

the cathedrals of the 19th century. Clearly there is an extended list of words and phrases relating to architecture which suggests an impact on non-architectural thought and the usefulness of such analogies to convey common meanings.

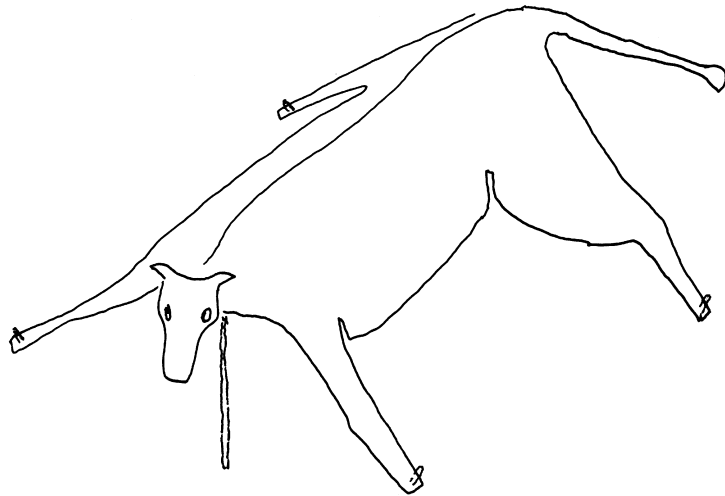
It is most important to distinguish any association between words used in everyday conversation with those with specific meanings in architecture from the suggestion that there is a general language of architecture as, for instance, used in John Summerson's title of his book *The Classical Language of Architecture* (1963). That is to ascribe to architecture the communicative powers of verbal language and therefore a very different proposition. Similarly it must not be confused with attempts to apply the concepts of linguistics to the analysis of architecture. Whether such attempts have validity is another matter and may, to some extent, hinge on whether or not the tools of verbal thinking are transferable to non-verbal thinking. That the rules of grammar may not be transferable has already been discussed in connection with Christopher Alexander *et al.*'s (1977) *Pattern Language*.

If by language we mean that there is a generally accepted correspondence between words and objects and concepts, then it may be possible to consider a similar correspondence between objects and objects as a visual language. I believe that this is what Joseph Rykwert has in mind when he makes comparisons between the upright human body and the orders of classical architecture (Rykwert, 1996). An argument that the column may be derived from the body – rather than a tree trunk, let us say – and to be a metaphor of that body is a comparison made in the visual realm. It can be discussed verbally after the column has been made but is not dependent on words for its creation. We do not assume that a group of elders came together and, after extended talk, agreed to make a column that mimicked the standing human figure.

The search for some relation between nature and architecture, and particularly that the origins of architecture should

Right
Animal skin on poles and
pegged down as tent

153



stem from nature, is not a recent pursuit. Antiquity gave gender characteristics to the orders – Doric masculine, Ionic feminine – and in the middle of the 18th century the Abbé Laugier writing his celebrated and influential *Essai sur l'architecture* attempted to derive the pediment from the intertwining branches of trees. Whether there is any truth to these connections is doubtful. As early man was not a forest dweller, it seems to me much more likely that the pediment is an echo of a tent made from an animal skin and three poles by hunters needing shelter. It may also be just possible that the animal head above the entrance to the tent had a reincarnation in the sculptural figures placed in the pediment. The search for roots in nature is of course part of the anxiety about the seemingly arbitrary and thus the necessity to find the ultimate, the true and only, source. The search for the fundamental is embedded in both the philosophical and the religious condition.