



COLUMNS OF SMOKE ABOVE THE CRATER IN STROMBOLI PHOTO: SIMON FAIRBAIRN.

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ELEMENTAL CONDITIONS

Lecture by Josep Lluís Mateo

We are dealing with fire in a very specific spot: the island of Stromboli, Europe's last permanently active volcano. Here, we are going to relate to fire in three ways.

First, as a physical presence, as a phenomenon that can be intellectually analysed or sensually perceived. Through sight, we can see its ascending flames; through the skin, we feel its warming heat; through the nose, we smell its gaseous fumes and, through the ears, we hear the volcano groan or breathe, almost like a living being. Here, then, fire presents a permanent, holistic atmosphere, a complex organological condition.

Second, as a kind of material basis, for the earth is the direct product of the volcano, a frozen fire. When you attach your building to the ground, the rock will be dried lava, and the dust, the volcano's ashes. These things may not only be the support; they could also be the basic materials for building and imagining your structure.

Third, as a metaphorical connection with the sun, a permanent presence in the middle of the Mediterranean and a significant factor in the area's mythological culture. Having pointed out the intrinsic relation with the earth and the sun, on Stromboli fire will interact forcefully with the other elements: the water that surrounds the island with its reflections, horizon, changing colour, surface and movement, and the air, since Stromboli is part of the Aeolian archipelago. Aeolus, as you all probably know, was the god of the wind; this is a very windy location, directly confronting us with another energy. So, we are presented synthetically with different primitive energies which, from the very start, defined the world and architecture from the roots, at origin.

Notes by Florian Sauter