the scope of this thesis revolves around earthenware. Accordingly, the urban environment offers a particularly important “collection” which employs earthenware as a building and decorative material. Consequently, in the urban context, I encountered a wide range of bricks, tiles, and roof tiles as well as other related materials culturally connected to earthenware.

The historical use of bricks in the Finnish capital provides an overall impression of the evolution of this material and its cultural and stylistic features. According to the Finnish art historian Riitta Nikula (1993), the usage and manufacture of bricks in Finland was historically rare and expensive and became widespread only during the mid-18th century (pp. 28 & 55). The slow but steady utilisation of bricks was from the Middle Ages first utilised for detailing work, such as window jambs, pillars, and portals, and in defensive or ecclesiastic buildings (Nikula, 1993, p. 13). Around the 18th century, this material became common in towns for the construction of the first residential buildings; however, it was only during the 19th-century that brick production faced a turning point thanks to the industrial revolution, which quickly implemented and mechanised brick manufacturing and consequently its use reached a peak (Kuokkanen & Leiponen, 1981, as cited in Eklund, 2008, p. 141).

The evolution of the brick, which spans from mediaeval times until now, is not only confined to theoretical and historical studies but, on the contrary, can be still accessed today, by simply visiting the city of Helsinki and its neighbourhoods. Since many of the buildings spanning from this period still stand. Consequently, by admiring these historical constructions, it is possible to have an essential notion of the methods in which earthenware was used throughout history as well as to compare the changes in roles, different statuses, and cultural perceptions of this material throughout the ages.

However, in addition to the aesthetic qualities, the physical composition of bricks with their structural quality and resistance to the ravages of time can also explain the preference of the choice towards this material. Generally speaking, the manufacture of bricks began together with their use. The typical Finnish red clay, found in the majority of Finnish soils, constitutes an optimal source for brickmaking.

For this purpose, the lean glacial clay, which was deposited in the bottoms of bodies of water during the ice age, has been found to be the most suitable (Eklund & Mentu, 2004). Once the fragile, raw, and grey clay body is fired in, its physical structure mutates and acquires strength, solidity, and a warm dark orange tone as it turns into ceramics. Among the many physical characteristics of the now formed brick, frost resistance is one of the most vital for the nordic climate; however, in specific environmental conditions, such as variations in temperature, wind, and humidity, as well as a large amount of water absorbed, the durability of the brick together with its disadvantageous porosity may result in frost deterioration (Nieminen & Romu, 1988, p. 103).

While these physical properties can usually be considered just natural and normal features of the life and decay of bricks, in my research they identify the passage of time and historicity of the material. For example, the erosion process happening on the surface of a brick façade can express, in contrast to the one of other buildings, the condition and lifetime of the building. Such qualities of earthenware and bricks support and stimulate the historical aesthetic development of buildings, but they also directly suggest their relationship with time through their materiality.

The analysis of the material becomes one of the most relevant traits of the thesis, which is a knowledge that is developed through observation in situ, and on the reflections sprouted during the process of visiting several buildings. As the British anthropologist Tim Ingold (2013) underlines, in the study of material culture, the overwhelming focus has been mainly on finished objects; however, the attention should be also directed towards the productive processes of the materials and the sensory awareness of the practitioners (p. 7). Moreover, he continues by arguing that it is in the engagement

with the material that the practitioner understands the way in which things are made (p. 20). Thus, this engagement is ideally something active and dynamic, made possible only through physical and direct experiences.

Therefore, the understanding of the material becomes the key to accessing the essence of an artefact, which in my case takes the shape of an architecture. Following this concept, my research method is grounded in the direct assessment of buildings and is acknowledged as an active and growing learning process.

The knowledge produced during the visits to the building is uniquely subjective since it is filtered and interpreted through the body of the practitioner. For this reason, the artefacts studied are not a product of a historical narrative or the result of someone else's study but, on the contrary, they become intertwined together with the practitioner's curiosity. A knowledge that keeps evolving, experience after experience.

Throughout the thesis, I describe these processes of encountering architecture and the way in which the material spoke and connected me to a heritage hereto not experienced.

6.

Explorations in the municipality of Helsinki

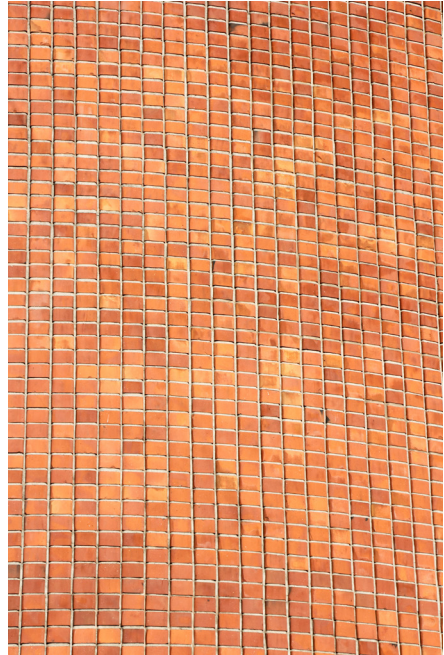
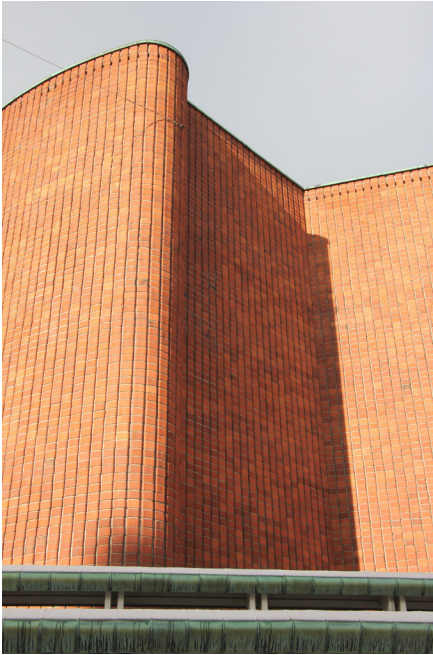
In this chapter, I introduce my practice of encountering architecture by discussing my visits to several historical buildings in the municipality of Helsinki. The rendition of the explorations is enriched by the photographic documentation of the sites and by the transcribed reflections gained from the encounters. The sites are illustrated chronologically, following the series of investigations I conducted between the months of February and March 2022.

Definitely, the aesthetic architectural features analysed helped me to develop a solid mental construct of the historical development of earthenware-related architecture in Helsinki. Moreover, the variety of the historical buildings exemplified the existence of multiple intertwined histories that can be concretely experienced in the present. Thus, the knowledge I gained from the visits was not superficial and abstract but embodied and lived through my own direct experiences.

On 18 February, 2022, I initiated my research from Kulttuuritalo (translated the House of Culture). This building, designed as a concert/venue hall by the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, was completed in 1958, and it is situated at the beginning of one of the main streets of Helsinki, Sturenkatu 4 (Malmberg, n.d.). As soon as I arrived at the location, I felt struck by its monumentality, a solid yet dynamic plasticity in space composed of innumerable bricks [fig. 1; fig. 2]. In this building, I was most fascinated by the designer's attention, who did not only focus on the overall structure but also reached down to cellular detail. Hence, here it is represented by the customization of regular bricks into wedge-shaped ones [fig. 3]. Designed by Aalto, these tailor-made bricks influence the whole construction and make possible the soft, sculptural curvature that distinguishes the continuous facade of Kulttuuritalo.

During my visit, I acknowledged the way in which the wedge bricks are not considered mere modules, but instead, they are the core aspect that leads to the appreciation and characteristic charm of the building. Their importance, understood as historical and treasured objects, is also recognised and shared among the members of the staff. For example, it can be seen in the way in which the bricks are utilised in the cafeteria Sture4 inside of Kulttuuritalo, where several of them are not only displayed in the space similarly to artworks but are also used as stands for presenting the food [fig. 4]. The creative application of such construction material made me realise the way in which the building is lived and perceived among the staff as something important, valuable, and greatly appreciated.

A similar interpretation of the building is also represented by the nearby 1960 sculpture of Wäinö Aaltonen—Builder's Hand—which depicts the hand of the designer holding the entire building of Kulttuuritalo [fig. 5]. If the symbol, on the one hand, indicates the ability of the constructor to master

**FIG. 1****FIG. 2**

Depicted in the pictures are the details of the curvature and tessellation of the facade of Kulttuuritalo. The subtle nuances of oranges on the bricks create a pleasant melange of warm colours, adding vividness and dynamicity to the unusual shape of the building.



FIG. 3	FIG. 4
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The wedge-shaped bricks were specially designed for Kulttuuritalo by Alvar Aalto. It is possible to have a close look and admire them in the in-house cafe, where they are displayed all over on the countertop and tables.

FIG. 5

In the picture below, the Builder's Hand, a sculpture by Wäinö Aaltonen, welcomes visitors to experience the building.

so many technical aspects, it might, on the other hand, also suggest a humble act of consigning the building to the care and interpretation of someone else.

My experience of the modernity of Kulttuuritalo was soon interrupted by another visit I made on the same day, which is the buildings complex of the Herttoniemen kartano. Situated in the neighbourhood of Herttoniemi, the kartano (translated manor) is characterised by several wooden houses and a major imperial style building. The latter covered various purposes throughout the centuries until 1925 when it became a museum.

The history of the Herttoniemen kartano is quite varied. It is documented that its origin dates back to the middle age when several allodium estates were built (“History of Herttonäs Manor,” n.d.). A radical change happened during the mid-16 century, when an earthenware factory, as well as kilns, stood in the southern part of the property, where plates, pots, tiles, and dishes were produced and brought to the market in Helsinki (Ahl-Waris, 2020). In 1815 the manor was acquired by Carl Olof Cronstedt, the main building of the factory was moved, restyled, and converted to an imperial style house as we see it today (Ahl-Waris, 2020).

During my visit to Herttoniemen kartano, the Knusbacka farmstead caught my attention. It dates back to 1777 and was brought into the manor from Sipoo (Ahl-Waris, 2020). Moreover, the farmstead is built with the typical log technique and is characterised by brick chimneys. However, traditional Finnish estates did not usually have chimneys but rather a hole in the ceiling through which the smoke is drawn out (Nikkinen & Morton, 2020). In Knusbacka farmstead, the presence of chimneys suggests the way in which bricks slowly started to spread during the

18th century. Thus they became a more common and affordable building material that improved the Finnish living conditions. Similarly, the 19th century houses of the former workers of the manor, situated closeby, are also built with logs but differently from those of the farmstead; these houses are painted with a typical red paint, in Finnish called Punamulta maali (literally translated Red soil paint) [fig. 8; fig. 9].

It is generally believed that the practice of painting houses with the traditional of punamulta, originally from Sweden, was intended to produce an impression similar to the red brick buildings which were considered more prestigious and luxurious than the wooden ones (Nikula, 1993, p. 23). In my mind, the relationship between wood and bricks highlighted the way in which people from different social statuses perceived materials. For example, by simply implying red paint on a barn, a Finnish farmer could show and apparently associate himself with a higher social rank. The imitation of the status of brick buildings resurfaced in my research in my next place of interest, the island of Seurasaari.

The renowned island, located on the western outskirts of the Helsinki city centre, is an open-air museum in which it is possible to admire a collection of traditional Finnish buildings that were discovered across Finland and brought to Seurasaari, in order to save and protect them from destruction and weather decay. This process of relocation, started around 1909, with Niemelän Torppa (translated Niemelä crofter's farm), a building discovered in central Finland by the artist Akseli Gallen-Kallela and architect Yrjö Blomstedt; it became possible thanks to the professor Axel O. Heikel who purchased the building and several subsequent ones and established the romantic island museum as we see it today (Nikula, 1993, p. 19). During my visit, on 25 February, 2022, I wanted to concentrate on the analysis of the typical red paint used as surface



FIG. 6

In the Herttoniemen kartano, the typical wooden construction of the Knusbacka farmstead is improved by the presence of a couple of brick chimneys.

FIG. 7



FIG. 8

FIG. 9

During my visit to the Herttoniemen kartano, I had the possibility to closely inspect the typical red paint and construction styles that characterise the wooden houses of the manor. It is possible to glimpse several layers of paint that have been spread on the surface of the walls over the years.

treatment for the traditional log houses. In my opinion, the connection between the punamulta maali and bricks, with its historical and cultural perceptions, and tensions is best expressed in the area by the Jusupoff Stable [fig. 10]. This 1842, wooden building was originally located in Kaivopuisto and was an integral part of the summer residence of the Russian princess Zenaida Jusupoff. The stable, which presents a neo-gothic style, consisted of one room, a carriage shed, a horse stable, and a hayloft (Tiilikka, 2014, pp. 2–6). The whole stable is painted with the typical red paint, and its facade is embellished with a white geometric pattern that clearly resembles a bricked wall [fig. 11]. Here, the relationship between red paint and bricks is not only suggested but evidently shown and expressed. Even though this paint is not made out of earthenware, I believe it can be understood anyway as an active and crucial element that developed with time a relevant position inside the heritage of earthenware buildings, side by side with brick architecture.

I experienced another similar semiological clash during my fourth exploration on 27 March, 2022, when I decided to visit another significant brick building of the Finnish capital, the Uspenskin katedraali (translated Uspenski cathedral) [fig. 12]. The renowned orthodox cathedral, situated in the Katajanokka district, is considered the biggest temple in northern and western Europe. Designed by the architect Aleksei Gornostajev, the temple was completed in 1868 when Finland was a grand duchy of the Russian Empire (Orthodox parish of Helsinki, 2019).

The aspect that surprised me most about this building is that its bricks came from the fortress of Bomarsund located in the Åland islands, then a part of Russia, which was attacked and destroyed in 1854 by the British and French in the Battle of Bomarsund during the Crimean War [fig. 13]. These bricks, which were carried all the way to Helsinki, are

more than just a mere construction material, thus they become historically charged and culturally valuable as they might act as a sort of medium of remembrance for the soldiers fallen in war. In this construction, the material is a vehicle of history that becomes reinvented and reinterpreted into a building with an opposite function and meaning.

The reflections sprouted by these encounters express the variety and complexity of our present. Whilst these might appear chaotic and confusional, they highlight, on the contrary, a richer reality that too often remains unnoticed. For example, the visit to Kulttuuritalo surprised me by showing many unexpected details and aspects I would have never experienced by not going there. The action of reaching these places enabled me to discover many new meanings, features, and histories from buildings that would instead remain anonymous for a foreigner.

**FIG. 10****FIG. 11**

The facade of the Jusupoff Stable, a building from the summer residence of the Russian princess Zenaida Jusupoff, appears to be made out of bricks. However, a closer inspection reveals that it is a log building painted in a pattern that looks like brickwork.



FIG. 12 **FIG. 13**

During the visit to Uspenskin katedraali on 27 March 2022, I remained fascinated by the skilful use of bricks. Aside from being used as construction materials, these bricks were also reshaped and restyled for decorative purposes and embellishments.

7.

A material encounter

The action of reaching a place and analysing its aesthetic features generates knowledge and awareness in the practitioner. On the one hand, it is the curiosity and sensibility that encourage the practitioner to investigate architecture. On the other hand, architecture can influence and attract the attention of practitioners through its materiality. The British field archaeologist Matt Edgeworth (2012) argues that together with the theories that are applied to analyse an artefact, there is also the corresponding emergence of the material of the object that shapes the perception of its encounter (p. 77). He follows by saying that the encounter happens with the material, and, from it, a new form of knowledge is produced re-combining and influencing the existing ideas of the practitioner. I realised this feature during my visits when, after the careful analysis and experience of the aesthetic qualities of the buildings, the sites were somehow speaking to me through their physical condition.

During the assessment of the architectures, I was able to perceive the signs and passage of time through the material that constituted them. Other than manifesting on their surface: scratches, marks, and visible deterioration, I noticed the presence of several fragments and fallen pieces around the perimeter of these buildings [fig. 14–16]. These findings triggered a particular feeling that pushed me to understand and get closer to the history of these architectures through the materiality of these fragments.

I argue that the action of walking, reaching a location, and collecting samples made me interested in researching something that otherwise would remain hidden from me. Consequently, throughout these visits, apparently anonymous buildings suddenly became available to me as valuable snapshots of history and their fragments as direct evidence of their fragile condition in the present. Carolyn Korsmeyer (2019), argues that the thrill and wonder evoked by artefacts from the past is heightened when the practitioner becomes aware that they present a moment of history in front of us (p. 28). Similarly, my sensations while picking fragments made me aware of the concrete possibility of holding history in my hands and the awe of participating in it.

My emphasis on the materiality of architecture stresses the attention toward the fact that materials, and especially earthenware, manifest permanent signs of the passage of time. This feature helps to perceive heritage as something not only inherited from past generations but also a phenomenon that can be analysed through the direct assessment of artefacts. Moreover, when encountered, architecture suddenly emerges from an anonymous and overlooked scenery, becoming a unique manifestation of the signs of its past. By reaching the location of these buildings, their specific history becomes situated and contextualised, offering the practitioner a tangible heritage experience that no museum can provide.

**FIG. 14**

During the visit to Kulttuuritalo on 18 February 2022, I found several fragments around the perimeter of the building. Their bright orange colour and irregular sharp shape present a slight curvature derived from the wedge bricks designed by Alvar Aalto.

**FIG. 15**

Similarly, also during the visits to the Herttoniemen kartano on 18 February 2022, I found fragments fallen from the buildings. In particular, on the left side of the image are a few findings of wooden pieces from the houses of the former workers of the manor. On them, traces of red paint, punamulta maali, is still evident. However, in the top-right corner of the image, there is a fragment of a broken earthenware pot. I wonder if it comes from the old earthenware factory that stood at the manor during the 16th century.



FIG. 16

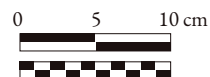
On 25 February 2022, during my excursion to Seurasaari, I found fragments of wood and red paint. Abandoned in the bushes of the forest of the Island, I discovered an arrow-shaped element that fascinated me particularly. Unfortunately, despite many investigations and research, I could not determine the origin of the artefact.



FIG. 17

The visit on 27 march 2022 to the Uspenskin katedraali surprised me with many fragments. This building, among the other visited buildings, suffered the most from the weather conditions. It is possible to see along its perimeter stains of red brick dust and many small fragments. Touching these pieces is fascinating, especially when I think they come from the destroyed fortress of Bomarsund.

FRAGMENTS SCALE 1:5



8.

The practice of experiencing architecture

The visits described in the previous chapters motivated me to further analyse and reflect on various aspects connected to this practice in a way that could be considered a valid and structured research method. Such aspects are the relevance of structuring a practice for analysing architecture and the way in which the direct encounter generates knowledge embedded in the practitioner's experience. Moreover, the careful inspection of buildings can develop a deep emotional bond and attachment over time.

During an online meeting, the Finnish architect and theoretician Juhani Pallasmaa encouraged all the students to directly experience architecture (personal communication, 13 May, 2022). In the statement, he emphasised the importance of the physical encounter with a building which is lived and felt by the whole visitor's body, rather than merely studying it from books. This modality of understanding architecture involves a

direct relationship between architecture and the practitioner who, immersed in the space, perceives with all the senses together and with several different peripheral feelings, moods, and sensations. Furthermore, the physical experience with buildings, following this concept, becomes not generalised, filtered by someone else's voice, but deeply embedded in the practitioner that feels through their own body the current condition of the construction and its surroundings. Being in a physical space involves a whole series of perceptions that is impossible to acquire in any other manner. Different from the teachings of history of art or architecture classes, in which history is considered a collection of styles and shapes merely situated in the visual culture, the physical assessment of buildings, on the contrary, brings the acquired knowledge to a whole embodied level. Pallasmaa (2018), following this argument, asserts that a theory of architecture per se is impossible and useless, since architecture is tied to the iterative and embodied experience rather than theoretical notions (p. 10). The practitioner or the visitor becomes the catalyst of the energies of the architecture, which are absorbed, felt, and only after the experience, processed mentally. Therefore, architecture, which is a place specifically designed for human scale and proportions, becomes meaningless without a person able to experience and understand it.

The Finnish philosopher Arto Haapala, whose ideas are grounded in phenomenological thinking, outlines an aesthetic of the everyday based on the experience and interpretation of a place. Haapala (2005) well explains that when entering an environment, the interpretation of its spaces is not a primarily conscious search for meanings but, instead, an action of living, roaming in the space and creating a connection between what is seen and encountered; it is an action that takes place on a practical level rather than theoretical (pp. 46–47). Therefore, he continues, the interpretation of a place is an almost automatic, even instinctive action of making sense and adapting

ourselves in the spaces; it is carried out by the structural features of the environment, infrastructures, and artefacts embedded in the buildings, which suggest our movements within and reading of the spaces. For example, a door suggests being opened or closed. Moreover, our previous life experiences shape as well the modality in which our perception understands certain features of the spaces by considering details that are meaningful to us. Haapala (2005) describes it as an interpretation by an existence that is unique to each individual, and one that deeply influences our movements according to our history of past experiences that happened during our lives (p. 47).

A building can suggest our movements in its spaces, our sensations in the appreciation of its particular features, and our background in the way we perceive certain ambience. However, if it is true that the experience lies in a practice more than a theory, the individual who studies the building should, therefore, be a particularly attentive translator of these signs and be aware of these conditions. If a physical experience is used to study a particular building, this experience should be carried out actively and consciously. Only an attentive practitioner, through the experience, can construct together with the building a deep emotional connection. The practice of experiencing architecture is an active personal experience on the way in which it touches the soul and senses of the practitioner. It becomes an emotional practice that binds the practitioner to the building and creates a new personal history, rather than sourcing from an already written one. Moreover, the emotional connection is directly proportional to the experience, effort, and time spent in the location. Thus, it is more likely that only after several sessions in a specific site is it possible to develop connections that are relevant to the practitioner. However, we should not exclude the fact that the immediate encounter with a particular architecture can strike and deeply touch the soul of the practitioner, but as often happens

with different learning processes, the physical experience of architecture also enriches with time, evolving from a superficial encounter to a solid, deep connection.

According to my personal experience, the perception of a building changes radically with time. If, in the beginning, the experience while roaming in the spaces felt similar to a touristic visit, this sensation faded during the subsequent visits when I spent more time understanding the features of the location. Moreover, the commitment to live and occupy the spaces is crucial in identifying and mastering the structural and visual details of a building. It is also fundamental to nourish the emotional connection with the site and perhaps even understand the particular needs that the locations might have.

As the emotional connection with a building evolves with time through experience, our first feeling of strangeness mutates into a sensation of attachment and care. Haapala (2005) suggests that the emotional relation contributes to making a place dear to us and part of our essence (p. 49). Definitely, attachment and care, in relation to the experience, as well as being exclusively subjective, also express vicinity and closeness to the architecture. Our body and its physicality bond the experience to the location and allow the practitioner to interact with it.

9.

Living the building

The physical engagement and material interaction with the architecture of the Finnish capital area allowed me to outline a method for getting closer to a distant and unknown heritage. Hence, by reaching a location, analysing its aesthetic and material features, and reflecting on my lived experiences, it was possible for me to encounter the Finnish earthenware heritage. Moreover, my physical vicinity to this heritage enabled me to develop a deep emotional bond.

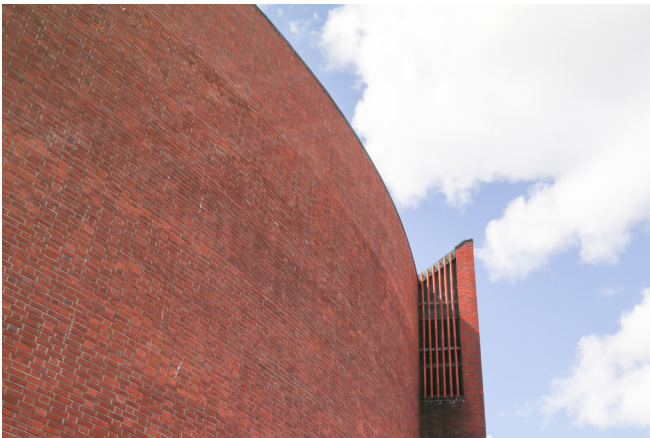
The information gathered from the previously discussed visits, such as their historical and aesthetic aspects, condition and materials, turned out very valuable. However, reflecting on my experience soon stimulated me to develop this practice further, interested in other possible outcomes. Consequently, I decided to uniquely focus on an additional building, which I often run into, although without ever paying too much attention to it, the Undergraduate Centre in Otaniemi.

The building has many similarities with the antecedent ones. It is made entirely out of bricks, belongs to a protected historical site, and consists of multiple extensions constructed in different epochs and by different architects. However, the aspect that makes it preferred to the others is its location. The advantage of being more easily accessible and reachable allowed me to spend more time on its premises, establish a weekly routine of visits, and consequently develop a much closer bond and emotional attachment to its spaces.

Kandidaattikeskus (translated Undergraduate Centre) located in Otakaari 1, Otaniemi, Espoo, designed by Alvar Aalto was completed in 1964. The building previously hosted the Helsinki University of Technology, now Aalto University, and represents a landmark of the Otaniemi Campus. Moreover, since its construction, various extensions and renovations have been implemented to further develop the building. The most relevant developments have been the design of a new wing, realised by Elissa Aalto in 1975, and an important renovation by Architects NRT in 2015, which optimised the whole construction without forgetting its historical and protected status. This improvement earned the building the Barrier-Free Finland (Esteetön Suomi) award (“Undergraduate centre,” 2018).

The most peculiar aspect that first attracted me to the Undergraduate Centre was the amount of red bricks. This construction material covers and runs through the whole building. It becomes the common denominator for highlighting the variety of shapes and volumes of the architecture.

Among the many spaces, the most impressive is, indeed, the auditorium, high and fan-shaped, imposing itself on one of the hills of the campus, dominating the area similarly to a mountain [fig. 18]. Its long, rounded wall becomes the screen or background for the surrounding nature,

**FIG. 18**

The auditorium of the Undergraduate Centre in Otaniemi dominates the campus, becoming a fascinating landmark. Its unusual shape, a conical section composed of innumerable bricks, characterises the surrounding environment, imposing itself like a mountain.

FIG. 19



FIG. 20 **FIG. 21**

FIG. 22

The Undergraduate Centre, with its many different wings and floors, creates a maze-like structure which extends widely throughout the campus. The upper right image shows white marble covering the architecture department. Despite the highly geometric shapes of the architectural volumes, nature gently surrounds the building and creates a dynamic optical interplay of organic shadows.

while its inner area, covered in steps like an amphitheatre, is a place for aggregation or reflection for the students [fig. 19]. Furthermore, among the many wings of the building which are covered with red bricks, the architecture department shows a peculiar difference since its facades are of white marble [fig. 20–22]. This might be a curious statement of Aalto himself, who wanted to highlight his dedication to the field.

My first visit to this building during the research was on 10 March, 2022. The dimension and complexity of the spaces made the exploration probably one of the longest, but despite its maze-like structure, I managed to extensively explore the exteriors and spent several hours mapping the interiors. The entanglement of the building is also reflected by the diversity of the rooms, laboratories, lecture halls, as well as workshops, photography studios, libraries, and many other spaces hidden all around.

When I was outside on the terrace of the fifth floor of the U-wing (Uusi siipi, translated New wing), I noticed on the roof the presence of a copper dome [fig. 23]. Immediately it came to my mind that the mysterious semi-sphere could be the vault of an observatory. Since there is no mention of an observatory in Otakaari 1, I decided to investigate and determine its actual function. After many denied requests from the Aalto staff and lobby services, the School of Science technology manager and Undergraduate Centre building officer, Mr. Kenrick Bingham kindly offered to help my cause. After explaining to me his expertise and knowledge about this building, which he has gained after more than 30 years of work, he volunteered to inspect the mysterious dome together. During our meeting, he confirmed my hypothesis and explained that the room in question (room n° Y502) is an actual observatory; nevertheless, for various reasons, it has never been used since its construction [fig. 24–26]. Its history goes back to the foundation of the campus when Alvar Aalto, during the design of the building,



FIG. 23

The top picture depicts the copper dome that characterises the exterior of the observatory in the Undergraduate Centre. It is interesting to notice the openable roof door that would allow a telescope to point out to the night sky.

FIG. 24 **FIG. 25** **FIG. 26**

However, in the pictures below, a sequence of images portrays the internal appearance of the room. Circularity, impeccable white, and an engine with pulleys reveal the mechanics of the structure.

thought that an observatory would be a necessity for a university campus such as Otaniemi (Kenrich Bingham, personal communication, 14 March, 2022). Bingham continues that although Otaniemi is not considered an optimal spot for looking at the night sky, due to its light pollution and location, many people have tried to repair the rotating and openable dome. However, none of the attempts ended successfully. As a result the room is now totally abandoned and inaccessible. The access to this untouched space, with its uncommon emptiness and circularity, instantly connected me to the time of the foundation of the Campus, to the mind of the designer, and consequently to his expectations and dreams.

If, on the one hand, the visit made me acknowledge something that would otherwise remain hidden, on the other hand, the uncovering of this secret sprouted another parallel sensation of preserving something destined to change, fade or perhaps even disappear. Similarly to the observatory, which has been protected through its abandonment, Kenrich Bingham brought me to another room particularly dear to him: a very small and intimate library (MS Kirjasto, Y231) located in the maths department. This room has been saved, thanks to the pressures from both students and staff, from a radical renovation plan that would have turned it into a kitchen (Kenrich Bingham, personal communication, 14 March, 2022).

These experiences in the two spaces, the observatory and the library, exemplify a specific and intimate relationship between physical space and individuals; an energy-like connection which is possible to perceive and intercept by attentive and sensible eyes. Consequently, as argued by Pallasmaa (1999), an architecture, which is usually understood as a visual syntax, can also be conceived through a system of human situations and encounters (p. 4). The access and confrontation of these lived experiences, personal insight, and memories keep an artefact alive

and operative, extending its lifetime and updating its meaning to the future. In fact, it may be argued that the aspect that turns them into historical objects is forgetting them as present items of use (Olsen, 2010, p. 104). Mistakenly, the physical rigidity of architecture makes us perceive a building as an unalterable and not influenceable solid. However, I have experienced that the human network inside buildings makes architecture behave similarly to a living body, prone to changes and adaptation. The practice of repetitively visiting the Undergraduate Centre shaped my sensitivity, allowing me to establish a pleasant sense of familiarity and attachment with its spaces. Moreover, after approaching this building multiple times, it became possible to generate new knowledge, memories and experiences that nurtured a more personal and perhaps authentic understanding of its history and nature.

10.

Accidental archaeology

Whether the visits to the interior spaces highlighted experiential traits and memories, the careful exploration of the exterior premises differentiated the Undergraduate Centre from the buildings previously encountered in the municipality of Helsinki. During the frequent inspections of this building, while roaming outside following its perimeter, I encountered many fragments that fell from the external walls. These chips that I later organised and catalogued by size, date, and exact location where I picked them, soon started to attract me, particularly because of their quantity. In fact, even though I found few fragments in proximity to the other visited buildings in Helsinki, the number of the ones surrounding the Undergraduate Centre encouraged me to develop a weekly activity to gather them all [fig. 27–37].

Even though these fragments could look, at first sight, like anonymous broken pieces, their presence expresses and represents, on the contrary, a relevant opportunity to get in

touch with the past. Carolyn Korsmeyer (2019), a philosopher whose research focuses on aesthetics and emotional theory, explains the way in which a fragment, despite being a partial and damaged piece of original material, is anyway able to bring the past into awareness with vivid immediacy (p. 184). In fact, the materiality of a fragment inevitably creates an extension and a link with the initial artefact, a connection which is often possible to intercept for retrieving its source.

With the practice of gathering fragments, I had the possibility to link myself with the life of the building and somehow participate in its history. It is more than just a theoretical concept. It is a tangible practice that can be perceived through touch by handling fragments. Moreover, the tactile feeling not only demonstrates the physical quality of the fragment but also poses attention to the bodily dimension of the encounter. In my case, being able to touch meant being close enough to reach and collect the piece and consequently recognise the place where I stood. For this reason, the location reminds me that encounters with the past are often an active exploration of places; not just visiting historical objects but also getting as near as possible to where something happened (Korsmeyer, 2019, p. 194).

The amount and materiality of the broken brick pieces and, consequently, their direct connection to the history and location of the building transformed my perception of the research. Hence, from a dynamic engagement with architecture, the practice evolved towards an accidental archaeology. I identify this term as the spontaneous learning process while handling brick fragments during the encountering process of a building. Therefore, collecting fragments, understood as a conscious action, unexpectedly highlighted the relevance of the practice for investigating the present condition of the architecture through the number of pieces gathered from the Undergraduate Centre.

In this context, the term accidental is not intended as unintentional or unessential but poses attention to the action of encountering a building. In fact, the search for meanings and knowledge is not immediately evident when visiting architecture but is an experiential process of meeting and getting to know each other. This process involves reflecting on the experience, and in my case, this was crucial for identifying and realising the features that impressed me most. Hence, the tactile qualities of the fragments, with their diverse shape, sharpness, and sizes, suddenly brought the monumental size of a building into the palm of a hand. They redimensioned and synthesised the earthenware heritage into a small archaeological finding. In my view, fragments represent both a loss for the building since they challenge its integrity, but also an intimate opportunity to acknowledge architecture through its deterioration process. After gathering all the fragments I could find, the many broken pieces added up to an entire box. Among the thoughts that crossed my head, I sure wondered about the possibility of filling back all the empty gaps and replenishing the entire Undergraduate Centre. The thought, even though paradoxical, made me realise the way in which the accidental archaeology created a deep emotional connection with the building and, therefore, an intimate awareness of the earthenware heritage.

Moreover, another aspect related to archaeology is that it is commonly associated with terms such as discovery, stratigraphy and excavation. On the contrary, in my practice of accidental archaeology, I mainly concentrate on the surface or ground. The conceptual and practical difference between archaeology as excavation and as surface lies in their perception towards the past. Where the first one identifies the past as buried and hidden, the second one sees it as readily available and deeply intertwined in the present. The archaeologist Julian Thomas argues that the normative idea of archaeology, oriented towards depths, concealment, and mystery, is quite obstructive since it

emphasises the distinction between present and past and the need to discover the past in some specific way (Thomas, 2004, p. 170). Additionally, in my case, as explained by Rodney Harrison (2013), professor of Heritage Studies at the UCL Institute of Archaeology, the surface, which is not intended as a diminutive or derogatory term, could serve as a metaphor for a present that is still in the midst of becoming, a space that combines past, present, and future together (p. 47). Thus, he continues by saying that an archaeology of the surface can be understood as a creative act with the present and spaces in which the past is visible.

The surface, or in my case the ground, hosts a multitude of agents and features that belong to different times, which assemble, cluster, or mix up, highlighting this complex mesh of pasts in the present. The practice of working with the surface, for me as gathering fragments, becomes an act of exploration in and of the present, consisting of identifying and collecting features that the building has lost over time. This act can be described as a reflective practice to understand the condition of the building and become aware of its state. In fact, the accomplishment of a practice, as in this case gathering fragments, can bring to light features that otherwise would not be noticed or remain overlooked (Schön, 1984, p. 54).

The accidental archaeology also drew attention to the different meanings of fragments, from the ones of buildings/ artefacts still standing, to the ones of artefacts now disappeared. Following this concept, picking a fragment fallen from the Undergraduate Centre, which is a fully functional and operative building, has a diametrically opposed meaning to discover the remains of an ancient artefact that no longer exists. In other words, whereas the latter is the discovery of the last and perhaps unique remains of an artefact and, therefore, a sign that it once existed, a fragment of something still standing represents the “first” discovery of something that one day might vanish or turn

into a ruin. Accordingly, in accidental archaeology, through the practice of gathering “freshly” fallen fragments, I find myself in the middle of a process of transition, documenting an evident deterioration of a building. The building suddenly becomes an hourglass, extremely fragile yet standing, and these fragments are the evidence of it.

The common idea of architecture is permanence. Once it is completed, a building should hold for eternity. Yet, buildings are part of the world; their fixed and final form ceaselessly unfolds along different paths of growth, decay and degeneration regardless of any human attempts (Ingold, 2013, p.48). During the encountering process of the Alvar Aalto’s building through my accidental archaeology, I developed an emotional connection with the design choices, mindset, and atmospheres of the spaces. However, perceiving the architecture from its fragments made me realise, not the urgency of its preservation, but rather the importance of interpretation and collaboration with this heritage. In fact, the action of scanning the surface and gathering fragments worked as a process of discovery of the actual condition of the building, rather than accepting and taking for granted notions most of the time enlarged or mythicised. The direct experience with heritage became a gradual learning process, where knowledge grew together with the person, focusing on aspects that actually mattered to the practitioner. This entire practice of visiting architecture and gathering fragments turned out to be a very relevant learning experience. In fact, it unfolded in front of me a heritage I was not aware of and allowed me to participate in it by assessing and empathising with its fragile condition. Definitely, the relationship with the heritage transformed my perceptions of earthenware, and architecture became, to some extent, transformed by this mutual engagement.

5

The term accidental archaeology was suggested by my advisor Max Rynnänen to describe my practice. The term is also used in archaeology as the unexpected finding of historical artefacts that lead to an archaeological discovery (Abi, 2019, p. 79).

**FIG. 27**

The first gathered fragments from the Undergraduate Centre during the excursion on 10 March 2022. These pieces originate from specific earthenware bricks with a cylindrical form. It is possible to find these bricks also in other Aalto buildings, such as Kulttuuritalo. I believe these elements could be earthenware pipes used in this context as a specific construction or decorative feature. Below is the picture of the place of the finding, near the entrance of the Y-wing [fig. 27.1 & 27.2].

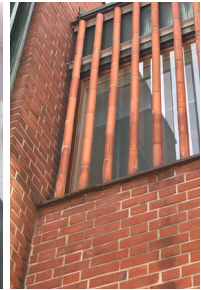
**FIG. 27.1****FIG. 27.2**



FIG. 28

On the evening of 28 April 2022, after heavy rain, I found a handful of big pieces fallen from the auditorium's inner wall [fig. 28.1 & 28.2]. The occasion triggered the development of accidental archaeology and my desire to collect all the fragments I could find. All pieces found around the Undergraduate Centre's auditorium are collected on this page.



FIG. 28.1



FIG. 28.2

FIG. 29

FRAGMENTS SCALE 1:5





FIG. 30



FIG. 31



FIG. 32

On 13 May 2022, I executed the most extensive exploration in the Undergraduate Centre. I realised that an easier way to find fragments was to first look and detect any ruptures in the wall's bricks and then try to understand where the fragment might have fallen [fig. 32.1 & 32.2]. On these two pages, a collection of pieces from the terraces on the fifth floor of the U-wing just outside the Observatory's dome.



FIG. 33

FIG. 32.1

FIG. 32.2

FRAGMENTS SCALE 1:5

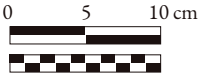




FIG. 34

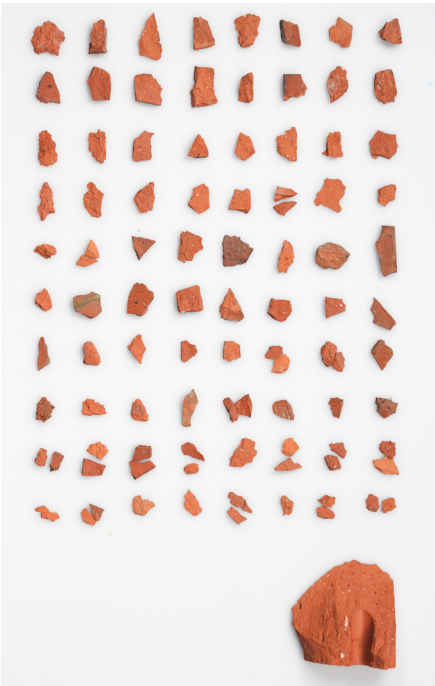


FIG. 35



FIG. 36

The following most exhaustive analysis of the premises of the Undergraduate Centre happened on 14 June 2022. Even though I followed more or less the same path of the previous explorations, I kept finding many other fragments [fig. 36.1 & 36.2].



FIG. 36.1

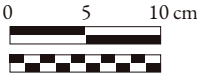


FIG. 36.2



FIG. 37

FRAGMENTS SCALE 1:5



11.

Findings

The thesis illustrated a journey and an approach that allowed me to dive into the Finnish earthenware heritage. The main goal was to establish a bond with this specific heritage, mostly because of my passion for the field of ceramics, but probably even more because, as a foreigner, I was not aware of the features that characterised it. Among the many aspects that I wanted to study, the materiality and tactile qualities of earthenware were surely the most important. My initial idea of earthenware heritage was entirely focused on the history of Finnish ceramic crafts, perhaps influenced by the history of the Arabia factory and the ancient-to-modern ceramic findings displayed in the National Museum of Finland. Already from the first steps, the research surprised and challenged my preconceived notion. On the one hand, theoretical studies integrated my lacking knowledge on the topic, revealing a much broader and complex field than I was imagining. On the other hand, the impossibility of handling and touching

the ceramic pieces, due to the protective measures of the visited institutions, forced me to seek a different environment that would allow me to experience the materiality of earthenware “on my skin”.

The city of Helsinki turned out to be the optimal location to discover and analyse the earthenware heritage, which in this context takes the shape of brick architecture. In fact, the urban environment hosts an impressive “collection” of historical brick buildings that, differently from a museal piece, can be touched, visited, and experienced without almost any constraint. Consequently, through the development of a practice of experiencing earthenware architecture, I tried to transcribe the aspects of encountering the particular heritage and describe the active, experiential, learning process.

The key point of the practice was reaching various locations, extensively analysing their premises, and assessing their condition. In the first part of the thesis, four historical sites (Kulttuuritalo, Herttoniemen kartano, Seurasaari open-air museum, Uspenskin katedraali) were examined. During these visits, the buildings appeared firstly through their materiality. Their physical presence immediately allowed me to interact with the site and awaken a series of sensory perceptions impossible to acquire through theoretical studies or pictures. Secondly, each building represented, through its own style, the mindset of the period when it was built, offering the opportunity to the practitioner to dive into that specific past and experience features now lost. Thirdly, by comparing the characteristics of the observed buildings, I could outline the aesthetic and stylistic development of brick architecture in the Finnish capital. In addition, while performing this investigation, I recognised aspects that normally would remain ignored or totally overlooked. An example that I extensively described in the thesis, was the way in which bricks expressed the passage of time; their

physical constitution deteriorates with weather agents, making bricks crack and chip off from the building. Finally, the practice of gathering fallen fragments enriched and complemented the practice of experiencing architecture, providing a clear hint of its history as well as a tangible link to the past of the building.

The second part of the thesis focused uniquely on the Undergraduate Centre, a building designed by Alvar Aalto, in Otaniemi, Espoo. In this section, I pushed even further the practice of experiencing architecture by introducing the notion of frequency and the way in which the perception of a building changes radically with time. Therefore, it transpired that the more frequent the visits and the time spent on the location, the greater the possibilities to acknowledge its features and history. The assessment of a location evolved with time into a solid, deep connection, reaching an emotional practice of attachment and care.

In the Undergraduate Centre, the action of searching and gathering fragments turned out surprisingly abundant, leading the practice towards an accidental archaeology. This activity functioned as a reflective practice to understand the condition of the building and become emotionally aware of its current state. The architecture, seen from its fallen pieces, became an hourglass. In the middle of this process of deterioration, I acknowledged and empathised with the extremely fragile yet still standing heritage.

12.

Conclusion

The development of the thesis enabled me, as the practitioner, to acknowledge the Finnish earthenware heritage and establish a deep emotional bond with brick architecture. The research created awareness of the features of this heritage, expanding the horizons and challenging my preconceived ideas. By structuring a practical journey of encountering brick architecture, I experienced the materiality of earthenware and embodied the history of several constructions of the Municipality of Helsinki and Espoo.

Thus, the action of reaching a place, mapping its surroundings, and closely studying buildings can allow the practitioner to acknowledge details, architectural features, and specific historical traits that in our everyday life would, instead, remain overlooked and unrecognised. For example, in this case, the physical qualities of bricks and their fragments made possible the study of the employment of earthenware

and its different social statuses across the history of the Finnish capital. As such, the dynamic nature of the practice can develop a strong knowledge grounded on lived experiences, creating a deep emotional bond with the artefacts. In this study, I, the practitioner, proactively encountered and opened a dialogue with the earthenware architecture, outlining a novel and vivid image of a heritage that previously felt unknown and unreachable.

Moreover, in this study, the encounter of several buildings highlighted the temporal and cultural dynamic relationship occurring in the present between architectures. While each building carries its unique history, the close analysis of multiple sites manifests a continuous dialogue of times in the present, which can be experienced through close attentiveness to their materials and spaces. Thus, the practitioner, through a direct engagement with architecture, has the opportunity to dive into a specific past and experience features belonging to different ages.

In this research, the direct encounter with architecture allowed me to acknowledge the actual condition of the buildings and extract notions unretrievable from theoretical studies or former historical descriptions. Therefore, in this study, the action of reaching a place provides a unique physical experience that involves a whole series of perceptions filtered through the body of the perceiver, as in this case, the practitioner. Hence, architecture was physically encountered rather than theoretically studied. It thus became not a product of a historical narrative or the result of someone else's voice but, on the contrary, embedded and intertwined with the practitioner's experience. As a valid method to access and bond with the Finnish earthenware heritage, this practice can be beneficial for other people and practitioners too, especially foreigners, by offering concrete help to get in touch with the Finnish earthenware tradition or even architecture as a whole.

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IMAGES

COVER PICTURE: Photo by Vertti Virasjoki. Canon EOS R (2 October, 2022). In the image, a miniature of the Undergraduate Centre created by Amedeo Martines with collected earthenware clay from Otaniemi.

FIG. 1–2: Photos by Amedeo Martines. Canon EOS 60D (18 February, 2022).

FIG. 3: Bricks designed by Alvar Aalto for the House of Culture (p. 274), from Colombo, F., & Kokkonen, V. (2018). *Man Matter Metamorphosis: 10000 Years of Design*. The National Museum of Finland.

FIG. 4: Photo by Amedeo Martines. Iphone SE 2nd generation (20 June, 2022).

FIG. 5: Photo by Amedeo Martines. Canon EOS 80D (20 June, 2022).

FIG. 6–9: Photos by Amedeo Martines. Canon EOS 60D (18 February, 2022).

FIG. 10–11: Photos by Amedeo Martines. Canon EOS 5D Mark II (25 February, 2022).

FIG. 12–13: Photos by Amedeo Martines. Canon EOS 5D Mark II (27 March, 2022).

FIG. 14–17: Photos by Amedeo Martines. Assistant: Xiao Li. Canon EOS 80D (17 August, 2022).

FIG. 18: Photos by Amedeo Martines. Canon EOS 5D Mark II (10 March, 2022).

FIG. 19: Photo by Amedeo Martines. Canon EOS 80D (13 May, 2022).

FIG. 20–23: Photos by Amedeo Martines. Canon EOS 5D Mark II (10 March, 2022).

FIG. 24–26: Photos by Amedeo Martines. Canon EOS 5D Mark II (15 March, 2022).

FIG. 27–37: Photos by Amedeo Martines. Assistant: Xiao Li. Canon EOS 80D (17 August, 2022).

FIG. 27.1–27.2: Photos by Amedeo Martines. Iphone SE 2nd generation (10 March, 2022).

FIG. 28.1–28.2: Photos by Amedeo Martines. Iphone SE 2nd generation (28 April, 2022).

FIG. 32.1–32.2: Photos by Amedeo Martines. Canon EOS 80D (13 May, 2022).

FIG. 36.1–36.2: Photos by Amedeo Martines. Iphone SE 2nd generation (14 June, 2022).

