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# AUTONOMOUS ARCHITECTURE

the  
Harvard  
Architecture  
Review

Volume 3 Winter 1984

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Other Architecture  
Mark Mack

The Question of Autonomy in Architecture  
Liane Lefaivre  
Alexander Tzonis

From Abstraction to Symbolism and Back Again  
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# The Harvard Architecture Review

Volume 3 Winter 1984

## Autonomous Architecture

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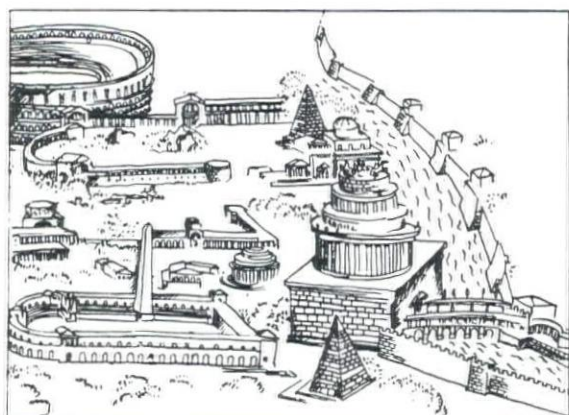
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# Autonomous Architecture



## Editorial

As the editors of issue number 3 of *The Harvard Architecture Review*, we are interested in the role of ideas in architecture, and we believe that any vital and relevant architecture relies on the prior development of theory. We can only add our belief that, once formulated, these ideas must be subjected to ongoing analysis and discussion if they are to sustain and support an ever-increasing, ever-changing body of work. Constant dialogue and debate can prevent devaluation and critical misunderstanding that may result from discontinuity between work and theory. Thus, the essays and projects that follow are presented to refocus attention on the ideas behind the images and to stress the interdependence of work and theory.

Although this magazine is thematic, the essays present different conceptions of autonomous architecture. Beyond the problem of definition, articles are diverse in subject matter and vary from historical to theoretical to critical. The result is a collection of essays on a particular topic and not an exhaustive, integrated dissertation. Nevertheless, the articles are related by a concern with certain subthemes that are inherent in the central topic.

Since the publication of our first issue, "Beyond the Modern Movement" in 1980, the critical onslaught against modern architecture has intensified. Critics and journalists proclaim this the era of post-modernism, a tired and abused term suggesting a unity that nowhere exists. A shared critical position toward modern architecture coupled with the appearance of certain figurative similarities, specifically forms and images derived from history, is the basis which a post-modern epoch is declared. However, such criteria are too general, for the various groups that are labeled post-modern are often drastically opposed in their criticism of modern architecture and consequently have different motivations for embracing the past. Ultimately, a post-modern unity relies on a trivialization of the profound differences that are revealed on a closer examination of the work.

Emerging out of a more substantial analysis is the recognition of a number of schools of thought, two of which are particularly influential: the neorationalists and the neorealists.<sup>1</sup> Although both groups advocate a "return to history," the nature of the return differs radically. The neorealists regard history as a repository of images; they combine specific historical references with motifs drawn from pop culture and other sources outside of architecture. Often the individual architectural element is elevated to the status of pop icon. The neorationalists, in contrast, propose a "return to the discipline." Rather than use history as a source of imagery, they regard it as a continuum in which the guiding rules and principles of architecture evolve. The neorealists treat historical references as fragments that contribute to the whole; the neorationalists use the rules of combination that characterize various building types as the basis for the overall generation of form. Insofar as the essence of the architecture is a set of rules or formal relationships that, although invoked by the architect, precede him, the work has an identity independent of the designer. Therefore by virtue of this disciplinary independence, the work asserts its *autonomy*.<sup>2</sup>

Although much of the recent work derived from a theory of autonomous architecture has become quite influential, the theory itself is not well known. Herein lies a paradox with distressing implications: What is the basis of the enormous influence exercised by architects such as Aldo Rossi and Leon Krier if the theory that supports their work is not familiar or well understood? It would appear that the source of their influence is the popularity of the imagery, irrespective of its theoretical support. For many architects this imagery and vocabulary constitute a new set of stylistic devices to be selected and incorporated as they see fit. Recently, designs have appeared that display a Rossiesque, pared-down classicism combined with other influences, inventions, and historical quotations. The use of this imagery in the service of an overall eclecticism signals the abandonment of the theory, which is predicated on the unified structure that is the essence of the building type. Without the benefit of theoretical underpinnings, the imagery eventually collapses into the picturesque, a decline that hastens its quick devaluation by a society

The Lesson of Rome.  
From *Towards a New Architecture*, Le Corbusier.

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conditioned by the needs of the market to regard all cultural products as objects of consumption.<sup>3</sup>

I  
Autonomous architecture is closely related to the idea of type and the notion of an architectural discipline. The possibility of autonomy ultimately depends on architecture's reference to a priori, ideal forms. It is through this allusion to an ideal that autonomous architecture concerns itself with essence and transcends personal idiosyncrasies. However, although the type assumes a certain power and precedence as a source of identity, its relationship to any particular model is arbitrarily determined. There is no absolute correspondence between any one architectural problem and a specific formal solution, nor does the type derive its force from function. Rather, the power of the type lies in some arbitrary assignation of meaning. If the type is inherited from the history of architecture, it is "justified" by a collective recognition which becomes a matter of convention; if the type is a geometric construct, it "justifies" itself by referring to its own internal organizations.

One result of the arbitrary nature of the type is an inherent flexibility. As there is no bond which fixes the type to a particular form, it is free to change in order to accommodate specific needs. When a particular alteration attains a level of anonymity and generality as a result of its application to an entire series of buildings, a new convention is established and the type itself is modified.<sup>4</sup> While this idea of the evolving type has its roots in the theory of Durand, a more dynamic conception of type, one based on continual change, is a peculiarly modern invention. Le Corbusier's house type was to achieve the efficiency of the machine by undergoing continual transformation and improvement. By linking the type with a technological determinism based on progress, it became dynamic in nature while remaining stable in origin and essence. And while the modernists hardly advanced the arbitrary nature of the type as the source of its inherent flexibility, the notion of the "active" type is used today by polemicists of autonomous architecture who reject its original mechanistic justification.

Today the possibility of a "return to the discipline" is made difficult by the ambiguity surrounding the term itself. A discipline implies an established and controlling system, a tradition of norms and conventions. However, it is an active concept of type which is linked to the discipline; a type which is vitally dependent on its ability to transform and change, while at the same time maintaining its reference to a constant ideal. As such, it must be understood as both an integral support and catalyst of the discipline. Seen in historical perspective, today's theorists proposed a neoclassical concept of discipline based on a modern, that is, active, notion of type. Such a partnership may seem unlikely following the modernists' rebellion against the Ecole des Beaux Arts and rejection of history. Indeed, the liberation of typology by the early modernists was in part a reaction to the stylistic manipulations, formulae and frozen types of the Ecole. They offered critique of a method which restricted the development of new and modified types in the face of new programmatic and social demands. Through this active type, the modern movement broke the continuity of an architectural discipline based on the classical tradition. It provided an alternative set of forms and elements founded on a new vision of the world. Thus architects today who seek a return to the discipline cannot simply retrieve the classical past. Instead they must confront the complex situation of two ongoing traditions, seemingly in opposition: the classical and the modern, and it is this dichotomy that offers the generating dialectic.

A comparison of the classical and modern traditions reveals significant differences. The classical palette consists of elements of an overtly *architectural* nature: columns with bases and capitals, entablatures, and pediments. That tradition provides a syntax that governs the combination of elements. In the theory of typology developed at the Ecole Polytechnique in the early nineteenth century, this syntax of architectural elements formed the structure and essence of the building type, where type is associated with building function.<sup>5</sup> As Vidler has pointed out, this theory was developed concurrently with similar theories of typology in the natural sciences. An architecture based

on such a theory was thought to mirror the structure of nature.<sup>6</sup>

The early modern vocabulary consists of a homogeneous set of elements; white, minimalist, and abstract. The disposition of these elements is governed by an abstract formal order that is itself subject to various manipulations and transformations. "Regulating lines," "shifted grids" and "rotated angles" are examples of this kind of operation. This order contributes to the autonomy of the modern object, complete unto itself, detached from both maker and beholder. The modern parts combine, as do those of the classical tradition, to form types. However, the modern type is not inferred empirically from the experience of the city,<sup>7</sup> like a new species discovered in nature, but it evolves in the Darwinian sense to perfection in order to carry society into utopia. In place of the Roman palazzo type, we have Le Corbusier's "machine for living," and it presumes the existence of other type-forms: machines, airplanes, steamships, and the like. Yet all the type-forms are related by their similar outward appearance by their metaphorical reference to the machine. Thus an alternative interrupts and replaces the conventional vocabulary of the classical tradition.

Despite these significant differences, the opposing traditions are in a deeper sense partners within one discipline. Although subject matter differs and may even conflict (nature vs. technology), both traditions assume that architecture has the power to communicate meaning, to represent an interpretation of how the world is, or should be. The city is the common locus of concern and meaning is rooted in the collective recognition of types. Furthermore, as Peter Eisenman discusses in his essay, the modern and the classical traditions also share the process that governs the production of new meaning—transformation of the known. While older tradition offers the orders and the classical types, the younger tradition, lacking a history to guarantee familiarity, offers an underlying formal structure as the "given" to be transformed.

If the history of architecture can be interpreted as a dialectic rather than as a series of "new" styles and ideas, it is possible to see the classical and modern traditions as

partners in an ongoing process. Such an interpretation would provide a context in which to understand modernism in relation to classicism and some of today's developments as a marriage of both. A more inclusive definition of architecture also promises more profound understanding of some of the theories that today propose a return to the discipline.

Autonomous architecture provides such a definition, successfully synthesizing aspects of both traditions; classical as thesis, modern as antithesis. The manipulation of building types inferred or remembered from the history of the city marks a retrieval of classical form and the rules that constitute the discipline. Yet a typology released and reactivated, opening the possibility of transformation, modification, and new types is a distinctly modern phenomenon. While the architecture incorporates the autonomy of the modern object, it shifts the object of representation away from technology as vehicle-of-utopia and back to the classical notion of the relationship between type and the city. By rejecting the progress-oriented, utopian interpretations of the world offered by the classical and modern traditions, yet borrowing their forms, processes, and structures, autonomous architecture appears to have accomplished a synthesis of the two traditions.

The idea of a synthesis of the two traditions within the discipline can serve as the basis for establishing criteria to distinguish between certain proponents of autonomous architecture. Aldo Rossi and Peter Eisenman, whose work appears in the exhibition section, represent the two poles of autonomous architecture, Rossi emerging from the classical tradition and Eisenman from the modern. Neither, however, continues these traditions in their original form. Rossi does not seek to represent an idealized view of nature and Eisenman does not present a vision of utopia achieved through technology.

Eisenman's early work derives from the formal conventions of LeCorbusier, Terragni, and the modern movement. Typically, a piece of architecture is presented as a stage in a sequential formal progression. An Eisenman house is accompanied by a series of transformation drawings, which start with a simple

geometric hypothesis, perhaps a grid or a rectangle, and build into a complex formal matrix. The final product represents nothing but its own internal structure. No overt reference is made to the history of architecture, save for the notion of transformation itself.

Rossi's work develops and transforms the classical mode. His projects evolve from images sketched from his memory of building types found in the city. As we discuss in our text to the autonomous architecture exhibition, the act of drawing from memory filters out the contingent, giving the image a stripped-down, essential presence. At later stages, this generalized image is manipulated to accommodate program and site. The process is essentially the reverse of Eisenman's: Eisenman progresses from an initial hypothesis, while Rossi works backward from a remembered type. The classical tradition is transformed insofar as it is emptied of its original significance, and its body of rules and procedures is itself subjected to formal manipulation.

## II

*There is no question for the editors of *Oppositions* but that the fact of architecture of 1975 is radically altered from that of 1965. Equally, there can be little argument that a significant contribution to that difference is the concept of autonomous architecture. It can be seen now to be one of the few ideas capable of articulation internationally which has reached this country since World War II, and perhaps it will be of as much consequence as the functionalist doctrines of the early Modern Movement.<sup>8</sup>*

*What remains in question, ten years after Rossi's book, is whether architettura autonomia is merely another architect's smokescreen, as Functionalism was, for "aesthetic free-play." This question persists because the forms of this "autonomous architecture," as Rossi and others of the so-called *Tendenza* exhibit, have such a marked preference for a neoclassical style.<sup>9</sup>*

A theory of autonomous architecture is fundamentally concerned with the overall generation of form and not with the selection of a particular style. Yet in much of the work of the *Tendenza*, a contemporary form of neoclassicism has become so compelling that it

threatens to overwhelm the architecture and the theory. Given the power of the imagery, it becomes necessary to consider if a neoclassical vocabulary is a direct outgrowth of the theory or whether it simply indicates the stylistic preference of the architects. The answer probably lies somewhere in between the two positions.

Autonomous architecture exists as both a concrete reality and an abstraction. Although rooted in the specific circumstances of program and context to which it must respond, the architecture also has a transcendent value owing to its reference to an ideal type, an ideal that precedes any specific figurative manifestation. Thus, style, in the context of an autonomous architecture, is visual quality that is applied onto the generalized formal structure, the type. It is therefore possible, as Rafael Moneo has suggested,<sup>10</sup> to imagine an autonomous architecture dressed in something other than the preferred neoclassical style. However, since the Enlightenment and the theories of Laugier, it has been possible to understand certain forms of neoclassicism as an attempt to create a "styleless" architecture, one made up of normative forms that do not prevent a reading of the architecture's essential structure.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, although a neoclassical vocabulary is not absolutely linked to autonomous theory, its use does symbolize an architecture that, in going beyond the specifics of style, represents a return to the discipline and to a concern for the form of the city. It is no doubt this symbolic aspect of neoclassicism that is so appealing today.

The emphasis afforded image as a representation of the return to the discipline is more understandable when autonomous architecture is considered as both an outgrowth and a reaction to modernism and the modern movement. Although a theory of autonomous architecture has existed for hundreds of years, it is only since the inception of modernism that such an approach has resulted in the displacement of man as the focal point of architecture. Before modernism, types were based on symmetrical compositions that unfolded with the observer's movement along a central axis. The architecture glorified man by creating an elaborate reflection and extension of his own symmetrical form. Modern architecture replaced this tradition of symmetry

with a series of abstract formal compositions emphasizing the periphery and downplaying the center. Such compositions, interlocking and self-contained, were not contingent on the experience of man. Thus, man assumed a relative, rather than an absolute, position in relation to his architecture.

Despite this displacement from the center of attention, it was hoped that modern architecture would nevertheless be universally accessible and understood by virtue of man's a priori grasp of pure, abstract form. Le Corbusier's notion of Platonic shapes was representative of this hope: "Primary forms are beautiful forms because they can be clearly appreciated."<sup>12</sup> On the semantic level as well, this hope found expression in a theory of functionalism that rooted the meaning of architecture in an "objective" reality—the program—rather than in an individual, "arbitrary" style.

Thus, the architects of the modern movement claimed that their architecture transcended style. In Le Corbusier's theory, the types that developed around these abstract formal compositions represented the perfection and efficiency of the machine. But while the architecture was presented as a statement of pure form, wholly integrated and homogeneous, it also was made to resemble the products of high technology. And while form and symbol were thought to coincide in the pristine boxes of the modern movement, it is also possible to see the technological analogy as a symbolic level of meaning that was applied to the form; this interpretation seems more likely, given the lack of an absolute connection between the plastic and semantic programs of the modern movement. As in the relationship between the autonomous architecture of the *Tendenza* and neoclassicism, the "style" of the modern movement had a symbolic component that was not an absolute result of theory.

Autonomous architecture continues the concern of the modern movement for an architecture of essence, one that transcends style and personal taste. As it pursues the ideal and the general, it offers an alternative to an architecture conceived of as a private discourse. Like modern architecture, autonomous architecture often appears cool, classic, and reductivist. Despite its aim of

developing a universal language, modern architecture was sometimes alienating because in its abstraction and in its use of new forms or forms not usually understood as architectural, it did not preserve enough of the "familiar" to serve as a basis for comprehension. Autonomous architecture attempts to avoid such alienation by returning its field of inquiry (the subject of its representation) to the discipline of architecture. Although its forms are abstract like those of modern architecture, its types are inherited, conventional, and architectural. By using known forms as referents, architects hope that, although abstract, enough of the familiar is left to void the alienation of orthodox modernism. In this context, the application of a neoclassical vocabulary can be interpreted as another attempt to root the architecture in the familiar.

Nevertheless, the question remains whether autonomous architecture will fall prey to the criticism of inaccessibility. For despite efforts to realize an architecture that is familiar yet not reduced to eclecticism or personal indulgence, a certain estrangement that always accompanies abstraction persists. While the reduction and abstraction of known (that is, typical) elements can help reveal hidden structures and meanings, the distortions of scale and context to which these elements are often subjected also tend to imbue them with a surreal, distant quality. The danger, then, is that the architecture will become too "unfamiliar," that the shift in the nature of the type from outside architecture to inside may not be sufficient to ensure that the architecture avoids the alienation it first sought to eliminate. It would be unfortunate, indeed, if autonomous architecture continued this legacy of the modern movement.

### III

*Disillusioned as to the socially utopian promise of architecture and urbanism, discarded by the very forces of production and consumption it sought to control, architecture is now turning inward and investigating the nature of its own specific practice. Removed from the progressivist currents of social utopianism, as much by the force of a general cultural*

*shift by the action of its own aesthetic critics, architecture is now engaged on a profound re-evaluation of its status, internally in the forms of its own métier, and externally in the dimensions of its ethical responsibility toward the criterion of a mechanistic functionalism.<sup>13</sup>*

*In other times architects were commissioned to embellish our cities. But today the great party political struggles give architecture a discreet freedom provided, of course, that it is a question of works sine pecunia, irrelevancies to the workings of the system. And faced with the monotonous system which has ravaged and destroyed our cities, the written word begins to provide an effective alternative.<sup>14</sup>*

An inevitable question regarding today's version of autonomous architecture is what impact it will ultimately have on the form of the city and the practice of architecture. The large body of theoretical writing has been successful in creating an intellectual context for the architecture. At the same time, however, it tends to mask the inability of the architects to enter the political sphere. This situation is especially frustrating because so much of the theory is essentially political. As Mark Mack discusses in his article, a return to the discipline necessarily involves a concern for the public nature of architecture and the role played by architecture in the development of the city. The dependency of much of this architecture on a collective act of recognition reflects the political nature of the theory, and refutes any charges of elitism or isolationism. And in fact these architects offer up sensitive, contextual interventions that reflect their understanding of the form of the city, their ability to create order, and their concern for the primacy of public space. But we are not challenged to accept such schemes. We are simply left to lament the lack of a strategy for getting the work built. Although the theory is at once humanistic and socialistic, it is, in contrast to that of the modern movement, neither progressive nor utopian. While the leaders pointedly decline the role of apocalyptic savior, they sometimes assume the role of all-knowing martyr. From these architects we need not fear having to reject the destruction of Paris and the building of Utopia. This architectural theory lacks a program for confronting the world as it is, a problem it sidesteps by asserting its lack of utopian pretensions. In light of the modern

movement's failure to fulfill its social program, it is indeed not surprising that architects today refrain from making grandiose promises and from assuming the responsibility for the fate of the world. Still, the unlikelihood of attaining Utopia through design, or even the presumptuousness of claiming to know what Utopia is, is an insufficient reason for avoiding the political sphere and ignoring the fact that little progress is better than none.

Today, the proponents of autonomous architecture are in a vulnerable position because the theory has so far failed to spawn a method for political confrontation or for effecting change. By refusing to assume a moralistic posture toward the public sphere, while at the same time not wishing to express the values of the private realm, these architects lose by default. Generally, houses and other small projects for wealthy patrons of the arts are the testing grounds for the application of principles. But suburbia is hardly the site of the new architecture. Outside of the urban context it is more difficult to discern the full meaning of the work and the tendency to get lost in the privacy of the image is increased. It is, in part, this phenomenon that leads Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre to criticize autonomous theory as being a cause of the privatization of architecture. As a result of the failure to enter the political sphere, our cities contain few tangible results that might impress the significance of autonomous theory as a working design process on the public and the professional. Still, the projects continue to be published and the imagery is as compelling as the theory is inaccessible. The inevitable result is the appearance of the visual effects in buildings that lack the underlying integrity and profundity of those very few buildings that represent the theoretical basis of the architecture.

<sup>1</sup> Mario Gandelsonas, "Neo-Functionalism" *Oppositions* V (1976).

<sup>2</sup> For a more thorough discussion of our use of the term *autonomous architecture*, see the introduction to the exhibition catalogue. The term is inherently ambiguous. One can speak of the autonomy of the modern object as a result of what Peter Eisenman describes as a "modernist sensibility": "Abstraction, atonality, and atemporality, however, are merely stylistic manifestations of modernism, not its essential nature . . . It can simply be said that the symptoms to which one has just pointed suggest a displacement of man away from the center of his world. He is no longer viewed as an *originating agent*. Objects are seen as ideas independent of man. In this context, man is a discursive function among complex and already-formed systems of language, which he witnesses but does not constitute." Peter D. Eisenman, "Post-Functionalism," *Oppositions* 6 (1976). Alternatively, one can speak of autonomous architecture in the sense described by Anthony Vidler as a result of a "Third Typology": "The columns, houses, and urban spaces, (of the "New Rationalists") while linked in an unbreakable chain of continuity, refer only to their own nature as architectural elements, and their geometries are neither scientific nor technical but essentially architectural. It is clear that the nature referred to in these recent designs is no more nor less than the nature of the city itself, emptied of specific social content from any particular time and allowed to speak simply of its own *formal* condition."<sup>11</sup> Anthony Vidler, "The Third Typology," *Oppositions* 7 (1976), p. 2. While the former sense of the term stresses the continuity of all the arts by treating them as symptoms or results of a general causal sensibility, the latter sense emphasizes the unique qualities of architecture. We believe that both strands of thought exist, to varying degrees, in much of today's architecture. This dual sense of the term is the basis on which we focus our attention on Rossi and Eisenman. It is in the comparison of their work that the contradictions and common ground found in these two senses of the term become apparent.

This discontinuity between theory and work is similar to the one that occurred when modern architecture was brought from Europe to America. In the new context, the social and political programs of the modern movement, a cornerstone of the theory, were ignored or forgotten while the images enjoyed considerable exposure and became increasingly popular. Modern architecture, divested of its original meaning as a result of the loss of theoretical support, was thus available to be claimed as the image of corporate America. Today, some of the criticism leveled at the modern movement is undeserved, for it fails to distinguish between the original movement and its devalued transformation in America. In the case of autonomous architecture, this process of devaluation also results in a loss or distortion of meaning and a subsequent critical misunderstanding. As the work loses all but its inherent image value, it becomes vulnerable to possibly false charges of formalism and cultural isolationism.

<sup>4</sup> See Rafael Moneo, "On Typology," *Oppositions* 13 (1978).

<sup>5</sup> See Demetrius Porphyrios, "The End of Styles," *Oppositions* 8 (1977), p. 129, for an elaboration of Durand's notion of types: "Its (the type's) power resided in its ability to define combinatory syntax, from which everything else takes on a derivational identity; all hospitals, for example, are hospitals because they manifest their similar use by sharing—to a greater or lesser extent—the same combinatory syntax."

<sup>6</sup> "Thus, the elements of architecture, their rules of combination, and the characteristic form of the resulting *building type* were, in some way, seen as similar to the generation of types in nature." Anthony Vidler, "The Production of Types," *Oppositions* 8 (1977), p. 93.

<sup>7</sup> See Giulio Carlo Argan, "On the Typology of Architecture," *Architectural Design*, (December 1963).

<sup>8</sup> Peter D. Eisenman, Introduction to "Aldo Rossi: The Idea of Architecture and the Modena Cemetery," by Rafael Moneo, *Oppositions* 5 (1976), p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> See Rafael Moneo, "Aldo Rossi: The Idea of Architecture and the Modena Cemetery," *Oppositions* 5 (1976).

<sup>11</sup> See Anthony Vidler, "The Idea of Type," *Oppositions* 8 (1977).

<sup>12</sup> Le Corbusier, *Toward a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells, Praeger, New York, 1974, p. 26.

<sup>13</sup> Anthony Vidler, "Commentary," *Oppositions* 9 (1977), p. 37.

<sup>14</sup> Aldo Rossi, quoted in Charles Jencks, "Post-Modern Classicism," *Architectural Design Profile*, Architectural Design and Academy Editions, London, 1980, p. 100.

In this article Mark Mack presents a brief history of autonomy and rationalism in architecture. He argues strongly that the values embodied by these ideas need to be reintroduced to the current architectural dialogue and he discusses the significance of these concepts, which are of European origin, within a contemporary American context.

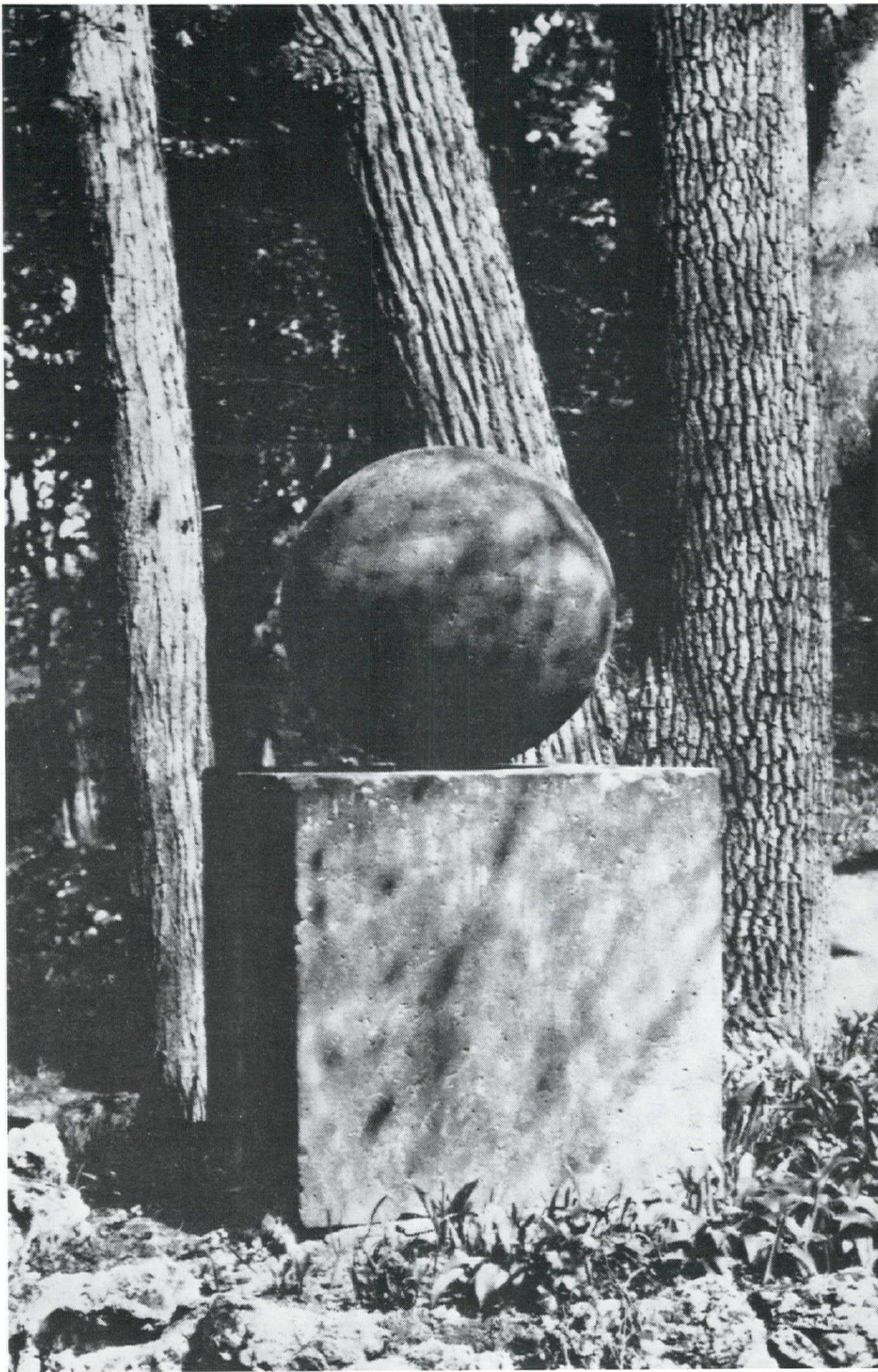
Mack's argument is an interesting counterpoint to the criticism of autonomous architecture offered by Liane Lefaivre and Alex Tzonis. Both writers recognize the importance of an architecture that concerns itself with broad social issues. Also, to different degrees, they both describe the problems of a system in which most architectural production is dominated by individual developers and land speculators. In short, Tzonis and Mack share a belief in the political/social necessity of the collective, in the public realm of culture. But whereas Tzonis sees autonomy in architecture primarily as an expression of the individual and thus as reinforcing the dominance of the individual in society, Mack views autonomy as expressing the collective nature of architecture. For him, then, autonomy can be a vehicle for the reintroduction of a common language, a collective dimension, to architecture.

Mack sees in the contemporary architectural condition a trend toward the development of private languages which he feels threatens to banish architectural practice to social irrelevancy. This development, illustrated most clearly by certain strains of post-modernism, is a reaction to the abstraction and loss of meaning often associated with modern architecture. The desire to put meaning and a sense of individuality back into architecture has led to an attack on modern architecture's theoretical foundation on two fronts. On a formal level, modern architecture's attempt to develop a universal, abstract language through a figurative break with the past has been criticized by architects who seek to regain literal meaning through the manipulation of historical quotations. On another level, critics have been quite ready to throw out modern architecture's social program along with its formal one. Recently it has become quite common to look upon the social utopianism of early modernism as nothing more than naive idealism that has failed. In the wake of this failure to create a universal architecture that would save the

world, and as a result of the problem of alienation that arose out of the abstraction of forms, Mack explains that many architects have been eager to concern themselves only with issues of personal expression. This form of expression has become so individualized that it prevents any general discussion of basic architectural principles and has effectively removed architecture from a wider social discourse.

Mack argues for an autonomous architecture that once again involves itself with an investigation of a generalized architectural language, an architecture that avoids the alienation associated with modern architecture by incorporating familiar forms derived from convention and vernacular. But in contrast to the private usage of historical quotations seen in post-modernism, they are here used in a general and basically abstract manner, to elaborate essential architectural attributes. This emphasis on essentials ensures an architecture of lasting value, one beyond mere style and thus less likely to be readily consumed and discarded: in other words, an architecture that strikes a balance between an unapproachable abstraction and a superficial literalness.

Perhaps the most important point Mack addresses in his essay has to do with the scope of autonomous architecture. Interestingly, he has not abandoned a belief in the social power of architecture. Rather, he sees architecture as both an art and a tool for social change. The investigation of architectural essentials and the development of an architectural language that he calls for would foster a serious discussion of architectural form and meaning. But unlike Tzonis, Mack's concept of autonomy involves more than the issue of simple visual enjoyment. For Mack, the investigation of architectural essentials must go beyond the level of specific formal elements to include larger issues such as the planning of public spaces and even the broader question of land development. Thus his vision of autonomous architecture is, in fact, a continuation of a tradition of socially motivated architecture, a tradition that was so strongly carried by modern architecture. Of significance to our journal is that for Mack, architecture's particular answer to these larger questions is to be found through a study of the discipline of architecture itself.



# Other Architecture

## (or The Need for Serious Post-Modernism)

Mark Mack

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*Other architecture* exists today not as a unified school but as single attempts by young American architects to cope with the present without literally seeking the past. In this climate of great infatuation with eclectic, historicist, and stylistic motifs, under the pretense of reestablishing meaning in architecture, it seems difficult to find anyone pointing toward a sober, rational future. Architecture, the "art of building" has become the "art of deception," a pleasant deception, an agreeable sensation that has replaced the motivated, moralistic attitudes of pre-, middle, and late modernism. Only a few practitioners supported by several "moralistic" critics seek in architecture today the vigor and conviction necessary for a meaningful and timely sociocultural development. Modernism is criticized as being responsible for a loss of meaning in architecture, and post-modernists overtly try to bring it back. To be meaningful in the post-modern sense is to adopt shapes, motives, and orders presumed to be popularly understood. These articulations may be concocted, distorted, exaggerated, or played upon to express the individuality of the architect. This forced individuality is an obvious reaction to the domination of abstraction and reduction in modern architecture and evokes a popular psychological movement of the recent past: the self-improvement clinics and workshops dedicated to the rediscovery of individuality in a time of psychological and social alienation. The resulting feelings of individuality and self-respect present a frame, a pedestal from which the world seems ordered and any conflicts are acted out before they occur. This reflective attitude may cause the individual to feel good but it does not contribute to a larger cultural well-being. Such rampant individualism is in fact symptomatic of the present state of architecture: self-importance, disconnectedness, and the lack of a common language contribute to the hopelessly weak position of architecture in present society.

America, which constitutionalized individuality, is dominated by a post-modernism of personalized and

palatable styles and logos. Each architect seems to ride his own wave, concerned only with his own image. Discussion of principles, attitudes, and values becomes extremely difficult because the profession lacks a common language. To engage in a collective effort culminating in an articulation of architectural ideals and environmental values is nearly impossible. Urbanism and suburbanism, construction, energy, transportation, and growth patterns are rarely discussed among either the "abstract" late modernists or the "literal" post-modernists; both camps seem only to compete for gallery space. Architecture and its presentation has become its own self-fulfilling mechanism; ideas and morals are barely visible in the faint washes of watercolor. When architecture becomes its own carrier or so individualized that it loses definition, it risks being reduced to a collection of ministyles, each unquestioned and never compared to larger, more common imperatives. And if styles constitute architecture, Philip Johnson's comment—"We might question whether words like 'value' or 'morals' are applicable to an architectural style,"—is unfortunately sad but correct.

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### Style and Morals

To arrive at autonomy and meaning, architecture must transcend style or individual expression. It must connect with the basic imperatives of society and should avoid reducing itself to a tasteful interpretation of perpetual artistic desires. Not only an art, architecture is a powerful tool to shape our way of life. Presently a discipline characterized by a self-satisfaction encouraged by the fragmentation and specialization of its own profession, architecture has to take responsibility for our environments. The global destruction of well-functioning and inspiring architecture and whole parts of cities and countrysides under the mechanism of a capitalistic and individualistic drive has prompted a reaction by many responsible architects, predominantly in Europe. Leon Krier and Maurice Culot define the movement most poignantly:

*We wish to define and further a movement in which intellectuals commit themselves to urban struggles at a daily*



*level, develop projects for the city on the basis of personal reflection on architecture and the city, and pursue pedagogical work within the context of social and cultural preoccupations, outside any spirit of artistic avant-garde."*<sup>1</sup>

These strong words recall an architectural attitude that tries to identify, comprehend, and actually arrive at solutions to real problems. A fragmentation of architecture either through specialization or through experimentation has made the architect powerless in the struggle for a reasonable and sane environment. To overcome this alienation, architects must band together, at least in terms of values and imperatives, to battle the interests of non-civic-minded multinational organizations, insurance companies, and other land speculators.

While the resistance in Europe grows, especially around the issue of the destruction of traditional city parts, America offers only a handful of proposals of urban infill and half a dozen residences through its young "rationals." They do not constitute a defined school, nor do they even agree on one overt direction. Their efforts, however, grow from the same concerns: a disenchantment with the abstract and intellectual architectural "games" of the seventies and a concern for the interrelationship of society at large and the built object.

It was mostly the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS) under the manipulative guidance of P Eisenman that disseminated the concerns of the American "rationals." Although its founders were still trapped in their own experimental, existential, or stylistic formulas, a post-Five Architects attitude could develop through constant cross-fertilization from abroad (Rossi, Krier, Ungers, Koolhaas, Agrest/Gandelonas, Torre) and support from fundamentalist-type critics (Vidler, Frampton). The discussions shifted from form to content. Common themes are the lack of overt expressionism and individuality, the reappraisal of present building technology, and the discussion of urban and suburban environments. Implicit in the search for an architectural representation of this new idealism is the refusal to accept the traditional make-believe attitudes of the American building tradition. In

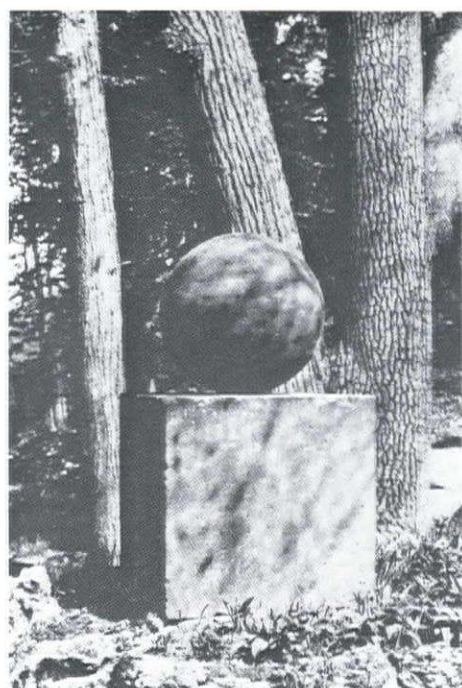
these mostly small projects one finds elements of *old-looking* shapes or types. The way these elements are put together and the way they relate to context characterize this Other Architecture. A rational rather than an expressive or artistic order recurs as a reaction to the lavish and introverted examples of post-modernism. This rationalism has its roots in the constant struggle of people to establish human order in a chaotic, disorganized environment. Relatively new to the American context, rationalism tried to deal with the values and aspirations of a specific era and translate these into solutions that are neither too abstract to alienate the public nor too literal to slip into kitsch.

The hope of this attitude is to establish a sense of "morality" and a positive and constructive attitude toward the civic and subcivic environments of our time. This new breed of architects will oppose the overt, no-holds-barred attitude of post-modernism and stand therefore fairly isolated on the most rational continent of them all.

### Roots of Rationalism

The roots of rational architecture can be traced to the Age of Reason of seventeenth-century France, an age that also witnessed the founding of architectural academism. The teachers at the École des Beaux Arts and at the newly founded Polytechnicum engaged in the emotional task of defining architecture in a new age. In 1752, J F Blondel, for whom "good architecture was inseparable from reason," redefined architecture in terms of *construction* rather than *decoration*. The "art of building" replaced architecture as art. The use of primary construction elements contributed to the reemergence of a classical order in the essence of a built work. The theorists at the École envisioned a return not to classical composition, but rather to classical Greek elements.

The Abbé Laugier said that parts and elements "of the architectural order are the very components of any built work. Such elements must be employed in a way that they create a complete, a whole entity of the universe; if you remove a part, the whole will collapse."<sup>2</sup> The

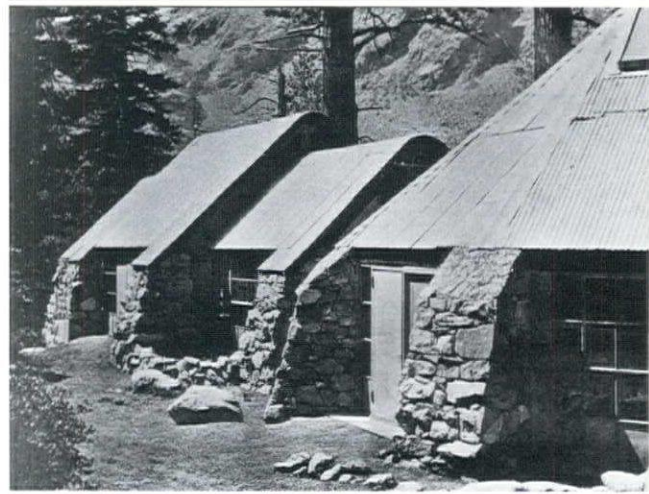
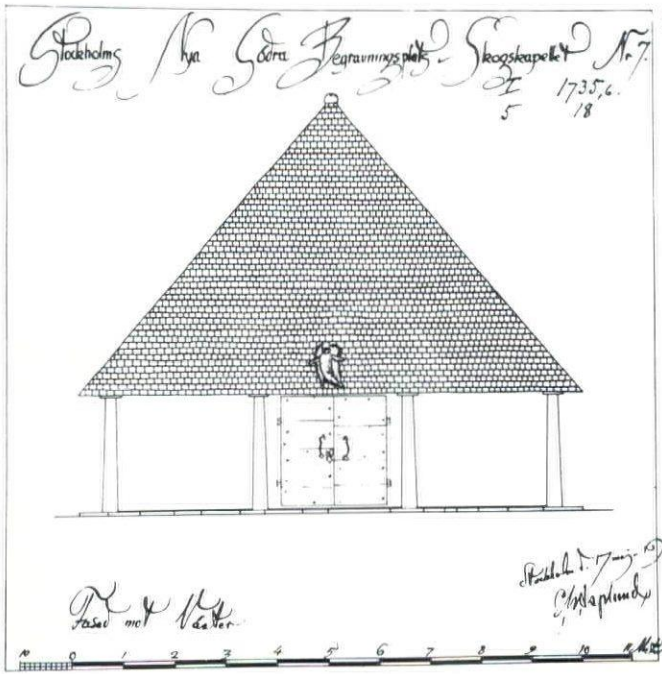


classical elements—column (post), entablature (lintel), and pediment (roof)—found their rational continuance as structural necessities rather than as sensual decorations or manneristic expressions. These principles were constantly refined and any violation was vehemently opposed. J A Bognis lamented the pilaster in his “Elementary Treatise of Construction” (1823): “engaged columns and engaged pilasters which merely formed an ‘architecture in relief’ has neither the beauty nor the vigor and magnificence of isolated columns.” This separation of elements into freestanding, load-bearing, and symbolic architectures demanded from the architects a new attitude. Architecture became an art that required more reasoning than inspiration and stood in contrast to painting and sculpture, which limited themselves to giving pleasure to the senses. While the previous epochs, baroque and rococo, played with proportions and compositions (agreeable sensations) in an elegant and picturesque arrangement of architectural elements and masses, rationalism preferred an order of hierarchies, modeled after the universal laws of nature. The purpose of architecture was “to construct solid edifices by employing exact quantities of selected materials and setting them into position with skill and economy.”<sup>3</sup> Implicit in this return to a “Greek” order was the return to an idealized past, a past where pure, undisturbed order prevailed. The Doric order was singled out as the most rational because it contains the most reduced (abstract/ideal) principles of construction and structure. This classical rationalism required a reappraisal of the properties of all structural elements according to the science of strength of materials, a logical approach to planning with respect to the actual needs, and a more flexible approach to the classical notions of symmetry and regularity.<sup>4</sup> Another more metaphysical aspect, namely, moral primitivism, was put forward by Abbé Laugier in his “Essay sur l’architecture” (1753), in which he demands a return to the *primitive hut* (Fig. 1). His illustration of the “first building” featured on the frontispiece of his essay, combined the laws of nature (tree) with the laws of construction (branches of the tree forming a roof) as well as the symbols of humanism (the architectural muse pointing to the god-created hut). This symbol of architecture contained the principle on which architecture should be founded: anthropomorphic

symmetry, balance, and structural honesty. The little curious drawing became the logo of a new fundamentalism supported by the humanistic-philosophical *Weltanschauung* of great French humanists such as Rousseau.

While classical rationalism denied altogether the expression of emotionally inspired shapes, the “revolutionary architecture” of Ledoux and Boullée expanded the rationalist principles to include a variety of symbolic emotionalism. Boullée’s grand monuments to science and Ledoux’s utopian temples incorporate the very essence of abstract, mental, and idealist classicism. Their emotional strength evolves from the commitment to an idea that is larger than the architectural discipline itself, addressing both the philosophical and social aspects of society. Emil Kaufman, who rediscovered these architects in the 1930s, declares that “the lost importance of aesthetic principles and orders give place to the anti-baroque idealism of unified principles of Newtonian rationalism. Gone are the pilasters, the orders, the moulding. . . . Stone is stone again, shown in its metaphorical presence. . . . The revolutionary architect became the autonomous carrier of form as an idea, an idealized architecture.”<sup>5</sup> This idealism, married with the rediscovery of Greco-Roman architecture, reinforced the new dimension of romantic feeling and a prospective utopian attitude that would attempt to reconstruct the “golden age” in service to “modern” times. Johann Wolfgang Goethe, who called the pilaster a lie, designed in 1777 a monument in Weimar that expressed yet another aspect of this new architecture; geometric purism and abstraction (Fig. 2). The *Altar of Good Fortune* captures the alchemistic search for idealism and order in reductionist terms. The sphere (human) is unstable on the solid square base (universe) balanced only by reason and trust according to Newtonian principles.

These notions of classical rationalism found their continuance again in the Doricism of the Scandinavian late-neoclassical period of the early 1900s. This casual, emotional classicism contains many of the elemental principles found in its rational predecessors. Shelter, type and monument again evoke a return to the basic imperatives of architecture, while a rediscovery of



3. Asplund, Woodland Chapel (Drawing)

4. Maybeck, Glen View Village, Tahoe, California

the beauty of the vernacular is based on an honest relationship between form and construction. These principles were earlier exploited polemically in the architecture and writings of Adolf Loos in Austria and softly articulated in the silent buildings of Heinrich Tessenow in northern Germany. Both defined the spectrum of ideals and philosophies of early modernism as a return to humanistic and social issues. The role of the architect in this new thinking underwent drastic reevaluation as Loos questioned this role by stating: "the architect from the city was uprooted by definition and hence categorically alienated from the innate agrarian (or alpine) vernacular of his distant forebearers; he instead compensated for this loss by pretending to inherit the aristocratic culture of western classicism. Architecture," he concluded,

*is building and only a small part of architecture belongs to art. Architecture is silent and serves collective and social needs and must above all relate comfortableness. The house must please everyone. The work of art on the other hand must please no one. The art work is the artist's private affair, the house is not. The work of art is placed in the world without the existence of a particular need. The house satisfies a need. The work of art is not responsible to anyone. The artwork wants to tear one out of one's comfortableness. The house must serve comfortableness. The work of art is revolutionary, the house is conservative. Only a very small part of architecture belongs to art: the tomb and the monument. Everything else, everything which serves a purpose, should be excluded from the realm of art.*<sup>6</sup>

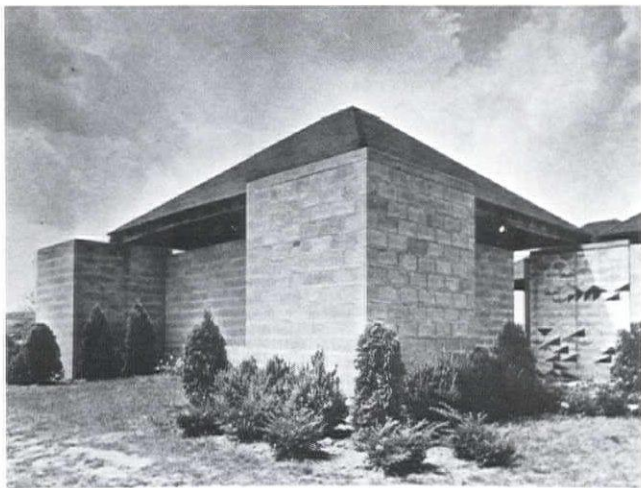
A similar attitude is echoed by Tessenow: "If a building is finished and you don't recognize the architect in it then it is right: the goal is to make the architect superfluous."<sup>7</sup>

This reaction against the individualistic period of the arts and craft in *fin de siècle* Europe is also apparent in the Deutschen Werkbund, where Hermann Muthesius exclaims, "From the individualism to the creation of types is the organic way of development. Essentially, architecture tends toward the typical. The type discards the extraordinary and establishes order."<sup>8</sup> This fundamentalism is strongly apparent in the universal and nonhistoricist but vernacular-oriented Doricism of Gunnar Asplund and Siegmund Lewerentz. Their

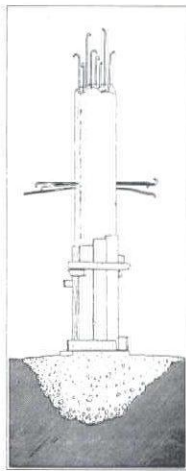
architecture is based on a symbiosis of classical and vernacular language in which room for inventiveness is still possible. In their travels to Italy, the Holy Land of classicism, they focused not on the monuments left by the geniuses Palladio and Michelangelo but on the hilltowns and farmhouses of the countryside. Staying within the confines of architecture as suggested by Loos, Asplund's Woodland Chapel stands as the Primitive Hut of a new generation of fundamentalists in the twilight of the approaching modern age (Fig. 3). Architecture is again classified according to universal elements. Construction is the basis for shelter, shelter is basic to well-being. The monument provides the communication between architecture and culture, and its interrelationship places man in the earthly expression of the universal. The type provides a thematic hierarchy of importance, indicating a social and cultural structure of a society. This attention toward type and construction constitutes a newfound appreciation of vernacular architecture in which type and form are rationally connected through construction and ecological considerations. Thus for hundreds of years the primitive fine-tuning has produced an architectural framework in which tradition and individuality freely coexist.

This return to the vernacular can also be found at the turn of the century on the pioneer shores of northern California. Here architects like Coxhead, Polk, and Maybeck struggled and succeeded with the integration of traditional and new architectural concepts (Fig. 4). This careful approach was spearheaded by fundamentalists such as Charles Keeler. Keeler, poet and founder of Berkeley's Hillside Club, an organization devoted to outlining and preserving appropriate building attitudes on sloped sites of the Bay Area, went so far as to point out improper use of ornament and construction in his treatise *The Simple Home* (1904):

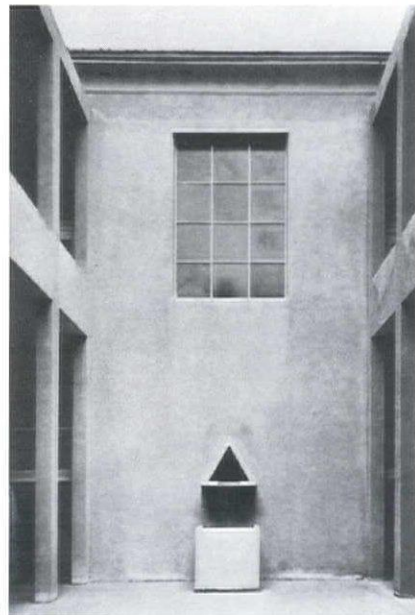
*there is no hardship if one essential rule be observed of using every material in the manner for which it is structurally best adapted, and of handling it in a dignified style. The failure to observe this rule is the great sin in most of the domestic architecture of America . . . the arch in masonry is the strongest structural use of stone or brick. An arch in wood, on the contrary, has no structural value, and is a mere imitation of a useful building form. It is generally*



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- 5. Kahn, Bathhouse in Trenton
- 6. Krier, Sixth Order, or Yves St. Quentin
- 7. Rossi, School

*painted to imitate the effect of stone and thus sins even more seriously in becoming a sham . . . it is far better to have no ornament than to have it either badly designed or wrongly placed. Ornament should grow out of construction and should always be an individual expression adapted to the particular space it is to fill.<sup>9</sup>*

The turn-of-the-century architecture of the Bay Area and Irving Gill's buildings in southern California still bear this early modern rationalism while they also reflect typical regional differences, thereby avoiding modernism's stylistic sameness. The rational and constructional aspects of modernism are fundamental and well defined, but its marriage with the objectives of modern art and its emphasis on abstraction and intellectualization shifted pre-modern architecture away from a balance between comfort (tradition) and individuality (invention). This imbalance resulted in architecture that was reduced to a powerful style; its social and philosophical attributes could be easily removed without its losing its form.

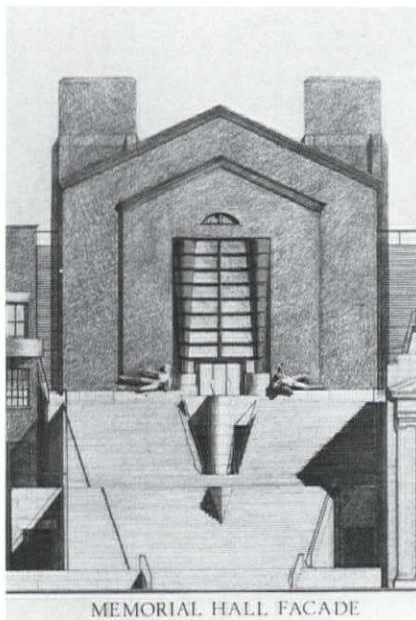
The precursors of "modern" rationalism and structural fundamentalism can be found in postwar America as well as in Europe. While Team 10's antiformalistic, process-oriented architecture culminated in a material "brutalism," Louis Kahn's cosmological purism extended the formal doctrines of modernism. Kahn's use of "form," his term for *type*, was flexible and modifiable through program or expressive urge, but always related to a universal idea or logic. His "primitive" structures, like the Bathhouse in Trenton, are examples of a renewed connection with the principles and articulations of classical rationalism (Fig. 5).

The vigor and power of architecture as a moral- and value-oriented expression has returned through the continuous development of the neorationalist movement of the early 1970s. While it concerns predominantly the critique of the modern movement and the International style, it also brings forth a viable new attitude toward the traditional European city and its social-cultural evolution. "*La tendenza*," as the movement was called in its early days, set out to

*save the discipline of architecture from being undermined*

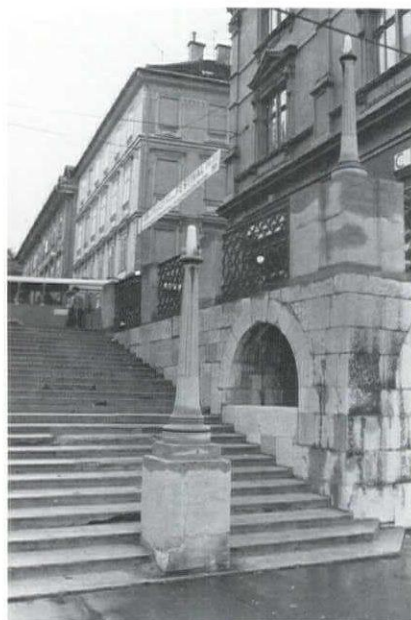
*as a discourse by the all pervasive forces of megalopolitan technique and economy. This return to "reason" has meant, at least in part, a return to the concerns of the pre-war Italian Rationalist movement. This rationalist reaction was initiated by the publication of two singularly seminal texts, Aldo Rossi's "La architettura della città" of 1966 and Giorgio Grassi's "La costruzione logica della architettura" of 1967. The first stresses the part to be played by established building types in determining the morphological structure of urban form as it develops in time; the second attempts to formulate the necessary compositional or combinatorial rules for architecture.<sup>10</sup>*

Again the connection between traditional vernacular and utopian classical attitudes can be read in the autobiographical allegories of Aldo Rossi and Leon Krier (Figs. 6, 7). While Rossi abstracts and reduces the vernacular to arrive at an autonomous architecture, Krier battles the evils of modernism, positivistic logic, and blind faith in progress. He is an "architect who rather does not build" than compromise his ideology. He expands his architectural repertoire constantly, from large urban "counterprojects" to small urban objects. His role as preservationist of urban and civic culture makes him an important consultant to alarmed northern European city legislators. His most recent project for the school at St. Quentin en Yvelines clarifies his direction and combines the rational and Doric school of thought. A series of separate buildings, typologically ordered, are arranged in a hierarchical sequence; the classrooms and workshops consist of simple structures in masonry, stone, and timber. Their articulation reveals how the parts are put together, a constructional attitude that connects to the paradigms of the early rationalism of Laugier. For Krier, "a town is not a large house, a house is not a little town, a town does not consist of hallways and rooms; a town consists of streets, plazas, places in between, and monuments."<sup>11</sup> A similar metaphor is also apparent in Aldo Rossi's work, with the addition of a metaphysical and artistic flair. The clarity and intensely didactic poetry of his buildings establish a language that is private as much as it is collective. He brings back the reduced, controlled, primitive, and constant elements of architecture: post, lintel, wall, and roof. The poetic vision of a redundant simplicity establishes an order, a focus to find the values of a new



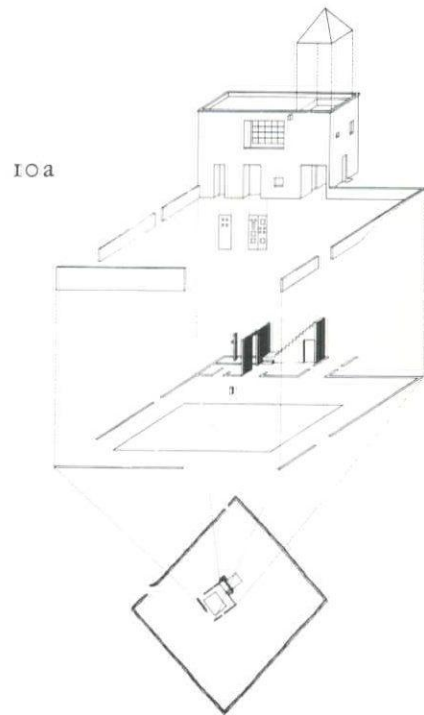
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8. Machado/Silveti, Steps of Providence



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9. Plečnik, Stairs on the Embankment in Ljubljana, 1934



“third” typology, the “typology of the city”<sup>12</sup> It marks a return to a critical public architectural vision.

The buildings and projects of these European rationalists historically and currently form the operative framework for a handful of American architects who have come to question the contradictory, morally decayed architecture of America’s collage or strip cities. They believe in moral conviction, universal contextualism, and new structural materialism.

### The New Americans

There is no defined school or geographical area dominated by “rational” architecture; the efforts are still individual, disconnected and spread between the two coasts of this continent. Closest to Europe, on the East Coast, Jorge Silveti and Rodolfo Machado are self-confessed fundamentalists who, following their infatuation with signs and symbols in architecture, take a more serious stand in addressing the issues of rationalism. They defy the elite articulation of architecture that has led to an artistic but still consumable style:

*Against these literal, avant-garde operations, we would like to present a more solid premise. Rather than attempting a critique through inversion with its consequences of shock, controversy and alienation of both artist and public, and the assured final, quick collapse into kitsch, we would like to see a critique of the present state of architecture based on the production of forms, the production of meaning.<sup>13</sup>*

This meaning is contained in the pragmatic yet poetic use of architectural elements seen in their project Steps of Providence (Fig. 8). A proposal for urban remodeling and civic infill, it is more a design strategy that employs architectural elements, using stairs to mend the disjointed campus of the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence. The strategy, consisting “of the repetition of an architectural element to solve a variety of urban conditions, . . . arrives at a new contextualism which is neither literal or abstract” (Fig. 5). This strategy is reminiscent of the plan by Josef Plečnik, who after leaving Otto Wagner’s office in Vienna went to

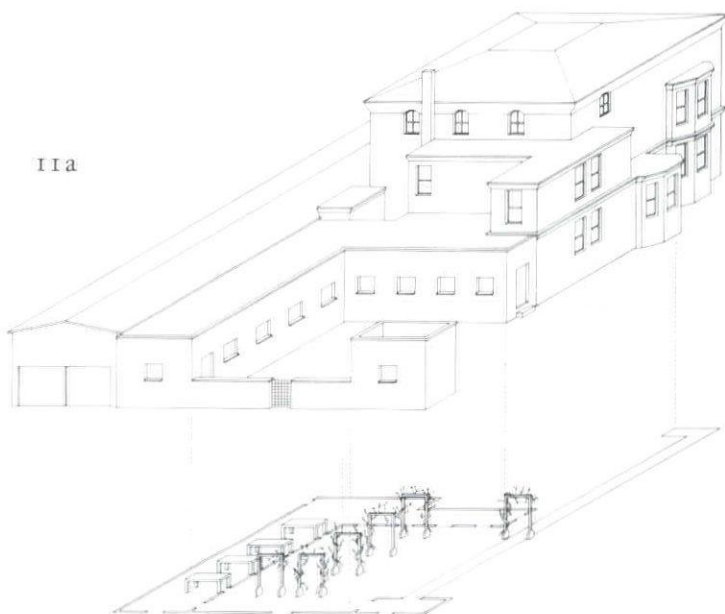
Ljubljana (Croatia, Yugoslavia) and embarked on one of the most pleasant and intelligent urban infill projects between the wars (Fig. 9). He arranged single freestanding columns, stairs, bridges, and small buildings into the fabric of the historic city center. Through the clever placement of these elements he achieved a mix of urban sensations without overt specializations like “pedestrian zones.” In “mending” unrelated areas through a uniform but varied system (columns) Plečnik achieved meaning not through literalness but through typology. Everywhere these columns appear a connection is made. Similarly, the Steps of Providence are elements or devices and do not present a master plan like authority. This sensible approach recalls a newly found definition of architectural professionalism. Silveti and Machado do not see themselves anymore as specialists of architecture but rather as integrated practitioners who are involved in planning, architectural design, and interior decoration. Their stand “is then not “stylistic for better or worse; the present problems cannot be solved as a matter of style. We [Silveti and Machado] would like to discuss through our projects more fundamental principles, independent of style, against which architectural performance should be checked, a test that only history can substantiate.” This refusal of style generates a new fundamentalism built of their definition of a new order. Its components are character, which includes personal language; genre, which gives context; and order as well as axiomaticity, which substantiates a cosmological and anthropomorphic continuance.<sup>14</sup>

Steven Holl uses a series of thematically linked pamphlets and projects to promote a conviction and vision of urbanism tied to its context, the American City. His Pamphlet Architecture series (the Alphabet City and the Bridge of Houses) substantiates his conviction that the city is a typological arena of architectural elements. Artistic yet constrained, he calls for a reevaluation of our environment by seeing it as a continuum in space and time. The purpose of architecture is now to find an appropriate definition to connect with the present values and conflicts.

While Holl’s urban convictions deal with types and the morphology of the city, the architecture he has



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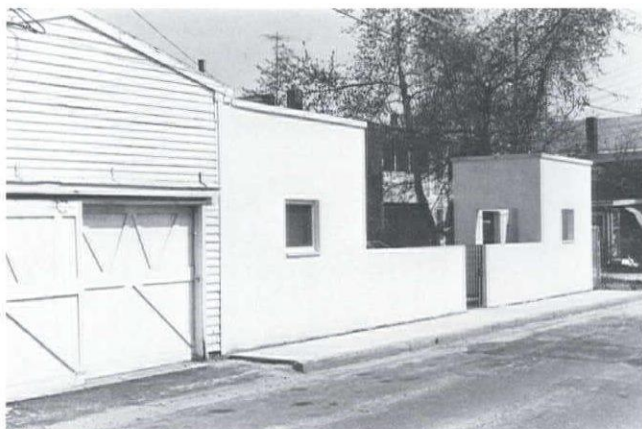
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10 a,b. Holl, Poolhouse, Scarsdale, New York, 1981

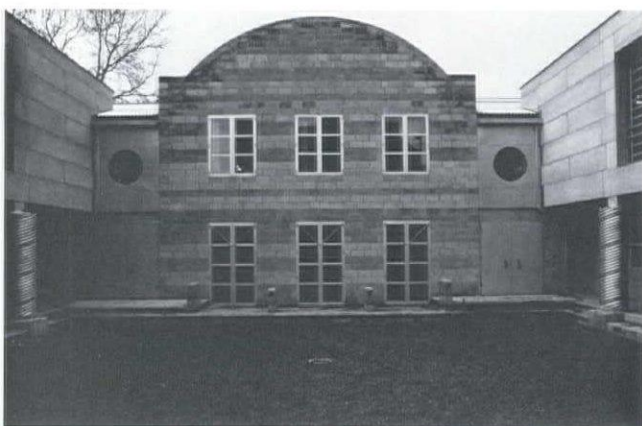
completed so far rests in peace within suburbia. A sober, rational refreshment among the artificially sweetened post-modern articulation, the Poolhouse in Scarsdale, N.Y., speaks the *other* language (Fig. 10). An existing pool is intelligently made private, separated from the existing residence by the insertion of an object that serves as a poolhouse and sculpture studio. Low walls around the pool and the walls surrounding the estate define the pool area as an almost "urban" place. Facing that "plaza" is a building that tastefully presents no apparent style but substantiates a conviction of modernism combined with the emotional and material attitudes of European and early American vernacular. Built of concrete block, the *modern stone*, the object presents itself more maturely than it actually is with its thick stuccoed walls. Compared to the flimsiness of neighboring buildings, the poolhouse's more substantial material possesses the same magic and fundamental, tactile quality of the civic and historically minded environments of American urbanism.

Holl's conviction about "materiality" also comes forward in his Courtyard Project in New Jersey (Fig. 11). A typological rather than an individual approach to the design of this addition to an existing structure results in a building that blurs the separation between abstract and vernacular architecture. It is the calm and clean stuccoed concrete block structure that has its own presence, a presence that easily becomes past and future of a timeless autonomous architecture in the service of a new contextualism (Fig. 7).

This new contextualism of material and building type also characterizes the work of Craig Hodgetts and Robert Mangurian. Their South Side Settlement in Columbus, Ohio, glistens without historicist and eclectic allusionism and reaches back to a more abstract yet emotional architectural expression (Fig. 12). It offers an exciting possibility of architecture that does not depend on any current fashion, fad, or symbol. While the recent interpretation of contextualism in America revolves around the imitation of and reference to pluralistic elements of architecture spiced up with ornamental, expressionistic, and sentimental values, the ideas of contextualism contain a far higher potential: They can create an architectural culture expressing



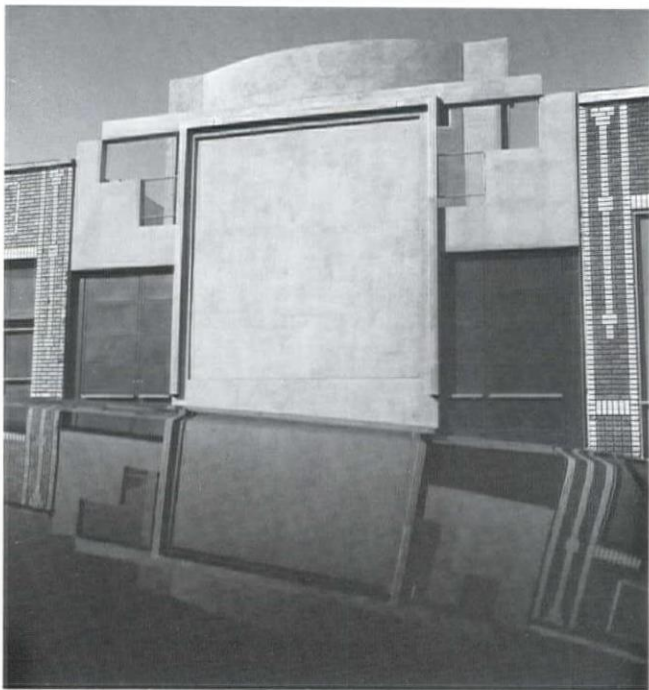
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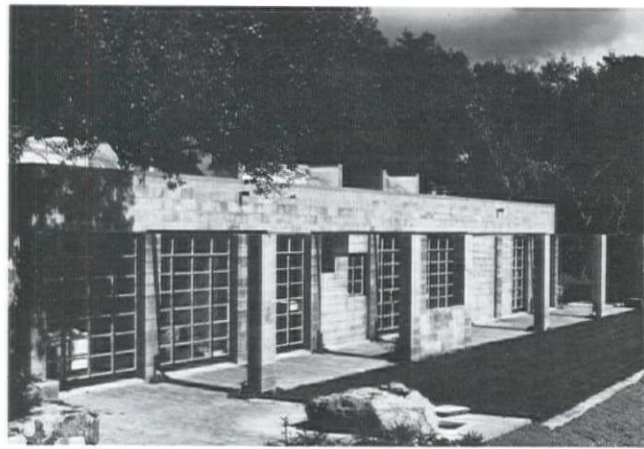
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11 a,b. Holl, Courtyard Project, New Jersey, 1980

12. Hodgetts/Mangurian, South Side Settlement, 1979

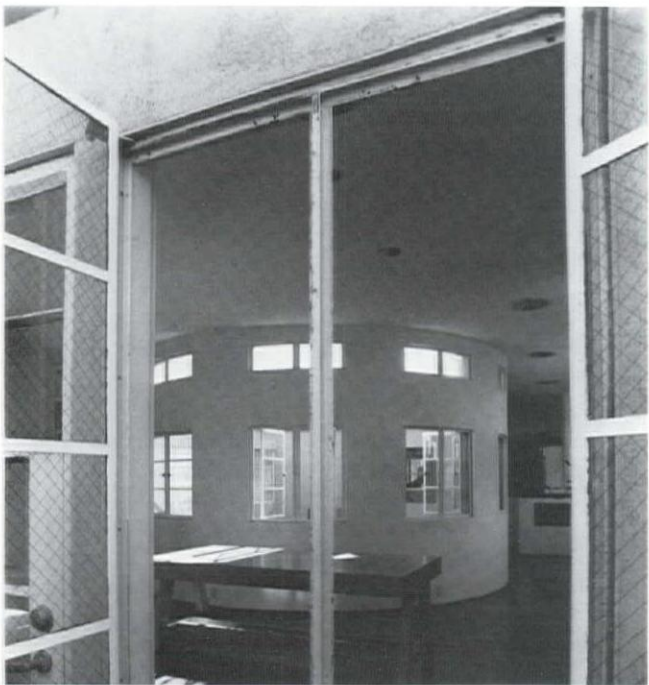


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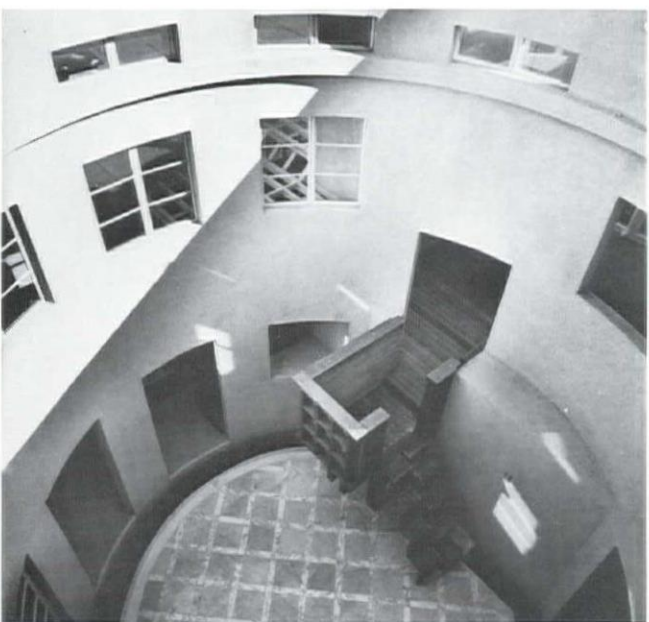


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13. Hodgetts/Mangurian, Gagosian Studio/Gallery, 1981  
 a Rotonda  
 b Interior  
 c Facade
14. Batey and Mack, Anti-Villa, Napa Valley, 1974



13 b



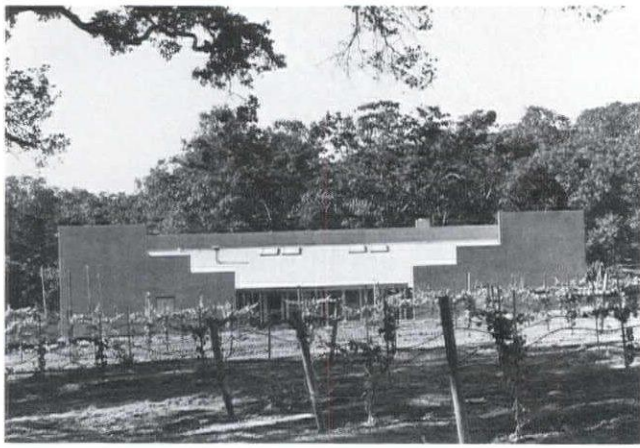
13 a

popular and refined values alike. This can be accomplished not through the prissy application of architectural motifs and styles but through the creation of enduring buildings capable of standing on their own feet. The contextual fit of the South Side Settlement is achieved by massing and scale rather than detailing, and none of the buildings of the complex is larger than the typical neighborhood house.

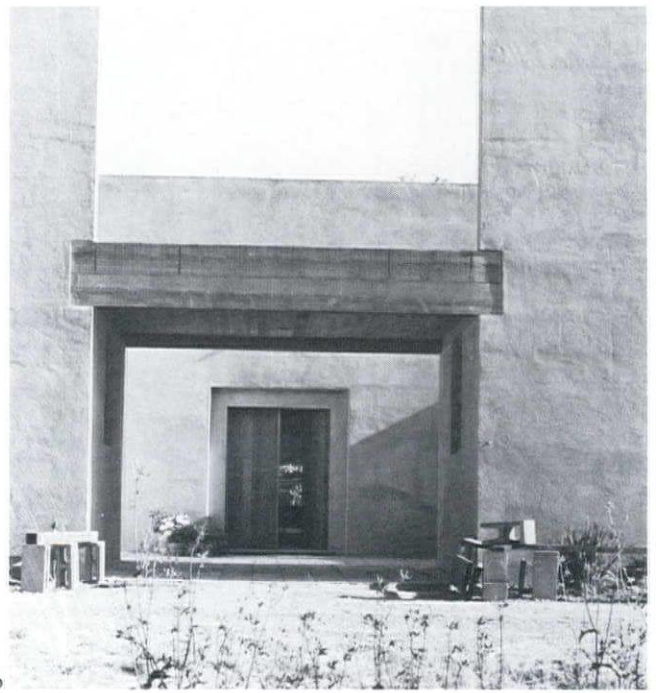
The materials used—concrete block, asbestos siding, and conventional doors and windows—echo the neighborhood without imitating it. This contextual fit is achieved by abstraction and simplification of building types and masses indigenous to the neighborhood.

It is the usage of the type that enables architectures of different eras and ideologies to form a coherent architectural appearance. What Quatremiere De Quincy, a French rational critic wrote around 1800 in his *Dictionnaire d'Architecture* applies again today: "Type presents less the image of something to copy or imitate completely, than the idea of an element itself has to serve as rule for the model . . . everything is precise in the model while everything is more or less vague in the type."<sup>15</sup>

Another project by Hodgetts/Mangurian in Venice, Calif., explodes the confines of a restricted urban site (Figs. 13a, c). Not unlike the house of Luis Barragan in Mexico City, in which the nonfacade of the street side sharply contrasts with the luscious, colorful interior courtyard and garden (which is typical for South of the Border urbanism), the Gagosian Studio/Gallery displays a quiet, gray, and restrained facade. However, inside, an off-center rotunda provides light for the interiors and open space. Around this center void the rooms are ordered in a hierarchical but functional manner, almost in the sense of a Loosian *Raumplan* (space plan). The intricate and calculated orientation of the rooms inside the building contrasts with the restrained and cool choice of materials. Industrial sash windows against a gray-green stuccoed wall establish an almost magical elemental feeling, similar to the nondesigned urban *Hinterhofe* (back courts) of European city blocks. It is this feeling of a casual yet controlled use of archetypal elements that characterizes this new architecture. The



15 a



15 b

15 a,b. Batey and Mack, Kirlin House, Napa Valley, 1981

interior rotunda has a tectonic quality as an object in itself, a quality enhanced by the wooden balcony and stairway off the kitchen. Because Palazzo Gagosian (as the architects lovingly call it) addresses the issue of context with restrained articulation and celebrates the private aspects of the building in an elemental and archetypal yet understated and silent way, it becomes a powerful new image in today's architecture.

The architectural "primitivism" of Andrew Batey and Mark Mack addresses similar attitudes and values discussed before but in a rural context. Their approach consists of the careful merging of invention and tradition in the service of more substantial conviction about building. This "primitivism" is conservative in its reaching back to a well-mastered building technology, progressive in promoting a utopian purism, intellectual in its reduction of architectural principles, and emotional in its tying together of rugged natural form to site conditions.

The Anti-Villa in the Napa Valley is a subterranean accommodation of urban domesticity (Fig. 14). The materials—concrete block and steel sash windows and doors—present a late-industrial-building technique. The plan organization is a string of archetypal rooms linked together by an internal skylit street. Its orientation on the site takes advantage of the sun to heat the house. A planted trellis of indigenous grapes shades the windows from the summer sun and also provides the space for a semiprivate zone between the outside and inside of the house. The raw stone (concrete block) relates to the rugged undisturbed terrain but clearly connotes a manmade object of elemental vigor; it is not an imitation of nature through a woody, nooky style of architecture (Fig. 10). The plan offers a series of "generic" rooms, lit from both sides to overcome the stereotypical underground "fear." Each room can be used for any purpose within the limitation of size; the rooms are square to rectangular and are clearly separated from each other. This approach to the relationship of space and use presents a definite break from the modern (and post-modern) space articulation. While modernism championed the open, loosely divided space, the late-modern practitioners of California (MLTW, Esherick) expanded the same principle into a "nook and cranny"

formula. The principle of generic rooms offers a flexibility that extends to the inhabitants rather than to the architecture; one rotates the uses of rooms to accommodate ever-changing needs. In the Anti-Villa, for instance, the owners have changed the use of some rooms several times because of changes in their living patterns. This anti-hi-tech attitude comes straight from the appreciation of vernacular, historic architecture; though technically outmoded, it still presents a livable environment in European cities and Greek islands.

The Kirlin House, also in the Napa Valley, stands tall like a fortress, dominating the site and nature (Figs. 15a, b). The footprint is carefully controlled so that a maximum amount of land remains for the profitable grapes that are planted right up to the house. Again, a typical H-plan configuration faces the sun and the view, creating an interior private part surrounded by courts on the north and south. Such a configuration is rarely seen in the suburban typology of America. A massive shell protects the "fragile" inside, which consists of large rooms flanking the living/dining area. The dividing elements contained within are "wall monuments" or concrete-block objects—one for the disbursement of heat surrounding a wood stove and one to contain the fruits of the land, the rare and precious bottles of indigenous wine.

While the Anti-Villa and Kirlin House use concrete block as a visible building material and intentionally recall a structural fundamentalism, the Holt House in Corpus Christi, Texas, explores the use of refined and lasting building materials (Fig. 16). Over the ubiquitous concrete-block skeleton various stones are applied: Italian travertine for the main house, pinkish Mexican sandstone for outdoor parts (like terraces and garages), and Texas granite for the counters and the symbolic gesture of entrance. The sensuality of the materials and the archetypal "Roman" articulation of the plan expand the language of "primitivism" while still adhering to the values and attitudes of a rational and restrained articulation of architecture.

In a project for a private school in Monterey, Calif., Batey and Mack explored the architecture of a more urban typology (Fig. 17). The design is not a large

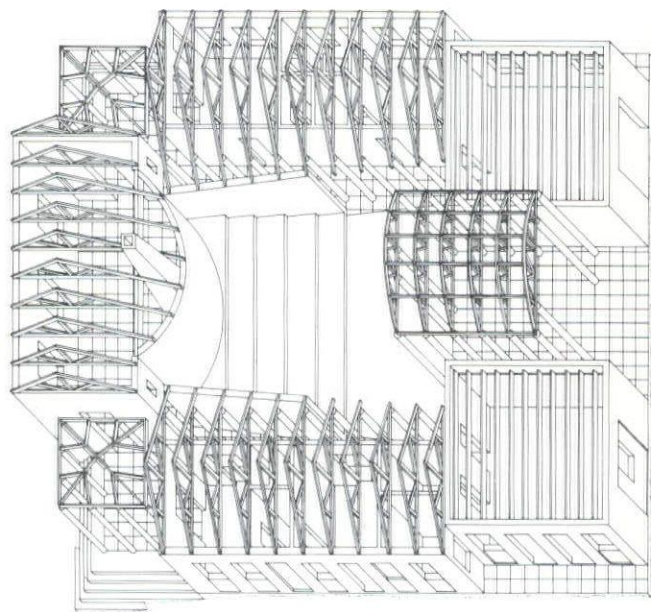


16. Batey and Mack, Holt House, Corpus Christi, Texas

object containing different rooms and functions but rather a series of small yet massive buildings connected by wooden open and enclosed structures. The assemblage of buildings establishes its own contextual "little town" in which the buildings are ordered by hierarchy and function. The attitude toward the design introduces an urban conviction to the rural landscape of the anti-urban environment of California.

This selected list of Americans engaged in the architecture of rationalism and autonomy does not constitute a school of conscious direction. It does, however, reflect the beginning of an attitude toward architecture that reintroduces and sustains certain historic and moral values for the present. These values are humanistic, rational, contextual, structural, material, morphological, and autobiographical. Such universal values establish a link between the European precursors of rationalism and their historical dependencies. We can go back to Palladio who, in his *Quattro Libri*, remarks: "Although variety and things new may please everyone, yet they ought not to be done contrary to the precepts of art, and contrary to that which reason dictates; whence one sees, that although the ancients did vary, yet they never departed from some universal and necessary rules of art."<sup>16</sup>

One hopes that a continuous dialogue between American and European architects will culminate in a more politicized and moralistic discussion of architectural ideas. This rational activity presents a sane way of approaching the "art of building" in the face of the continuous titillation of the self-indulgent, irresponsible, jokelike architecture of the post-modern era.



17. Batey and Mack, School, Monterey, California, Axonometric

<sup>1</sup> Leon Krier and Maurice Culot, *Counterprojects* Archives d'Architecture Moderne, Brussels, 1980, pp. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Architecture 1750-1950* London, 1965, Faber, p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Architecture 1750-1950* London, 1965, Faber, p. 204.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 205.

<sup>5</sup> Emil Kaufman, *Revolutionary Architecture*.

<sup>6</sup> Adolf Loos, *Sämtliche Schriften*, Vol. 1, Vienna, 1962, Verlag Herald, pp. 314-315.

<sup>7</sup> Heinrich Tessenow, Catalogue for Tessenow exhibition at the Academy of Applied Art, Vienna, 1980.

<sup>8</sup> Hermann Muthesius, *Der Werkbund Gedanke in den Germanisgben Ländern*, Jena, 1914. Proceedings of the Werkbund debate at Cologne.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Keeler, *The Simple Home*, San Francisco, 1904, P. Elder, pp. 20, 37.

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* New York and Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 290.

<sup>11</sup> Leon Krier, *Projet pour une école* Archives d'Architecture Moderne, Bruxelles, 19-1980, p. v.

<sup>12</sup> Anthony Vidler, *Third Typology*, AAM Bruxelles, 1978, Rational Architecture.

<sup>13</sup> Rodolfo Machado and Jorge Silveti, *The Presence of the Past*, catalogue for the 1980 Biennale at Venice, Rizzoli, 1981, p. 230.

<sup>14</sup> Jorge Silveti, lecture at the University of California at Berkeley, February 1982.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Mack, "Critique of South Side Settlement Center," *Progressive Architecture*, 2-81, p. 85.

<sup>16</sup> Andrea Palladio, *Quattro Libri*, vol. 1, Chap. 20, p. 26, New York, Dover Press, 1965.

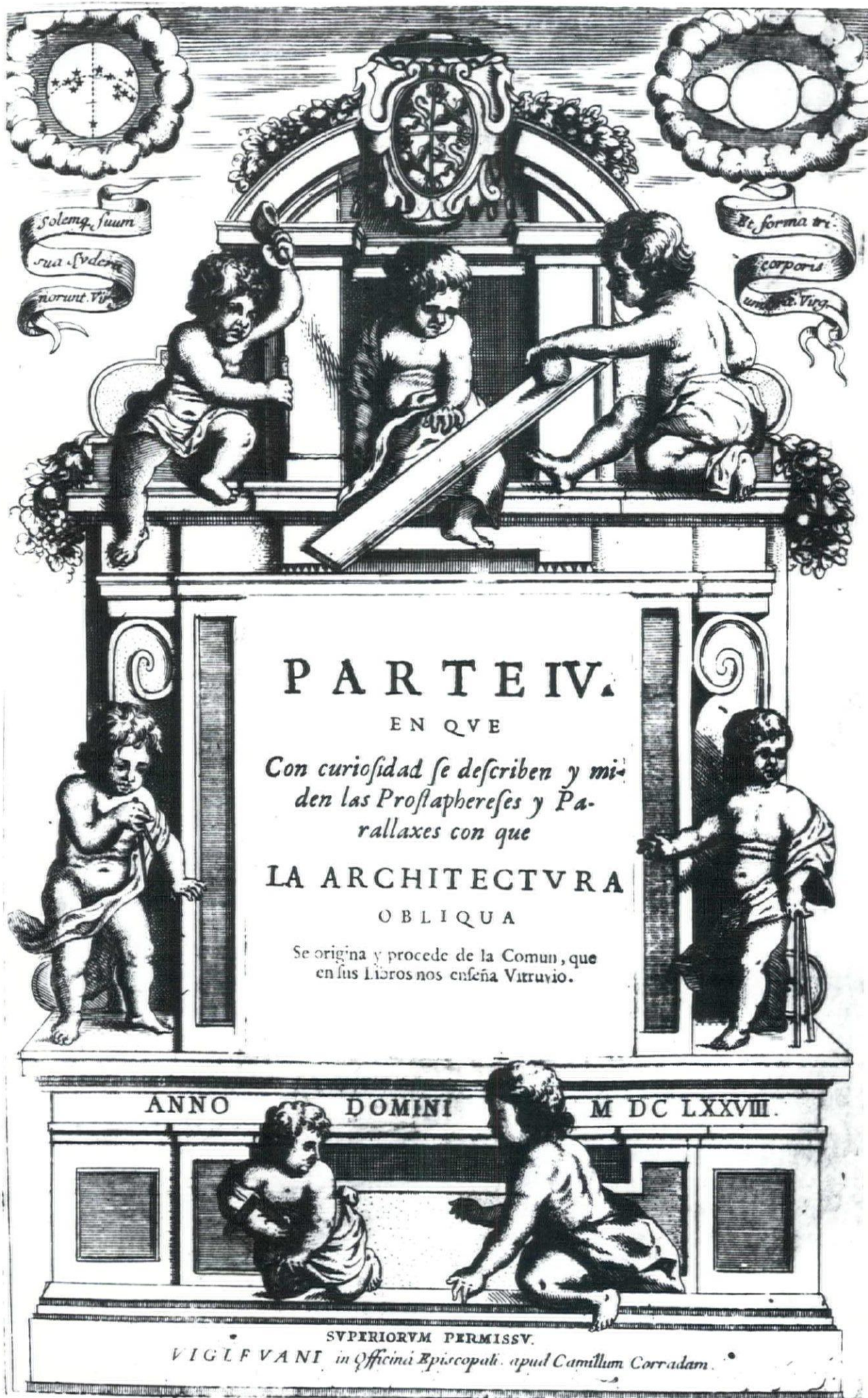
In this paper Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre propose, through the investigation of various architectural treatises, an interpretation and definition of the idea of autonomy. They pointedly outline autonomy as a reoccurring theme in the history of architectural ideas. They present this idea as both a catalyst and polemic in the history of architectural theory.

Drawing from the texts of Vitruvius, Alberti, Sebastiano Serlio, et al, they cast the notion of autonomy in a historic overview. They propose an idea of autonomy as responsive to the archaic ideas of harmony and formal and moral perfection. Having emerged simultaneously with the decline in the belief in the norms of purity and divine order, it then coincidentally developed in opposition to the plurality of profane, utilitarian and functional purposes. This polemic attitude to the functional reflected a new formal approach toward design, making a distinction between two kinds of beauty: that which is purposeful as well as beautiful, and that which only gives pleasure to the eye. This introduces the issue of whether or not forms are normative in themselves, that is autonomous, offering a formal-visual definition of autonomy.

Tzonis and Lefaivre focus their definition exclusively on the formal and "pictorial effects" of autonomous architecture. They limit their definition to a strictly visual level which stimulates the senses of the viewer. This interpretation is further developed in the articulate example of Giovanni Caramuel de Lobkowitz. Through this example, we have the interesting situation in which drawing is introduced, first by Serlio and later by Caramuel, as a formal canonizer and problem solver. Contributing as an operative mechanism to a formal, visual autonomy, drawing influences the growth of the idea of autonomy, and conversely, the rise of autonomy is one of the major factors that accelerates the spread of the graphic means of architectural thinking. It organizes the formal fabric, isolates its elements and strips them of construction or utility associations. It foregrounds the formal characteristics of a building, elicits patterns and helps them relate to a formal structure.

This definition, although elaborate and well illustrated, trivializes the idea of autonomy. However, it does enable the authors to criticize it as being both non-socially relevant, and a servant to capitalism. Having proposed autonomy as a formal construct which is appreciated on a sensory level, they then declare it an elitist and private system which is exclusive of the general, and as such contributing to the maintenance of power structures and the division of labor.

This critical argument is in effect consistent with the role that autonomy has historically played in architectural theory. It often acts as the dialectic with functional, building, and socio-political issues. It should be recognized however, that the definition put forth by the authors is a particular one, and does not imply the extent and breadth of the idea. Essentially by focusing on the single issue of form they have chosen to ignore the dynamic and inclusivist nature of autonomy. Instead they have committed architecture to the critical and static separation that has traditionally denied a thorough understanding and definition of architecture as autonomous.



PARTE IV.

EN QUE

Con curiosidad se describen y miden las Prostaphereses y Parallaxes con que

LA ARCHITECTURA

OBLIQUA

Se origina y procede de la Comun, que en sus Libros nos enseña Vitruvio.

ANNO

DOMINI

M DC LXXVIII.

SUPERIORVM PERMISSV.

VIGILVANI in Officina Episcopali. apud Camillum Corradam.

# The Question of Autonomy in Architecture

Liane Lefavre  
Alexander Tzonis

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Firm believers in the idea of autonomy in architecture<sup>1</sup> see architecture as having its own problems and its own way of thinking, independent of any other concern. They conceive built form as determined by purely formal norms and assume that such norms are the only suitable criteria for judging the quality of buildings. Sociological, economic, political, and technological concerns are taken as necessary evils that must be tamed, compromised, or exploited for the designer to be able to concentrate on the central problem of architecture, which is form.

The following historical inquiry, sketchy as it might be, into the emergence and early development of the idea of autonomy shows that the preoccupation with autonomy is a passing phenomenon that emerges under certain conditions. The idea of autonomy is historically specific and intrinsically linked with how architecture is viewed and socially used. The sinuous conceptual path we retrace here cannot be associated directly with specific social or economic events nor with any specific action of a single social group. But neither is it the outcome of a random process or of a remote battle of ideas fighting ideas. Clients, builders, and users of architecture are pushed by motivations, constrained by attitudes, carried away by dreams. Autonomy is such a motivation, attitude, dream.

From anthropological data and from the study of literature, it appears that archaic culture did not possess the idea of autonomy of architecture. The forms of buildings were dictated by the directives of "purity" or "harmony" and taboos of pollution so that they conformed to the divine order of things. The practice of architecture was interwoven with ritual while the theory was bound up with conceptual systems of divination. Ancient Greek culture carried on this tradition; formal perfection was believed to be the outcome of moral perfection—which is, in the end, a version of the doctrine of purity and harmony.

By the fourth century B.C., however, a new approach is apparent. "Why do you charge me for your plates more than any other maker though they are neither stronger nor costlier to make?" asks Socrates of the technician. And the latter answers, "because the proportions of mine are better because they fit better." The design product is seen as serving an additional goal. It is "fit" for use. Socrates again is quoted by Xenophon in the *Commentarii* as saying that "the same things are both beautiful and ugly . . . for all things are good and beautiful in relation to those purposes for which they are well adapted." Norms of conformity to a universal cosmological order are replaced by the plurality of profane, utilitarian purposes.

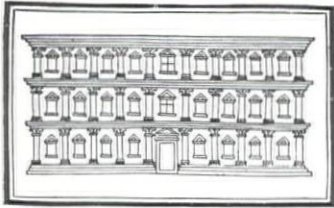
The idea of autonomy in the arts emerged almost simultaneously with, and in opposition to, this utilitarian approach. Statues, says the sophist Alcidas, give only pleasure to the eye; they are of no use. Socrates writes in *Pistias* that the beautiful (eurythmon) in relation to a purpose is superior to the beautiful in itself. From these two statements, one thing is clear: A new formal attitude toward design was born, and the question of whether forms are normative in themselves—that is, autonomous—became an issue.

However few and fragmented are the references to architecture in antiquity, they reveal that the decline in the belief in the norms of purity and in the divine order coincided with the emergence of utilitarian norms and, as concerns us, of norms that refer to form itself. But formal norms are not entirely autonomous. Some formal patterns are preferred to others on the basis of how well they gratify, how well they please sensually. Thus formal norms are not really autonomous. They depend ultimately on a hedonistic, aesthetic norm.

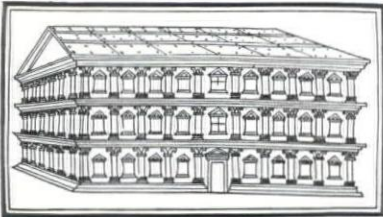
The treatise of Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, is a unique document on architecture at the crossroads.<sup>2</sup> Utilitarian as well as autonomous points of view of architecture come out in a fragmented manner throughout the text. But social flux had not yet arrived at a threshold where all these novel intellectual findings could be put into a coherent system. For this reason, the text suffers from ambiguities and indecisions. One of the resulting difficulties for a contemporary student is to find exact

DE VITRUVVE

Quantité est vn effect cōuenant à la grandeur & largeur de tout le corps de l'architecture, & à toutes les particularitez des membres.  
 Disposition est vne bōne & raisonnable collocatiō d'iceux membres, & vn moyē qui donne grace à toute qualité d'ouurage. Les especes de ceste disposition, qui sont d'itez en Grec Idées, sont celles dont les noms en luyuēt, Ichnographie, Orthographie, Scenographie.  
 Ichnographie doncques est l'usage ou pratique de la regle & du compas, par laquelle on faict sur le plan ou terralle les descriptiōs & lineamens des plattes formes.



Orthographie est la representation de la figure ou relief du bâtiment, pour démonstrer quel & comment il doit estre.



Puis Scenographie est l'adumbration ou renfondrement avec la racourcillure du front & des costez d'vn Edifice, faicte par lignes qui respondent toutes à vn Centre & de cela se nomme communement Perspective.  
 Toutes ces especes naissent de la vertu Imaginative, & de l'insuētion de l'homme.

equivalents between the concepts of Vitruvius and the concepts of our times; that is, between concepts developed in epochs in which the crystallization of ideas was significantly different.

Most translations of Vitruvius, however scholarly, when trying to establish a one-to-one correspondence between terms of the two periods, run into the danger of becoming oversimplified and/or anachronistic. For this reason we shall retain here, for the most part, the terminology found in the original text.

In the Vitruvian analysis of the norms of architecture, *ordinatio* and *decorum* appear to carry over archaic connotations of purity. *Decorum*, on the other hand, also refers to social felicitousness. So does *distributio* which, in other instances, together with *firmitatis* and *utilitatis*, belongs to a utilitarian outlook of design. *Venustas*, *symmetria*, and *eurythmia* view the building as a formal object organized by symmetrical correspondences: the "symmetriae," free of divinatory or utilitarian connotations. A more opaque norm is *dispositio*, "the fit assemblage of details, and, arising from this assemblage, the elegant effect of the work and its dimension along with a certain quality and character" (bk. 1, chap. 2). There are three kinds of disposition, which in Greek are called *ideae*: *ichnographia* (ground plan), *orthographia* (elevation), and *scenographia* (perspective). All three "arise from imagination and invention" (Fig. 1).

Despite later associations, it seems that *ideae* belong to the context of Democritus and Lucretius and not of Plato. *Ideae* means forms of objects existing or planned, not archetypal, metaphysical structures. This is evident from the classifications of *ideae* that represent buildings in a manner similar to how Democritus pictured the differences in atoms.<sup>3</sup> Vitruvius refers to *The Nature of the Universe*, Lucretius's long poem, in his introduction (bk. 1, chap. 1). That *ideae*<sup>4</sup> are close to what the latter calls "images" can be seen in the part of the treatise where Vitruvius discusses the problem of optical illusions.

According to Lucretius, "images" are "films," "replicas or insubstantial shapes of things . . . thrown off from the surface of objects," "floating," "traveling," "weaving

1. *Orthographia* and *scenographia* illustrated, from C. Cesariano's edition of Vitruvius.

. . . the aspect and form . . . of the object." These images, which "travel through a great deal of air," may be altered along the way. A building may be thought of as having a form different from that which it has in reality and, while shaped correctly, it might be seen as ill formed. Lucretius refers to the "square towers of a city in the distance which often appear round" (bk. 4). Vitruvius discusses the "angle columns which appear more slender" because of "the air [which] consumes and lessens in appearance the diameter of the shafts." He also refers to the upper part of the building which gives the appearance of leaning backwards." Vitruvius accordingly suggests that "what the eye cheats us of must be made by calculation" (bk. 3, chap. 3). The architect must "make thicker," "add," "supplement," and "incline" to overcome such problems of vision that deform the proper *ideae*.

Vitruvius is here warning the architect to consider the *ideae* as they will be perceived by the viewer and not as things that exist on their own. This is something that the archaic architecture of purity could not allow for, as it was concerned with the essence of the products and not with the senses of the viewers. But for a sensualistic architecture it is a most appropriate observation. With the introduction of the Democritus-Lucretius paradigm one more argument emerges in favor of the autonomy of architecture: that as a field, architecture deals with problems of pure visibility that are not only apart from construction and use but are also highly specialized as they belong to the world of illusions and optical corrections. Vitruvius goes on to suggest other readjustments that "will produce a more *pictorial* (*graphicoteram*) effect in the general view" (bk. 4, chap. 3). The introduction of the Democritus-Lucretius paradigm of optics in architecture, with its abstractions and organization of categories, represents a first step toward looking at buildings as coherent problems of pure visibility, of "pictorial effect," with their own methods for solution apart from construction and devoid of use.

References to architecture are as scarce in the writing of the Middle Ages as they are in that of antiquity. They appear inside larger theoretical works that deal with architecture as part of an overall, universal system of

world order. Some forms are believed to be auspicious and to keep evil at bay; others are categorized as boding ill. Very little of these writings can be seen as an expression of the autonomy of architecture, especially during the earlier period. Toward the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, one frequently comes across a utilitarian view. In addition, in these late-medieval texts beautiful forms come to be seen not only as reflections of the beauty of a higher order or as beautiful in their capacity to reflect this order; they become beautiful in themselves and are seen as objects of gratification. Entering into contact with them becomes an end in itself. In other words, architectural form is now perceived as having a measure of autonomy.

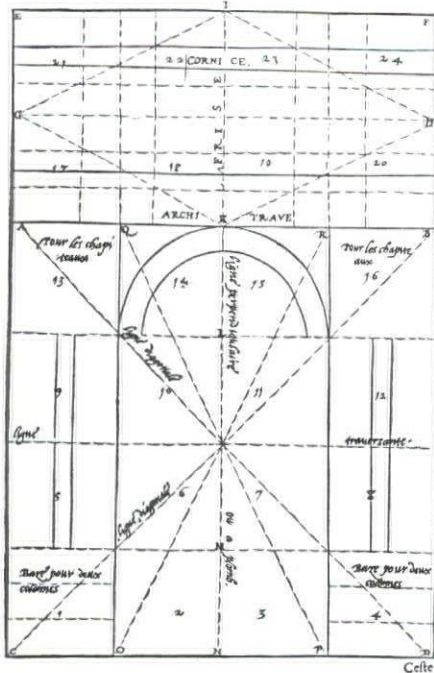
The *Ten Books on Architecture* by Alberti is the first treatise on architecture after Vitruvius.<sup>5</sup> It is better written than Vitruvius and is closer to our own sensibility. It also contains the first major theoretical statement of the autonomy of architecture. In the text, architectural forms are seen as products of formal norms whose ultimate warrant is the pleasure of the viewer. This interpretation of Alberti does, however, rest on a highly selective reading of his book. The reader must be warned that Alberti, while not as ambiguous as Vitruvius, can be very contradictory. His treatise is really many treatises in one, each written from a particular point of view. Such a tolerance for ambiguity is revealing not only about Alberti but also about the general state of architectural thinking at the time.

As with Vitruvius, the *Ten Books of Architecture* do not present a unified picture of architecture. The difference is that in Alberti the ruptures are much deeper and more visible. There is a strong desire to maintain an overall unity, even if it is only an apparent one. This results in the keeping of uncompromised, opposed opinions within the same work. The idea of autonomy that clearly emerges out of the work is one of the major splitting forces. But in the end these are not allowed to dominate the overall conception of architecture. There is a divinatory point of view, especially in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of the ninth book. There is also a prominently displayed utilitarian point of view that approaches buildings as "most beautiful when they are most useful for service" (bk. 1, chap. 11). There

is a compromise between the utilitarian and aesthetic norms that oppose both a strictly autonomous view of architectural forms, as when Alberti writes that "Beauty was never separate and distinct from Conveniency" (bk. 1, chap. 11), and is equally at odds with a purely utilitarian outlook, as when he asserts that "Works should be not only strong and useful but also pleasant to the sight" (bk. 1, chap. 10). Finally, there is a strong endorsement of the norm of pure, formal pleasure and of the idea of architecture as an autonomous, purely formal activity. The "Pleasure and Delight which we feel on the Viewing of any Building, arise," according to Vitruvius, "from nothing else but Beauty and Ornament." For "when we lift up our eyes to Heaven . . . we admire [God] more for the Beauties we see than for Conveniencies which we feel and derive from them." Beauty "is necessary in any Thing . . . particularly in building," while the satisfaction of "necessity is a very small Matter" as it "affords no manner of Pleasure" (bk. 6, chap. 2).

Three types of argument in the treatise clearly support the idea of autonomy in architecture: the psychological, that there is an autonomous agent in man seeking visual pleasure in buildings; the formalistic, that the visual organization of buildings can be abstracted and analyzed in terms of autonomous attributes; and the institutional, that the production of visual pleasure through buildings and formal organization in architecture is handled by the identifiable autonomous group of "Ingenious Artists." In addition Alberti suggests that looking at buildings gives us "Pleasure and Delight" (bk. 6, chap. 2) "by a kind of natural Instinct" (bk. 2, chap. 2) or "sense in the Mind" (bk. 9, chap. 5) or because of "a secret Argument and Discourse implanted in the Mind itself" (bk. 9, chap. 5). Alberti finds that this pleasure is due to the formal organization of the building, that which he calls "Design" and which he sees as a "firm and graceful preordering of lines and angles conceived in the Mind" (bk. 1, chap. 1).

The strongest argument for the autonomy of architecture is made at the opening of the book, where Alberti declares the independence of architectural form: "It is the Property and Business of the Design to appoint to the Edifice and all its Parts their proper Places . . . Nor has



Cette mesure fut inventée par les ouvriers anciens bien experts en maçonnerie, & obliuée en leurs arcs & voultures, pour leur donner grace & resplendeur. Le piedestal ou contrebaze des colonnes, commençoit au niveau du pauc par vn plinthe, & le tout estoit de la hauteur d'un pied, garny de six moulures avec leurs alitrages ou fuzes, suivant l'alignement de l'edifice, & seruant d'embasement aux colliers ou lambages de la porte. L'espace cotenu entre les lignes A, B, E, F, estoit diuisé en trois parties, l'une pour l'architraue, l'autre pour la frize, & la tierce pour la corone ou cornice, qui auoit vne partie plus que les deux autres: cest à dire, que si l'architraue a cinq parties, & autant la frize, la corone en doubte auoit six, par laquelle en cest oruure excedoit celle mesure, d'autant que l'ouuure entredus, auoit fait vn pendant de demy pied sur la cymaise de la corone, & elle fin que la faille des moulures dicelle, n'empeschast la veue des sculptures qui estoient au dessus, combien que lon peut aussi agrandir l'architraue & la frize, par leurs ornemens, ainsi que l'ouuure le requiert. Souz la cornice y auoit vn quart de chacun costé autant large que la faille. La frize estoit par de foubz, auoit autant de largeur que la moitie de ce quart, ou que la tierce partie d'un des vingz & quatre quarez. L'espace entre les deux quarez, estoit diuisé en sept parties, celui du mylieu qui respondoit a plomb sur l'ouuerture de la porte, estoit employé en vn nid pour mettre la figure d'une nymphe. A chaci des costez en demouroit trois pour autres sculptures. La faille de la plus haute corone ou cornice, se peut facilement trouuer en faisant de la ligne de la grosseur vn quart, le diagoné duquel sera fa projection. Or comprenant toute la figure des vingz & quatre quarez ensemble, vous trouuerez qu'elle contient vn quart perfect & demy. Diuisé le demy

en six parties, par cinq lignes droites perpendiculaires, & urez vostre ligne du mylieu de la cinquieme merquee C, H, iusques au coing du quart perfect. A ou commence l'architraue, puis la dressez perpendiculairement sur la clef de l'architraue courbe ou voulture de la porte, & elle vous monstrera la hauteur reguliere du frontispice ou comble de dessus, les extremités duquel se doiuent ioindre & rapporter a la faille ou projection de la dernière corone ou cymaise, & avec semblables moulures.

C

this Design any Thing that makes it in its Nature inseparable from Matter (*neque habet lineamentum in se, ut materiam sequatur*) (bk. 1, chap. 1). "We can," he continues, "in our Thought and Imagination, by settling and regulating in a certain Order, the Disposition and Conjunction of the Lines and Angles" (bk. 1, chap. 1).

Throughout the treatise it is clearly the architect whose "Mind conceives and contrives" the "Design," and this is seen as a natural state of affairs. The role of the architect as an "Ingenious Artist," autonomous from the "manual Operator" (Preface) and from the "Hand of the Artificer" (bk. 6, chap. 4) is stressed again and again.

Alberti did not conceive this way of looking at architecture in a vacuum. Not only had Vitruvius contributed to its early stages but so had Plato, Cicero, and many other antique and medieval authors. Alberti remembers the palaces, uncovers and selects fragments, fits everything together into a pattern, but other Renaissance theoreticians did the same. They recognized Alberti's synthesis because it was something that they had always wanted to see.

Essential as it is to find the roots of this new conceptual framework of architecture and the context from which they emerged, it is equally important to identify the moment they joined together to form a common trunk and the conditions under which they did so. The search for the reasons why the Renaissance promoted certain thoughts more than any other period before or why it placed them together in a synthesis never yet attempted is also part of this investigation.

We have tried to locate the idea of autonomy in architectural texts and to show its steady progress. Our presentation has been sketchy and selective, but we do not think we have led the reader to conclusions that can be disqualified by reference to other authors or other writings. We shall now try to see if this progress is linked with other developments in society.<sup>6</sup>

We must first look into what we might call the microsociological situation and try to discern the status of architecture as an institution at this time and how

2. Abstraction of the geometrical and proportional structure of a gate that is at the same time an allegory of a female body.

the idea of autonomy related to this status. We see in this respect the struggle to bring about an intellectual elite of architects which, through an accelerated division of labor, favored innovation. This innovation was increasingly in demand since society was growing and becoming more activated, with the gradual introduction of the market as a moving factor. At the same time, this new architectural elite aspired to a superior economic and social status relative to the builder-technician to whom was delegated increasingly manual labor. It is wrong to imagine that this elite developed out of the differentiation of tasks existing among the old stock of builders. On the contrary, the new architectural functions were filled by people who were initially goldsmiths (Brunelleschi), lawyers (Alberti), painters and sculptors (Michelangelo), and even men of letters (Francesco Colonna). For the ambitious of this elite the idea of autonomy, backed by the conceptual separation between design and structure, form and matter, as well as by what Alberti calls the "Force and Rule of Design" or the "property and Business . . . [of Design] to appoint and deliberate," served as an excellent argument to legitimize their independence from, and domination over, traditional, skilled groups of builders.

Other, broader social and economic developments played an equally important role in the emergence and evolution of the idea of autonomy in architecture. Alberti uses the notion to present the enjoyment of beauty in a building as a natural ("inata") drive of the individual. In other texts, such as Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, this drive is identified with the erotic one (Fig. 2). The privatization and eroticization of the use and acquisition of buildings displaces the consciousness of the social dimension of design objects. They make buildings look as if they occupy a place in human life and a role in human relations very different from the role they in fact play. Such a displacement of consciousness, while not affecting the act of acquisition itself, gives it by analogy to other acts, particularly the erotic, a stronger image of social acceptability than it ever had before.<sup>7</sup> The putting together and hoarding of buildings that function as depositories of power for the court nobility are made to appear to society at large as ordered, natural phenomena rather than as arbitrary and

temporary facts of domination, which they are in reality.

The point has been made by scholars that the rising powerful group of merchants and financiers of the Renaissance championed the release of the circulation of products and labor from deeply rooted taboos and obligations. This new mentality is best expressed by Pico della Mirandola: "free judgment . . . confined by no bounds" where the individual is able "to fix the limits of [his] nature for himself." No wonder this social group found felicitous the idea of autonomy of architecture, with its strongly individualistic character, its belief in the solitary "Mind" as a source of private pleasure, its insular enjoyment of buildings, and its claim to generate designs out of the unadulterated springs of the creative soul.

The idea of autonomy gives architecture an *as-if* status. It makes architecture seem to be detached while in fact it is engaged. It makes architectural practice appear to be a purely psychological, if not physiological, drive while in fact it is a social institution. It makes architects appear to be serving the desires of all while they are serving the interests of certain groups only. The idea of autonomy is related to different groups in different ways. It is therefore a multifunctional instrument that permits intellectual elites, court nobility, merchants, and financiers to cooperate at a moment when their interests coincide, so as to reinforce each other's position.

One of Alberti's basic contributions to advancing the idea of autonomy in architecture is his identification of the set of abstract attributes through which a building is to be seen as a purely formal structure. His list includes: "Order, Number, Size, Situation and Form" (bk. 6, chap. 5) and, again, "Size, Quality, Angles, Situation and Colour" (bk. 9, chap. 7). The operations by which these attributes are "mixed together" (bk. 9, chap. 8) or "put together" by "Conjunction and Connection" (bk. 9, chap. 5) are "Election, Distribution, Disposition" (bk. 6, chap. 4).

This set of attributes is an extension of Vitruvius's *dispositio* or *ideae*. Alberti alludes to these two terms (once as "Design" and once as "Idea" (bk. 9, chap. 10),

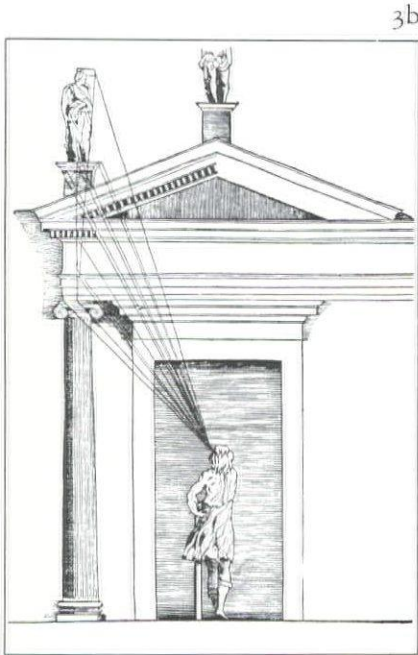
which refer to the "reduction [of the building] into lines." This understanding of architecture promotes the conceptual independence and insularity of the formal system of architecture. It offers group identity to the architects by providing a special, abstract language for describing the world and controlling it. The materialization of this abstract representation of the building is expressed in the drawing.

Alberti's view of drawing, on the one hand, is very reserved. Drawings are not essential in his treatise. His text clearly voices the belief that drawings can be put to good use "to examine and complete" the built product in advance:

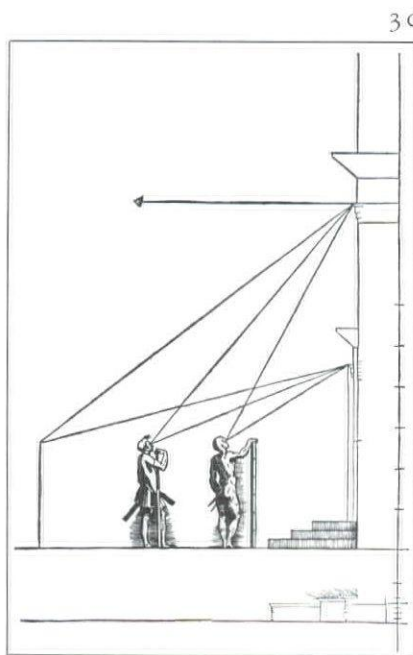
*I have often started in my Mind with Ideas of Buildings which have given me wonderful Delight: Wherein when I have come to reduce them to lines, I have found in those very Parts which most pleased me many gross Errors that required great Correction; and upon a second Review of such a Draft . . .*

He adds that "I have been sensible and ashamed of my own Inaccuracy" in failing in the "Measuring of Weights, Superficies and Solids" (bk. 9, chap. 10). He sees, on the other hand, a danger in being carried away by the visual-formal aspects of the drawing as such and in being distracted by the gratification one derives from the drawing of a building. This, he fears, might detract the architect "from a rigorous Examination of the Parts which he ought to make" (bk. 2, chap. 1). It might cause the "vain Architect" "by charming the Eye and striking the Fancy of the Beholder" to be easily drawn "into an Admiration of himself" (bk. 2, chap. 1). Alberti recommends as a first measure in avoiding such a danger the use of models rather than drawings which "would not have [to be] . . . too exactly finished or too delicate and neat but plain and simple."

But the basic issue is not models versus drawings. The fundamental conflict is between the privatization of architecture and its traditional social use. In this respect, while Alberti is ready to accept the autonomy of the hedonistic visual experience, and through it the legitimization of the private interest of the hoarder nobleman of the court, he is not allowing this autonomy

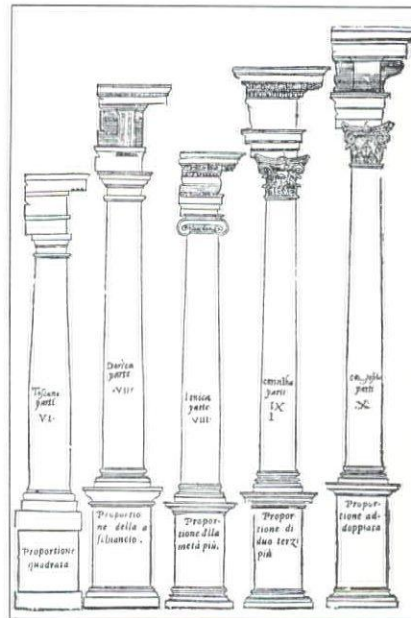


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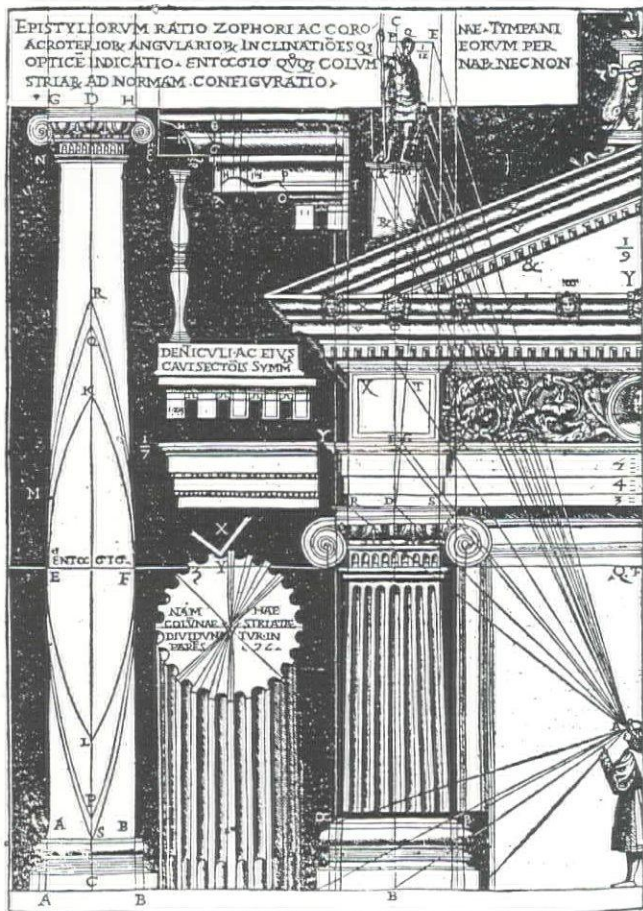


3c

3 b,c. Jean Martin, Translation of Vitruvius's treatise.



4. Sebastiano Serlio, The five orders canonized.



3a

3 a. Illustration of Vitruvius's optical errors.

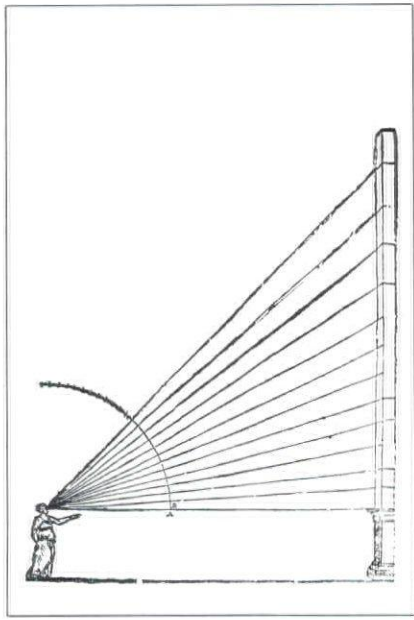
to spread over the actual work of the architect. Nor does he approve of the process of production of design being turned into an intimate, hedonistic, asocial act. The designer, whether technician or humanist, must continue working toward a social product.

Alberti's warnings could not arrest the massive introduction of the drawing into architectural thinking. Drawing influenced the growth of the idea of autonomy, while at the same time the rise of autonomy was one of the major factors that accelerated the spread of the graphic means of architectural thinking. The drawing is important in making the canon of regularity apply to buildings. It organizes the formal fabric, isolates its elements, and strips them of construction or associations with utility. It foregrounds—to use a term coined by the Russian formalists—the formal characteristics of a building, elicits patterns, and helps them relate to a formal structure. The drawing also plays a most important role in coping with questions of irregularity.

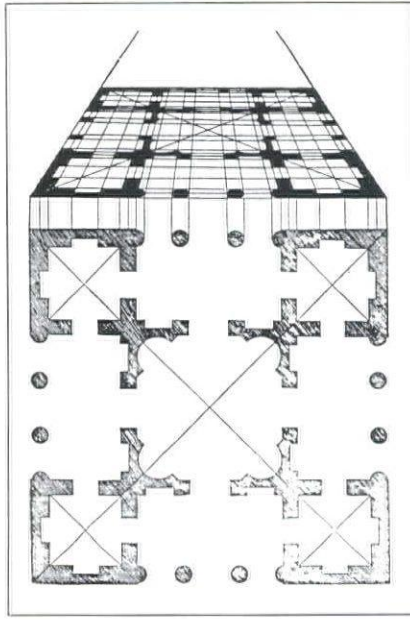
We have already noted in Vitruvius the problem of optical illusion as preeminently an expression of the autonomy of architecture. Alberti refers to this problem but pays it little heed. In later treatises, however, it rises to prominence. The correction of optical errors and the return of the building to an apparent state of regularity are among the critical formal problems of architecture that drawing is called upon to solve (Figs. 3a, b, c).

Sebastiano Serlio, in his *Seven Books on Architecture*, published over a period of almost forty years between 1537 and 1575, gives a central role to drawing. The contrast with Alberti's *Ten Books*, in which illustration plays no role at all, is enormous. On the other hand, Serlio is simply putting into effect what Alberti had stated as a program. It has been said that Serlio uses illustrations to popularize the subject. One wonders, however, if for the popular readership of his days it was not easier to read his "ideae" than his words.

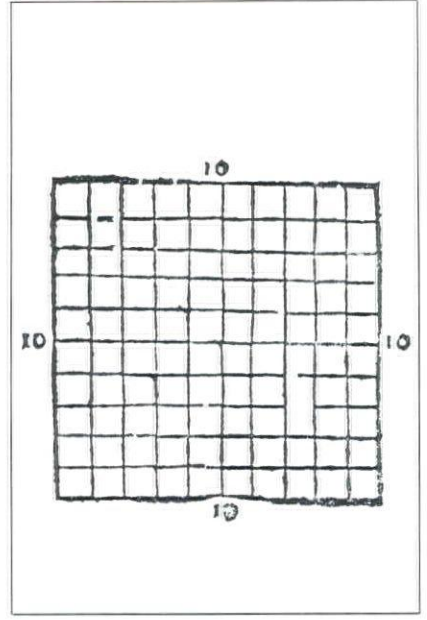
More than a popularizer, the drawing is a formal canonizer (Fig. 4) and a formal problem solver. It establishes formal norms and tactics for the attainment of formal perfection. More specifically, the *Seventh Book*



6 a. Serlio, Illustration of Vitruvius's optical errors.



6 b. Serlio, Perfect plan and its perspective distortion.



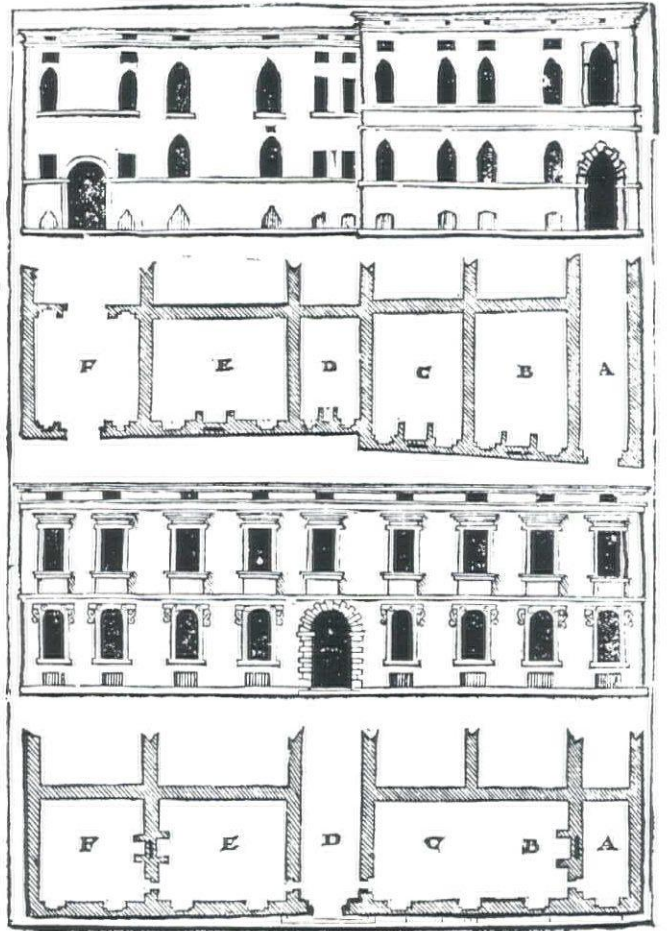
6 c. Serlio, The most perfect form. Matrix.

deals with "many accidents that may occur to the architect," anomalies (Figs. 5, 6a), among them "strange forms of sites" that are seen as obstacles in reaching perfection (Figs. 6b, c).

There are similarities between the archaic norm of purity and the emerging modern norm of beauty relative to the state of perfection they both seek. Perfect buildings, whether pure or beautiful, are seen as valid products of complete and consistent logical systems. These systems are developed through the use of generative rules that cannot produce a design that contradicts them nor tolerate the addition of a new generative rule. There is also an optimistic, agonistic attitude common to both systems. In archaic texts there is a hero designer—a king or a prince—who after a struggle succeeds in arresting disorder and monstrosity on the site and constructs the perfect palace or the perfect city in the same way that he overcomes the enemy on the battlefield. The same fighting spirit of architecture is to be found in the writings of the Renaissance. Considering our discussion of the society of this time as seeing itself as a society of achievement, such a grandiloquent portrait of the architect would not seem out of place.

Certainly there are also differences between the two systems. In the case of archaic design, the penalty of pollution is seen as catastrophic. For the Renaissance the "Error" of "Deformity" that fails "to satisfy our immoderate Desire for Perfection" is, as Alberti would say, an offense "to the Eye" and "to the Mind."

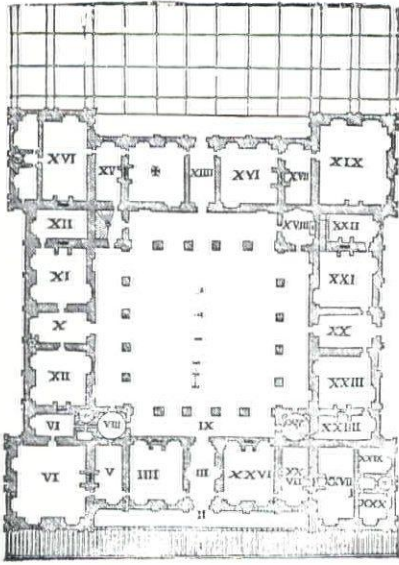
Serlio's *Seventh Book* deals with the problem of formal irregularity primarily through graphic means. In a number of case studies he demonstrates how a regular orthogonal, atrium-type building can relate to the irregularity of the site (*sito fuori di squadra*) and normalize "ugly and unsupportable" anomalies (Figs. 7, 8a–f). His solution can be generalized as follows: As one penetrates the building coming from the outside, one passes through a sequence of public spaces. These ought to be placed in the center of the building. They must also be regularly shaped in order to lead the viewer to infer that the rest of the building is as regular. Then, as one proceeds from the public spaces toward the



5. Sebastiano Serlio, vol. 7, Correction of a Gothic facade according to the canon.

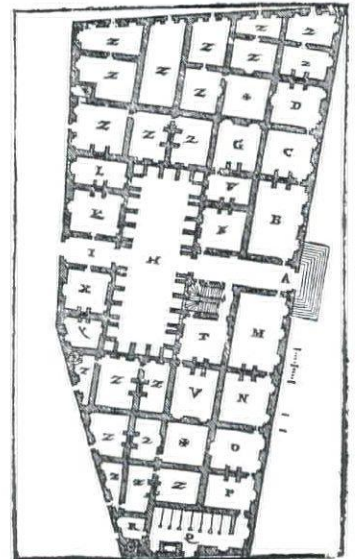
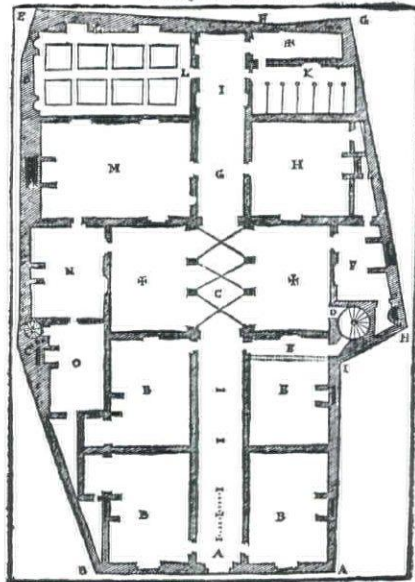
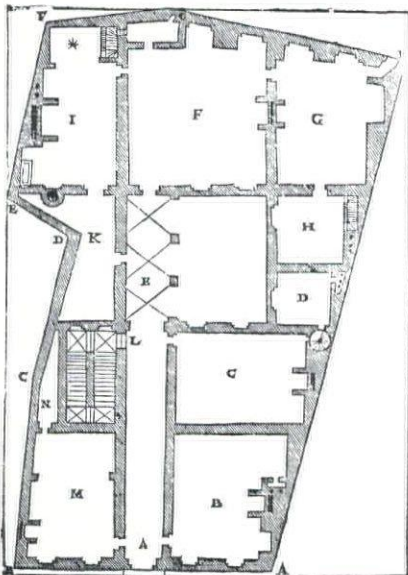
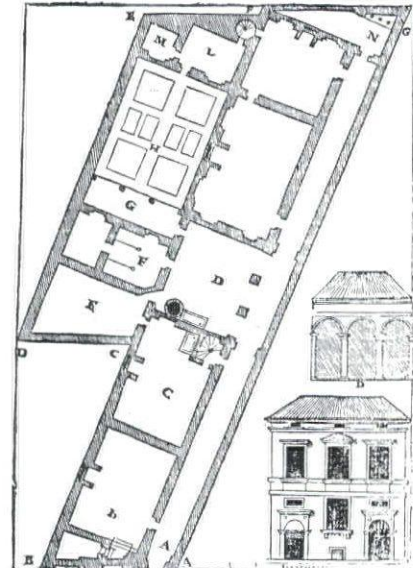
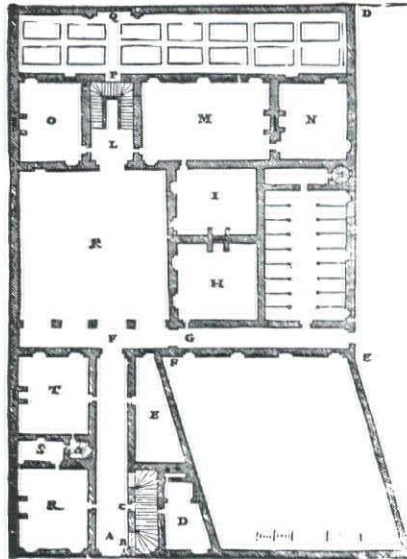
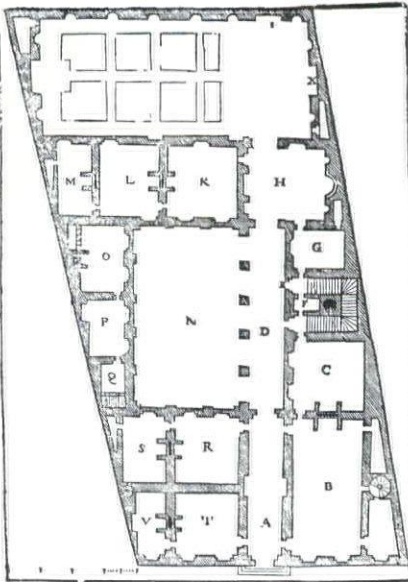
7. Serlio, A perfect plan and its matrix.

8. Serlio, anomalies.



7

8



private or servant areas, which must be placed near the periphery of the site, oblique and scalene spaces are permitted. This irregularity results from the boundaries of the site itself, which chop off part of the space that otherwise would have been regular.

Just as Vitruvius had tried to compensate for what the eye cheats us of, Serlio attempted to make up for what the site takes away. The perfect plan is not an essence of the building but a sense that belongs to its viewer. Regularity of form is not an objective state of the product, but a subjective state of the mind that depends on the relationship between the viewer and an artifact's organization. This relationship can be deliberately controlled by the architect, as Serlio demonstrates by carrying out a compromise with the help of the abstraction of the drawing. The drawing foregrounds the essential elements of the formal problem juxtaposing the orthogonal canvas of the building against the obliqueness of its contours, leaving out of the picture the nonessential.

The new formal abstraction of building was a problem-solving tool. So, too, the drawing as an object became an implicit assertion of the autonomy of architecture. It contributed to the production of a formally perfect plan while it silently argued for the right of existence of the formal problem. It assumed the architect to be the guardian of the rules of beauty, the proprietor of special problem-solving instruments, and the dextrous negotiator in the conflict between the canon of form and deformation.

These formal exercises that compromise regularity and promote the autonomy of architecture can be interpreted as Serlio's effort to help architects, as a group, to establish a specialty, an identity, at a moment when their claimed exclusivity over all problems of building was being challenged by military engineers.<sup>8</sup> These exercises can also be seen as an ingenious set of suggestions for a new problem typical of an increasing number of clients who were faced with the short supply of regular city sites—that is, how to achieve, on an irregular site, new norms of perfection for their buildings as a way of bringing themselves closer to the status of the court.

Despite the overwhelming, formalistic preoccupations of Serlio's *propositioni*, they were ultimately derived from Renaissance social norms and thus express political and social values of the period (such as the primacy of the public [*honore publico*] over the private interest and the domination of the master over the servant). Despite the imperatives of formal completeness and consistency, the social use of architecture had not yet been completely nibbled away. Alberti, too, had meshed the idea of formal regularity with signification of social hierarchy when he wrote that exceptions to the canon of regularity could be tolerated only in the private sector. In the public sector, on the other hand, perfect order always had to be respected (bk. 9, chap. 1). Moreover, one can infer from Serlio's drawings that in a situation of limited resources, such as when space is constrained, the perfection of the public realm can be gained at the expense of the private or servant realm. Indeed, one finds that the hierarchy of spatial ordering from the street to the center and from the center to the periphery, which is homologous to the hierarchy from the regular to the irregular, corresponds to a social hierarchy from the public to the private and from the master to the servant.

*Dispositio*, and therefore *ideae*, "arise," according to Vitruvius, "from imagination and invention." Alberti, too, in the preface of his *Ten Books*, stresses that an architect devises "with Thought and Invention." This statement implies that the "ingenious Artist" produces something nonmaterial yet capable of taming matter; capable of transforming something that in itself does not delight into a source of pleasure. It underlines the creative aspect of the artist who, in the words of Michaelangelo, "invent[s] that which never has been found." Both statements support the architect's superiority over the manual worker. Both imply the similarity between the architect and the humanist poet and rhetorician who produce something nonmaterial and constantly generate new forms. Both present the architect as involved in an aspect of design in which the military engineer could not compete.

After the time of Alberti, there were other social developments that may be linked with the trend toward imagination, invention, and "that which has been

found" that occurred toward the end of the fifteenth century. One such development was the rise of the commercialization of life that favored newness and deviation from established standards. Another was the increase in social mobility and the emergence of a class of rentiers. Both phenomena led to a mentality of hostility against the newcomers to power. This mentality was expressed in the praise for the nonobvious perfection, that is, for the perfect form that seems at first irregular or whose rules of regularity are obscure. The newcomer upstarts are expected to be unable to pass such a difficult cultural test and thus to be intimidated.

Within this framework the architect had to work under constant pressure and had to struggle between conforming and indulging in inconsequential innovation. We can interpret the rising tide of playful trespassing on formal norms during the beginning of the sixteenth century as the result of this struggle. The irregular forms of this period were not generated in the hybrid manner of the Serlio plan. They are intentional anomalies that were not born out of a clash with constraints. They emerged from violations of formal norms, usually by inverting rules of placement of architectonic elements or by distorting forms. The Renaissance art of representation played an important part in generating such distortions. We have already seen it being engaged in the overcoming of irregularities resulting from optical illusions. It was now employed in the reverse sense, generating irregularities by translating normal forms into angular, oblique, serpentine twists.

These anomalies arose within the context of the autonomy of architecture. They deviated from formal norms for no other reason than to return to formal concerns and to acknowledge the glorious insularity of the formal problematic. They are playful demonstrations of the formal virtuosity of an architect who devoted himself to formal campaigns while dreaming of formal trophies with which to enrich the imagery of his heroic uniqueness. Alternatively, they may be seen as blissful, brief escapades, largely resulting from the capabilities generated by the new, abstract idiom of space representation and from the belief in the primacy of aesthetic formal joy. This state of affairs no longer seems to conform to Alberti's opinion that the production of

architecture should be kept within the confines of a social act while permitting consumption to take its solitary path of individualism.

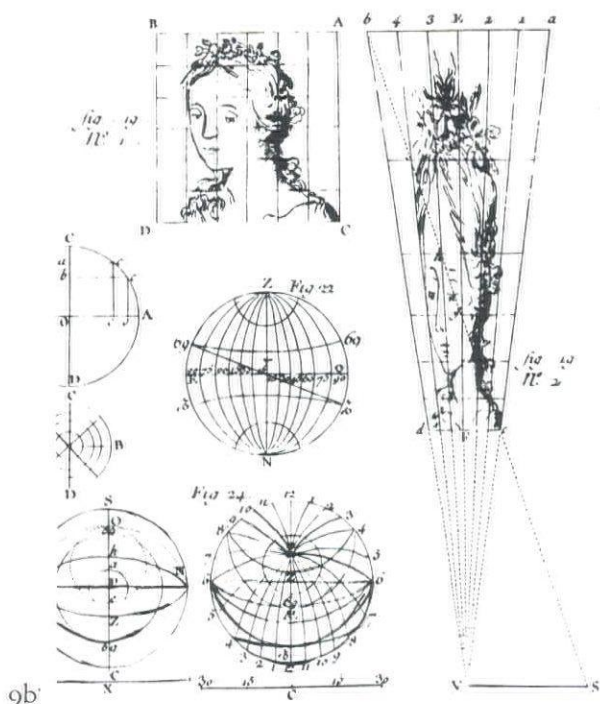
Vasari praises Michelangelo's power to generate new forms,<sup>9</sup> "*nella invenzione della veramente garbata architettura.*" He sees in the artist's works "something very different from the ornamentation and measure, order and rule" of "reason and rule." Michelangelo's "license," "bizarre breaks" and departures from "common usage" "amazed everyone" and "gave great encouragement to imitate him."

It is certainly an exaggeration to say that Michelangelo brought about these changes spontaneously. It was, however, in his time and in reference to his work that a new sensibility toward distortion, inversion, and other formal anomalies emerged. This new sensibility grew in opposition to the idea of autonomy. It was linked to a new social use of architecture—that of criticism.

Techniques of projection such as perspective, in addition to being used for correcting optical illusions, were put into use for the duplication of regular forms. Introducing the paradigm of perspective—its method and its concepts—to architecture had a very important effect. Not only did it make forms available for easy manipulation and the purposeful deviation from formal norms as easy as their imitation, it also made the act of duplication an object of observation. It provided an abstract level that imitation could be referred to and with which one could reflect upon the relation between model and reproduction, error and illusion, truth and falsehood.

Many of these discussions can be seen from our point of view as bizarre, dealing as they do with shadow images, mirror images, and anamorphosis. Often they have magic connotations in the sense that they deal with the esoteric and with deep powers of the universe. There are arguments that what is pictured is not the real world but rather its secret identity. What is real and open is ciphered through its representation into a mysterious icon (Figs. 9a, b).

All this leads to the seeing of irregular patterns as



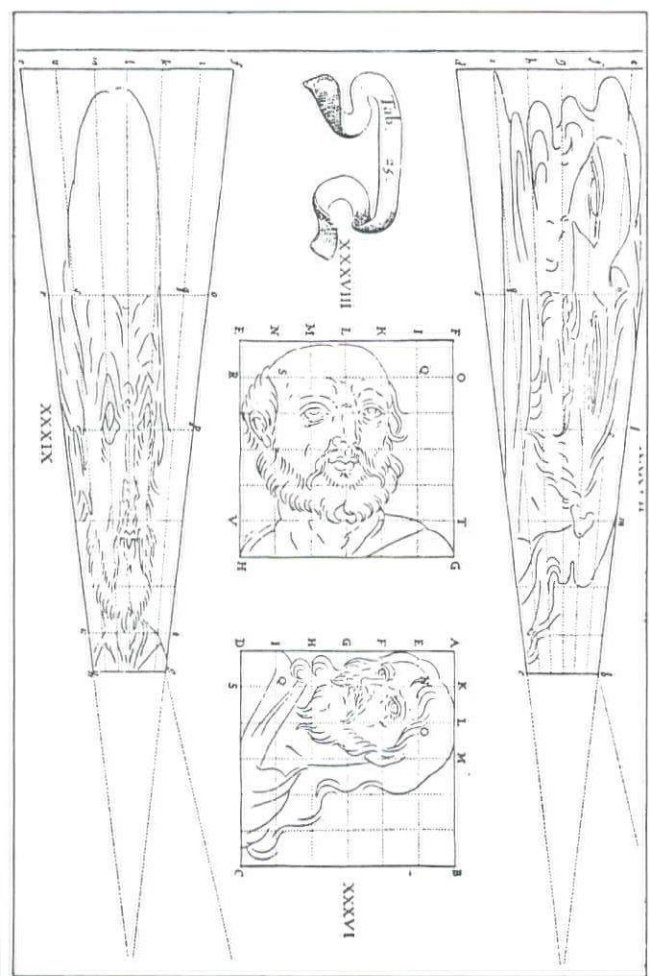
something more than a new variety of forms generated by the use of projection. Irregular patterns can be seen as pictures of regular forms and as comments on the act of picturing—an effort that has failed. They can be understood as epistemological rather than formal statements. Perfect forms that undergo the torture of stretching, squeezing, and bending, of being penetrated, mutilated, and lacerated should not be taken as disfigured designs, as monsters. They are the *dramatis personae* composing allegories about “Mimesis and Vanitas,” about desire and failure. In the framework of the antiscientific view of the Counterreformation,<sup>10</sup> they can be interpreted as stating that we can see “only through the glass darkly,” that knowledge is impossible and that faith, grace, and the legitimacy of the institution of the Catholic Church are warranted.

One might interpret inversions and transformations, the *contrapposti* and the *figure serpentine*, as expressions of the ideas of Vincenzo Danti,<sup>11</sup> a theoretician of art one generation younger than Michelangelo, who wrote that “disorder . . . finally has the purpose of order” because “if there were no disorder the order would not be known, inasmuch as natural disorder is a means of making known the divine order and human disorder of making known the natural order” (p. 216). One can also find in the idea of inversion and transformation the same thinking as in Montaigne’s passage:

*of ignorance I speake sumptuously and plentiously, and of learning meagerly and pitiously . . . purposely I treat of nothing, but of nothing: nor of any one science but of unscience. (3. 357)<sup>12</sup>*

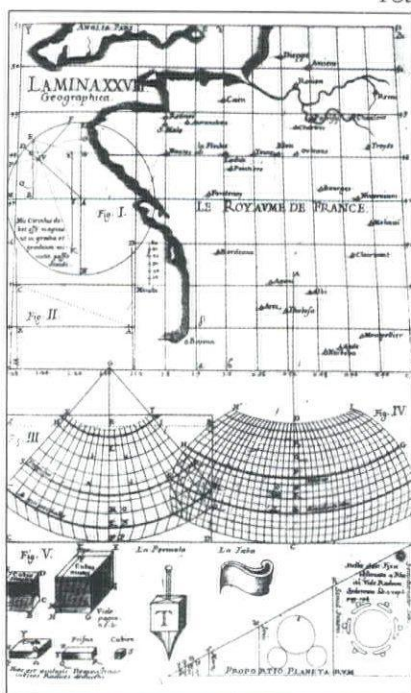
Such epistemological, theological reflections on representation bring to mind Bernini’s theatrical experiments<sup>13</sup> in which the act of mimicking becomes the subject of the play and in which the actors’ acting as if they were the spectators looking out at the spectators as if the latter were the actors results in the problems of conventionality and limits of knowledge being most forcefully confronted.

One might even proceed beyond this level of fideistic epistemological critique and argue that what we have in



9 a. Transformation of orthogonal to polar coordinates and accompanying distortion. Nicéron, like Mersenne on whose work the former’s is based, believed that perspective and “anoptic” distortions had a deeper philosophical meaning.

- 10 a. Grid transformation.
- 10 b. Frontispiece of Part IV.
- 10 c. Hybrid solution.
- 10 d. *Architectura Obliqua* solution.
- 10 e. *Architectura Recta* Doric capital.
- 10 f. *Architectura Obliqua* Corinthian capital.
- 10 g. Transformation of *Arch. Recta* column to *Arch. Obliqua*.
- 10 h. Plan of oval colonnade with *Arch. Obliqua* columns.
- 10 i. *Architectura Obliqua* radial grid colonnade.



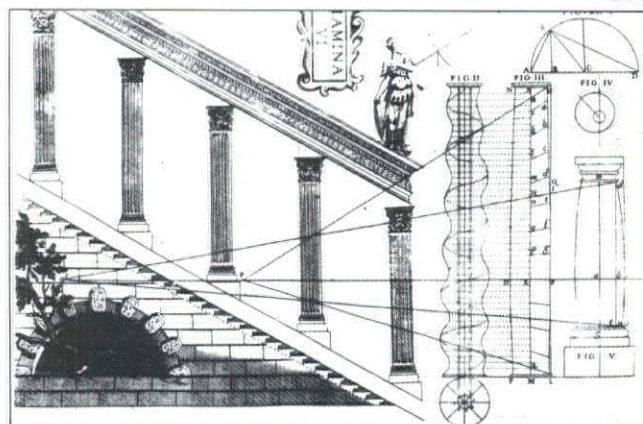
hand is a Pyrrhonist moral critique and a discontent with the institutions of the time. In fact, perhaps it can be seen as the antipode of the previously prevailing efforts of humanists to legitimize the emerging absolutist states during the end of the fifteenth century. Distortion, the allegory of mimesis that fails or deceives, by picturing how form emerges arbitrarily under the ruling of the conventions of representation, tells us in the same mood as Machiavelli, Montaigne, or Erasmus does how the fitting states of law and order result from arbitrary power and how limited their legitimacy is. "There is nothing so grossly and largely offending, nor so ordinarily wronging as the Lawes" (3.377).<sup>14</sup>

When Michelangelo "wished to separate himself from the whole . . ." formal thinking of architecture that surrounded him, he expressed not only an aesthetic, autonomous position about formal norms that have to be replaced but also an engaged philosophical and moral position about laws and institutions that have failed.

We can now interpret the melancholic behavior that swept through Europe, referred to by Wittkower,<sup>15</sup> not only as another expression of the bourgeois aggressive doctrine of individualism but also as a social psychology of being torn away. It indicated the painful impact of the unweaving of the social fabric, an early state of what Durkheim called *anomy*, which will become increasingly not the exception but a common occurrence in the modern world.

Serlio's solutions to the problem of how to save the order of the plan in the face of the anomalies of the site seem similar to a solution to a different problem—that of the orthogonally inscribed form of a balustrade climbing up onto the inclined plane of a stair. In this case the abacus and the base block of the baluster are cut into trapezia or triangular prisms. As in Serlio's plans, the peripheral spaces are mutilated; the sleeve and the belly of the balustrade, analogous to the public spaces in Serlio's plan, are kept intact.

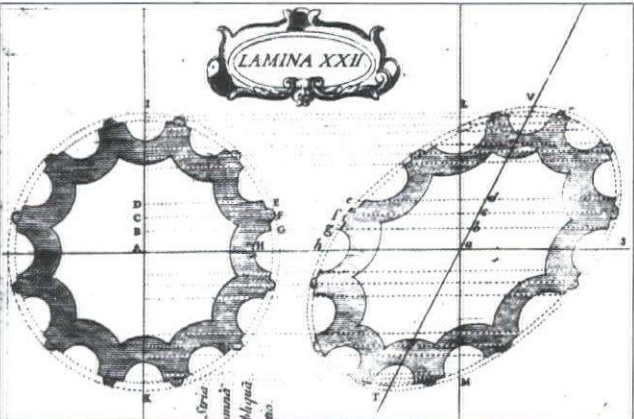
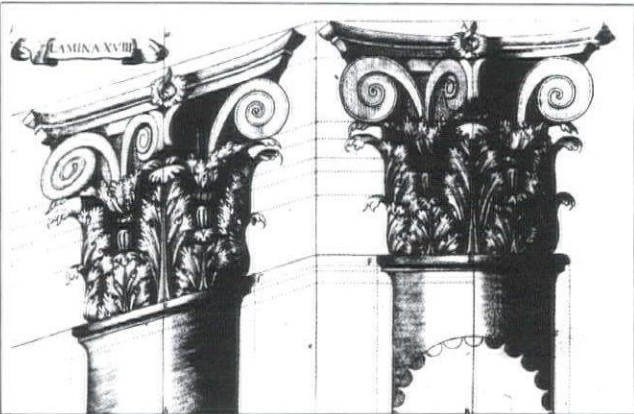
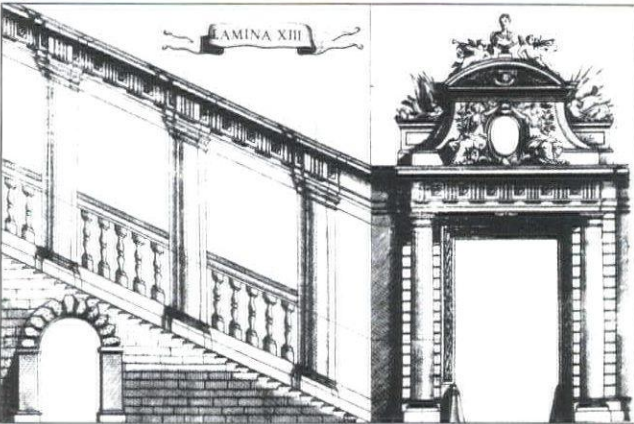
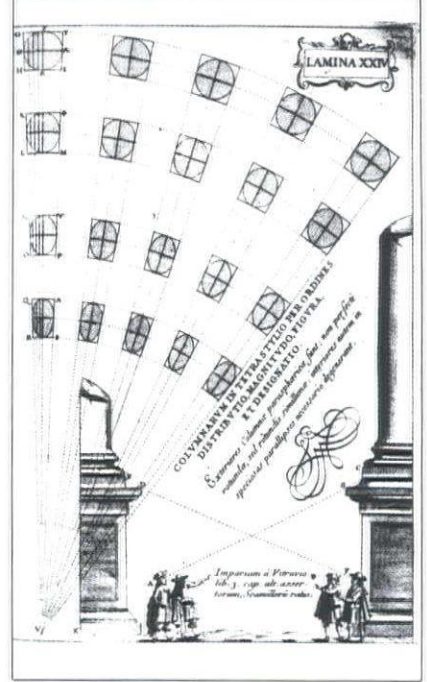
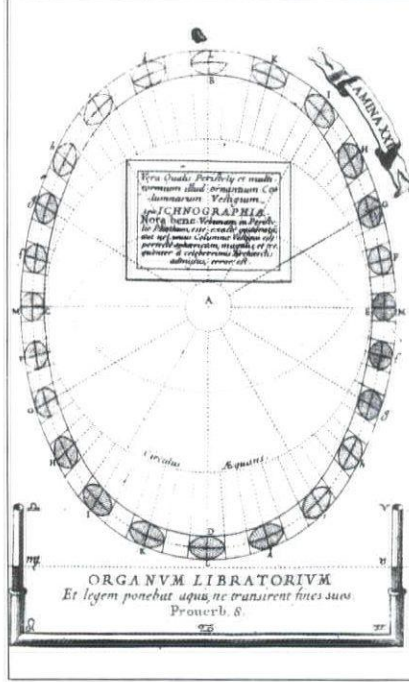
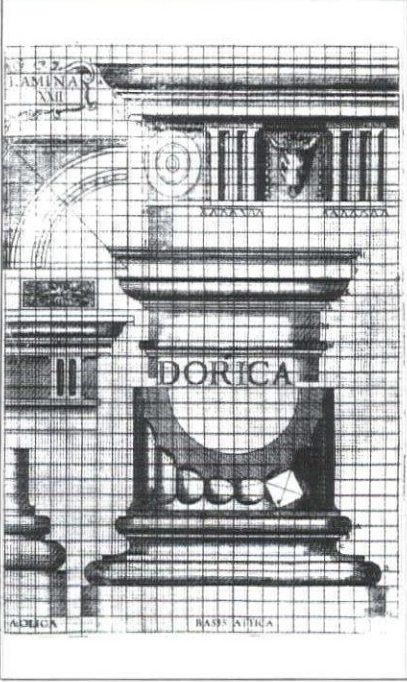
The hybrid type of solutions are challenged by Giovanni Caramuel de Lobkowitz in his *Architectura Civil Recta y Obliqua*.<sup>16</sup> He sees in what we will call for the moment



the Serlian solution—which permits two sets of figures, one regular and the other irregular, to sit side by side in the same plan—a violation of the imperatives of consistency and completeness of the formal Renaissance system of architecture. His rebuttal is accompanied by counterproposals.

The title of Caramuel's treatise, in which the two concepts "recta" and "obliqua" are juxtaposed, reveals from the start his program to set up a new paradigm and a new method in architecture: the "obliqua" in juxtaposition to the already existing "recta." Caramuel, rather forgotten today, deserves a place among the key theoreticians of architecture of his time. Born in Madrid in 1660, a most important linguist, theologian, philosopher, mathematician, and administrator, he added to his preoccupations architectural theory and, to some extent, even practice.<sup>17</sup> Caramuel was conscious of the importance of his contribution and called it "a new art" (*arte nueva*) a forerunner in name, if not in some of its visual characteristics, of a twentieth-century movement in art and architecture.

Like Serlio, Caramuel presents a series of case studies (Figs. 10a–g) expressed in drawings. But there is more of a system in his approach: there is a more theoretical text to back it, and the catalogue of the anomalies is much longer, almost exhaustive. Caramuel goes far beyond Serlio's effort to save the appearance of regularity, and he introduces a new system of formal



norms. The methodological key to this system is given in the fourth treatise, "The Logarithmical Transfiguration of the Platonic Bodies," in which methods already used by cartographers for the mapping of forms from one plane to another and from one system of coordinates to another are systemically analyzed. The fifth treatise is devoted to architecture in general while the sixth concentrates exclusively on "architectura obliqua." Three types of transformations are considered: of the plan, of the elevation, and of a mixture of both. The orthogonal regularity matrix that had underlined the norms of regularity and symmetry of the Renaissance order becomes elastic, bent, compressed, stretched. Regular forms thus translated do not lose any of their topological properties, as one would say in a more contemporary mathematical language; they become plastic in order to fit inside any constraints that might surround them.

In the much-discussed case of the balustrade of a stair, the regular baluster, representing the "architectura recta" is seen as inscribed in an orthogonal grid. The grid is bent so that the angle of its axes is able to match the angle of the slope of the stair. The shape of the baluster is thus transformed following the transformation of its grid. The resulting figure might seem distorted when examined as an isolated form, but it will be perceived as regular if it is accepted as part of a total system. Did the transformations of Caramuel also deal with epistemological and moral ideas? Were his *laminae* allegories? Or are his cases campaigns for extending the frontier of a new formal universe that he is urging us to colonize?

Caramuel was hardly a subversive. He was a system builder who in fact introduced a powerful, rigorous, logical framework for architecture and removed from deformations any possible association with disorder, distortion, or dissent. He tried to generate a higher formal order that would encompass all the formal anomalies developed since the years of canonization with Alberti. For this purpose he generated a new level of abstraction, looking at regular architectural forms as parts of a consistent and complete system, one of many that can be generated. Any such new, formal system

springs from presuppositions about the autonomy of architectural form that are similar to those we have already discussed. The difference is the change in the accepted "mother" formal norms. Caramuel's systems— "*architectura obliqua*" being one of them—are therefore validated logically only, without recourse to hedonistic or psychologicistic warrants.

We can interpret Caramuel's efforts in several ways: as an attempt to marry the concerns of the architect for visual order with the preoccupations of the engineer for rational method; to adapt the idea of autonomy to the mounting scientism of his day; to recuperate the deformations following the crisis of the Italian absolutist regimes of the beginning of the sixteenth century and restore them to conformity; and to facilitate the production of beautiful design products for use by the even more powerful, totalitarian court nobility of the seventeenth century.

It is interesting to compare Caramuel's ideas with those of his contemporary Claude Perrault, who also cast off the hedonistic psychologicistic warrants of the Renaissance. His attitude was what one may call Machiavellian. Indeed, Perrault argued that in order to exercise social control through architecture, the goal of aesthetic gratification must be replaced in the mind of the architect by its real political and social function. He criticized the idea of positive beauties that were supposed to be based in human nature and counterproposed the arbitrary beauties, determined by social institutions. In other words, he rejected the idea of autonomy in favor of a more straightforward, realistic theory of architecture.

Perrault's ideas met with little sympathy among his contemporaries. Caramuel's attempts to reform architecture also failed. Neither theoretician succeeded in leading architecture beyond the confines of the idea of perfection that had been shaped by the interests of the court nobility for legitimation. They both remained prisoners of the old world order of the *ancien régime*. Critical statements against Caramuel's system can be found by his contemporary Guarini and by J F Blondel.<sup>18</sup> Their remarks are interesting because they point to the new direction architecture would take; they

are early functionalist statements. They argue against oblique shapes because they see them as contradicting the norm of stability. Form, therefore, is not autonomous but rather is an *instrument* for achieving firmness. On the other hand, a closer look at this argument reveals that form must only *signify* stability and not necessarily contribute to it physically.

Functionalists see the problem of the split between the formal and aesthetic outlooks in architecture as resulting from the very idea of autonomy. Form for them depends on efficient function. All the elements of the building must *portray* function or be eliminated. Architecture is once more a rhetoric in the service of the mercantile class seeking to legitimize the norm of efficiency as the highest in all facets of human life.

Functionalists like Violet-le-Duc, Gaudi, Horta, Aalto, or Scharoun have come to picture complex cases of forces in form that resemble the shapes displayed in Caramuel's *Laminas*. It was only with the crisis of the market that occurred between the two World Wars that the functionalist movement came under attack and that an end was put to such experiments. One of the main targets of criticism at that time was the dependence of this movement on the interests of the mercantile class. At the same time, new attempts were made to reform architecture in accordance with the new aspirations for equity, democracy, and social justice. But it was only during the 1960s, a decade of major legitimation crises for the modern state, that a new, powerful movement came to dominate architecture. It violently attacked the idea of autonomy as well as any other architectural idea imposed "from above," functionalism included. It was a sentimental, anti-intellectual, populist movement.<sup>19</sup> It aspired to an architecture generated spontaneously by the masses themselves, left free to create in a world unencumbered by elite professional dogma. The populist movement threatened the conceptual and institutional post-Renaissance foundations of architecture. It lost its force quickly, however, and by the middle of the 1960s, following the economic crisis, the spread of neoconservatism, and the growth of its own internal weakness, it declined into a marginal fluster.

Now we observe a comeback of the idea of autonomy. It is not a return to the norm of beauty of the court nobility, but nevertheless an irrational accent is once more placed on the preciousness of form. Now, however, it is a preciousness devoid of sensualistic, hedonistic aspects. The disinterested mental exercises from which the new formalism is supposed to spring recall Caramuel's "cool" formal systems, free of extraneous elements. But the reoccurrence of the dogma of formal norms smacks of social conformism at a moment when social evolution is desperately needed.

The new autonomy claims to be a continuation of the critical attitudes of the sixties, but without its naiveté. The blind belief in formal canon restores confidence to architecture but also further weakens the architect's ability for self-observation and for passing judgment on the social use of his or her products. The new autonomy cannot satisfy the needs and aspirations for social change. Its ambiguous image of professionalism, combined with its lack of social accountability and its criticism deprived of social context, offers only temporary relief from the chaotic state of populism and will ultimately lead to an impasse. Its naive, if not deliberately misleading, approach is characteristic of an almost pathological social amnesia that is dooming architecture to a state of joyful passivity and sad self-gratification.<sup>20</sup> Historical analysis is one of the first steps toward the rational thinking needed to overcome this state.

Our brief, historical account has been undertaken to clarify the meaning of the idea of autonomy by restoring the memory of its emergence and development and its social context and use. On the eve of the reign of the market, autonomy was a playful game between Eros and Hermes. Now, at its twilight, it appears as a sad choice between Saturn and Narcissus. During its evolution, the idea of autonomy stimulated the development of new levels of abstraction and new plateaus of formal analysis. The methods of distancing from the architectural object, of foregrounding and systematizing its visual structural attributes helped the promotion of the idea as much as they were by-products of its growth. Historical investigation has shown that these methods were "autonomous" in the sense that once they emerged to

operate in a certain framework of concepts and interests they were put to new social uses outside their original tasks. Today they can be turned away from their original orientation, combined with social-historical studies, and be made into instruments of social change. The workings of such a methodology is the topic of another essay.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Many studies have been carried out on autonomy over the past twenty years. We refer here to only one stimulating study, M. Muller et al., *Autonomie der Kunst* . . . , Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1972. The numerous French and Italian writings on this topic are inspired by Althusser's concept of *autonomie*. English bibliography on autonomy is less abundant and concerns mainly studies in literature. See writings by the School of New Criticism. For the origins of aesthetic theories in antiquity and the Middle Ages, see W. Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, vols. 1 and 2, Mouton and P.W.N., The Hague and Warsaw, 1964 and 1967. For the Middle Ages see also E. de Bruyne, *Études d'Esthétique Médiévale*, De Tempel, Gent, 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Vitruvius *Ten Books* (tr. F. Granger) Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1970.

<sup>3</sup> G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, Cambridge, 1973, chap. 17.

<sup>4</sup> G. Vlastos, "The Physical Theory of Anaxagoras," in *The Pre-Socratics*, ed. A. P. D. Mourelatos, New York, 1974, p. 461.

<sup>5</sup> L. B. Alberti, *The Ten Books of Architecture* (tr. J. Leoni, ed. J. Ryckwert) London, Tiranti, 1965. First published in Latin 1485.

<sup>6</sup> For valuable information on the sociology of the Renaissance, see P. Burke, *Tradition and Innovation in Renaissance Italy*, London, 1972, and M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1972.

<sup>7</sup> W. Sombart, *Luxury and Rise of Capitalism*, Ann Arbor, University of Chicago Press, 1967 (original German publication, 1913).

<sup>8</sup> H. de la Croix, "Military Architecture and the Radial City Plan in the Sixteenth Century Italy," *Art Bulletin* 42, no. 4 (1960).

<sup>9</sup> D. Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1981.

<sup>10</sup> H. Haydn, *The Counterrenaissance*, New York, 1950, chaps. 2, 3, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Vincenzo Danti, *Il Primo Libro . . . delle . . . Proporzioni*, Florence, 1567; also edited by P. Barocchi, *Trattati d'Arte del Cinquecento* . . . , Bari, 1960, Vol. I.

- <sup>12</sup> M. de Montaigne, *Essays*, trans. J. Florio, London, 1603.
- <sup>13</sup> M. Fagiolo, *La Scenographia*, Florence, 1973, pp. 66–64.
- <sup>14</sup> de Montaigne, *Essays*.
- <sup>15</sup> R. and M. Wittkower, *Born under Saturn*, New York, 1963.
- <sup>16</sup> Published in *Vigevano*, 1678. On Caramuel, see D. de Bernardi Ferrero, "Il Conte I. Caramuel . . . Architetto e Teorico dell'Architettura," *Palladio* 15 (1965), and J. Connors, "Bernini's S. Andrea al Quirinale: Payments and Planning," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, March 1982.
- <sup>17</sup> A. G. Marino, "Il colonnato di Piazza S. Pietro . . . ," *Palladio* 23.
- <sup>18</sup> W. Oechslin, "Bemerkungen zu Guarino Guarini and Juan Caramuel de Lobkowitz," *Raggi* 9, no. 3 (1969).
- <sup>19</sup> A. Tzonis and L. Lefaivre, "The Populist Movement in Architecture," *Forum* 3 (1976) (Originally published in German in *Bauwelt*, January 1975).
- <sup>20</sup> A. Tzonis and L. Lefaivre, "The Narcissist Phase in Architecture," *Harvard Architectural Review* 1 (1979).

Thomas Schumacher's research into the work of Terragni and the Italian rationalists has helped affirm Terragni's stature as a master of the modern movement. In this article, Schumacher analyzes the *Danteum*, a project especially suited to our theme precisely because of its nonautonomous nature. A programmatic piece of architecture, the *Danteum* in its overt literary theme reveals the potential limitations of an architecture that denies the possibility of a symbolic dimension beyond the reflexive reference to itself.

As Schumacher points out, the rationalists' creation of an architecture that expresses the nationalistic aspirations of the fascist state presumes the abandonment of the progressive social program of the modern movement. Furthermore, in the specific case of the *Danteum*, the production of an architectural symbol that refers to something outside of the architectural discipline comes into direct conflict with the inward-looking tendencies of modernism. Neither an autonomous architecture based on the formal relationship of its constituent parts nor one based on a simple functional determinism can serve Terragni in his intention to merge building and poem.

In light of the apparent contradictions between orthodox modern doctrine and Terragni's intentions in the *Danteum*, we might ask whether it is reasonable to regard Terragni as a modern architect. We think so, providing one expands one's interpretation of orthodox modernism and functionalism beyond the narrowly defined limits set by the original theoreticians of the movement. Rather than limit ourselves to a literal interpretation of functionalism—an attempt to derive form directly from the program—we can conceive of functionalism as an attempt to represent function, to express the image of function. Such an interpretation was suggested by Mario Gandelsonas in his editorial "Neo-Functionalism," published in *Oppositions* 5. If the expression of function is viewed as one possible source of meaning rather than as the determining agent in the generation of form in modern architecture, it assumes an importance relative to other possible subjects of expression and sheds its absolute value.

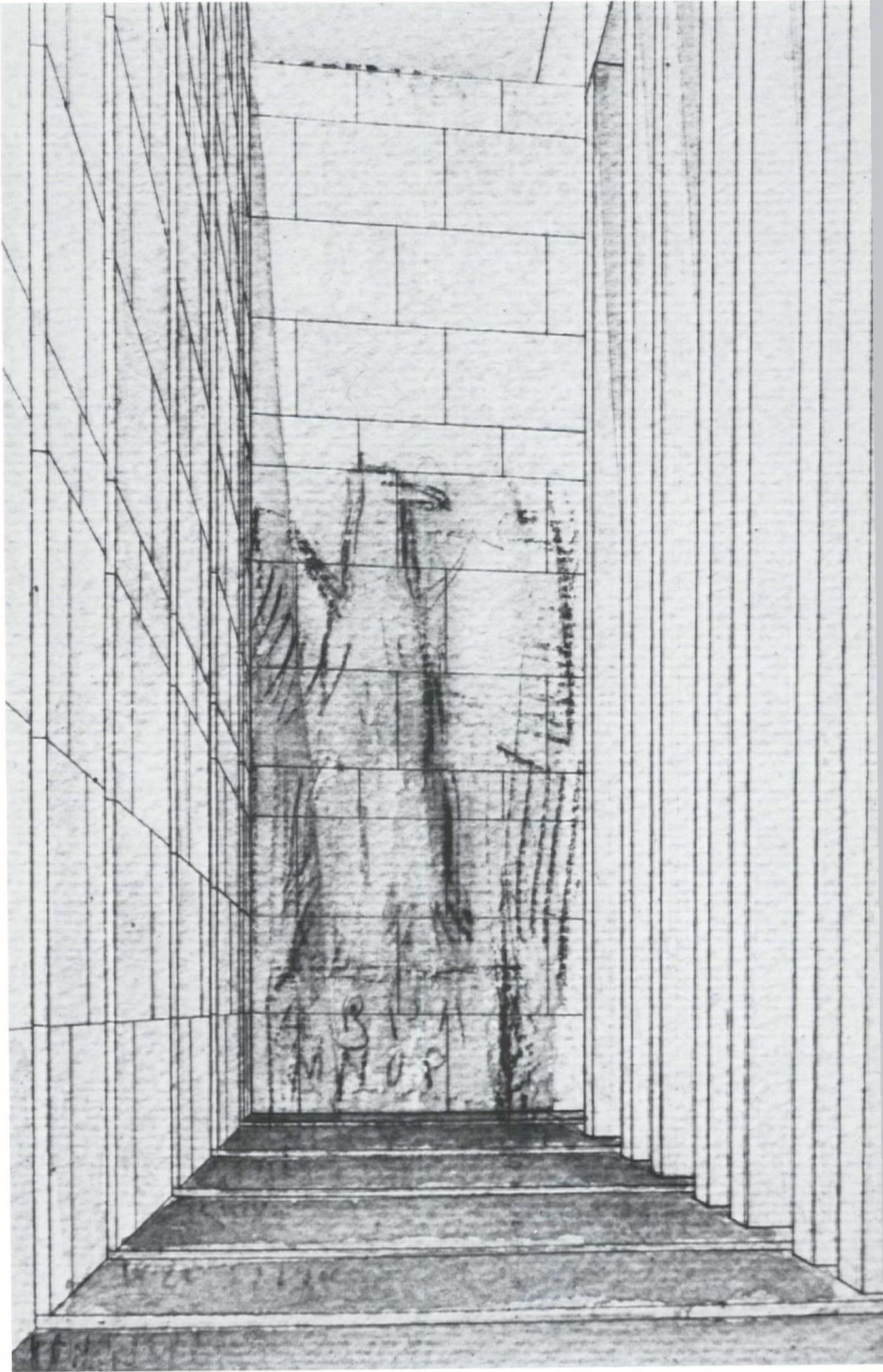
Assuming this interpretation, Terragni's decision not to express function as the primary level of discourse in the *Danteum* does not constitute a rejection of the modern design process (the adoption of the program as the criteria for form) so much as a reordering of the values

assigned to the various levels of meaning with which Terragni informs his work. As Schumacher suggests, the radical gesture of Terragni was the introduction of nationalism (in the specific form of the literary symbol) as the primary level of meaning, a priority that does not preclude the simultaneous appearance of those other levels of meaning we usually associate with modern architecture.

At the same time that modern architecture made internal reference to its own formal condition, it also made external reference to the products of high technology. In the *Danteum*, Terragni maintained the dichotomy of inward- and outward-looking references but introduced a new content as the primary subject of his external reference. The *Danteum* was first and foremost a symbol of the literary work, although the other levels of discourse that identify it as a piece of modern architecture were also in place. As we see in Schumacher's discussion of the column in the *Danteum*, it exists simultaneously as a mark in a formal system, as an autonomous element in its own right, as a symbol of Le Corbusier's *piloti*, and as a symbol of Dante's person.

But Terragni went further than introducing a new source of meaning into the modern construct. He created an architecture in which one level of meaning is paradoxically symbolic of an opposing level of meaning. The abstract nature of Terragni's composition, its completeness and autonomy, is itself a symbol of the poem, the purity and transcendence of Heaven. Thus in a truly comprehensive and integrated manner, the project is simultaneously an autonomous piece of architecture and a literary symbol.

The lesson of the *Danteum* is that a rich architecture of lasting value results from an inclusive approach that incorporates a multiplicity of interrelated meanings. The lesson seems especially appropriate today, when architects seem content to fragment the wide spectrum of values that can be expressed in architecture, claiming particular pieces as their territory for investigation and personal fulfillment. The breaking up of the levels of discourse to which an architect can address himself or herself is sometimes accompanied by a sense of victory, as though the fragmentation constitutes a final mastery over, and release from, history. The *Danteum* reveals the potential limitations of an architecture that seeks myopically to overidentify itself with a singular level of meaning.



# From Abstraction to Symbolism and Back Again:

## Terragni's Danteum and the Dilemma of Architectural Autonomy

Thomas L. Schumacher

This article is adapted from Professor Schumacher's book, *Terragni e il Danteum*, officina edizione, Rome, 1983.

*"Perhaps every science must start with metaphor and end with algebra; and perhaps without the metaphor there would never have been any algebra."*

Max Black, *Models and Metaphors*

**I**  
The avant-garde in Italy is not so easily distinguished from the "rear-garde" as in Germany or the USSR of the same period. From the initiation of the movement toward an International Style, Italian architects seem to have oscillated between embracing orthodox modern positions and maintaining old certainties. "The new architecture, the real architecture, must derive from a strict adherence to logic, to rationality," said their "rationalist manifesto," but they added, "For us, in particular, there exists a certain substratum of classicism . . . a spirit of tradition."<sup>1</sup> While the same ambiguities can be seen in Le Corbusier's writings of the same period, the seeds of a return to national characteristics can be said to have been sown by the very first rationalists.<sup>2</sup>

Part of this ambivalence may be ascribed to the fact that the modern movement in Italy was imported after Mussolini had seized power, so the avant-garde found itself having to adjust to an ever-changing and conservative social order masquerading as revolution. G. C. Argan has explained this predicament for the modern movement and for Terragni:

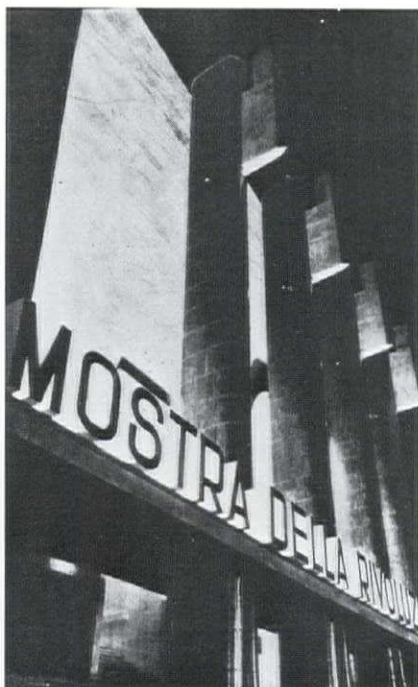
*The extraneousness of the "foolish" revolutionary ambitions of culture to the fascist revolution, the revolution as an unknown which one cannot account for, and which avoids fixed values and denies a political capacity to cultural advances; this was the struggle of artists who had looked to give life to a second avant-garde after futurism. . . . When Terragni began his artistic career the ideological question was already out of the way.<sup>3</sup>*

Beyond the fact that until the Ethiopian war the entire world considered Mussolini the savior of Italy and a great international statesman, as did the architects, it would have been political suicide for architects to have usurped the role of politics in creating well-being. The Corbusian position in *Towards a New Architecture*—"The happy towns are those that have an architecture. . . . It is a question of *building* that is at the root of the social unrest of today"—simply would not wash. For the fascist hierarchy, the happy towns were those that had a *torre littorio*,<sup>4</sup> and many an architect of the day had at least one to his credit. It was clear that display was more important than social or political content, and if the architecture of the period registers anything of its contemporary political conditions, it registers just that lack of social commitment.

The social pretensions of the International style were among the first manifestations of modernism to be discarded by the avant-garde of Italy during the early thirties when the polemic turned toward nationalism. With the celebration of the first decade of fascism in 1932, the beginning of a heightened nationalism surrounding the Ethiopian war, and the Great Depression, the avant-garde all but abandoned those arguments that had drawn architects into CIAM. But those factors alone did not change the polemic. The shift in architectural ideology came partly in response to the argumentative brilliance of Marcello Piacentini, the leader of the Roman school now known as monumentalism.<sup>5</sup> Piacentini mounted a critical attack on modern architecture that the modernists could not refute because it was oriented to their own point of view: function, structure, and the conditions of the modern industrial world. He exposed the emperor's nudity by showing peeling plaster, underused spaces, leaking roofs, overheated rooms, and so on, and implied, in a rational and eminently reasonable way, that modern architecture possessed a symbolic basis, not a technical one.<sup>6</sup>

Piacentini's writings during the early thirties show almost no trace of his supposedly narrow view of the elements of architecture. His denial of the need to fit all buildings with the "arches and columns"<sup>7</sup> proposed by Ugo Ojetti<sup>8</sup> as essential to an Italian architecture makes

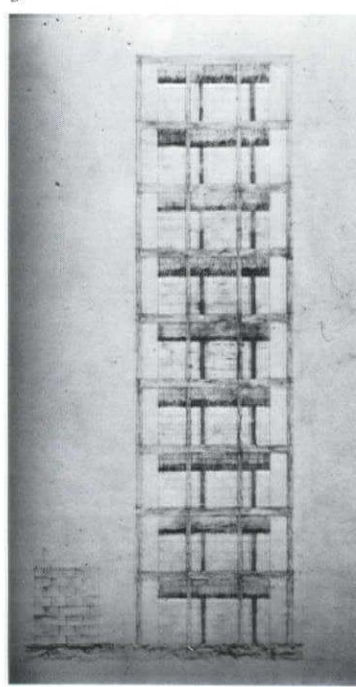
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Piacentini sound almost modern in rhetoric, if not in his selection of architectural forms.<sup>9</sup> Repostulating the notion that all building activity need not result in *architecture*,<sup>10</sup> he proposed to divide the built environment into two types: one in “underwear” and one in “evening dress.”<sup>11</sup> The overt pluralism of this attitude showed genuine political acumen. It was perfect for the mentality of Mussolini, who thrived on his ability to turn real losses into apparent gains and to tread a fine line between inaction and defeat.

Meanwhile, the rationalists had turned toward the nationalistic drive of the State and had directed their polemic toward a single aim: the conversion of Mussolini to the use of modern architecture as the symbol of the fascist revolution, its system, and hierarchy (Figure 1). They did not succeed, but their defeat in this fight signified neither the neutralization of modern architecture in Italy nor the success of the forces of reaction. Mussolini, in fact, never made the decision for or against modern design. Unlike Hitler or Stalin, he felt equally at home with modern and classically derived forms (depending on the context of “theater” with which he was involved at the moment) as long as the grandeur of the regime could be expressed. And the rationalists demonstrated without doubt that modern architecture could muster a monumentalism comparable to Roman revival. Much of the architecture for the State realized in the *stile littorio* (that crude collage of Roman, neoclassical, and modernistic that is often identified with any fascist regime) came in the late thirties, after Mussolini had begun to align himself with Hitler. Modern design, in fact, was still alive and well when the war ended the “fascist era,” and there is a surprising continuity between building forms of the late thirties and the late forties, despite the fact that many of the most talented and productive personalities, including Pagano and Terragni, died during the war.

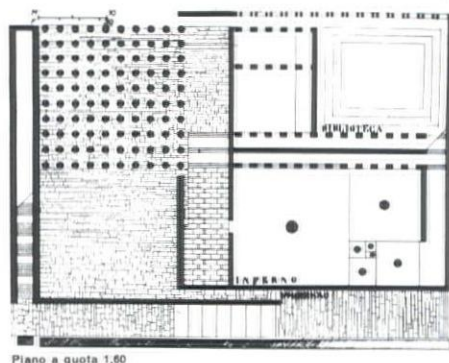
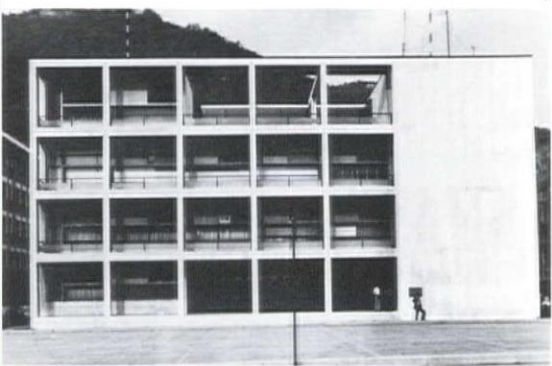
The characteristic arches and columns of the Piacentiniani—with an occasional *fascio littorio* order<sup>12</sup>—can be contrasted to the equally rhetorical use of the concrete frame of the rationalists (Figures 2, 3). The frame appears so often as to elicit speculation that it was intended as the symbolic equivalent of the orders (both based on a construction technique at their

origins). In the polemics, the avant-garde made a strenuous effort, especially after the Ethiopian war, to disassociate itself from the International style and *esprit nouveau* symbolism that might be mistaken for liberal, even Bolshevik, leanings.

The rationalists’ problem was to maintain as much of their “modernity” (in terms of a grammar of architectural forms) as possible, while not adopting a machine aesthetic based on a technological determinism, which would have appeared to devour national characteristics. The resulting aestheticism, most often abstract, is apparent in the most famous building of the period, Terragni’s Casa del Fascio in Como (Figure 4).<sup>13</sup> In the writings of the period, Pagano best summarized the aesthetic “retreat” in *Casabella*, in 1933: “We cannot any more consider the aspiration of Le Corbusier to an absolute technology as the ‘style’ of our epoch daily fixed [by that technology]. . . . the position that we must assume today is a rigorous aesthetic one.”<sup>14</sup>

While Pagano’s statement of 1933 foreshadowed the pragmatism of Italy’s economic isolation that came later in the decade, the resulting economic policy—the *Autarchia* (self-sufficiency)<sup>15</sup>—had little real effect on design practice. The rationalists had already absorbed traditional Italian joinery and construction techniques without losing the abstract qualities of the International style. Terragni’s major buildings, for example, were faced in tiles or marble, not stucco.

An abstraction that avoided either extreme—International style or monumentalism—was not without symbolic intention. On the contrary, Terragni explained the design of his Casa del Fascio in Como according to its place in the symbolism of the regime, stating, “Here is the Mussolini concept that Fascism is a glass house into which everyone can peer, giving rise to the architectural interpretation that is the complement of this idea: no encumbrance, no barrier, no obstacle between the political hierarchy and the people.”<sup>16</sup> He followed Piacentini’s directive for a building in “evening dress,” but substituted a sheer crepe de Chine for the requisite brocade.



1. Libera and de Renzi, Exposition of the 10th anniversary of the Fascist Revolution, facade applied to the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Via Nazionale, Rome, 1932.
2. Marcello Piacentini, War Manument, Bolzano, 1931.
3. Ignazio Gardella, competition for a tower in Piazza del Duomo, Milan, 1934.

4. Terragni, Casa del Fascio, Como, 1932–36, Front Facade.
5. Frontispiece of the manuscript presented to the Italian government by Rino Valdameri in 1938, for a statue to bring into being the Danteum Institution.
6. Danteum, Plan at 1.6 meters.

In other words, the rationalists designed more or less as they pleased, working around political circumstances with the tenacity of the *seicento* painters confronted with the inquisitions of the Counterreformation. Even in Rome, rationalists like Libera and Ridolfi continued to design buildings that resembled those of northern European modernism well into the war period, and many rationalist works were still being published by Piacentini at that time.

The Danteum, a patently modern building, was enthusiastically received by Mussolini in late 1938 and might well have been built if the war hadn't occurred. The *Relazione sul Danteum*, written to accompany the drawings, resembles Terragni's Casa del Fascio report, complete with the nationalistic ramblings that would certainly have pleased the Duce.

The project originated with Rino Valdameri, director of the Accademia di Brera in Milan, who commissioned Lingeri and Terragni to prepare the drawings and model (Figure 5). The architectural fees, along with some political influence in Rome, were provided by a Milanese industrialist, Count Pos, and a site was chosen in Rome across from the Basilica of Maxentius along the newly created Via dell'Impero.<sup>17</sup>

The building was to be a museum and study center housing all the available editions of Dante's works and works on Dante (Figure 6). Symbolically, the Danteum represented the fulfillment of Dante's political aims: the unification of Italy under a new Roman Empire.<sup>18</sup> The drawings, model, and *Relazione* make up the most complete picture of any of Terragni's works after the Casa del Fascio, and they form one of the richest packages of design intentions to be found for any architect of the modern movement. Terragni's explanation of the sources, references, formal devices, and design development—in short, his *method*—is uniquely honest and complete, while enough is omitted to provoke speculation on his deeper intentions.

Even a cursory reading of the *Relazione* establishes Terragni's intention to create a symbol (Terragni calls it Temple) that would transcend the politics of fascism and respond to a more general, more important, more

universal standard of Christian philosophy, a philosophy grounded in his devout (if personal) Catholicism.<sup>19</sup>

Abstraction/symbolization, nationalism/internationalism: the polemic of the middle and late thirties had begun to resemble a Pirandello play, with reality (in the form of true intentions and beliefs) masked by pronouncements and by the ambiguity of architectural forms read as political symbols. Terragni's buildings throughout the period reflect such ambiguity. He created an abstract architecture in the facades of the Casa del Fascio in Como, but he also created an architecture of connotation, calling the building the "glass house of fascism." His abstraction was Italian, through a denial of the machine symbolism of the International style, and Internationalist, through the abstract surface characteristics of that style. His symbolism was Italian, making political metaphors, and Internationalist, residing beneath the surface qualities of imitated detail, within the realm of "parti."

The Danteum, and its *Relazione*, must be seen in this context.

## II

We can approach Terragni and his Danteum project through Dante. Terragni's understanding of the *Divine Comedy* and Dante's other works was reasonably well developed, and his references to Dante's ideas in the *Relazione* express his acute awareness of Dante's place in Italian culture. The specific question of the relation of the literary piece and the architectural work was also addressed in the *Relazione*, where Terragni expressed the need "to adhere to the literary work only through an examination of the admirable structure of the Divine Poem."<sup>20</sup>

Terragni's propensity to cross-reference architecture and literature, almost to the point of confusing the two, may have resulted from his friendship with Massimo Bontempelli.<sup>21</sup> This literary figure had a great influence on the painters and architects of the modern movement in Italy. As editor of *Quadrante*, a multidisciplinary review, Bontempelli was able to bring together people

from all the arts—literary, plastic, and theatrical. The concern of architecture as a form of language (*linguaggio*) was one of Bontempelli's primary interests, and his dictum "Write without adjectives, build with smooth walls"<sup>22</sup>—futurist in origin—is a prime example of the potential interconnection between the two media.

Bontempelli's interest in such cross-referencing and cross-fertilization is clear:

*Speaking of poetry (or art in general) as architecture I mean to say art as a modification of the inhabitable world. . . . The principal consequence of the particular nature of the work of architecture is the absolute detachment of the work itself from its author. The work is a real and actual alteration of the earth's crust. . . . The architectonic work may be great even if the authors don't know it. . . . The estrangement of the work from the author, this perfect cutting of the umbilical cord in literature, happens with the creation of myths, of fables, of characters. . . . This must be our supreme ideal, fellow writers: to become anonymous.*<sup>23</sup>

If the poet or writer may strive for the anonymity of the architect, then the architect may also emulate the writer. To Terragni this meant the creation, in an architectural composition, of myths and characters. In the *Danteum* and the *Relazione* he rather academically separated form from content, myth from composition, so that the two might be fused again in the act of designing.

Terragni also borrowed ideas on form and content from Benedetto Croce. The relation of subject matter, whether Dante and the Comedy or traditional architectural elements like columns and porticos, to the abstract structure of an architectural composition was a problem that constantly intrigued Terragni. The question of the observer's response to conventional elements that are also parts of abstract compositions was considered by Croce as well in his major work, *Aesthetic* (1902). According to Croce, the response is rooted in the intuitive activity of the mind. Intuitive knowledge, or aesthetic, provides the observer with an innate grasp of composition. This intuitive activity is, for Croce, "the first grade on which other grades of activity depend."<sup>24</sup> The idea relies on the separation of "grafted

meaning" (Terragni's term) from compositional structure. This response would require no intellectual activity on the part of the observer, even though the geometry of Terragni's composition is filled with intellectual manipulations. Terragni made no claim for the immediate perception of the formal transformations that exist in the building's composition; he retained only a historical justification.

Croce equates *intuition* and *expression*, claiming that in the synthesis of artistic achievement, as distinguished from the work of the scientist, it is intuitive expression that forms the germ of the work. For Croce, and Terragni after him,

*Matter, clothed and conquered by form, produces concrete form. It is matter, the content, which differentiates one of our intuitions from another; the form is constant; it is spiritual activity, while matter is changeable. Without matter spiritual activity would not forsake its abstractness to become concrete and real activity, this or that spiritual content, this or that definite intuition.*<sup>25</sup>

For Terragni, then, forms are desirable because they adhere to "harmonic law" (his term); they are communicative because they are overlaid with a semantic intention. Thus, while Bontempelli argued for the adaptation of architectural modes of thought, Terragni, with his ability to stretch the notion of correspondence to the breaking point, easily adopted the literary theme as the program or content for the *Danteum*, the subject matter of his composition. In the modern movement of the 1930s this was something of a revolutionary act.

The separation of form and content, of compositional structure and literary content, makes possible a *temporary* isolation of building and poem as distinct facts that merge in a later stage of the design process. Terragni interprets the architecture as possessing a formal wholeness and essence which we can describe as autonomous. Through an examination of the building as an autonomous object that is subsequently overlaid with literary meanings, it is possible to regard the design as an autonomous piece of architecture in the service of Terragni's larger intentions to merge building

and poem.

The interest in literary texts, in an architecture of literature, was not to become an important issue until the 1970s, with the parallel interest in architecture as text examined in the researches of the semiologists. As late as 1968 Terragni's intended architecture of literature was criticized by G C Argan, dean of Italian architectural historians. The *Danteum*, according to Argan, was "an enormous mistake: The idea of making a correspondence between the plan distribution of a building and the structure of a poem is almost comical, but not more than the intention of architecturally expressing victory, patriotism, or the longevity of the Empire."<sup>26</sup> Argan's argument might have been rebutted by Terragni, or even by Bontempelli, with historical examples of buildings that systematize memory in the same way that literature codifies memory. Hadrian's villa, any medieval cathedral, and Renaissance gardens are all such architectures. Further, the notion of expressing the longevity of the Empire would certainly be accepted by any modern critic, Argan included as a reasonable intention of the ancient Romans. The *Divine Comedy* was itself a kind of memory book for Divine Grace and how to achieve it, as Frances Yates has so eloquently demonstrated.<sup>27</sup> The *Comedy* also describes one of the most elaborate architectural promenades in all of literature.

Terragni seems further indebted to Croce's interpretation of the *Comedy*, which divides the form from the content of the poem. This separation is justified by Croce's argument that Dante's poetic imagination could be appreciated in an *analytical* way.<sup>28</sup> Any problems inherent in such an approach can be overcome, says Croce:

*Only by making a sharp distinction between structure and poetry, placing them to be sure in strict philosophical and ethical relationship and thereby considering them necessary elements of Dante's spirit, but being careful to avoid any idea of a poetical relationship between them. Only in this way is it possible to enjoy all of the poetry of the Commedia profoundly and at the same time accept its structure, with some indifference perhaps, but without aversion and, above all, without derision.*<sup>29</sup>

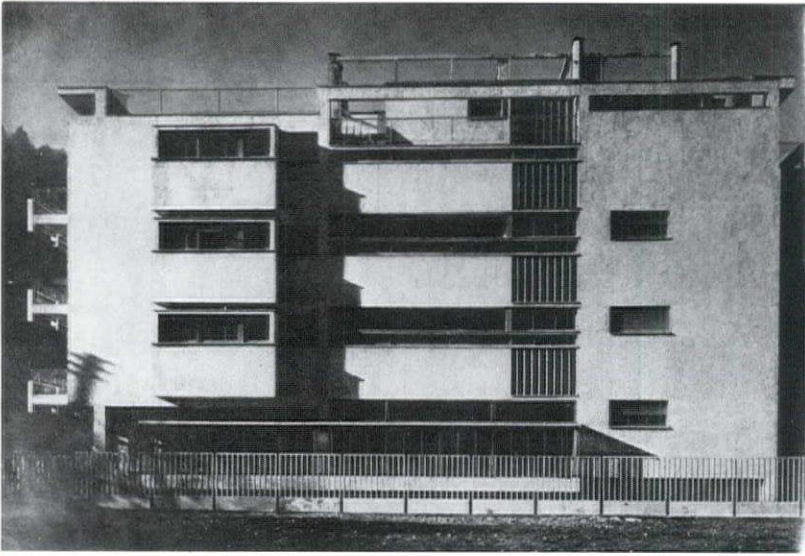
Without derision indeed! For Terragni, the appreciation of Dante's structure could, with the aid of Croce's lens, lead to an adaptation of that structure irrespective of matter. We can imagine that Croce had given Terragni the green light to deal with Dante's numerology on the one hand and his allegory on the other, all the time using very different criteria for his selection of images. Hence, Terragni could claim that "architectural monument and literary work can adhere to a single scheme . . . only through an examination of the marvelous structure of the *Divine Poem*."<sup>30</sup>

After distinguishing between the form and the content of the building, Terragni applies the same analytical method to the poem, with the result that the structure of the poem provides the common denominator, the common basis, for the merger of the building and the poem. Terragni's statement admits that both architectural monument and literary work exist on one level as autonomous entities, while on another level they both refer to a common scheme.

Terragni cautioned against making the monument a too-exact copy of the ambience of the poem, a stance that reveals his inclination to analyze the poem into discrete parts. Yet he ran the same risk as Croce—an arbitrary separation of components of a work of art that otherwise forms an indelible *Gestalt*. Croce himself was criticized by Luigi Pirandello for this very "fault":

*If he {Dante} wrote the Commedia, this indicates that he did not want to write a treatise or a work composed of poetical and non-poetical parts; but a poem. . . . His {Dante's} fantasy is populated with images and not ideas. But Croce says that "subject matter" in Dante's spirit "is shaped into poetry" and then remains subject matter for an allegorico-moral treatise.*<sup>31</sup>

It would seem that Terragni's concept of Dante, at least as regards the *Danteum* design, makes the *Comedy* into just such a hypothetical *treatise*, enabling Terragni to analyze its component parts and pick and choose certain architecturally relevant aspects to imitate. The resultant transposition of concepts from one medium to another was important enough to Terragni that he dwelt upon it at great length in the *Relazione*. This transposition



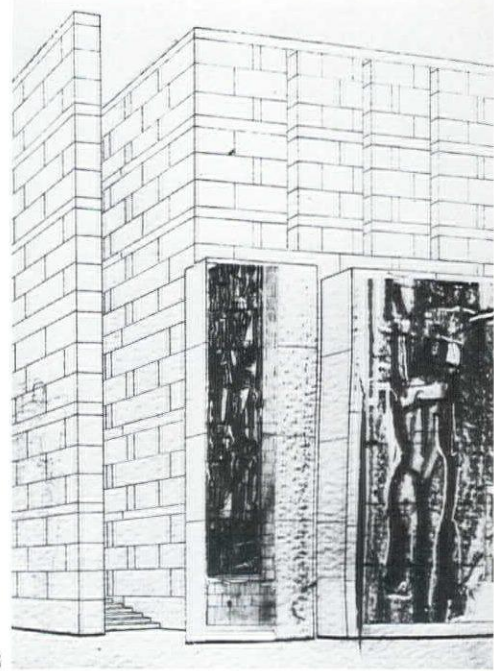
7. Terragni, Casa Giuliani-Frigerio, Como, 1939–40. “Enough ideas for 40 houses.”

may be seen as his ultimate escape from both the functionalist rigors of the International style and the “subservient” (his term) copy-book eclecticism of the Piacentiniani.

If we reverse Bontempelli’s dictum to read “to build without adjectives,” the question for Terragni becomes What constitutes an architectural adjective? Are the rhetorical Roman details of the Piacentiniani to be considered adjectives, or are they more akin to Alberti’s idea of decoration as the adjunct to beauty? How would Terragni’s own facade of the Casa del Fascio in Como be considered?

It seems to me that Terragni’s idea of an architectural adjective would embrace any architectural element that does not directly derive from the central themes of a building—something “added” in the Albertian sense; hence, Terragni’s insistence on maintaining a singular theme in the Danteum design in order to create an adjectiveless architecture. Purged of the inessential, this architecture consists only of elements that are part of the formal composition. When this condition is combined with the idea, which Terragni borrowed from Croce, that the work of art refers to an abstract form which conquers it, the result is an architecture that is autonomous insofar as it represents its own formal consistency. The development of subthemes would permit the use of adjectives as additives in the design process, as in the Casa Giuliani-Frigerio, a building that Lingeri said contained “enough ideas for forty houses” (Figure 7).<sup>32</sup> Most certainly, Terragni’s idea of an architectural adjective would not allow the superimposition of the arches and columns that Ojetti proposed as necessary elements of an Italian architecture. The Danteum, as a didactic building, had to be far simpler on the level of the vocabulary of architectural elements, to avoid what Terragni called the possibility of “falling into rhetoricism, into symbolism or into convention.”<sup>33</sup>

Whatever the reasons for Terragni’s obsessive identification with Dante, it was just this identification that allows him to adapt the strategies of the medieval poet. His identification is manifested in various ways. It



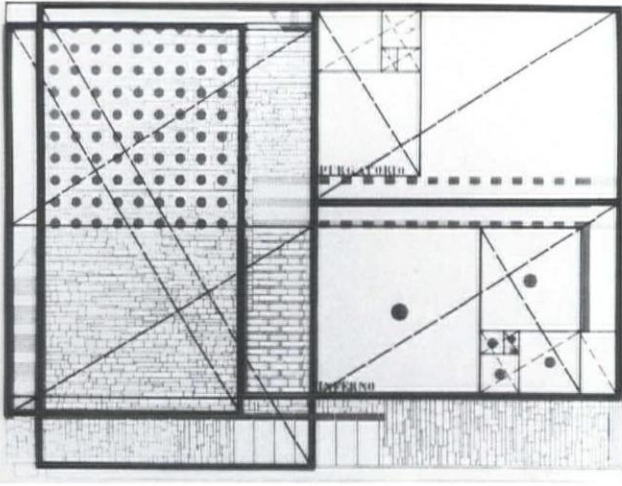
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is revealed in Terragni’s writing style in the *Relazione*, a mirror of Dante’s style, and also in its format.

In this report Terragni makes reference to earlier works of Dante, *Convivio* and *de Monarchia*, noting that Dante’s allusions to the longevity of the Roman Empire were first expounded in these books. He goes on to explain that this building, being dedicated to Dante and all his works, might derive from the early works of the *dolce stil nuovo*. Dante’s concept of the Empire, in which the emperor receives his just and right sovereignty over the secular world directly from God, and in which the Church receives its own power over the spirit without being superior in any way to the Empire, was of course crucial to Mussolini’s Italy. Terragni, a devout Catholic, might well have been able to resolve the problem of the role of the Church of Rome in Mussolini’s Italy through Dante. The fascists certainly did. Moreover, it was Dante’s concept of the Roman Empire that made him the culture hero he was in an Italy that, during the fascist era, had downplayed the importance of the Middle Ages.

Most important to Terragni’s *Relazione* was Dante’s own “Relazione,” his *Epistle to Can Grande Della Scala*. The *Epistle* was a letter of thanks for hospitality, an offering of the *Paradise* as a present to the nobleman, and a brief explanation of the meanings of the *Paradise* (and the entire *Comedy*) lest they be lost in a difficult text filled with many levels of allegory. The letter was a guide to the structure of the poem, the different “senses” of the structure and the content, and an explanation of Dante’s choices for the different types of exposition. The *Relazione* is exactly this sort of document. It was clearly Terragni’s epistle to Mussolini, although one must conflate Can Grande, the patron, with Henry of Luxembourg, the “greyhound,” in order to arrive at the figure of Mussolini (Figure 8). Such a fusion was not an act beyond Terragni’s imagination.

Dante first divides form from content (structure from meaning). He explains the form of the poem in terms of a descending series of structural elements, as Terragni does for the Danteum when he writes, “The mathematical and geometric correspondences can be traced in turn for the most important divisions of the



8. Danteum, front facade detail showing the freestanding block with the "greyhound" relief by Mario Sironi. The greyhound was Dante's allegorical figure for Italy's savior. Terragni's greyhound was Mussolini.

rooms of the building—deriving the workings of the plan from the decomposition of the golden rectangle (Figure 9).<sup>34</sup>

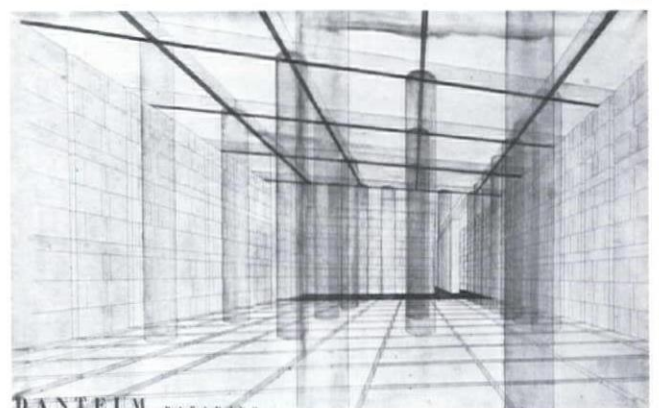
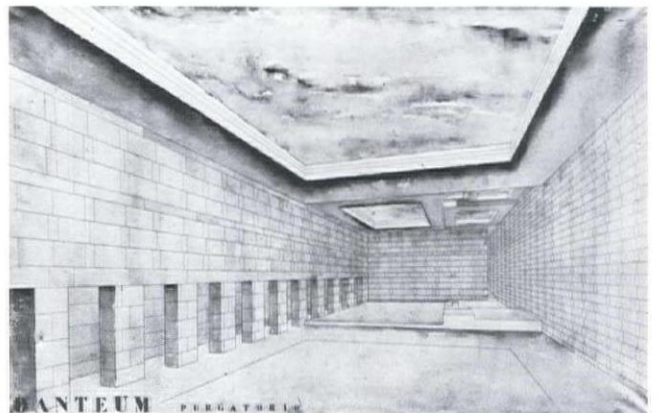
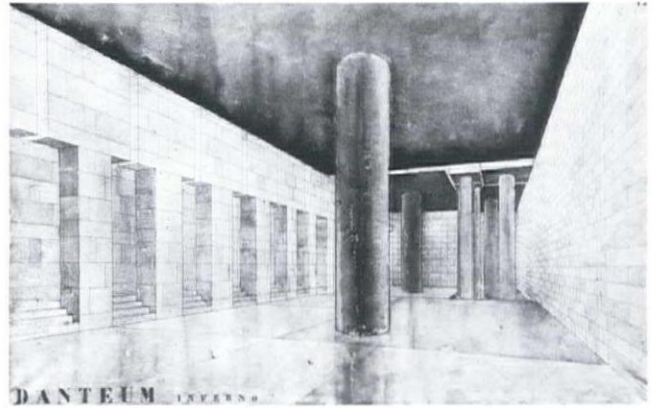
Dante divided the form of the treatise into three: (1) the three canticas, (2) the division of each cantica into cantos, and (3) the division of each canto into rhymed lines.<sup>35</sup> The treatment, which Dante explains as the second part of a "two-fold" form, is subdivided into ten types: "poetic, fictive, descriptive, digressive, figurative; and further definitive, analytical, probative, refutative and exemplicative."<sup>36</sup> Dante thus plays twofold divisions against threefold divisions, an organization reflected in the Danteum. The cruciform scheme that makes twofold divisions compares with the tripartite division of the building into three major spaces.

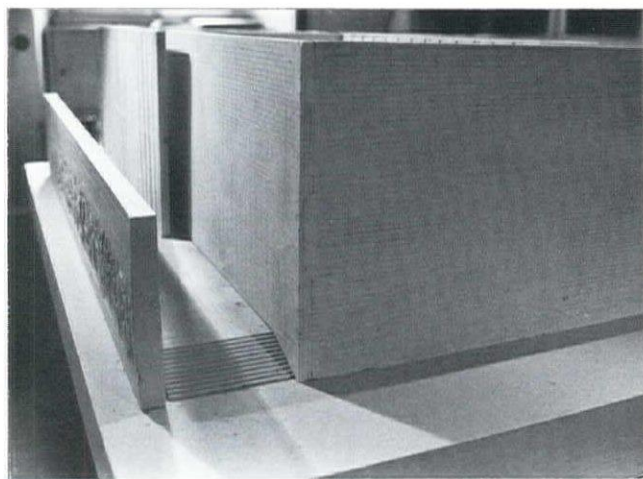
Terragni further elaborated his own version of the play of twofold and threefold divisions in his intention to gain "unity in trinity." He even digressed into an arcane explanation of the golden rectangle as the "rectangle that clearly expressed the harmonic law of unity in trinity"; he also offered the further explanation that "one is the rectangle, three are the segments that determine the golden ratio."<sup>37</sup> The creation of an infinite number of possible squares and rectangles in the decomposition of the golden rectangle, resulting in a spiral form, was also assigned an important Dantesque significance: the concept of the infinite. The spiral motif is itself used in the composition of the spaces of the Inferno and the Purgatory as flat projections of the funnel and conical forms of Dante's domains.

In the *Relazione* Terragni's divisions of structure and meaning, that is, his geometry and what they represent, further parallel the *Epistle* in format. Similarly, his insistence on using the same scheme for the original compositional decisions as for the details also recalls Dante: "In like manner the form of the part is determined by that of the whole work."<sup>38</sup>

The pragmatic character of progression (or promenade) in the *Paradise* is reflected in the Danteum design (Figures 10–12). Dante explained, "The process of narrative will be ascent from heaven to heaven."<sup>39</sup>

9. Danteum, plan, decomposition of the golden rectangle.  
10. Danteum, Inferno.  
11. Danteum, Purgatory.  
12. Danteum, Paradise.





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13. Danteum, model, view of the entrance. The visitors must enter single-file, as in a pilgrimage.

Terragni explained, "A tripartite Temple of rooms disposed at different levels establishes an ascending route."<sup>40</sup> The key phrase in Terragni's adaptation of Dante's ideas then follows: "Constructed in different ways, these rooms are integrated to gradually prepare the visitor for a sublimation of matter and light."<sup>41</sup> The sentence is most Dantesque and is also a close paraphrase of St. Augustine's conception of the origin of poetry. St. Augustine, who like Dante after him had read Virgil, said that poetry is "the first notion of a rational soul trying to reach beyond the world of matter and change."<sup>42</sup>

This transcendence is an essential quality of both the *Comedy* and the Danteum. The decomposition of the golden rectangle and the decomposition of the materiality of the space of the *Paradise* together express the notion. Dante was also careful to distinguish sequential experience from deeper significance, as in the *Paradise* where, because he "is in his first life, impeded by the limitations of mortality, he cannot see things in their essence, as the blessed do, but only in their sequence, which is how he has shown them."<sup>43</sup> The Divine Law is not revealed in sequence, nor is the structure of the poem. One must step back, as it were, and gaze at the work from some distance to understand its complete rule and essence. (Danteans have been doing this for six hundred years.) In the Danteum only the most obvious of Dante's structural motifs, aside from the rendering of the spaces dedicated to the canticas of the poem, are revealed in the sequence. The rest is left to a reading of the plan and, I believe, the *Relazione*. The document, like the *Epistle*, forms the footnotes, the key to the intentions of the architect.

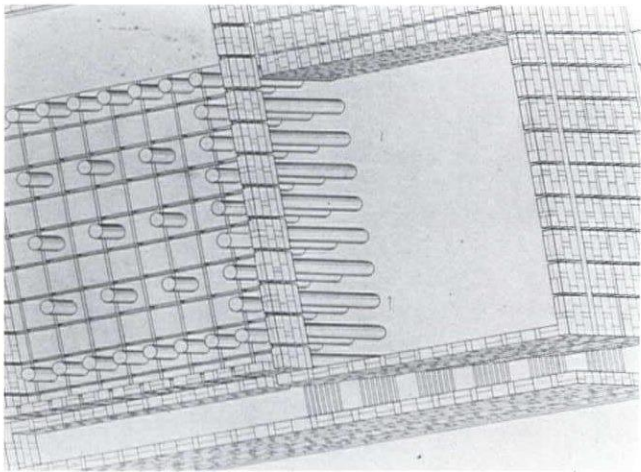
The transcendent quality assigned to structure and the need to regard the work of art at a distance lead one to conclude that the essence of the work resides in its completeness as an object, its autonomous nature. Again, however, the autonomy of the architecture is itself a representation of the structure of the poem as well as the ability of the blessed to transcend the limitations of sequence and experience. Thus the autonomy of the architecture is part of a larger nonautonomous merger of architectural monument and literary work.

The obfuscation of the actual generating structure of the building is an important intention for Terragni, and it is clear that a good deal of effort is required of the participant to unravel the experience. The visitor is, after all, a "pilgrim," who must enter the sacred domain as any pilgrim would enter a pilgrimage church, with at least a modicum of acceptance, prior knowledge, and a purposeful intent (Figure 13).

The independence of the order, or essence, from the sequence is manifested in the geometry, as the shifted-rectangle motif and as the golden section. It is an abstracted form, similar to the abstracted forms of the structure of the *Comedy*, and Terragni was quick to remind us that abstraction alone can lead to relevant and justifiable results.

*The connection between the plastic-architectonic expression and the abstraction and symbolism of the theme of the building (a connection that could cast doubt on the relevance and spontaneity of the results) was only possible at the origin of those two discrete spiritual facts: building and poem. Architectural monument and literary work can adhere to a singular scheme without losing, in this union, any of each work's essential qualities only if both possess a structure and a harmonic rule that can allow them to confront each other, so that they may then be read in a geometric or mathematical relation of parallelism or subordination.*<sup>44</sup>

Abstraction as an active process, however, begins with the concrete and leads to a conceptual synthesis, unlike simple pattern making. Abstraction presupposes not only an original form but to some degree an original form/meaning combination, so that the resulting synthesis involves a dialogue between the old and the new meanings. In other words, this is the "concrete intuition" of Croce made manifest by virtue of the active process. Terragni's use of the concept of *abstraction* is similar to, although not the same as, Le Corbusier's idea of "re-creation." For Le Corbusier, the process of re-creation involved mathematics and geometry to arrive at the most essential *aesthetic* experience: "Pure forms are the most beautiful because they are the most easily perceived."<sup>45</sup> The famous mathematical geometric forms of Le Corbusier's sketches are the catalogue for



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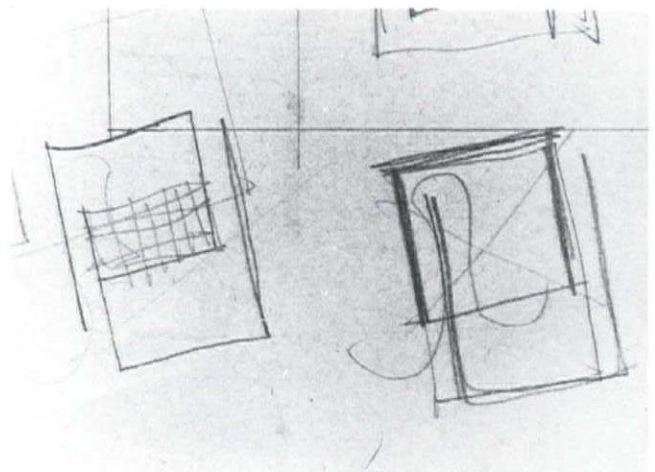
14. Danteum, detail of axonometric, showing columns of the portico supporting the space of the paradise.

this aesthetic experience. For Terragni, the process of abstraction was used in the service of a *metaphysical* experience. It is the rectangle itself that represents the most abstract condition, as Terragni shows in his depiction of the canticas of the *Comedy* as equal rectangles, despite the variation in size and shape (although not in length) of the canticas in Dante's text.

Terragni's abstraction of elements into an architectonic code never results in the total destruction of the identities of those elements. The form of an element in the *Divine Comedy* may be a "three-line tercet." In addition to its inherent formal qualities the tercet also has a tradition of use in poetry. The form of an element in the building may be a cylinder (Figure 14). The cylinder may also be a column, which not only possesses a support function but also a tradition of use. The column in a series produces a "Portico" (Terragni's term), and the traditional usage is further elaborated to include a grammar of elements. Thus, the convergence of two methods, the first originating in an abstract form—the golden rectangle—the second originating in traditional architectural objects, finds justification in Dante.

The notion of separating essence from sequence is not sufficient, however, to explain Terragni's identification with Dante. *A symbolic purpose for the convergence of these methods was necessary.* The choice of the rectangle, for example, as the most rudimentary thematic element of the building is given some attention by Terragni (Figure 15). He was concerned about the appropriate form to be selected and began the *Relazione* with a description of the choice of the golden section. He started with the disclaimer that the circle, though considered, was discarded "because the area it enclosed is too modest for what was needed, but also because of the immediacy of potential conflict with the perfect and imposing ellipse of the Colosseum."<sup>46</sup>

The rectangle, on the other hand, could have been seen by Terragni as a more abstract form than the circle, even if the circle were a higher form in the cosmic order of things. It was likewise necessary for the Danteum to be an abstract construction as well as the embodiment of "myth [and] symbol" in order to achieve a "spiritual



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15. Danteum, preliminary sketch showing the slipped-square motif forming the golden rectangle.

synthesis"<sup>47</sup> of the two. The preference of the more abstract rectangle would be consistent with Terragni's intentions.

While historical justification was important to Terragni, a Dantesque justification was even more important, and the more Dantesque motifs he could conjure up, the better. The justification of the circle changed into the rectangle is typical of the kind of Dantesque analogue that Terragni used. In the *Paradise* we find Dante grappling with the question of the relation of the square to the circle in the service of his own poetic purposes:

*As the geometer his mind applies  
to square the circle, nor for all his wit  
finds the right way, how'er he tries.*<sup>48</sup>

For Dante, this passage explains the immeasurability of the circle in terms of the square, and it therefore stands for the inability of humans to come to terms with the ineffable, the image of God.<sup>49</sup> Man is the square, God the circle. For Terragni the relationship of the two geometric figures bears the added characteristic of a traditional architectonic opposition: the circular versus the rectangular Temple, the nave versus the apse, and so on. In the Danteum the circle becomes the appropriate form for particular iconic elements while the rectangle becomes the generator of the plan. The circle is at once more concrete and more abstract, as the form of the columns and as the motif of the spiral in the *Inferno* and *Purgatory*. The rectangle becomes the carrier of whatever "grafted meaning" (Terragni's term) may be appropriate, as well as the origin of all correctness. He begins the design with a given form, the golden rectangle. The way he receives this form, as though it were God-given, is reminiscent of Dante's assertion that "every motion, but the First, is caused."<sup>50</sup> The rectangle, self-justified and essential, is the motif, the subject of the formal transformations that ultimately result in an autonomous, integrated architecture. Although this may be true on one level of meaning, Terragni is also careful to explain that the manipulations of the golden rectangle are still insufficient to explain the meaning of the Danteum in terms of Dante. The ultimate purpose for Terragni's Dantesque

correspondence is possibly revealed in Dante's own explanation of his work in the *Epistle to Can Grande*; Terragni might have borrowed the following thought from his medieval mentor:

*The meaning of this work is not of one kind only; rather the work may be described as having several meanings; for the first meaning is that which is conveyed by the letter, and the next by which the letter signifies; the former is called the literal while the latter is called allegorical, or mystical.*<sup>51</sup>

For Terragni, the meaning is manifested in what he calls "research into essentials," a rather arcane digression on medieval thought that relates his own process to Dante's. These concepts derive from medieval fourfold exegesis, and some discussion of Terragni's conceptualization of these ideas is necessary.

The categories of fourfold exegesis are the literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical. How these categories fit together—their inner structure—was of great importance to Dante and to Terragni. In the simplest terms, "The literal teaches the deeds, the allegory what to believe, the moral what to do, and the anagoge to where one should strive."<sup>52</sup> Dante grappled with the problem of how the categories relate to each other, whether in a twofold or a fourfold manner. In the twofold system the literal is contrasted with the allegorical, while the moral and anagogical senses are subsumed. This was Dante's schema in the *Epistle to Can Grande*. In the *Convivio* Dante adhered to the more elaborate fourfold division, in which all sense are given equal weight.

Terragni, by contrast, simplifies the readings of the exegesis by making a threefold division, perhaps as an attempt to follow the tripartite divisions of the building itself. Whatever the motive, he contrasts the literal, the allegorical, and the anagogical.<sup>53</sup> According to Terragni, the literal sense of the *Comedy* is an architectural promenade, the "subterranean trip" that parallels the travels of Saint Paul and other pilgrimages of discovery. The allegorical sense of the *Comedy* is Dante as the personification of "the moral amelioration of . . . sinful humanity."<sup>54</sup> The anagogical sense is simply the installation of the Empire:

*The anagogical sense is the vision of eternal happiness of the Roman Empire with its center in Rome for worldly prosperity and moral restoration of the Church, liberated from the temporal power that pollutes it, {this} for spiritual happiness, with its center in Rome as well.*<sup>55</sup>

Terragni's particularization of Dante's anagogical sense was typical of fascist thought and might even be construed as pandering to the regime. Terragni, seizing the opportunity to justify his building in Dantesque terms, further explained the "Didactic" quality of the work as an almost unnecessary symbol of the already established Roman Empire. It was but a mere confirmation of "Dante's dowry of prophecy."<sup>56</sup>

Terragni neglects to add his interpretations of the "senses" of exegesis as regards the building, although he hints that such interpretation would be logical. After all, if the Danteum were to embody the principles of the *Divine Comedy*, it would logically derive from the meanings of the *Comedy*. It is necessary, I believe, to fill in these levels of significance to fully fathom Terragni's thought and the extent of his symbolic activity. Such an understanding of Terragni's symbolic process will in turn throw light on his apparent abstraction and the relationship of figurative to abstract art.

The conflation of the modes of exegesis found in Dante's two texts shows that Terragni, like Dante, was concerned with "distinguishing the allegorical from the literal sense"<sup>57</sup> For a modern architect this was unique, especially in the theory of the interwar period.

The literal "sense" of the Danteum as a representational object (not its architectonic "presence") is patently Dante and not just the *Comedy*. It is Dante of the early works as well: the forecourt, for example, represents the life of Dante before his "trip." The walls, columns, floors, and so on, are to Dante's person what Dante's words are to "the state of souls after death, pure and simple."<sup>58</sup> Terragni is careful to place in context any references to Dante, the context being architecturally historical and political. While the composition of the building is to be spiritually chained to Dantesque compositional criteria, it is likewise necessary that "the meaning and symbol . . . not overshadow the effective

plastic necessity. . . . We must find in an examination of the building . . . that we have already resolved the problems of volumetric equilibrium and architectonic harmony."<sup>59</sup> The literal meaning, then, is topical and must be superseded.

It is interesting to note here the parallel between Dante's and Terragni's respective invocations of history and precedent. Dante peopled his *Comedy* with real characters from history and then placed them in a context that transcended time and place, making "all-time and all-place." This structure allows the reader to relate specific events of Dante's journey to the cosmos. Dante further invoked history in terms of the longevity of the Empire, an issue he linked to his own identity problem as a poet in the Middle Ages. This problem has been summarized by Nancy Lenkeith:

*To defend Rome and the Roman way of life, Dante had to defend himself as a poet. . . . A long disparagement of poetry had followed the decay of Roman culture. . . . The fact is that poetry and poets were not essential to the Christian scheme of saving the world.*<sup>60</sup>

Architects practicing under a fascist regime had an analogous problem. Although they led themselves to believe, as architects had all over Europe, that they were to play central roles in shaping the future, the regime was careful to let the architects argue among themselves and accomplish very little in terms of social benefits. Yet throughout the thirties, even when the battle for modern design as the official style of the regime had more or less failed, architects like Terragni, Pagano, Sartoris, and others tried to convince the regime of its benefits.

It seems reasonable to assume, then, that since Terragni was preoccupied with explaining the senses of the *Comedy*, the Danteum would reflect Terragni's interpretation. If Dante's mathematics and atmosphere were appropriate to render in stone, then why not his allegory? At any rate, the literal reading of both building and poem, while still important, would be insufficient to either author.

Neither can the literal meaning for both authors be

assumed to be simply the inadequate metaphors of a higher level of thought; the question of how allegory is used must be of some interest to us here. An allegory of "this for that," an allegory that presupposes that "objects of perception have value only as they lead us toward the ineffable . . . the inadequate signs of ideas," is the spirit of gnosticism, a spirit that some scholars argue Dante abjured.<sup>61</sup> These scholars argue that Dante was concerned with an allegory of "this and that," an interpretation that gives greater importance to the literal sense, certainly more importance to the allegorical and moral senses, and avoids placing all emphasis on the anagoge.

A simple abstract reading of the Danteum cannot express Terragni's desire to create so many rich levels of meaning in a disarmingly simple project. The "clues" to the spiritualized, non-tangible, abstract essence of the universe<sup>62</sup> are themselves objects of interest and importance. They become for Dante and for Terragni what Max Black has called "interaction metaphors,"<sup>63</sup> in which the simultaneous reading of the metaphor and its "frame" creates its particular meaning. One can thus refer to Zuccoli's paraphrase of Terragni's theory of design: "Architecture is never only a composition of elements in certain relationships; it is a house, a school, an airport, etc."<sup>64</sup>

To appreciate the complexity of Terragni's intentions, it is therefore necessary to examine the elements of the building as metaphors that function on many levels of meaning.

The broad range of meanings of the Danteum are a direct reflection, if not a conscious copying, of Dante's "form, or manner, [which is] . . . poetic, fictive, digressive," and so on.<sup>65</sup>

In the Danteum it is the column that absorbs so many levels of metaphoric usage; it is the generic architectonic element, a kind of lowest common denominator of concrete "parts." The column also alludes to pure geometry. The historical allusions of the Danteum columns may be seen as Terragni's version of Dante's "coupling of a Christian and a pagan source in order to clarify a contemporary event."<sup>66</sup>

The Danteum columns are at once the plain cylinders of Le Corbusier's *piloti* and the columns of classical antiquity; they are proportioned like the Doric order, lacking only *entasis* but complete with capitals. They are *all the columns that ever were*. They are also the circle, symbol of perfection and the highest form of geometric figure. In series, the columns become a "Portico" (Terragni's term), complete with a pediment in the form of the fractured wall they support. In clusters they stand for the ritual of initiation and the route of purification well known through the revival of Egyptian forms in the lodges of the eighteenth century; such a ritual of initiation is implied by the Danteum program.<sup>67</sup> The column is the umbrella of shelter for the poor souls of the Inferno. It is the symbol of infinity (and therefore eternity) as the glass column of the *Paradiso*, as well as the reference to futurism and *Glas Architektur*. The transparency of the columns coincides with Dante's concept of transparency in Paradise, that is, through transparency all Divine Grace is revealed. Dante wrote in the *Convivio* that "the excellence of God is received in one way by separate substances, that is, by angels, who are free from all coarseness of matter, being, as it were, transparent by reason of the purity of their form."<sup>68</sup> Hence form is made manifest by its dissection, as in Terragni's dissection of the column through its crystalline character. As a reference to the *Comedy*, the column also reflects its numerology as the 100 cantos of the complete work, the 33 cantos of the Paradise, and the seven divisions of the Inferno.

The columns are constantly "this *and* that." Dante thus provided Terragni a model of organization that eschews a simply binary distinction between literal and allegorical. Dante's overlapping categories of treatment, from reference through connotation to invocation, provided Terragni a foothold for his own design activity and for his "Epistle to Mussolini."

To return to the senses of the Danteum, it seems obvious that the allegorical sense is the reattainment of the Empire under the fascist regime. The Empire is to Terragni and Dante a *living thing*, having gone through its own penitence to emerge again in Terragni's time as Dante had prophesied. Or, in Dante's terms, "The phoenix dies and is reborn from fire."<sup>69</sup>

Determining the anagogical sense for the Danteum requires some speculation, but it was important to Terragni because the concept involves the conflation of the mystical and the spiritual, with the spiritual pertaining to an immaterial reality. In the secular terms of geometry and architectural forms this must be the transcendence of materials, functions, and arrangements (columns, stone, doors, and so on). Terragni's anagogical intent can also provide an analytical base for the entire range of his abstraction, in other words, his belief system.<sup>70</sup>

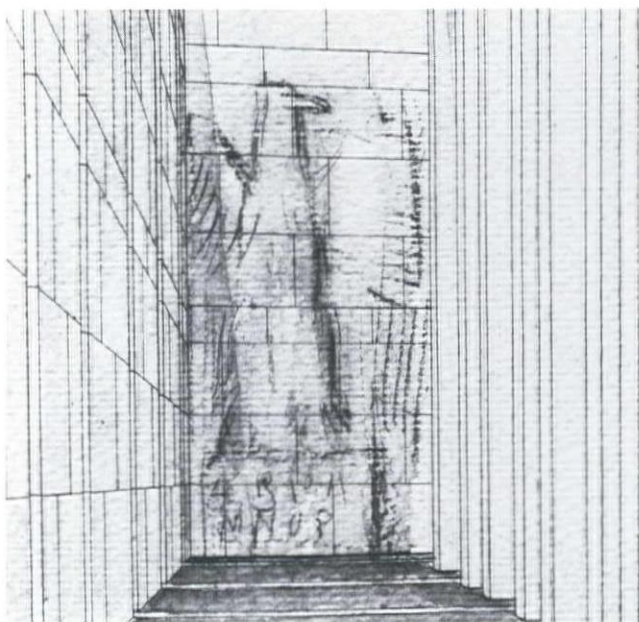
The best clue to Terragni's anagogical intent is perhaps his concept of the building as a synthetic type, created out of the types he discarded: the museum, the palace, the theater. He believed this building to be a temple, a building type that combines all the activity functions of the others but also transcends their expressive capabilities. It is a transcendence that must have recalled for Terragni the ineffably beautiful vision of God from the *Paradise*:

*Strove I with that wonder—how to fit  
The image to the sphere; so sought to see  
How it maintained the point of rest in it.*<sup>71</sup>

The reality of this experience, the attainment of which required Dante to traverse the depths of Hell and continue through Purgatory to Paradise, is the parallel of Terragni's process of elimination of all but the most rudimentary of architectonic rules. The Danteum, in its complete plastic reality, with an architectural structure that mirrors the structure of heaven, with a purity of such high order that all profane objects drop away, confronts us with an otherworldliness that seems to counteract all laws of man and nature. It is the place "to where we should strive," the anagoge. Thus the anagoge provided the symbolic purpose that links the various levels of meaning. Abstraction is the activity by which man transcends into a world of purity and essence. The autonomous nature of the architecture, the result of the process of abstraction, symbolizes the anagogical intention.

While the Danteum often approaches what Terragni denounced as the "servile imitation" of the

- 16. Danteum, Impero; the image of the Eagle adorns the end wall. In an unintentional historical irony, the Eagle is disappearing.
- 17. Transformation of the letter M into the image of the Eagle, as described in Canto XVIII.



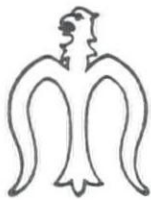
16

*Piacentiniani*, between mere imitation and total abstraction there exists an expansive world of meanings for which Dante's system was a sufficiently flexible model.

Typical of Terragni's use of the model is the image of the Eagle that adorns the end wall of the room dedicated to the Empire (Figure 16). It is a direct reference to the Eagle in Canto XVIII of the *Paradise* (Figure 17). The Eagle, symbol of imperial justice, appears as a transformation of the last letter of the phrase *Diligite Justitiam Qui Judicatis Terram*<sup>72</sup> (a phrase that conveniently contains thirty-five letters, Dante's and Terragni's age, and the multiple of  $5 \times 7$ ).<sup>73</sup> Dante's reference to the nullification of the temporal powers of the Papacy and the installation of the emperor is the most direct correspondence. The rendering of the image is similar to the version in Dante, and it sits on the drawing almost as an afterthought, a supplement to the Sironi reliefs that were to adorn the facades. The letter *M* also stands for Mussolini, another symbolic overtone, perhaps added to make the building more attractive to the *Gerarchi*.

Thus, Terragni's treatment, like Dante's, is expansive, as shown in the format and style of the building and of the *Relazione*. Both are atmospheric, connotative, denotative, referential, and correspondent, and they both embrace a continuum from form to content.

The significance of the Danteum project in the terms we described lies in uncovering the relation of those architectonic ideas stemming from within the discipline and craft and those that come from outside. We may conclude from Terragni's building and report that we need not embrace either autonomy or dependency for architectural expression. Rather, it is the manner in which the architecture is both autonomous and dependent that provides the basis for its communicative qualities. And if we may return to the epigraph of this essay, we might reinterpret it to mean that architecture must start with metaphor, go to algebra, and then back to metaphor.



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<sup>1</sup>Gruppo Sette, "Architecture" (1926) and "Architecture (II): The Foreigners" (1927), trans. Ellen Shapiro, *Oppositions* 6 (Fall 1976): 86.

<sup>2</sup>The term *rationalism*, despite Le Corbusier's attempt to prevent its widespread use (see his admonition to Sartoris of 1931, republished in Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, Praeger, New York, 1960, p. 320), remains the standard Italian term for modern architecture between the wars. The terms *rational* or *rationalistic* are also used in either a positive or a negative connotation, in much the same way the term *modernistic* weighs negatively in the English architectural jargon.

<sup>3</sup>G. C. Argan, in the theme speech at the Terragni Congress, September 1968, in *L'Architettura*, May 1969.

<sup>4</sup>The *torre littorio*, or Lictor's Tower, was one of the traditional symbolic elements adapted from Italian culture without formal alteration from its original use as the urban campanile. The hollowness of fascist town planning is eloquently expressed in the report of the completion of Saubaudia, one of the new towns in the reclaimed Pontine Marshes (see *L'Architettura*, 1935). The building typology as well as the layout of the town express the idea that the primary function of this town was as a theater for Mussolini's displays and harangues. The architects were indeed faithful to their client's needs.

<sup>5</sup>Piacentini was the "evil one" of Italian modern architecture. He was, relatively speaking, the most powerful architect of the period (after Speer perhaps). As director of *L'Architettura* he controlled much of what Italians read concerning their own architecture and foreign work. He either designed or judged in competition almost all the major buildings erected for the regime, including the Florence Railway Station, the University City in Rome, the Via della Conciliazione (in front of St. Peter's in Rome), the Town Center of Brescia, and the Plan of E' 42 (now the EUR district of Rome). Upon his death in 1960, Zevi's editorial obituary was entitled "Piacentini Died in 1925."

<sup>6</sup>See Piacentini, *L'Architettura d'Oggi*, Paolo Cremonese, Roma, 1930, and various articles republished in L. Patetta, *L'Architettura in Italia, 1919-1943, Le Polemiche*, CLUP, Milano, 1972.

<sup>7</sup>The word *colonna* refers to the columns used in the classical orders. Columns as simple static support are called *pilastri*. The differences in language are, of course, typical of the development of the concepts, and the existence of the distinction certainly underscores the perceived cultural directive toward classicism in Italy in the 1920s and 1930s.

<sup>8</sup>"Arches and Columns: The Debate between Piacentini and Ojetti, 1933," trans. Laura Neri, *Modulus, University of Virginia School of Architecture Review* (1982), p. 7.

<sup>9</sup>Piacentini displayed an almost schizophrenic division between his writings and his taste in buildings, as noted by some scholars, particularly Bruno Zevi, who called Piacentini a "quick change artist" in his latest edition of *Storia dell'Architettura Moderna*, 5th ed., Einaudi, Torino, 1975.

<sup>10</sup>I find interesting parallels between this position of almost fifty

years ago and Kenneth Frampton's ideals, based on Ahrendt, in "On Reading Heidegger," *Oppositions* 4 (October 1974).

<sup>11</sup>The actual wording was "I don't say that there ought to be two architectures . . . one in underwear and one in evening dress." From Patetta, *L'Architettura in Italia*, p. 161 (my translation). There has never been any doubt that he meant that there ought to be such a symbolic division.

<sup>12</sup>The creation of rhetorical columns out of the *fascio littorio*, symbol of fascism, is not too far removed from Latrobe's adaptation of the corn husk and tobacco plant as orders for the new American Republic.

<sup>13</sup>Until recently the work of Peter Eisenman has been the major source in English for Terragni. Eisenman has stressed Terragni's tendency to abstract elements into a code of formal relationships. See P. D. Eisenman, "From Object to Relationship I," *Casabella* 344 (January 1970), 38, and "From Object to Relationship II," *Perspecta* 13-14 (1971), 36. Zevi's analysis of the Casa del Fascio in Como also stresses abstraction; see his *Storia dell'Architettura Moderna*.

<sup>14</sup>Quoted in C. Maltese, *Arte Moderna in Italia, 1785-1943*, Einaudi, Torino, 1962, p. 423.

<sup>15</sup>One of the most important effects of the *Autarchia* was on imported iron ore for the production of steel, but modern buildings used little more steel than traditional buildings, despite the polemics of the modern architects. The psychological shift was more important, however, swinging some architects toward the more famous Italian natural materials such as travertine, marble, and tufa.

<sup>16</sup>E. Mantero, *Giuseppe Terragni e la Città del Razionalismo in Italia*, Dedalo, Roma, 1969, p. 130. Terragni also defended international modern architecture against charges of Bolshevism and "Jewishness," but he did so in terms of style, not in terms of the liberal social leanings of the movement.

<sup>17</sup>The Via dell'Impero (Street of the Empire), now the Via dei Fori Imperiali, was built in 1932 to commemorate the first decade of fascism. Part of this urbanistic/archaeological project was the restoration of the Basilica of Maxentius, the first such monument to be renewed under Mussolini. The site for the Danteum was originally to house the Palazzo Littorio, the national fascist party headquarters. The scheme for that competition submitted by Terragni and partners was awarded a prize in 1934. The site, therefore, was well known to the authors of the Danteum.

<sup>18</sup>For Dante's concept of the Empire see N. Lenkeith, *Dante and the Legend of Rome*, Warburg Institute, London, 1953, and C. T. Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, Oxford University Press, 1957. Terragni implied a knowledge of Dante's concept of the Empire in citing the *de Monarchia*, the work in which Dante had explained how the imperial and papal powers emanated directly from God.

<sup>19</sup>According to Luigi Zucconi, Terragni's assistant from the Novocumum to the end, Terragni was a devoutly religious Catholic, and a bit of a mystic. On Sundays he would travel to the periphery of Como to hear Mass in the unfrequented medieval

church of S. Abbonido, so as to be alone and quiet. His identification with Dante must be seen in this light.

<sup>20</sup> G. Terragni, *Relazione Sul Danteum*, trans. and Introd. T. Schumacher, *Oppositions* 9 (Summer 1977), 89.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of Bontempelli's influence on modern architecture in Italy and on Terragni, see A. Longatti, "Massimo Bontempelli l'architettura 'naturale,'" *L'Architettura* 163 (May 1969), pp. 34–36.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34–36.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> H. W. Carr, *The Philosophy of Benedetto Croce*, Russel and Russel, London, 1927.

<sup>25</sup> B. Croce, *Aesthetic*, Laterza, Bari, 1902, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> G. C. Argan, "Relazione," *L'Architettura* 163 (May 1969), p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> F. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966.

<sup>28</sup> B. Croce, *La Poesia di Dante*, Laterza, Bari, 1921.

<sup>29</sup> See J. Freccero, ed., *Dante: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965, p. 14.

<sup>30</sup> *Relazione*, p. 89.

<sup>31</sup> Freccero, *Dante: A Collection*, p. 20.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Piercarlo Lingeri, Pietro Lingeri's son.

<sup>33</sup> *Relazione*, paragraph 8.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraph 12.

<sup>35</sup> See P. Toynbee, *Dantis Alighieri Epistolae*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1922, for a translation of Dante's "Epistle to Can Grande Della Scala."

<sup>36</sup> "Epistle to Can Grande," paragraph 12.

<sup>37</sup> *Relazione*, paragraph 6.

<sup>38</sup> "Epistle to Can Grande," paragraph 12.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraph 33.

<sup>40</sup> *Relazione*, paragraph 23.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraph 23.

<sup>42</sup> Nancy Lenkeith, "Dante and the Idea of Rome," *Journal of the Warburg Institute* (1952).

<sup>43</sup> Barbara Reynolds, Introd. *Paradise*, by Dante Alighieri, Penguin, London, 1962, p. 26.

<sup>44</sup> *Relazione*, paragraph 5.

<sup>45</sup> Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Etchells, Praeger, New York, p. 26.

<sup>46</sup> *Relazione*, paragraph 3.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraph 4.

<sup>48</sup> *Paradise*, Canto XXXIII.

<sup>49</sup> Reynolds, Introd., *Paradise*.

<sup>50</sup> "Epistle to Can Grande," paragraph 21.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraph 7.

<sup>52</sup> J. Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1969, p. 28 (quoting Aquinas).

<sup>53</sup> In the manuscript the word is misspelled as *Analogico* instead of *Anagogico*, but Terragni's explanation is so close to Dante's that there can be no doubt that he meant *Anagogico*. The mistake must be attributed to typing or to the infrequent use of the word *anagogical* in the century.

<sup>54</sup> *Relazione*, paragraph 19.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraph 21.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraph 21.

<sup>57</sup> Reynolds, Introd., *Paradise*, paragraph 47.

<sup>58</sup> "Epistle to Can Grande," paragraph 8.

<sup>59</sup> *Relazione*, paragraph 8.

<sup>60</sup> Lenkeith, "Dante and the Idea of Rome," p. 33.

<sup>61</sup> Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia*, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Max Black, *Models and Metaphors*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 1962.

<sup>64</sup> Luigi Zuccoli, *L'Architettura*, 163 (May 1969), p. 9.

<sup>65</sup> "Epistle to Can Grande," paragraph 9.

<sup>66</sup> Lenkeith, "Dante and the Idea of Rome," p. 12.

<sup>67</sup> See A. Vidler, "The Architecture of the Lodges," *Oppositions* 5 (1976).

<sup>68</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Convivio*, Tractate III, vii, 18–57, trans. William Walpond Jackson, Abrams, New York, 1909, p. 148.

<sup>69</sup> *Paradise*, Canto XXIV.

<sup>70</sup> The similarity between Terragni and the de Stijl movement is unmistakable. Mondrian and Van Doesburg were strongly influenced by the mystical mathematician Schoonmakers, who believed that the geometry of the right angle held the key to the essence of the universe. See Hans L. C. Jaffe, *de Stijl*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1970.

<sup>71</sup> *Paradise*, Canto XXXIII.

<sup>72</sup> The phrase means "He who rules the earth should seek justice." See W. Vernon, *Readings on the Paradise of Dante*, Macmillan, New York, 1900, pp. 32–61.

<sup>73</sup> It is an obvious, but significant, coincidence that Terragni was in his thirty-fifth year when he designed the Danteum. One suspects that this fact contributed to his inordinate identification with Dante.



## Peter Eisenman and the Myth of Futility

Daniel Libeskind

Peter Eisenman's penetrating critique of the object, and of the correlative methods underlying its constitution, opens the subject of architecture to consequences that are more radical than those implied by his previous syntactic studies. In those works he brought the assumptions underlying the making of architecture to the very edge of consciousness, while presupposing the validity of the contemporary image of history that dates at least to the eighteenth century. This image of a one-line history, having an obscure beginning in remote practice and progressing to a happy or unhappy ending through the present, is actually the armature of a typological system in which the logic of formalization unfolds itself as a dialectic of consciousness.

In the present statement, however, Eisenman's discoveries concerning the discontinuity of order are no longer compatible with this view. The empirical facts (borne out by the analyses presented) are actually at odds with a developmental picture of the history of architecture that dominates the public's consciousness in the guise of progressivist, positivist mythology. In fact, Eisenman has suggested that "meaning" does not run along the line of time (history); that it is to be found, rather, in its cross section as presence. As a rupture of a continuous system, "meaning" cannot be apprehended as an unfolding hierarchy but rather as a field in which "outbreaks of presence" articulate a scale running between compact and differentiated symbols. Furthermore, it is from the peaks of a more differentiated symbolization in architecture that one can grasp its more inarticulate longings.

We are shown that the pattern of structuring representation in architecture runs out of synchrony with the story of its creation. The "genesis" (*ex nihilo*) of architecture's forms, the "exodus" of meaning (from social context), the "empire" of logic, the "apocalypse" of fulfillment have here given way to another kind of inquiry.

Eisenman's inquiry—a product of a different trajectory—mirrors and at the same time disillusiones ideas concerned with the fabrication of objects. The entire notion of the development of a historically sophisticated typology crumbles when we are

introduced to facts that have no future. The theoretical axis of investigation has been tilted away from architecture's cultural diffusion and aligned along the "outbreak" of rupture that is independent of human intentions and from a singular history.

Throughout his interpretation Eisenman disavows an immediate order whose horizons are lost in the indefinite. The idea of indefinite space and indefinite time existing in a homogeneous medium of Newtonian cosmology compels us to make assumptions about meaning (of objects) in that universe. That meaning must be covered by an apprehension that goes beyond the limited experience we actually have of them. Thus theories have to be constructed (be they semiotic, typological, or historical) as ideal models of how this "meaning" can be experienced.

What Eisenman shows, however, is that if we can experience a "meaning" through such fictitious model, then we have reached an aporia. All that can actually be experienced in this impasse is the fact of an unfulfillable demand, of rupture—and no verifiable model can ever be constructed of that. History is no longer conceivable as a stream of types or of signifiers but as a participation in an ongoing process of presentness having no future. I anticipate here my conclusion: that despite the author's reticence, eschatological overtones color Eisenman's interpretation, which has shifted from an analysis of what is said of objects eternally to the concrete saying in the present and the perennial difference it makes. Seen in this manner the present work is a challenge to those practitioners whose faith in modernity is only a nostalgia for paradise, as well as to those architects whose political acumen is never more than deferred theory.

We can summarize what the "futility of objects" actually entails. For Eisenman, thoroughgoing syntactic exploration is followed by what he calls "decomposition." This operation strangely reveals that all that was once woven together as architecture's memory can today be released to an idly drifting space. But in this drift, architecture discovers its own maturity. Thus, "coming of age" signifies that surrogate sources outside of architecture's immanent logic have

been deprived of their illegitimate supervisory function. The kind of post-modernity that is involved with transformational-compositional principles is no more than a crutch in the present dilemma, a quasi-sacrosanct absurdity veiling its own lack of authority. The architect, however, must continue "making" even if there is nothing that goes beyond his endeavors. According to Wittgenstein, "architecture immortalizes and glorifies something, hence there can be no architecture where there is nothing to glorify." How then is one to resolve the paradox that "negative dialectics" reveals?

According to Eisenman's argument, there is no alternative but to enter the rupture between the order of being and making. By divesting itself of humanism, architecture makes visible the *horror pleni*, not *vacui*, of reality. The sign of architecture in the present—its authentic post-modernity—is a trace of the nonhuman haunted by the image of its own inhumanity.

The humanism of architecture as a tradition, both classical and modern, is correlative with the metaphysics that is overcome in the process of surpassing the object. The subject of rupture is in effect the surpassing of humanism. One can say that insofar as the architect thus discerns his true authority, he is by this very fact proposing a humanism of a higher sort. Whether or not the ideally constituted object remains is a matter of indifference. Intrinsically, the architect's relation to the process of making appears now more fundamentally as the original relation that the process has to man: a relation by which the process projects its contents and throws amidst objects. But this negativity must not be thought too empty. It is not, in fact, a deficiency of architecture but rather its own withheld treasure.

Eisenman implies that architects would be foolish to take advantage of this weakness in objects by trying to bring them back from their tatters (in the act of "random, unconscious recording of information in an unconscious way") to a false fulfillment. Ultimately, to remain true to facts one must design as if meaning was not presupposed. Such a formulation reminds one that the initial (syntactic-structural) phase of the author's

investigation reduced the being of the object in order to free the nucleus of its significance. The second phase might be called a reduction of meaning, which in suspension reveals its own inner temporality.

The technique of suspended judgment, which is a trademark of any pure phenomenology and in Eisenman's work is the very core of a futureless present, has "turned" to reveal—albeit casually—its own backbone of nonbeing (decomposition, void). We must emphasize the importance of the theory of suspension or reduction whereby a final term of the means-ends relation is deferred into an indefinite future, be that future called "void and null" or placed in the present gnostically as a process of "future-in-the-present."

Twentieth-century science, as well as art, in mediating the gulf between appearance and reality (substance and process), has exposed the immanent self, enclosed in corporeal being to a finite consummation in which all souvenirs of myths and legends must be surrendered. Modernity on which one can now reflect with epochal consciousness is in the process of retrieving a memoryless past—the perfect counterpart to a futureless present.

But Eisenman accepts his own evidence: What meaning can one possibly impute to a gestalt-oriented reading of structure when the results undermine the idea of personal psychology in the very act of fighting the harder for it? The poignancy with which Eisenman fights the demons of the bourgeois and exorcises the magic of architecture can be measured by a distancing that hypostatizes the nightmare of a time deprived of direction, a time that will bring nothing. Just as Narcissus reflectively sought to reconcile his identity with the world and to leave no difference, thereby giving up his own self, so the architect has been moving toward a realm of impersonal production in line with his criticism of a political condition that makes consumption impersonal and production transcendental.

Eisenman's importance lies in the radical secularization of architecture's object, done not against it but henceforth in its own name. To accept that architecture

is cut off from transcendent grounds is to realize that its meaning is now participating in its own alienation. The "first fall" of the object into knowledge was not its last devolution. It turns out to have been a mere promise of the "second fall," whereby the object itself becomes a testament to its own futility.

That in brief is the summary of the content of thought that is both powerful and provocative. The renunciation of myths and stories about content is followed by a phase in which a meaningless process (any process that has no *telos*, according to Aristotle) undergoes its own conclusions in order to remain destinyless and thus authentic. Since Auschwitz and Hiroshima, the makers of architecture have had to face the humiliating prospect of dwelling in a world where human suffering is mirrored in the emptying of the object and its existence "outside of man's experience." The subject undergoing this process of "futilization" is thus finally made truly profane (that is, rational).

In discussing the immanent logic of the process of making, Eisenman has dared to probe deeper than his own implicit philosophical framework allows. I find that in following the consistent development of deconstructions, he has remained faithful to his own positive empirical outlook while describing a phenomenon of architecture that does not allow itself to be reduced to this system. This phenomenon, which he calls "the frozen shadow of man," can be characterized as the emergence of transcendence within a system that is both hermetic and solipsistic.

Though the work speaks about the "immanence of ends" and of "the division of the object from itself," it does so from a dimension that is tacitly yet fully engaged in the world. The ends of autonomy or of the object that "explains itself" are implicated in a horizon having temporalization as its essence. This existential dimension is the very core of the tensions articulated in the processes undergoing scrutiny.

One would have to ask Eisenman about the kind of world that would allow itself, as if by a Hegelian "ruse of reason," the prerogative of coming-into-being-through-process-without-ends as an end. What does his

system imply by isolating its principles (which are a bulwark against figuration and subject matter) in order to emerge into an openness that has no retrospect and no fear? How, finally, is the process of constituting an object, albeit an unfulfillable one, to be delimited, if the nonmeaning or lack of "ground" is already woven with all that is meaningful?

These are not meant to be rhetorical queries. Without doubt the insoluble element of Eisenman's deconstructive hermeneutic is the very one that has proved to be the nemesis of all philosophies of immanence, the one against which even the "best hung lamps have come undone" (Valéry): the problem of the consciousness of time. The crisis of reason that dominates our perspectives today can be seen as the inarticulateness with which the overlapping area between relations of identity and nonrelations of identity is described. The locus of rupture is therefore what defines our participation in reality. This "metaxy" or in-betweenness of existence, suspended as it is between the here (now) and the there (then) and participating in both, is the tension that keeps Eisenman's work in its truth. But one can speak of an "immanent process" only in relation to a "transcendent ground." Immanence, like transcendence, cannot be used as an absolute adjective to anything, but only as a correlative specifying this tension of consciousness which both prophecy and philosophy have articulated and whose symbols form the basis of thinking.

I would like to suggest that a critique along Eisenman's fundamental deontology of architecture must sooner or later encounter the fact that the nonexistent ground of architecture can be misplaced somewhere in the immanent hierarchy of being—made into an object. Furthermore, the technique of imputing or ascribing such a ground to an object of experience is precisely what defines a myth. With this conclusion I have come back to a suggestion made earlier that the entire process of decomposition and difference has a directionality and a goal, however unable one is to articulate this teleology in anything but a mythical form.



1. Palazzo Minelli, showing building as it existed in 1980.

# The Futility of Objects: Decomposition and the Processes of Difference

Peter Eisenman

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History is not continuous.<sup>1</sup> It is made up of presences and absences. The presences occur when history is vital and continuous, deriving its energy from its own momentum. In architecture the continuity is defined by categories of processes and objects. These are often consonant with the destiny of man: the universal order of man, God, and nature, as defined in a particular continuity. The absences are also vital, but of a different nature. The absences are ruptures between a continuity which has ended and the next one which has not yet begun. The vitality of the rupture is derived from the energy that rushes in to fill the void. In the past there have been many periods of rupture, each characterized by a change in what was perceived to be the order of the universe and in the categories representing that order in architecture.

In the fifteenth century there was such a rupture. It was assumed that through the powers of reason and will man could alter his place in the order of the universe relationship which, prior to that time, had been hierarchical and theocentric—God had mediated between man and nature. Anthropocentrism was a radical change. The objects man made in the Renaissance attempted to symbolize this new destiny. Thus, the form and order of ideal towns of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were thought to represent the form and order of “harmonic” man. This period, however, was also defined by a changed consciousness concerning what previously was an unconscious making of architecture. This change was first articulated by Alberti in his idea of composition.<sup>2</sup> The conscious idea of a compositional process changed the relationship between the object and what could now be called the process of design. Here was a direct correspondence between a cosmological change and an architectural one. (It will be argued that all such changes in cosmology have been mirrored by and in architecture.)

Again in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when man began to study man, he could no longer be said to

occupy the center.<sup>3</sup> He gradually drifted away from his former anthropocentrism. This prompted another condition of rupture, perhaps not as definitive as the Renaissance, but just as important for architecture. It was promoted by the introduction of an ideological statement of intent prior to the process of making. Where previously theory and ideology were derived from existing objects, now it was the objects which followed from and contained an explicitly stated ideology.<sup>4</sup>

Modernism was another attempt to wipe the slate clean, to break from the historical continuity of the previous four centuries. Primarily, modernism was thought to be a rupture with the continuity of classicism. Modernism expressed this rupture not only through a change in the object and its relationship to man but also in the process, the object's making, thereby changing its own internal history. The hierarchical relationship between man and object began to dissipate. Objects became autonomous. The resulting distance created between the modernist object and the creative subject was articulated through a more or less autonomous process of making.<sup>5</sup>

While the tabula rasa of modernism was not thought to be man-centered, it was, ironically, willed by man; his mythic shadow loomed more importantly than had been realized. Then, in 1945, those shadows became frozen realities, marked forever on the consciousness of man in the stones of Hiroshima and the smoke of Auschwitz. While the ruptures of the Renaissance and modernism were created by man in the eclipse of history, the ruptures of 1945 were created by history in the eclipse of man.<sup>6</sup>

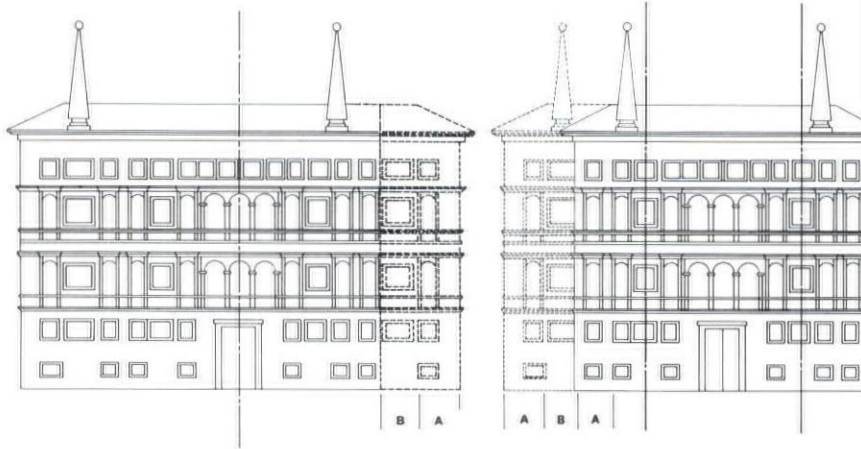
A new sensibility exists. It was born in the rupture of 1945. This sensibility was neither predicated in the tenets of modernism nor brought about by their failure to achieve the utopia of the present. Rather, it emerged from something unforeseen to modernism, in the fact that not since the advent of modern science, technology, and medicine has a generation faced, as it does today, the potential extinction of the entire civilization. This suggestion of an end *in* the present shattered the classical and triadic condition of past, present, and

2. Palazzo Minelli, (c. 1709), front elevation by V. Coronelli, showing asymmetrical location of the main entry.



2

3. Palazzo Minelli, showing addition of missing AB fragment on right.  
4. Palazzo Minelli, showing subtraction of AB fragment of ABA bay on left, producing a symmetrical condition about two axes.



3

future time and, thus, its progression and continuity. Previously, the present was seen as a moment between the past and the future. Now the present contains two unrelated poles: a *memory* of this previous and progressive time and an *immanence*, the presence of end—the end of the future—a new kind of time.<sup>7</sup>

In this new time a new sensibility has developed called post-modernism.<sup>8</sup> In the context of this new time, the term does not define a harmless period after modernism, nor does it merely signify the erasure of modernism and the resurrection of the classical. Rather, it proposes a transgressive or negative aspect which is at the root of its own definition.<sup>9</sup> It suggests that the relationship and nature of objects and processes sustained by a previous history are no longer operative. Underlying this is another view of history—that what was previously understood as the rupture between the classical and the modern can now be seen as aspects of the same continuity; first, in terms of the nature of the architectural object and its capacity to signify; second, in terms of the idea of the process of design.

The architectural object of both classicism and modernism contains the idea of original perfection. That is, the significance of any specific object is, in part, understood by some reference to simple type forms. The specific object does not so much represent type forms as it is significant of this relationship. In the classical, these type forms were ideal and “natural,” characterized by symmetries, central axes, and a hierarchy of elemental parts. In the modern, type forms were platonic and abstract, characterized more easily by references to dynamic, asymmetric, mechanistic structures than the hierarchical types of the classical. Each presumes that significance can inhere in an object and that such meaning accrues, at least in part, from the relationship of the object to the type form. Thus, each presumes a stable origin of the object as sign; an ordering of signs which, as Foucault says, is a mirror to the ordering of the world and the order of being itself.<sup>10</sup>

Composition—the classical process suggests that the ends are as stable as the origins; transformation—the modernist process concerns the idea of process as time. As processes, composition and transformation, in their

supposed differences, were thought to have defined a rupture. However, in fact, both presume that type forms are linked by an internal history to an object. Both assume that these origins are pure and ideal; on the one hand natural, on the other abstract. The classical sought congruence with the natural; the modern was concerned with its opposite. Yet, ultimately, the abstractions of modernism were brought into an order through strict compositional means.

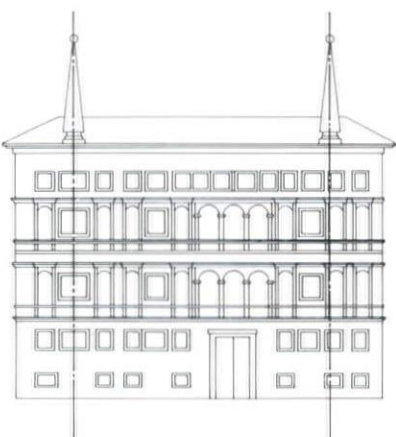
In composition the idea originated in an order outside man—in the transformation of the natural through an order, or system of rules and proportions. In the classical, a building's autonomy was not complete within itself; it was related to the transcendental condition of nature. The classical proposed that the natural or ideal order was identical to a substance. And to the extent that this was so, the object appeared as natural.

Transformation in its specific modernist sense had no such recourse to a natural or conventional order. Transformation, while it did not necessarily suggest any ideal order, presumed that the significance of the final form resided, in part, in the process itself; in the capacity of the object to reveal its own origins and processes, to register back to an original type, by a kind of reverse mental process. It was hermetic and internalized.

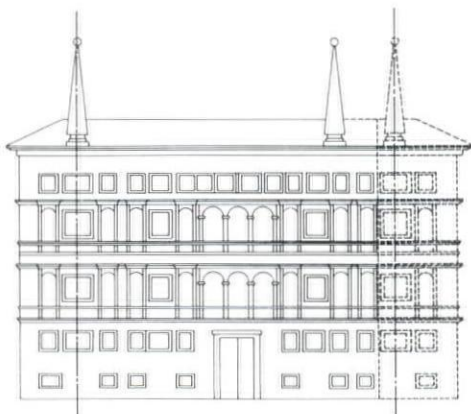
Thus, if the classical and the modern were seen as an inherent part of architecture, they were so through two constant ideas: one, the capacity of meaning to inhere in a form; and two, the grounding of the processes of composition or transformation in the idea of a type. These two ideas can be considered the traditional and continuing aspects of both classicism and modernism. And in this dual sense they share the same roots. No matter what the style or ideology displayed in an object—whether neoclassical or modern—the classical contained an unchanging attitude toward the relationship of the object to the process. So what was formerly seen as a rupture between classicism and modernism is, in the context of these two ideas, now a continuity and, what is more, a continuity which

5. Palazzo Minelli, showing two roof pinnacles as a datum defining two different axes of symmetry.
6. Palazzo Minelli, showing movement of right pinnacle to correspond to the position of the left, to recreate a stable condition of origin.

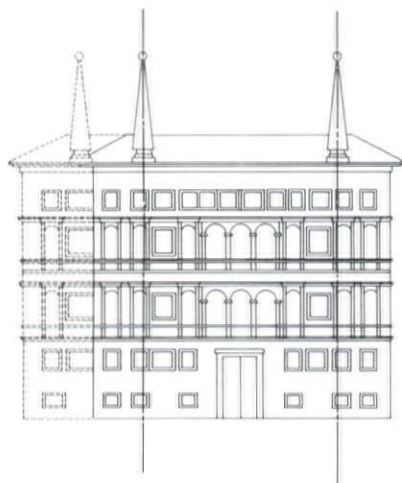
7. Palazzo Minelli, showing movement of left pinnacle to correspond to the position of the right, producing another stable condition of origin.



5



6



7

sustained four hundred years of the history of architecture.

Now, if the objects and processes of the classical/modern continuity are no longer sustained by the present sensibility (in fact it will be argued below that the classical objects and processes are the only ones that cannot be related to the new conditions of time), then how does one model a new relationship of objects and processes more congruent with the present post-modern sensibility?

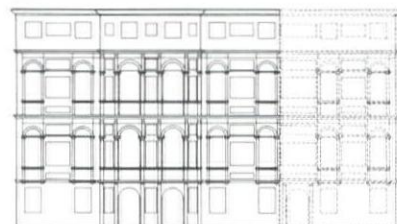
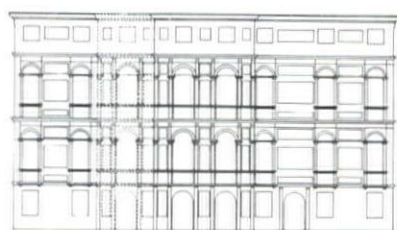
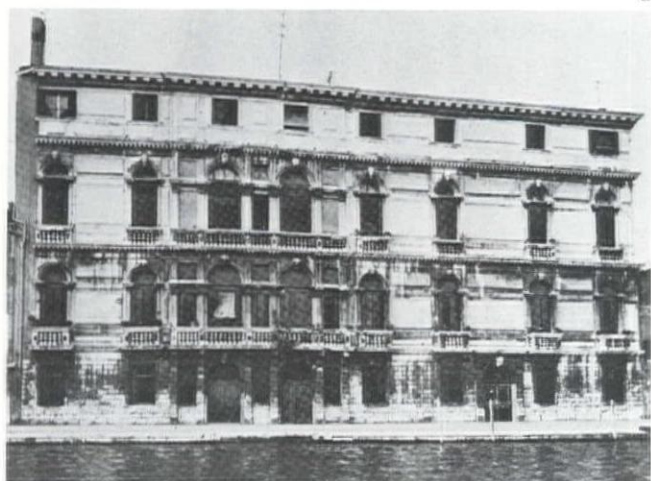
First, by the reintroduction of history not as a merely simplistic reaction to modernism, nor as a literal classicism, but rather in the concept of the negative which is imbedded in the classical tradition, it brings potentially a new dimension of interpretation to the idea of history. Second, by the introduction of the negative of the classical, it proposes the possible inversion of the nature of the object, its capacity to hold meaning, and the inversion of the processes of composition and transformation, thus erasing the basis of the concept of type. And finally, by the introduction of the idea of the negative of the classical the impasse created by modernism's erasure of history is avoided.<sup>11</sup>

At some distance from modernism, there seem to be other objects and processes which have existed that have contained such a negation of classical models. In their impure nature (purity being an aspect of both modernist and classical type forms) they propose an *other* condition for the object and, more importantly, an *other* process of making outside the classical/modernist definition.

This essay is an attempt to sketch certain aspects of this negative of classical composition by deconstructing a series of buildings which are used as heuristic approximations of this sensibility—as beginnings and simultaneously begin to suggest an alternative process of making called decomposition.<sup>12</sup> To begin to locate this idea of decomposition it is possible to propose three categories of objecthood, each of which in turn begins to suggest a process of making which displays a trajectory moving away from the classical idea of compositional processes and objects. Provisionally, these categories,

seen within a classical/modernist continuity, can be said to be not-compositional.

The first category originates at the very heart of the classical without being compositional. This category can be called precompositional in that it fundamentally concerns variations in symmetry from natural existence—additions and subtractions to simple bilateral structures which occur almost without design in plan or elevation. If composition in the Albertian sense concerned order and the making of order, that is, the transformation of some order giving type, then precomposition is essentially the denuded framework of order and not really the product of composition. While certain asymmetries may be present they do not represent the transformation from a type form. Any number of simple buildings, whether classical or not, display such asymmetry. For example, there is an asymmetrical location of the main entry in the Palazzo Minelli (Fig. 1) as illustrated by V. Coronelli (1709) (Fig. 2). There are several explanations which clarify this asymmetry, each implying a reference to a simple symmetrical type. First, the main entry usually defines the central axis of a previous ideal state. To sustain this interpretation an *AB* fragment of an *ABA* bay has to be read as missing on the right (Fig. 3). Such a reading presumes that previously there was an ideal state of classical unity, an order from which this right-hand element was subtracted. In a second reading, an ideal condition is defined by two symmetrical axes taken through the two bays of solid panels. This reading requires that an *AB* fragment of an *ABA* bay be subtracted from on the left (Fig. 4) to restore a preexisting unity. In either of these two cases, the location of the two roof pinnacles is anomalous. If, conversely, these pinnacles are taken to be a datum, if they define two symmetrical axes, (Fig. 5), then two other readings are possible. The first suggests that by moving the right pinnacle to correspond to the position of the left pinnacle (Fig. 6) or, conversely, the left pinnacle can be moved to correspond to the position of the one on the right (Fig. 7), a stable condition of origin is recreated. In each case, an understanding of order comes from the idea that there is an original unity from which elements have been added or subtracted to produce what seems to be an incomplete building. Since

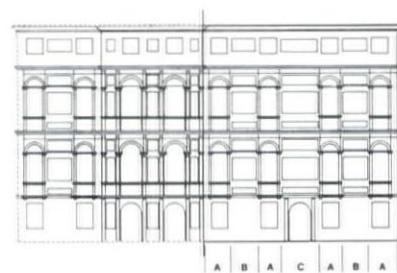
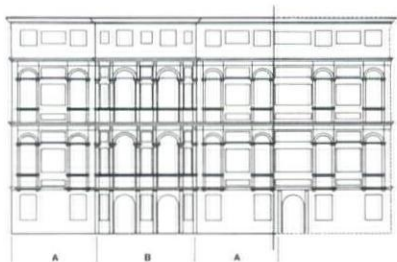
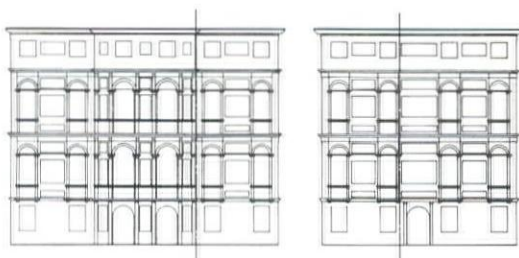
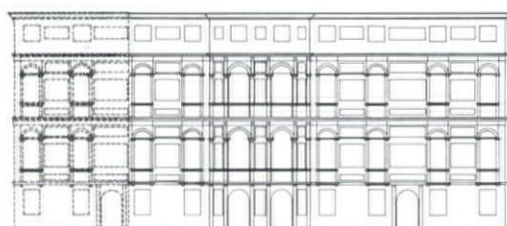
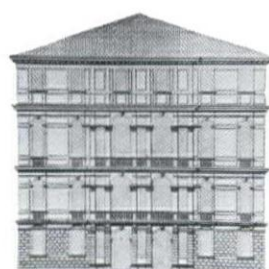


8. Palazzo Surian, showing building as it existed in 1980.
9. Palazzo Surian, showing central element moved one bay to the right, restoring classical symmetry.
10. Palazzo Surian, showing subtraction of right bays, producing a symmetrical condition.

composition in Alberti's definition is finite and does not admit such additions or subtractions, the process which produced the actual object is not strictly compositional. Palazzo Minelli, in classical terms, is precompositional because (1) what seem to be transformations are only additions and subtractions; and (2) what seems to be a type form is only derived from a primitive vertebrate symmetry, commonly found in natural order.

A second category which begins to move the trajectory of the design process away from the classical actually concerns the composite rather than the composed. Buildings in this category, while the result of a design process, basically concern overlapping, the superimposition of two simple types by a process of addition. The result is not usually a stable, finite order but, as in the precompositional, an unstable one. Any number of buildings from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Venice illustrate this second category. They are more additive than compositional in that they contain and display the process of working toward an order rather than an order itself.

A version of the composite can be seen in the Palazzo Surian (Fig. 8)—a first interpretation, proceeding in similar fashion as in the precompositional, questions the asymmetrical location of the central element. If this is moved one bay to the right (Fig. 9) it restores a classical symmetry. Two other similar interpretations are possible, assuming that the twin entry doors of the central element are, in fact, the center of some single unity and that it is the elements on either end which have been added or subtracted. Either the right-hand end (Fig. 10) is an anomaly and can be subtracted, as in the drawing by Antonio Visentini (Fig. 11), thus returning the building to an original unity, or a similar element to the one taken away in Figure 11 can be added to the left, again re-creating a stable, original unity (Fig. 12). All of the above interpretations are reductive, in that the complexity of the existing facade is interpreted as an irregularity of a single classical type. A third reading is possible, although it is also reductive; it takes into account much of the intentional complexity present in the facade rather than reducing it to the inconsequential. Here, the building is an overlapping of two models, as opposed to the composing of disparate



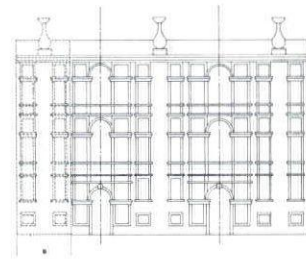
11. Palazzo Surian, by Antonio Vincentini, showing simple symmetrical palazzo.
12. Palazzo Surian, showing addition of several bays to the left, producing a symmetrical condition.
13. Palazzo Surian, showing Palazzo as an overlapping of two types.
14. Palazzo Surian, read as *ABA* type.
15. Palazzo Surian, read as *ACA* type.
16. Palazzo Foscari ai Carmini, as it existed in 1980.
17. Palazzo Foscari, showing addition of a *B* bay to the left, restoring symmetry.
18. Palazzo Foscari, (c. 1709), by V. Coronelli.
19. Palazzo Foscari, showing addition of an *A* bay to the right, creating a simple symmetry about the two dominant chimneys.
20. Palazzo Foscari showing addition of a fragment of a right end bay to the left end producing a symmetry about the axis of the central chimney.
21. Palazzo Foscari, showing a reading of alternating *ABAB* elements, from left to right.



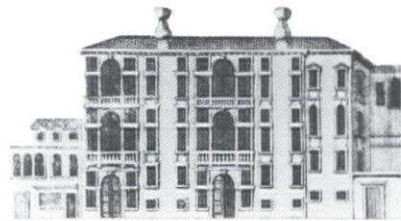
simple wholes, which when pulled apart reveal the collision of two types (Fig. 13). It can be read as a centralized *ABA* type (Fig. 14) or as a less centralized *ACA* type (Fig. 15).

In the Palazzo Surian there is no transformation of the original types. Instead of one original base, the building is merely the superimposition of two simple types. Since composition involves some form of transformation of a type to a specific form, such superimposition is merely another aspect of the composite.

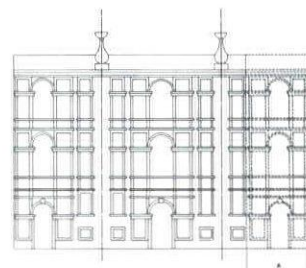
A third building, the Palazzo Foscari (Fig. 16) combines aspects of both the other buildings but suggests a third category which can tentatively be called extracompositional because it seems to be at the periphery of the idea of classical composition. Upon first appearance, it is a literal fragment of some complete real (as opposed to ideal) building that had existed as a unitary whole. This interpretation is possible because within a dominant and classical mode of thought when viewing a classical organization, it is normal to think in terms of classical unity and bilateral symmetry. Thus, the initial interpretation assumes that an end bay on the left was "cut off" to accommodate a later and larger adjacent building. Inherent in this interpretation is the idea that the building would have been something like the reconstruction in Figure 17. In this reading the two major arched elements with their two axes of symmetry suggest some form of original condition. In the eighteenth-century drawings of the building (Fig. 18), however, this is not the case. The building as it stands today is, except for minor details, as it existed then. In another reading a second symmetrical original or type form emerges. If the two dominant chimneys form two dual axes of symmetry, then an element composed of a third major arched opening flanked by small windows on either side (Fig. 19) can be added to the right to complete the "composition." In another reading, part of the end bay on the right (the line of vertical windows and its adjacent blank surface) can be added on the left to produce a symmetry about the axis of the central chimney (Fig. 20). If these were the only readings, there would be nothing more to command attention. Assuming that the Palazzo Foscari as built is the complete and original intention, that it is a fragment



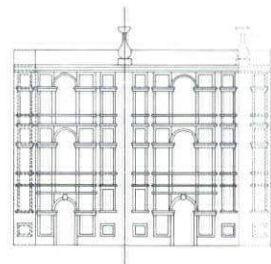
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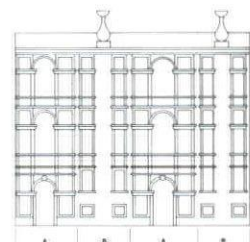
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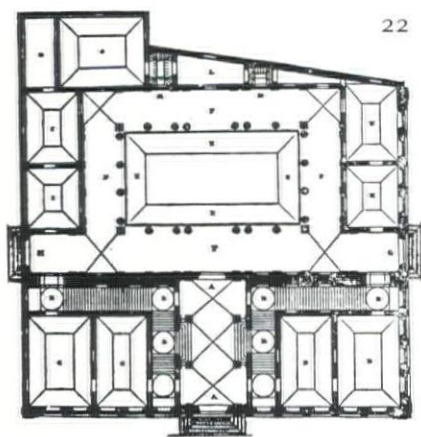
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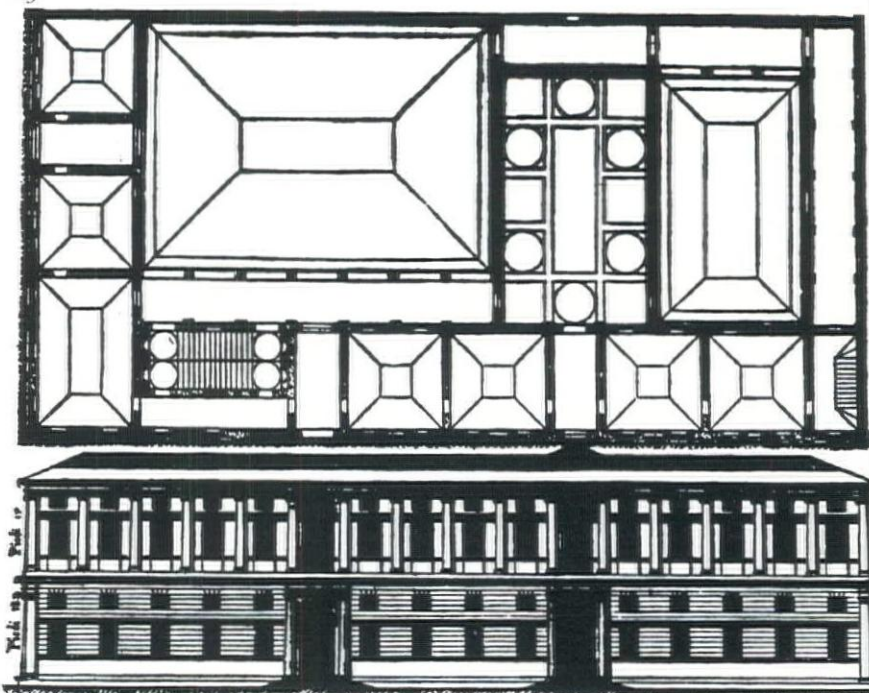
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22. Palazzo Strozzi, Florence (1602), by Vincenzo Scamozzi.  
 23. Fabrica Fino, Bergamo (1611), by Vincenzo Scamozzi.

23



only if one has recourse to a classical typology of simple origins, then it is necessary to search in the juxtapositions of existing elements for further readings which do not involve additions or subtractions and which are more pervasive. In one such interpretation the facade can be seen as alternating *ABAB* elements reading from left to right (Fig. 21). This reading forces the outside windows of the central element away from the inside windows so that they can be seen to join across a blank surface of the facade directly below the two chimneys, as a new *B* bay. Add or subtract one *B* or one *A* bay on either end, and the facade is symmetrical, producing a unity. However, such possible additions or subtractions are again not within the idea of completeness inherent in classical composition. The reading of *ABAB* is a reading of discrete successive units. The repetition of these units changes the facade from a compositional reading to reading as a process of succession. This idea of succession is neither precompositional nor composite. Rather, it suggests a third category of the not-classical, which is made more significant because the reading now has no recourse to an originating type.

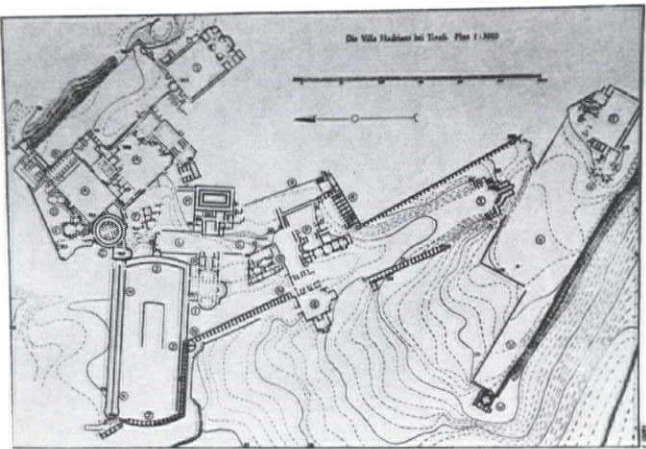
As long as the process of design refers back to classical types, there is a hierarchy of relationships. This hierarchy produces a preferred set of images and samenesses which leads composition to produce fixed and unitary objects and to discard, overlook, or reduce differences which in a classical context produce instability and change. That such preferences are part of a dominant cultural attitude can be seen in the late-eighteenth-century drawings of Antonio Vicentini whose *L'Admiranda Urbis Venetae* is a mirror of such an attitude.<sup>13</sup> These volumes, which purports to be a typological study, attempt to take many of the anomalous conditions of the Venetian palazzi and explain them as variations or transformations of classical types. The resulting plans and elevations are reductive as is the case in each palazzo discussed above.<sup>15</sup>

Underlying all such reductions is the idea that complex phenomena can be interpreted by simplification. Thus, the physical form of an architecture—the precise size, shape, number, and location of windows, doors, walls, and floors—takes on intentionality and, thus,

significance with respect to this simpler, more ideal or natural state to which they are presumed to be related and from which they are transformed.

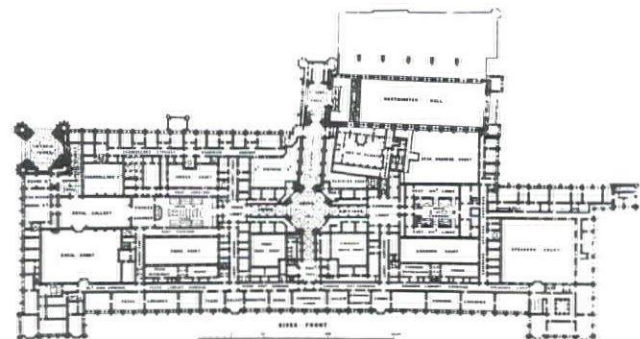
Classical composition presumes that any complex data present in a facade or a plan can be understood by a reversal of the process to some singular or binary ideal or natural model. The ideal guarantees and explains the complex transformations. Thus Vicentini's typological "reconstructions" are a "natural" or causal way of thinking of the Venetian palazzi. What is important to see in Palazzo Foscari is not just an initial asymmetry, a so-called contradiction of a classical unity, or a mere "complexity"—an either/or condition which refers to an ideal—but rather that it proposes another, latent, and alternative sensibility, which suggests a realm of potential rupture. Even in periods of past rupture, the models for the tabula rasa always have had a classical basis. Once there is no recourse to type, then the nature of the compositional process at work and the significance of the object are called into question. And in the present period of rupture these questions begin to suggest, from their former position at the periphery of the classical, *other* orders of being and *other* processes of making.

Thus, once this third category is proposed, other examples in history can be examined which do not have recourse to a simple type. This is seen in a comparison of two buildings of similar dates by Vincenzo Scamozzi, the Palazzo Strozzi of 1602 in Florence (Fig. 22) and the Fabrica Fino of 1611 in Bergamo (Fig. 23). They illustrate the distinctions between a classical plan (the result of a compositional process) and one which is extracompositional (the result of some *other* process). While there are many ways to interpret the Palazzo Strozzi, each explains the object with reference to a classical type. On the other hand, the Fabrica Fino, while using similar volumetric divisions (it may even contain the origins of Louis Kahn's idea of "space as structure"—an articulation of a series of contiguous volumes), has extracompositional qualities. There is no single center of gravity, no shifting axes of symmetry, no order of the whole. While this is not unusual in such complexes as Hadrian's villa (Fig. 24) or in the narrative scheme for the Houses of Parliament (Fig. 25) proposed



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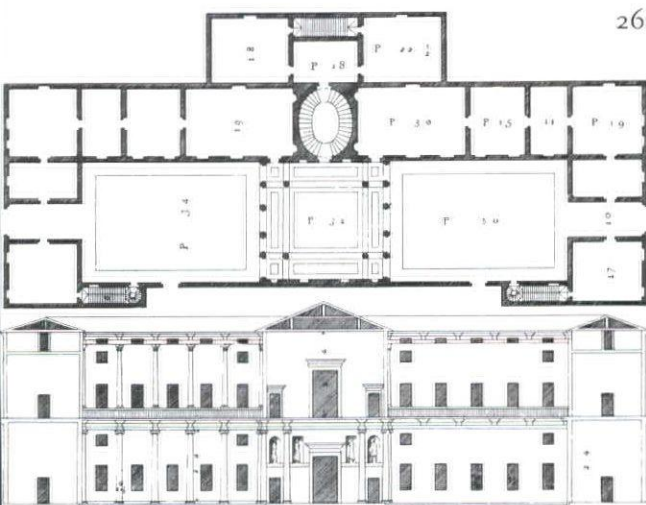
- 24. Hadrian's Villa.
- 25. Houses of Parliament Competition by Charles Barry.
- 26. Palazzo Della Torre by Andrea Palladio, showing alignment of window and door openings.



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by Charles Barry, it becomes anomalous but not arbitrary, in the context of what seems to be classical composition.

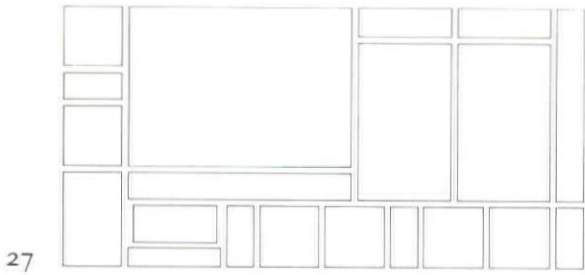
If in Palladio there is an ordering of volumes like beads on an invisible organizing string, and if in Louis Kahn there is a grid of servant and served spaces derived from the functionalist and technological shadow of the Beaux-Arts (which is also present, to a lesser degree, in the Le Corbusier of the Villa Garches), then the ordered volumetric relationships in the Fabrica Fino are neither Palladian, Beaux-Arts Academic, nor Corbusian. It is an entirely *other* order of gridded or interstitial space.



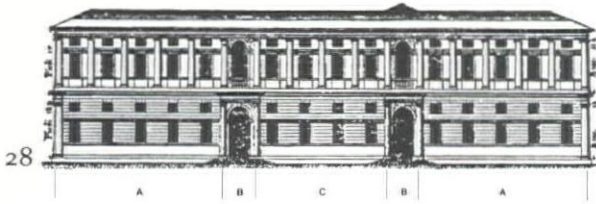
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Within classical formal analysis, Palladio's layered spaces are connected by the proximity and alignment of window and door openings (Fig. 26), and the *poché* of the walls define the negative or void spaces; Scamozzi's spaces in such a context become positive and volumetric, while the walls are the edges of the volumes rather than the containers (Fig. 27). In the entry facade (Fig. 28) two segments of space define double symmetrical axes of entry in the ABCBA symmetry. There are two sets of solid *A* bays on each end, two sets of single void *B* bays which contain the central set of four solid *C* bays. However, behind this symmetrical facade is an order of space which belies and even negates such a formal analysis. A hint of this is the little triangular projection on the roof line over the right entry. It is not a mere accident of drawing, or a functional modification, but a signal of what is to come on the interior.

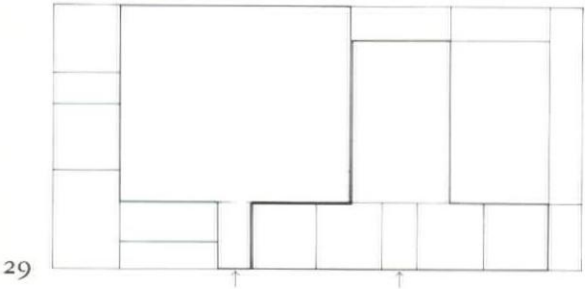
In plan, in front of the left and right entries are two partial symmetries which take the form of two interlocking tee-shaped elements (Fig. 29). The left entry is in the vertical segment of the tee; the right entry is in the horizontal segment. This is the first indication of this *other* order, understood by the following analysis: each time there is a search for classical similarities or sameness in shape, form, or number, something is confounded. In the samenesses of the Fabrica Fino there are always differences. For example, both major spaces have an antechamber, a row of columns, and a lozenge-shaped ceiling vault with a peripheral strip (Fig. 30) not seen in any of the other



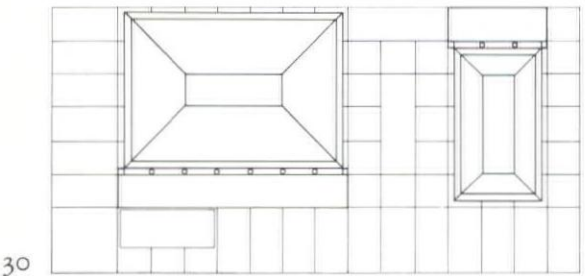
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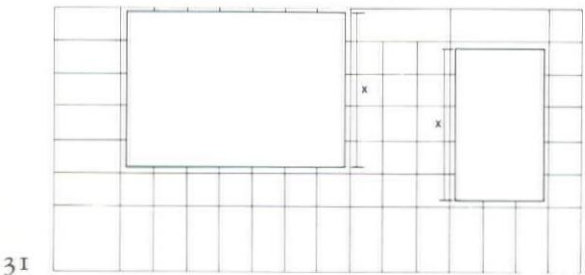
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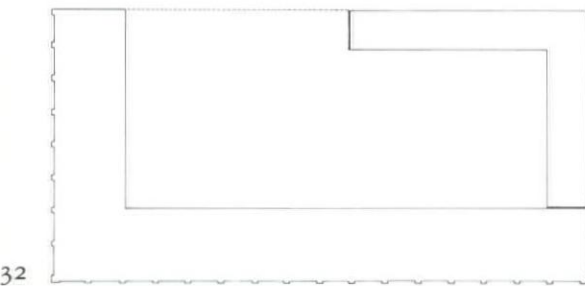
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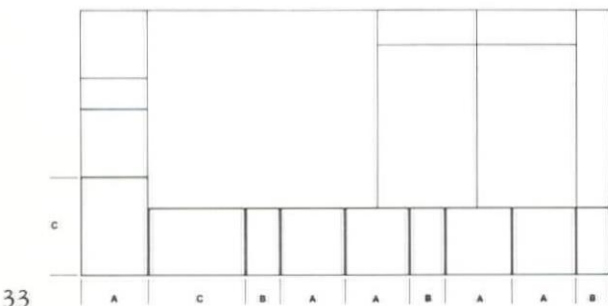
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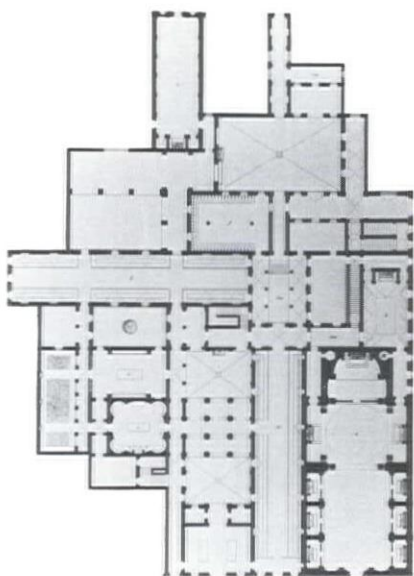
27. Fabbrica Fino, showing spaces as positive and volumetric and walls as the outer edge of the volumes.
28. Fabbrica Fino, showing *ABCBA* symmetry.
29. Fabbrica Fino, showing partial symmetries in the form of two interlocking "tee"-shaped elements
30. Fabbrica Fino, showing antechamber, row of columns, and lozenge shaped ceiling vault within the peripheral strip of both major spaces.
31. Fabbrica Fino, showing relationship of length to width of the two major spaces.
32. Fabbrica Fino, showing two dissimilar exterior bands.
33. Fabbrica Fino, showing irregularity in spatial alternation in front exterior band.

spaces. These samenesses are confounded by the fact that the entry to one is conceptually from the front, the other from the rear. Interestingly, the length of one is the same as the width of the other (Fig. 31).

There are also two different exterior bands of space (Fig. 32) which surround the two major spaces. These function as servant and served spaces, passage and arrival; they are marked by samenesses—central, square, vaulted, pavilionlike spaces punctuated by slots of rectangular, unvaulted spaces. One larger el-shaped band extends down the left of the building and across the front, and a second, smaller el-shaped band extends partially across the back and down the right. The left front band is marked by regular intervals of flat pilasters on the exterior as opposed to the right rear band, which is flat. However, this regularity on the left front is again denied by the order in the spaces behind the facade. The spaces begin in a regular alternation of one rectangular *B* bay and two square *A* bays. Reading from the right there is *BAABAAB* rhythm interrupted by a staircase in a *C* bay and by an anomalous bay at the bottom left-hand corner. This anomaly is read from the front as a square *A* bay, but from the left it is read as a rectangular *C* bay (Fig. 33). Thus, as in the Palazzo Foscari, the only reading of an order in these bands is that of an inconclusive succession of spaces. Such a reading denies the hierarchies of the classical for a sequential or successional order, which calls attention not to merely size differences between bay elements but rather to the interval, the implied void—that which has been left out—between elements. This alternating and inconclusive succession does not fall within the classical canon of symmetries and asymmetries, single or multiple axes. The idea that the object is incomplete and can be completed by addition of one bay or subtraction of another again derives from the classical preconception of an ideal image.

Whereas in the Venetian examples the buildings appear to be the composite of two or more types, transformations from some simpler base conditions, this is not the case in the Fabbrica Fino, which in its suspension of progressive time suggests another aspect of this third category. The plan is a series of jewel-like fragments frozen in motion and time, in a next

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34. Palazzo Pellegrino, showing complexity of interlocking and complementary axes.

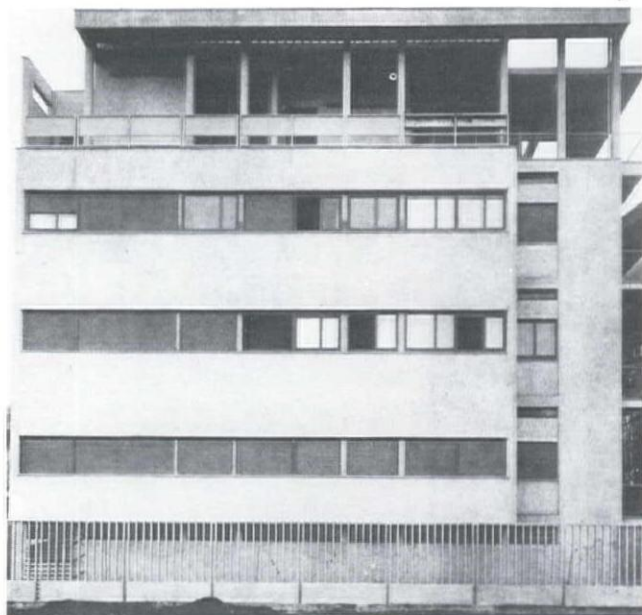


35. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, Como (1939), G. Terragni.

instant clicking into place in some equally unstable or incongruous condition. These fragments are neither arbitrary nor gratuitous. There is a strong sense of an immanent order which denies a reading of the plan as merely complex fragments. Equally, it is not a complexity which is a transformation of a classical unity, such as the interlocking and complementary axes of the plan of the Palazzo Pellegrino (Fig. 34). There is a centralizing, symmetrical, or stable order in the *Fabrica Fino*, which is only fragmentary and does not sustain an explanation of the entire building from a single or even multiple set of beginnings. It is only our will to see order as a transformation of a type form that causes us to see the whole or the pieces as a series of fragments. Instead these fragments suggest suspended "differences"—that the compositional process which controls them rather than being at the periphery of the classical may be at the center of some *other* order.

There is one final aspect of this third or extra-compositional category which can be seen in Giuseppe Terragni's Giuliani Frigerio apartment block of 1939 in Como.<sup>15</sup> It concerns a form of reading which is outside of the classical/modern canon. Initially, a modernist dialogue between implied and actual volume can be read, particularly on its north facade (Fig. 35). Neither reading is dominant enough to be clearly taken as the primary reference; volume and plane coexist ambiguously in an unresolved fashion. While a volumetric reading predominates from a frontal viewpoint, where the building appears more massive (Fig. 36), a planar reading predominates from the oblique viewpoint, where the open corners reveal a system of layered planes (Fig. 37). Such a modernist architect focuses attention on a shift from the classical architectural datum or reference plane—which provided a structure for the interpretation of an object by the observer—to a datum which acts internally to structure the incongruities of the object. However, it is not in the context of an internalized datum (one which is essentially modernist) that the apartment block becomes significant to this discussion, but rather when the building suggests an *other* form of reading, a condition exposed in the unresolved symmetries and asymmetries of the north facade.

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36. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, frontal view from which it appears more massive.

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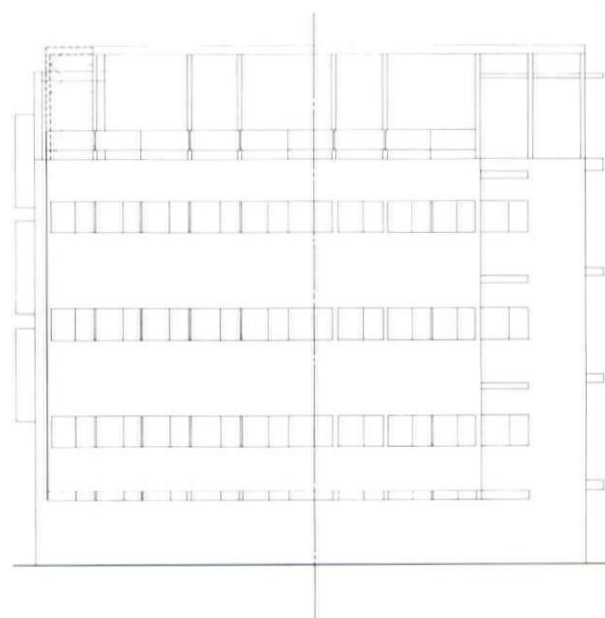
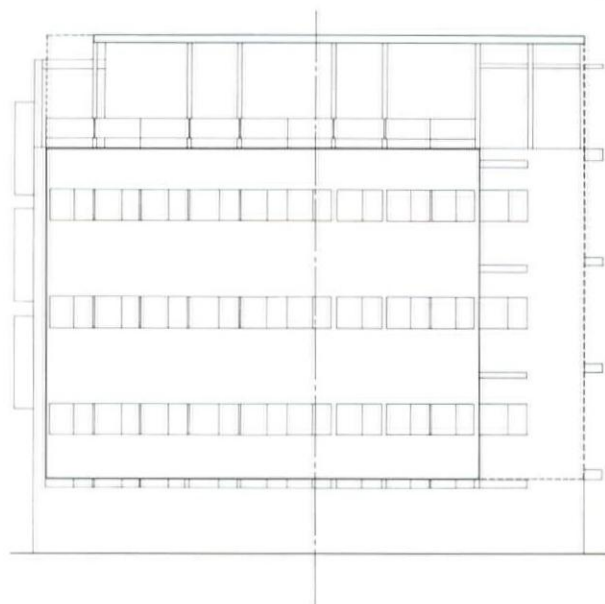


37. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, corner view from which a planar reading is revealed.

The asymmetric position of the projecting three-story volume first suggests a set of simple origins. In the front-back dimension, there is an alignment of the three-story volume with the forward edge of the bent frame. This suggests an original type with an axis of symmetry (Fig. 38). However, in the side-to-side dimension these two elements are not aligned. To produce an alignment the top frame can be extended to the left edge of the facade (Fig. 39). Now only the three-story volume is in an asymmetric position. A clue to its location can be found in the two anomalous *B* bays on the right. In one interpretation the three-story volume has been shifted one *B* bay to the left (Fig. 40). This interpretation gains validity when reading the three horizontal slots in the second from right *B* bay (Fig. 41), as the metaphorical tracks along which the three-story volume has been shifted one bay to the left. Obviously with a reverse movement, the three-story volume can be returned to a symmetrical position, thus covering up the slots and eliminating the anomalous *B* bay. This resolves the previous anomalies, but again suggests other anomalous readings in terms of classical interpretation. For example, the length of the horizontal windows at the base suggests another axis of symmetry as the order of a previous condition (Fig. 42). Then by adding a single *B* bay to the left, moving the bent frame one bay to the left and the projecting volume one bay to the right (Fig. 43), a symmetrical and stable original condition is obtained (Fig. 44), with an overall reading of *BBABABABB* (Fig. 45). All parts in this juxtaposition have been derived from a simple, stable, symmetrical condition. Thus, a more complex and less obvious process of transformation temporarily resolves the asymmetric conditions as first presented on the facade. However, there is another, more disturbing oscillation which is not resolved by recourse to a formal polarity of symmetry/asymmetry or plane/volume. It is indicated by the eccentric or incomplete bay system. Reading from left to right across the top, there is a *BABABABB* reading, where an *A* bay is slightly narrower than two *B* bays. It is the extra *B* bay on the right which is the important signal for an *other* form of reading.

Usually it is assumed that when a bay system is asymmetrical or incomplete, it is the result of the

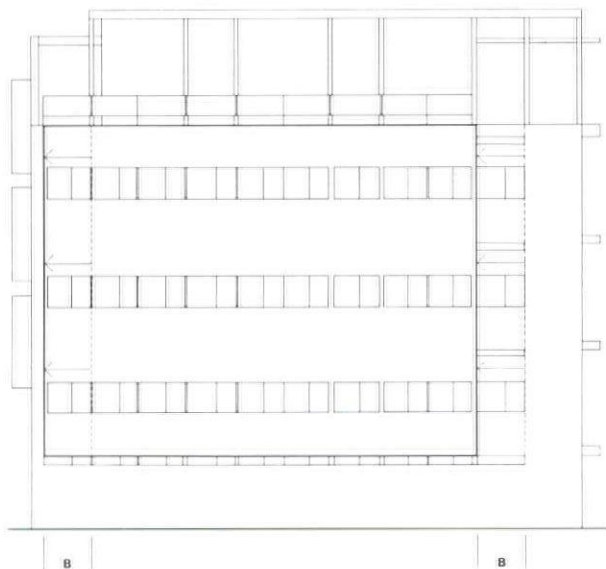
38. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, showing the projecting three-story volume as a possible base condition with its axis of symmetry.
39. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, showing extension of top frame to align with the left edge of the projecting volume.
40. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, showing shift of three-story volume one *B* bay to the left.
41. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, showing horizontal slots in second *B* bay on the right.
42. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, showing horizontal window at the base of the facade as another possible base condition.
43. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, showing addition of a single *B* bay to the left, producing a symmetrical condition.
44. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, showing symmetry produced by a shift of the bent frame one bay to the left and the projecting volume one bay to the right.
45. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, showing *BBABABABB* bay condition produced by the movement in Figure 44.



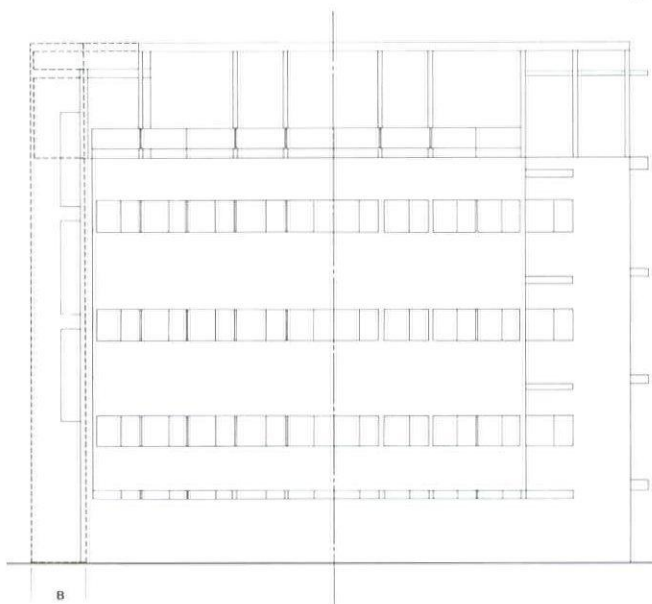
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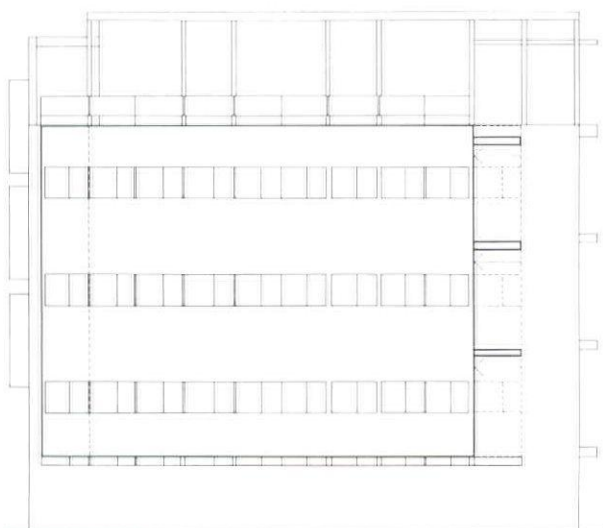
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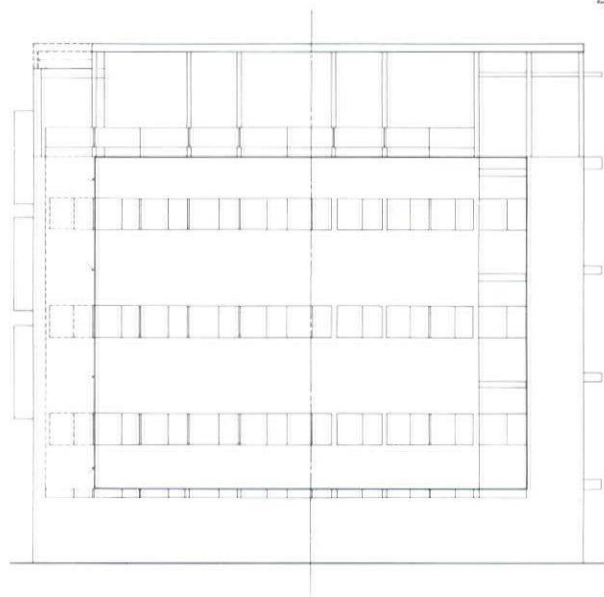
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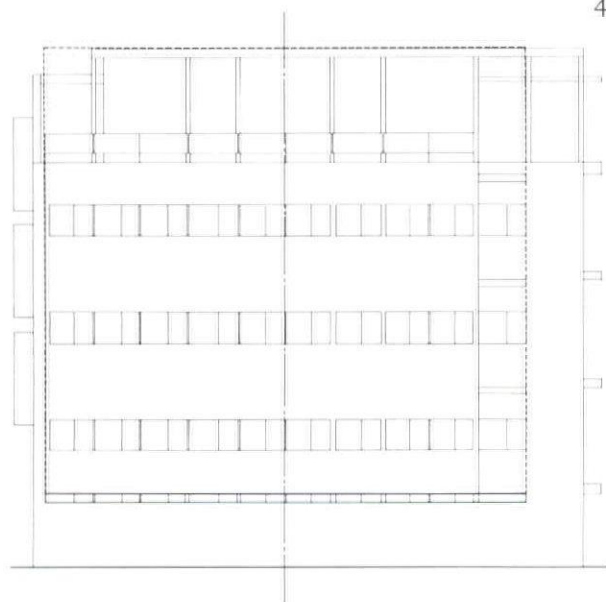
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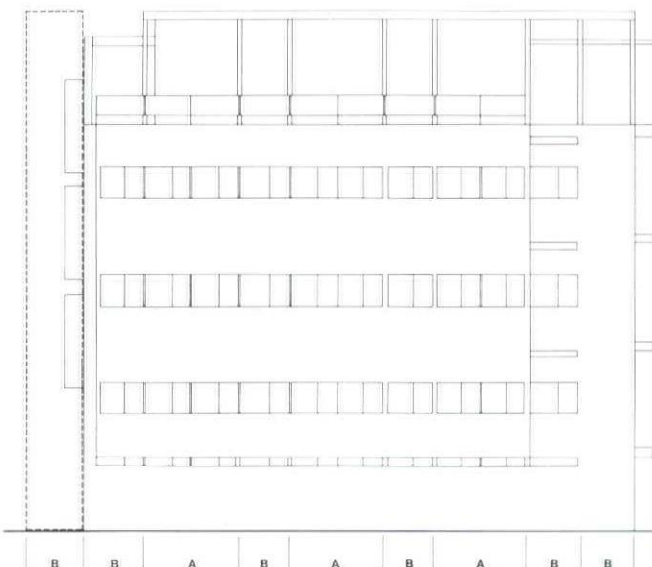
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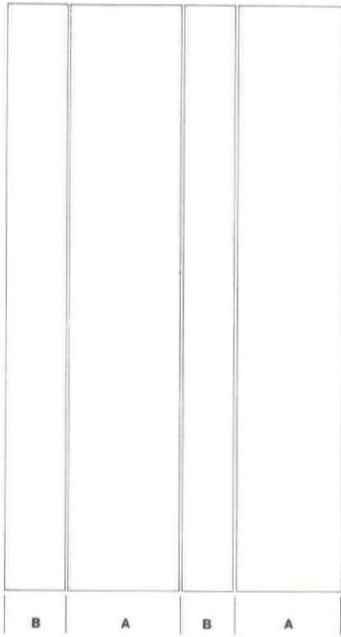


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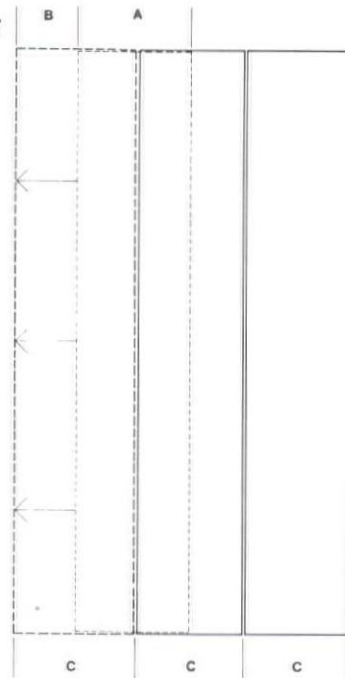


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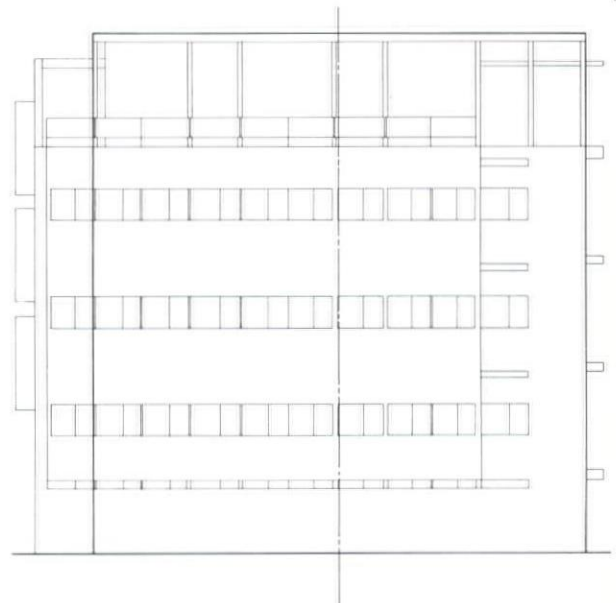
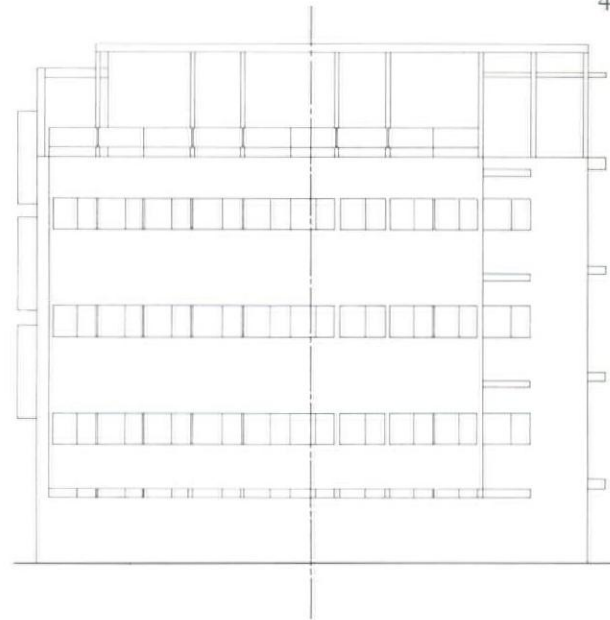


46. Showing *BABA* bay condition resulting from a single transformation.

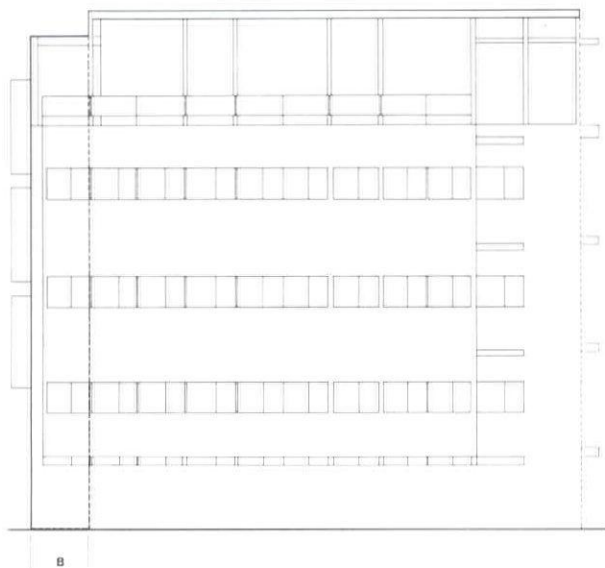


47. Showing *CCC* base condition.

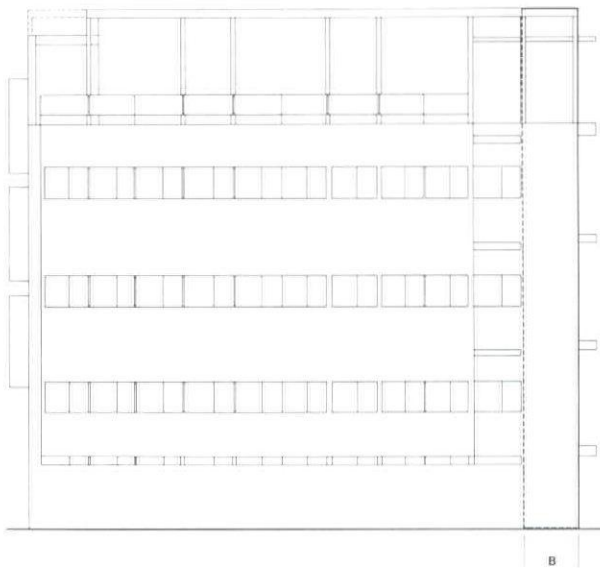
transformation of one or more stable type forms. For example, in the diagram (Fig. 46), the *BABA* alternation can be assumed to have resulted from a single transformation. For if the process is reversed and the *B* bay is shifted an *A* distance to the left, it produces an unambiguous and symmetrical *CCC* ideal type (Fig. 47). While it appears that the complex bay structure of the north facade of the Giuliani Frigerio apartment block can be explained in this way—as a composite of two overlapping systems which will disentangle to reveal a rather simple and stable original condition—this is not the case. First, the axis of symmetry (Fig. 48) through the real physical center of the facade does not engage any of the actual column or mullion lines. Moreover, there are further suggestions in the incomplete outline of the bent frame at the top of the facade that there are other axes of symmetry which could define other original states. For example, if the bent frame is the initial definition of a former ideal state, then it suggests an array of readings. First, the axis of symmetry is not the same as in the previous example (Fig. 49). Second, there is now an extra *B* bay, this time on the left (Fig. 50), not contained within the bent frame. This extra bay must be mentally brought back into the frame or read as an unaccounted-for addition to the original condition defined by the frame. Yet just under the horizontal part of the frame there is another asymmetry. It is now the rightmost or second *B* bay that becomes an anomaly in what would otherwise be an *ABABAB* alternation (Fig. 51). Thus, instead of collapsing a bay on the left, the option would be to shift the bent frame one bay to the right (Fig. 52). Now the frame is symmetrical in relationship to a regular *BABABAB* alternation below it, provided that the extra right *B* bay (Fig. 53) also can be mentally incorporated back into the facade (Fig. 54). This produces a *symmetrically* positioned bent frame at the top, yet a set of *alternating* bays across the facade immediately below it. Here, then, are two autonomous and incongruous readings; they are of a different order. One is classically symmetrical and defines composition; the other is linear and alternating and denies composition. The north facade of the Giuliani Frigerio apartment block is then the signal and the embodiment of an immanent object more complex and impure than its object presence; it opposes reduction or distillation into something



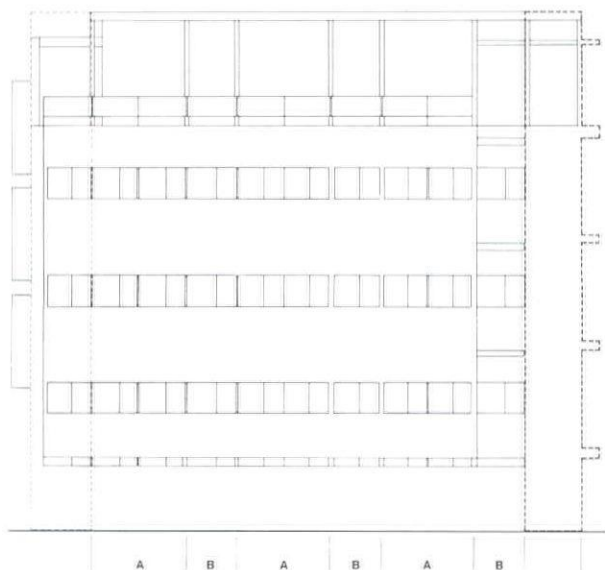
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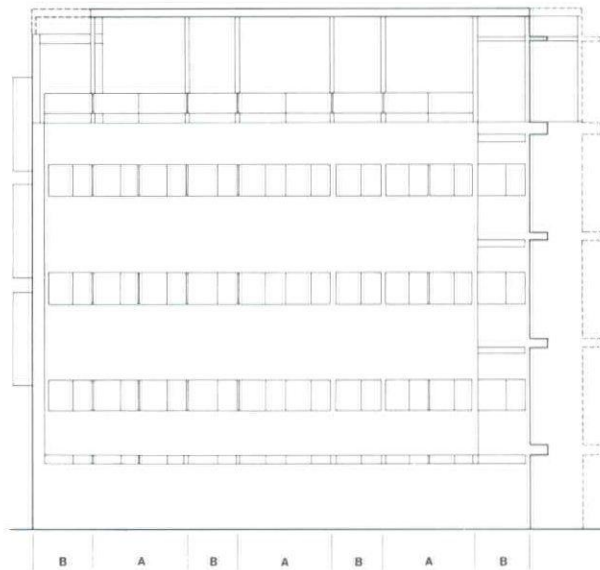
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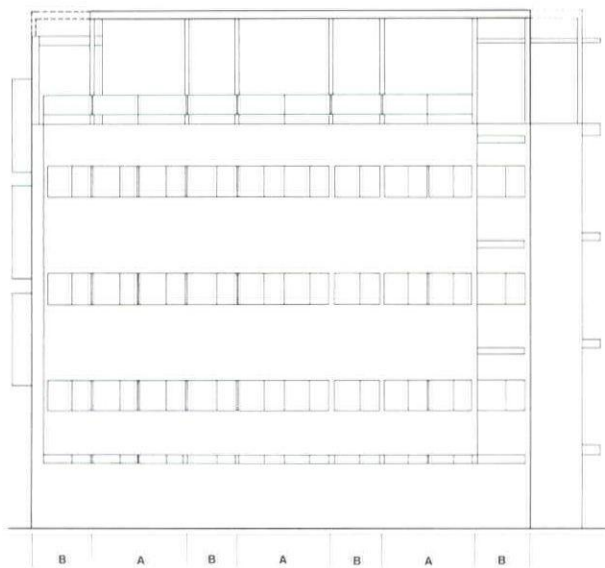
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48. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, showing the axis of symmetry through the real physical center.
49. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, showing alternative base condition as dominant proposed by a reading of the bent frame.
50. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, showing extra *B* bay on left not contained within the bent frame.
51. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, showing asymmetry resulting from the second or rightmost *B* bay.
52. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, showing another symmetry produced by a shift of the bent frame one bay to the right.
53. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, showing anomalous *B* bay on the right produced after the shift of Figure 52.
54. Giuliani Frigerio Apartment Block, showing the anomalous *B* bay incorporated back into the facade.

simpler. The apartment block never reaches a neutral or "zero" condition.

The original condition is as inconsistent and shifting as quicksand, making the object appear to be in flux, transition, or instability on the one hand and tending to a condition of stasis and simple geometry on the other, refusing a single interpretation in favor of a more complex condition. In the case of the north facade of the Giuliani Frigerio apartment block, there seems to be no stable or original condition from which such an internal history can either begin or be read. The object, as an initial state of complexity, and the process, as the will to simplify, are played out in the architecture; they endlessly celebrate a process which they cannot complete.

The *ABABAB* reading of the Palazzo Foscari had created the potential for a new system of reading, but in the context of a classical interpretation, it was an anomaly. The *ABABABB* reading of the facade of the Giuliani Frigerio apartment block, however, is not a mere anomaly of a modernist order suspended in time. It is already intentionally incomplete, even within a modernist system of reading. Whereas the modernist idea of dispersal, incongruity, and fragment is ultimately projected to return the system to closure, the Giuliani Frigerio apartment block is a set of fragments which is fundamentally incomplete. Each time a condition of origin is suggested visually, its resolution in the actual building is refuted. It would seem that a shift of bay here or volume there would indicate a single axis of symmetry, but when the mental move is in fact made, something else becomes unstable and suggests another axis of symmetry. These incongruent axes, in themselves, are a straightforward definition of the idea of difference; they signal the impossibility of a return to a type form. They represent the division of an object from itself. No longer does the vertebrate object represent the vertebrate nature of man. If the modernist object is alienated from its social setting, now this *other* object suggests an alienation from itself—from the former congruence of object and process. It is the ultimate *negation* of what in the classical and modern is a dialectical process concerning the relationship of a type form to a physical object.

In the periods of historical continuity, prior to the rupture of 1945, the extraclassical categories such as the ones proposed above are seen to be provisory and transitional; this is in the nature of historical processes. The Palazzo Foscari, the Fabrica Fino, and the Giuliani Frigerio apartment block all contained assumptions based on familiar elements such as bay relationships, symmetries, and so on. Yet they also contained relationships which seem to deviate from the accepted canon of a particular continuity. These deviations could occur at any time. This does not mean that they should or will occur. Yet now these peripheral or extracompositional phenomena, which had previously been seen as deviant, are fixed and mandatory. In the particular rupture of history today and the break with progressive time, what was formerly seen as aberrant now becomes symptomatic of this *other* sensibility.

It is possible now to look at these extracompositional aspects and see them as something else. It is here that the idea of decomposition suggests itself. If in the past architecture was classically conceived as beginning at ground zero—a type form—then composition and transformation can be characterized as plus vectors from this zero point. In decomposition, there is no type form, there is no ground zero. If anything, the process of decomposition is a minus vector returning to a ground zero which is now in the object. This minus vector is, in one sense, the negative of the classical idea of composition. But it is also something more than a mere negativity. It is no longer possible to return the object back to an acceptable canon or press it forward to an impossible future. It is not immediately understandable how the object has been derived, nor can there be any projection into the future as to what its ultimate destiny might be. Rather, the process of decomposition sets in motion its own historical judgment, this time as a fiction as opposed to a real history, because in an irretrievable past and a futureless present, the object has no past or future history, only a present condition as a suspension of past and future. Decomposition manifests the preserved traces of a process which has no ideal past and a future that is only in the present. In a futureless present—an immanent immanence—there is a removal

of the extrinsic, conventional identity and significance from the object.

In the classical object, significance was possible at the most fundamental level of formal integers, precisely because of a relationship to a type form. In decomposition, since there is no type form, there is no relationship between the object and this something else which formerly allowed for significance to accrue. In this sense decomposition now requires a suspension of our previous modes of deciphering.

In the past, objects in their passive duration have held significance precisely because there was a future which could endure linear temporal analysis. Without such a future the object no longer holds significance in the traditional sense. Since the capacity of meaning to be inherent in an object is fundamental to the idea of the classical, when such a possibility is denied it becomes the ultimate negation of the classical.

The idea of *decomposition* as the negative of the classical now allows the north facade of the Giuliani Frigerio apartment block to be read as precisely what it is: Instead of being an extreme or peripheral category of the classical/modernist canon, it is now the exception which becomes the departure for this *other* order. Even in the context of this one building, the process of decomposition is something far less easy to discern than composition but is, in fact, of potentially greater significance to the present condition of man.

Decomposition becomes clear when one considers that the Giuliani Frigerio apartment cannot be read as a linear sequence in time. There is no order to its views. They are atemporal; they do not add up; they are not simply the sum of a recognizable series of geometric or spatial conditions. While classical architecture is understood as one moves through space and through an accumulation of a number of perceptions initially ordered by an architect, the Giuliani Frigerio apartment block is about the act of passing in, out, and around the building in a random, unconscious way, each time recording the information unconsciously in a memory that is totalizing. But as the architecture is no longer complete but rather a series of fragments—objective differences—the role of the individual is no longer

discursive. The individual is no longer called upon to explain, as was the case from the time of Alberti, the actual experience of architecture. Instead, the architecture exists outside his experience. It explains itself. But this alone would define a modernist object.

Decomposition goes further in that it proposes a radically altered process of making from either modernism or classicism. Decomposition presumes that origins, ends, and the process itself are elusive and complex rather than stable, simple or pure, that is, classical or natural. However, decomposition is not merely the manifestation of the arbitrary, the intuitive, or the irrational or the making of something simple from something complex. By proposing a process which at root is the negative or inverse of classical composition, the process uncovers (or deconstructs) relationships inherent in a specific object and its structure which were previously hidden by a classical sensibility. Rather than working from an original type toward a predictable end, decomposition starts with a heuristic approximation of end, an end which is immanent within the new object/process. The result is another kind of object, one which contains a nonexistent future as opposed to an irretrievable past. In one sense it is making by analysis, but not the traditional classical formal analysis.

Whereas an analysis of composition and transformation tends to cement objective relationships between parts, analysis in decomposition suspends these relationships. It is no longer useful to analyze the bay and the order of bays—the main elements in a classical typology. The bay now becomes merely a counter in a process of voids and differences. As in the *Fabrica Fino*, the object or nature of the object resides in that process which constitutes its differences—the implied voids between bays. It is a nature now grounded in process, not in being; it is no longer based on the substance of the object. In decomposition the object is no longer identical to a substance. It now resides in how the elements are made and kept, that is, in their processes. It is a form of autonomous making, different from that of modernism or, for that matter, classicism.

If, in the past, nature was summoned to suggest

continuity, now the products of nature have begun to create conditions where this continuity is coming to an end. What was previously autonomous and consistent is now no less autonomous and no less consistent. Decomposition proposes an autonomy that is as universal as the classical or the modern. It is just a part of a different universe. It is a new naturalness now in an unnatural state.

The removal of the identity and significance from objects signals a uselessness—a futility in terms of its former conditions of being. If the nature of objects has changed, then typical propositions which formerly were a manifestation of that nature can no longer be represented in the object but only replicated by it. The futile object and the process of decomposition are no longer arbitrary objects and anomalous processes, nor a mutation of classicism. In this new time they may have become, albeit accidentally, the destiny of architecture today.

1. This should be compared to Franco Rella's opening sentence in the introduction to *Il Dispositivo Foucault* (Cluva Libreria Editrice, 1977, p. 7). He uses history as discontinuous (*la storia è discontinua*). The difference between the negative discontinuous and the not-something is important to the following discussion.
2. Leoni Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, rev. ed., 1966, p. 67–85. It should be noted that the particular aspects of Alberti's definition being invoked here concern circumscription, that is, the nature of the units or the place an object occupies, and composition, or the rule or order by which the parts fit together, and last, the requirement that members ought to have certain things in common such as size, function, kind, and color.
3. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, Vintage, pp. 344–348.
4. Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style*, Norton, 1972, p. 171.
5. Transformation as a modernist process has been characterized by Francesco Dal Co: "it's design gathering the traces of a now private order of its own original perfection." See Francesco Dal Co, "Notes Concerning the Phenomenology of the Limit in Architecture," *Oppositions* 23 (1981), p. .
6. This differs from Robert Jay Lifton's idea that "unlike earlier imagery—even that associated with such catastrophes of the middle ages—the danger comes from our own hand, from man and his technology. The source is not God or nature." See "The Psychic Toll of the Nuclear Age," *New York Times Magazine*, 26 September, 1982, pp. 52–66.
7. The term *immanence* is used here in the Kantian sense of immanence as opposed to transcendence (see *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. ). The term *immanence* as it is used here speaks of a latent but present reality of an object in its presence without concern for its future or its past.
8. As presently understood in architecture, the term *postmodern* (usually with a capital P and a capital M) is a kind of one-to-one reaction to modernism. If modernism was seen to be abstract, then *postmodern* is literal; if modernism was elitist, then *postmodern* is popular. The term as it is used here is not so much a style as it is a fact of time, a period that defines another sensibility outside the condition of modernism. Its use here is both polemical and tentative. It is polemically intended to open up and free a term that has been until now occupied by the reaction to modernism. It is a tentative term in that it may not adequately define the rupture that separates the present sensibility from modernism. However, since this sensibility will be seen to be also active from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, it can be argued for the moment that any temporal prefix, such as post-*anything*, is not useful for this discussion.
9. The negative aspect of post-modernism, as used here, is more closely related to the discussion in "Re:Post," by Hal Foster, *Parachute*, 26 (Spring, 1982), pp. 11–15. This negative is fundamentally different from Francesco Dal Co's use of the term. Dal Co says the term *classical* has become "the negative backbone of contemporary developments in architecture." For him it is not the classical that has changed but rather its relationship to contemporary architecture. What is being proposed here is that it is the compositional processes (and not the relationship of the classical to contemporary architecture) that have been changed and, in a sense, inverted to model an idea of the contrapositive. Francesco Dal Co, op. cit., p. .
10. Herbert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1982, p. 19.
11. The idea of the negative proposed here, while similar to that of Manfredo Tafuri (see *Heterotopia* and Piranesi *The Sphere and Labyrinth*), MIT Press, 1984) contains another idea. It is more of a heuristic approximation of a contrapositive that will be argued is immanent within any object. Thus it is outside of the traditional metaphysical dialectical use of the term negative. It is not either inversion or against something, but rather it is a something other within a something without being the something; the idea here being that something other has been covered up by our need to read positivity as a dominant order.
12. *Decomposition* as a term may only be a heuristic approximation of what is actually intended. In the first case it must be distinguished from the literal use of the term in the sense of something actually decomposing. Second, decomposition is meant to suggest the contrapositive of composition in the sense that it is cited above. That is, it is something latent or immanent within the process of composition (thus it is *not* composition). It is used in the nonmetaphysical dialectical sense that Derrida uses in his idea of *différance*. The idea of composition presented here differs substantially from that proposed in my article in *Architecture and Urbanism*, January 1980, or in my book *House X*, Rizzoli, New York, 1982. For a more detailed analysis of an aspect of the decompositional process in a synthetic, as opposed to an analytic, context, see my book *House X*, op. cit.
13. This is a title of a three-volume collection of drawings by Antonio Visentini. The Visentini drawings used here are from Elena Bassi's *Palazzi di Venezia*, La Stamperia di Venezia Editrice, Venezia, 1976.
14. What is interesting about the Visentini drawings is that their reductive quality does not always mean that there is something taken away, that there is something less than the actual construction. For example, see the Palazzo Labia, in Bassi, *ibid.*, p. 245. In each case, through addition or subtraction, the actual is made to conform to something that more closely resembles a classical or ideal type.
15. It should be noted that this discussion of the north facade of Giuliani Frigerio apartment block differs substantially from my text in *Perspecta* 13/14, 1978. For a more complete discussion of this building, which has been passed over by current historians of the period, see my forthcoming book *Giuseppe Terragni: Transformations, Decompositions, and Critiques*, M.I.T. Press, 1984.



Front, left to right: Aldo Rossi, Carlo Aymonimo, Paolo Portoghesi, Mario Ridolfi.  
Behind, left to right: Costantino Dardi, Vittorio Savi, Claudio D'Amato.

# Fifteen Years after the Publication of *The Architecture of the City* by Aldo Rossi

## The Contribution of Urban Studies to the Autonomy of Architecture

Claudio D'Amato

Translated by Ellen Shapiro

### Introduction

It would not be bold to state that the events we have lived through since the middle of the 1960s represent a historic turning point in architectural culture.<sup>1</sup>

If we were to use a precise formula to indicate this turn of events, we could say that *architecture has returned to the affirmations of its statute. Or, an autonomous conception of architecture is reaffirming itself*—despite great difficulties and contrasts. In other words, architects have rediscovered the specificity of architecture and its laws. They have abandoned interdisciplinary myths and no longer believe that architecture is born from the marriage of interests between the analysis of functions and the solids of Euclidean geometry.<sup>2</sup>

The history of the last twenty years is the history of a concerted effort aimed at the liberation from all the dogmatisms, inhibitions, and prohibitions inherited from the sclerosis of the modern movement. It is the history of the reaction to the processes of homologation primed by the International style and, on the contrary, of the affirmation of the right to individual expression.

In response to the old and worn-out hypothesis of a universal language sent from above, architects are now answering with a new and higher form of internationalism, which begins by considering the entire history of architecture, not just its parts (as fascinating as they might be), and which redeems national cultural patrimonies and respects the cultures of different peoples and the collective memory.

The new state of architectural culture appears today as a collection of highly individual contributions, among which we can sometimes find both significant tangencies and violent opposition. These contributions aim in any case at the conquest of the disciplinary "center" of architecture and consist of many proposed projects, few built projects, and a great effort toward theoretical reestablishment. Architects are now

discovering that they can no longer delegate the task of defining "norms of behavior" to critics. Within this fascinating picture, Rossi's theoretical and design production is among the most important. In this essay only the theoretical aspect of his work and, as a further limit to our field of analysis, only his specific contribution to urban studies will be considered. The originality of this work will be demonstrated by relating it to other significant contributions, all placed within the broader theme of autonomy in architecture, of which urban studies constitutes a significant, but not exhaustive, part.

### The Culture of Urban Analysis and *The Architecture of the City*

Since the second half of the 1960s, more and more attention has been given to the analysis of the city as a fact of architecture. Slowly but systematically, a real culture of urban analysis came into being in the 1970s, different from all previous studies on the subject.

This culture began to question the legitimacy of the "objects of the city" being dealt with by urban planners, those professional figures who arose during the progressive abstraction of the modern movement. Now, in fact, we are faced with the crisis of the instruments of analysis and proposition (the functional reading of the former, zoning in the latter) and especially with the abnormal growth of the city and its absence of quality. As a result, we feel the need to restore the study and control of urban growth to the domain of architecture. In addition, since attention has been given to the quality of urban spaces themselves, studies on the city have stirred up a debate on architecture that suffered the same contradictions resulting from the exhaustive experience of the modern movement.

The fundamental contributions to this culture of urban analysis were made in Italy. The text that synthesizes those contributions in an original way and serves as a new point of departure is Aldo Rossi's *The Architecture of the City*, first published in 1966.<sup>3</sup> The book represents the conclusion of a long *iter* of reflections and studies illustrating the entire range of his theoretical thinking.<sup>4</sup>

In dealing with Italian architecture produced before the publication of the book, Rossi demonstrates the critical continuity of a store of ideas and studies that had resisted the penetration of the ideologies and practices of the modern.<sup>5</sup>

Rossi himself makes the clearest statement about his contribution (and therefore that of the successive developments of the "Italian school") and about the results reached up to that time: "Although all of the students of the city have stopped short of a consideration of the structure of urban artifacts, many have recognized that beyond the elements they had enumerated there remained the *âme de la cité*, in other words, the *quality* of urban artifacts. French geographers, for example, concentrated on the development of an important descriptive system, but they failed to exploit it to conquer this ultimate stronghold. Thus, after indicating that the city is constituted as a totality and that this totality is its *raison d'être*, they left the significance of the structure they had glimpsed unexamined."<sup>6</sup>

In making a critical judgment on *The Architecture of the City* fifteen years after its publication, we are helped by the fact that a great number of its themes have been enlarged upon and challenged in a lively architectural debate and are, by now, an integral part of its patrimony. Parallel to the development of those themes is the development of Rossi's design work, which constantly casts light on those ideas and defends them from the often reductive interpretations of his followers.

It is no exaggeration to state that *The Architecture of the City* is one of the texts that has had the greatest effect on the architectural culture of the new generations. This is true not only with respect to the contents of the book but also with regard to its means of expression, which began a "literary" mode, at least in Italy. Among the important elements of the extraordinary success of the book are its often prophetic prose and tone (see, for example, the repeated use of the first person, the unraveling of the argument in closely linked and consequential clauses, the clarity of the initial assumptions and theoretical references). These elements

alone cannot, however, explain the real reasons behind its success.

We must look for these reasons, instead, in Rossi's having singled out an area of investigation with clearly defined boundaries; having gathered together the threads of an architectural argument that had been scattered, interrupted, and shattered to the limits of humiliation; having given dignity back to it; and having contributed to restoring security to a generation of architects who were "refusing their fathers" (the by now sterile teaching derived from the modern movement and who had not yet found their way.

For historical reasons Aldo Rossi, especially in Italy, played a more decisive role than other figures who in that period confronted the great themes of the redefinition of the discipline from different angles and hypotheses.

In Italy, despite apparent contradictions, the central theme of autonomy emerged clearly, following the routes of a rather complex cultural geography. Mention should be made of the great debate that developed around the texts of Galvano della Volpe and the theme of "organic complexity"; the decisive role played by the widespread study of the work of Louis Kahn; and the extraordinary influence of the books by Emil Kaufmann on the architecture of the Enlightenment and by Rudolph Wittkower on the architecture of humanism.<sup>7</sup>

Writing this history constitutes a summary of the formation of the consciousness of autonomy in Italian architecture of the post-modern movement.

While in Rome, with its more traditional culture, architects concentrated primarily on the architectonic specific and on the composition in itself, in Milan the entire group that formed around *Casabella* when Rogers was editor followed more diversified disciplinary interests.<sup>8</sup> In fact, during this period, in 1963, right after the end of Rogers's tenure at *Casabella* (of which Rossi had been an editor), Rossi made his choice toward reestablishment.

### The Formation of the Theses of *The Architecture of the City*

The years between 1963 and 1965 were decisive for the formation of the theses that would later be brought together systematically in *The Architecture of the City*.

In 1963, Aldo Rossi was assistant to Ludovico Quaroni in the Experimental Course in City Planning of the Adriano Olivetti Foundation, held in Arezzo. Rossi discussed this experience in his introduction to Ludovico Quaroni's *La Torre di Babele*,<sup>9</sup> referring indirectly to the content of those lessons.

That meeting left an important mark on Rossi's thought, enriching and enlarging it. It is not by chance that in 1967, a year after *The Architecture of the City* was published, Rossi explained: "Here I risk overlapping matters that are not entirely part of Quaroni's intentions, but rather a reflection of my reading of this text. On the other hand, a work always creates 'correspondences.'" <sup>10</sup> The nucleus of Quaroni's teaching concerned first of all the complex and unitary character of the city as an architectural fact and then the dialectical relationship between architectural object and the city itself, in which the object emerges and acquires "*life and history, and it is* 'contradicted by the very life which makes it possible, like the image of the colorful, bustling, bawling merchants among the columns of the Temple of Jerusalem.'" <sup>11</sup>

Quaroni's teaching also involved architects' directly assuming responsibilities that compete in architectural culture, with regard to the degradation of the modern city, without looking for extenuating circumstances in politics, building speculation, and so on.

At this point the criticism of the architectural culture of the 1960s arose, along with the need for a general reestablishment of the discipline and, above all, the need for the recomposition of the false dichotomy that was then affirming itself between architecture and urban planning that has unfortunately been deepening in the increasingly marked specialization of roles. In this regard, Quaroni has made an important contribution to the theoretical reconciliation of the two terms, which by that time seemed opposites: even from these hypotheses,

and in this way, Rossi has succeeded in getting to the heart of the problem, where "the meaning of the city" is inherent, enlarging the conceptual confines of the architectural object, until all urban construction is covered. It naturally follows that any correct discussion in this direction must take into account the totality of the city not only in space but in time as well; that is, the history of the city cannot be left out of consideration. "For Quaroni, the city of the past is therefore not just the image of a more beautiful city, but also a reference point of architecture." <sup>12</sup>

From 1964 to 1966, Aldo Rossi continued his teaching activity, first in Venice and then in Milan, holding the professorship of the course *Caratteri Distributivi degli Edifici*. During that time, and more or less all over Italy, this subject—a "modern innovation on the model of *Caratteri Stilistici*"—was based on the mechanical study of functions, on a more rational distribution of space in housing, and on the practical organization of the house and the most important building types.

In Venice, however, the situation was quite different; there, the echo of the extraordinary teaching of Saverio Muratori was still in the air. <sup>13</sup> In 1950 Muratori had been called to the chair of *Caratteri Distributivi* at the Architecture School of Venice. He remained in that post until 1954, when he was called to take over the chair of *Composizione Architettonica* at the University of Rome Architecture School.

During his four years in Venice Muratori achieved extraordinary results in this course, starting from an original critique of contemporary architectural culture "in order to avoid the erroneous break, where, among technical disciplines abandoned because of an objective aprioristic obsession, all official teaching of the day falls prey to the most dry and abstract technicism; and historical-critical disciplines, because of analogous and opposed subjectivist apriorism, fall prey to the no less abstract and sterile estheticizing nonsense." <sup>14</sup>

During this time he also succeeded in "closing into a system a concept of organicity able to give an adequate answer to the problems of technique as style, of the type and building fabric as organism, and of the urban environment as a work of art." <sup>15</sup>

These investigations constituted a secure reference point for the entire group then forming around Carlo Aymonino (the Gruppo Architettura, to which Rossi belonged). In 1963, Aymonino was called to Venice to take over Muratori's course.<sup>16</sup>

Between 1964 and 1965 the Gruppo Architettura was involved in an intense study of the central theme of the relationships between urban morphology and building typology.<sup>17</sup> Despite the acceptance of theses of a common base, the positions in the group obviously reflected individual personalities. Massimo Scolari has correctly observed that Aldo Rossi is in "clear scientific agreement" with Muratori's ideas, even if Rossi's acceptance of them is "ideologically ambiguous."<sup>18</sup> The two theoretical positions have extremely different results: Muratori's investigations end up at a deterministic vision in which the city, in the course of its history, develops its own unique individuality (a sort of a priori individuality). For Aldo Rossi, permanences (whether they are typological or are the monuments themselves) represent the driving force of an urban dynamic whose outcome can never be taken for granted. It is exactly this dialectical process that makes possible the invention of the city in time.

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### The Theoretical Foundations of *The Architecture of the City*

*The Architecture of the City* is articulated in four parts: the first treats the problems of classification and description (typological problems); the second analyzes the structure of the city by parts; the third discusses the architecture of the city and urban history; the fourth, the urban dynamic and "politics" as choice. From a certain theoretical standpoint, all the themes indicate the crucial points of the autonomy of architecture, seen from the particular perspective of the architecture-city relationship. "This relationship constitutes a basic hypothesis of this work, and one that I will analyze from various viewpoints, always considering buildings as moments and parts of the whole that is the city."<sup>19</sup> With regard to the argument then at the center of the debate about the opposition between architecture and city

planning, Rossi openly not only favors the unity of the two terms but goes even further, directing the discussion within strictly "disciplinary" limits. Here, in fact, the city is considered as architecture itself: not a simple "sum" of buildings, but a collective built object with its own history.

This history is constructed in time according to a precise aesthetic intentionality. The "theory of permanences" is extremely important from this point of view: in fact, what Aldo Rossi calls aesthetic intentionality is nothing more than the interpretive answer that the works of entire generations of architects have given to the aesthetic solicitations deriving from the monuments (permanences) that interpret the *genius loci* to its maximum: "the dynamic process of the city tends more to evolution than preservation, and . . . in evolution monuments are not only preserved but continuously presented as propelling elements of development."<sup>20</sup> The condition of the *locus solus*, of the unicity of the site, is one of the bases of Rossi's discussion on the individuality of urban artifacts. This discussion of the autonomous character of architecture and of the formal nature of the city clarifies a whole series of equivocations of a functional nature. "I believe that any explanation of urban artifacts in terms of function must be rejected if the issue is to elucidate their structure and formation. . . . Thus, one thesis of this study, in its effort to affirm the value of architecture in the analysis of the city, is the denial of the explanation of urban artifacts in terms of function. I maintain, on the contrary, that far from being illuminating, this explanation is regressive because it impedes us from studying forms and knowing the world of architecture according to its true laws."<sup>21</sup>

On the one hand, architecture has value for what it succeeds in explaining as architecture, and not from the functions it serves; in speaking, of the Palazzo della Ragione in Padua, for example, Rossi says that in its presence "one is struck by the multiplicity of functions that a building of this type can contain over time and how these functions are entirely independent of the form. At the same time, it is precisely the form that impresses us; we live it and experience it, and it in turn structures the city."<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, as a consequence of this "indifference to function" the great themes of the

"meaning" of architecture and the urban places that belong to collective memory manifest themselves. The city itself is the place of collective memory; and the collective memory, understood as the organic whole of the great ideas that have run through and confirmed the city, becomes the guiding light of the entire urban structure.

Through the collective memory, the urban structure intentionally develops its own ideas of the city. In this sense, the city is always its own purpose.

The "idea" that each city has of itself is the guarantee of its continuity. It always represents the union between its past and its future; it has the same role that memory does in the lives of each person. This idea is guarded by the institutions citizens create. And through their specific ways of operating, institutions choose the image of the city in time. This is what Aldo Rossi means when he says that the city itself is its own purpose.

In the contextual and conscious passage of judgment that presides over the human creation par excellence lies the richness and unexpectedness of its choices, "and its mystery is perhaps above all to be found in the secret and ceaseless will of its collective manifestations."<sup>23</sup> The great and fascinating theory that emerges from *The Architecture of the City*, while it is a specific way of reading the city and interpreting urban artifacts, contains the bases of a theory of design to which reference is constantly and indirectly made.

Some time after the appearance of the first edition of *The Architecture of the City*, Aldo Rossi focused completely on the passage from the analytic to the propositional phase of the reading, elaborating the "theory of the analogous city." His exposition, which takes off from the now famous description of Canaletto's painting of Venice, appears in the introduction to the second edition of the book and in the essay of that same year on the cities of the Veneto.<sup>24</sup>

The theory of the analogous city explains the way we read and reinvent every city through its history whenever we are faced with the problem of designing a building. If we are aware of what ties architecture not only to

the real city but to the "idea of itself" that each city holds, then we will be able to make our compositional choices in a less arbitrary form. For Rossi, the theory of the analogous city represents the moment of synthesis between the theory of choices and the phases of reading the city. In this sense, it connects up with strictly compositional reasoning, which is always mentioned in *The Architecture of the City* but is never really developed.

"Although this book is about the architecture of the city, and considers the problems of architecture in itself and those of urban architecture taken as a whole to be intimately connected, there are certain problems of architecture which cannot be taken up here; I refer specifically to *compositional problems*. These decidedly have their own autonomy. They concern architecture as a composition and this means that they also concern style.

"Architecture, along with composition, is both contingent upon and determinative of the constitution of urban artifacts, especially at those times when it is highly rational, comprehensive, and transmissible—in other words, when it can be seen as a *style*. It is at these times that the possibility of transmission is implicit, a transmission that is capable of rendering a style universal."<sup>25</sup>

This nucleus of ideas, clearly delineated but never developed in Rossi's text, was taken up again later and enlarged upon, serving as the basis for Rossi's teaching of design after that. It has been one of the most powerful vehicles of his success, precisely for the clarity and rigor with which he presents these ideas in his teaching.

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### The Critical Fortune of Aldo Rossi's Theses

We can divide the critical fortune of Rossi's theses into various periods. At first, his work was widely challenged, and even today it causes doubt and diffidence. To understand the debate that went on in the years following the publication of *The Architecture of the City*, we must also consider all the additions and enrichments (often not systematic) that Aldo Rossi has proposed, particularly the development of his concrete design activity.

After his stay in Venice, in 1966 Rossi was asked to teach *Caratteri Distributivi degli Edifici* at the School of Architecture in Milan. The principal document of this period is the famous "little green book," *L'Analisi Urbana e la Progettazione Architettonica*.<sup>26</sup>

The elaboration in the book occupies the intermediate space between the Venetian period and the perfection of the theory of the "analogous city," discussed above. In my opinion, Rossi in that book is much less cautious about the relationships between architectural composition and urban analysis and places the two terms in a much tighter and more consequential relationship.

"Our investigation deals mainly with the construction of a rational theory of architecture. This construction is founded principally on the study of the relationships that exist between urban analysis and architectural planning . . . the relationships between analysis and project, architecture and ideology, and rationality and invention represent the reality of architecture in a very concrete way. The first terms of this relationship (analysis, architecture, rationality) represent the disciplinary corpus with which we are involved and without which no imaginative development of design activity can exist that is not disorder. Analysis constitutes the project as it slowly becomes a science and choice of reality."<sup>27</sup> Now, in fact, when the great themes set forth by Rossi are beginning to make themselves known and his personal charisma is asserting itself, the apparent "facileness" of these ideas, their clarity, and the support given them by Rossi's projects are contributing to a general process of reduction of that complexity always present in Rossi's real thought and in his architecture. It can therefore be said that the first great stage of Rossi's critical success is characterized by a certain mechanization of the analysis-project relationship, where his followers tended to derive the second term from the first in increasingly more immediate and schematic forms. And the very notion of typology, applied reductively in designing, often becomes the repetitive application of abstract schemes in the living body of the city.

Despite this process of inevitable reduction, the general architectural debate continues to be enriched with

important contributions: its center is now becoming defined around the question of architecture as technique and around its autonomy.<sup>28</sup> The new journal *Controspazio* played an important role in the maturation and diffusion of Rossi's thought in that period. The journal's editor, Paolo Portoghesi, asked Ezio Bonfanti and Massimo Scolari, among others, to be part of the editorial staff; the group of architects who called themselves "Tendenza" began to form around the Milanese management of *Controspazio*, which eventually became a kind of official organ of that group.<sup>29</sup> The first serious contribution to the analysis of Aldo Rossi's work appeared in *Controspazio* in an article by Ezio Bonfanti,<sup>30</sup> who described Rossi's design method and the foundations of his theory. Bonfanti was helped by the rapidly advancing debate that contributed to making the different positions increasingly clear. In this regard, the distinction made between Rossi's and Manfredo Tafuri's attitude toward history is significant.

"The task of making choices, as Rossi sees it, carries with it a conception of the history of architecture (and art) in stark contrast to others. He has recently stated that 'the works of the history of architecture constitute architecture; even within these works it is necessary to make a choice, and here *tendenza* has meaning. I believe that this is an *authentic historicism*; it has nothing to do with a false historicism that pretends to reduce history to the historiographic act and denies that the two terms, thought and action, have a moment of actual application.' . . . We are dealing with a position in clear contrast to that espoused by Manfredo Tafuri beginning with *Teroia e Storia dell'Architettura*. . . . Between Tafuri's charges of historiographic instrumentalism and, in reply, Rossi's confirmation of an *authentic historicism* in his cultural position, there is a difference that no distinction can even reduce. . . . Tafuri states clearly: 'even today we are obliged to recognize in history not a great reservoir of codified values, but an enormous collection of utopias, failures, betrayals'; from this follows 'faith in violent breaks, in the jump into the unknown, in the adventure accepted with no guarantees.' For Rossi, against this history of breaks, against this past which cannot be related to us, lies the past, exposed and represented in the city, the continuity of architecture in the uniqueness of its

theoretical corpus: 'it makes no sense to say that the problems of ancient architecture are different from ours; we can say that in the history of both the city and architecture ruptures do not exist.'"<sup>31</sup>

I have quoted Bonfanti at length because his thoughts lead us to the heart of problems around which the architectural debate of the past ten years has developed and which are still current today. The first of these problems regards the relationship with history. From this point of view, Aldo Rossi can certainly be counted among those who have most coherently aimed at going beyond the modern movement, through the study of the entire history of architecture, beyond any temporal partition of it. Rossi is able to read it synchronically as a whole of techniques, as an autonomous discipline endowed with its own unvarying laws.

"The poverty of contemporary architecture lies not so much in its results, as in its contents, in the lack of precise tendencies, in the paralysis of the theoretical assumptions poorly drawn from the modern movement. . . . The construction of a logic of architecture cannot omit the relationship with history."<sup>32</sup>

With the vigorous resumption of the debate about history, and especially by virtue of its operative implications, the polemics are exploding bitterly: an immediate consequence is a beneficial process of clarification.

In this regard I mention the polemic carried on in Italy at the beginning of the 1970s, when the Ministry of Education suspended from their teaching posts Aldo Rossi, Paolo Portoghesi, Franco Albini, Ludovico Belgiojoso, Piero Bottoni, Guido Canella, Carlo de Carli, and Vittoriano Vigano following a "witch-hunt" organized by conservative groups against the "didactic experimentalism" at the School of Architecture in Milan, whose dean at the time was Paolo Portoghesi. On that occasion, the unity of "progressive and left-wing" culture was broken, and real contradictions emerged that had until then been hidden by ideological factors. The once political polemic became cultural, and the great defendant was the modern movement; finally, there was a clear division concerning the consumption of that inheritance, the themes of the

great classical tradition, and the negative consequences of functionalism.<sup>33</sup> Following this painful episode, Aldo Rossi stopped teaching in Italy for several years and received more and more invitations to teach abroad. The Spanish and Portuguese editions of *The Architecture of the City* were published in 1971, the German edition in 1973. It is almost compulsory now to speak of a Rossinian school affirming itself beyond the borders of Italy, reinforced by direct contact with Aldo Rossi.

The first concrete outlet of this new international area focused on the themes of rational architecture, manifested itself in the Architecture Section of the XV Milan Triennial directed by Aldo Rossi, in 1973.<sup>34</sup> On that occasion, Rossi's correct objective was that of organizing an exhibition not of the *Tendenza*<sup>35</sup> but of trend, opening up the subject to all those who in a certain way followed the principles of the logical construction of architecture, and typological problems first of all. "We are insensitive to accusations of historicism; we have simply taken away from the schools the boring courses of historical enumeration, and have instead reposed the history of architecture as a living part of it . . . and from history, we have logically linked up to the modern movement without special or private sympathies. Simply because the problems of that time are the problems of today . . . even elements seemingly unrelated to the historical argument . . . have a precise sense of their own history. . . . Hence the investigation into the type as the basic form of architecture is closely related to this research."<sup>36</sup>

On the basis of that program, and above all for the emphasis given to typological problems, a tactical alliance was made with those espousing neorationalism, even if at the center of that group, the figurative and theoretical link with the modern movement was the true characterizing element, along with attempts at refoundation.

It proved to be, therefore, an improper alliance, producing for a certain time a sort of unproductive balance in international culture; neorationalism, which soon took the lead over the *Tendenza*, succeeded in absorbing its heretical aspects until it finally exorcised

the very figure of Aldo Rossi, making him a kind of decorative presence.

The culmination of this process was the European/American exhibition organized in 1978 by the Visual Arts section of the Venice Biennial directed by Vittorio Gregotti.

By the end of the 1970s, however, the ambiguous signboard of international neorationalism had begun to crack. All the contradictions and unresolved knots began to manifest themselves, but most of all it was in crisis because of its natural "cautiousness," its immobilization. It was prisoner of both Tafuri's theory of silence and of an increasingly professionalized pragmatism, as well as of the ambiguous reduction carried out by its followers. Added to this was the maturation of historical-cultural conditions favoring an "individual" dimension of work.

Aldo Rossi himself is no longer involved in general theoretical *summae*. He is, however, making the poetic dimension of his work emerge more clearly all the time. And when he defines the cultural area to which he belongs, he does so exalting not programmatic cultural platforms but individual personalities.<sup>37</sup>

In our view, the Great Theater of the World, more than any written statement, constitutes the manifesto of this new trend in Rossi's thought; and among his recent contributions, it is clearly the most important for the new architecture.

<sup>37</sup>Naturally, this turn is part of a wider submovement that has made its way into culture in its entirety, and not only into the world of architecture. It is not by chance that the inflated label "post-modernism" is widely used by the human sciences to indicate the present condition of knowledge in the most developed societies (see, for example, Jean-François Lyotard's famous *La condition postmoderne*, Les Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1979). We would like to call attention to the aspect of that shift that has to do with the end of ideology and the eclipse of the "negative" conceptions of the real, with the consequent removal of ancient certainties and consolidated theoretical habits. On its more general philosophical implications, see also Francesco Cellini and Claudio D'Amato, "La presenza della storia," *Controspazio*, 12, nos. 5-6 (1980), pp. 65-67, 212-213 (with English translation opposite the Italian text).

<sup>2</sup>On the crisis of the functionalist statute, see Paolo Portoghesi, *Dopo l'architettura moderna*, Laterza, Bari, 1980 (in particular chap. 1, "La pista di cenere"), trans. Meg Shore, *After Modern Architecture*, Rizzoli International, New York, 1982 (in particular chap. 1, "The Trail of Ashes"). On the value of this turning point, see also the essays by Vincent Scully, "How Things Got to Be the Way They Are Now," and Paolo Portoghesi, "The End of Prohibitionism," in *The Presence of the Past*, Edizioni La Biennale, Venice, 1980 (English language edition).

<sup>3</sup>Aldo Rossi, *L'Architettura della Città*, Marsilio Editori, Padua, 1966.

<sup>4</sup>With regard to the state of urban studies at the beginning of the 1970s, see Massimo Scolari, "Un contributo per la fondazione della scienza urbana," *Controspazio*, 3, nos. 7-8 (1971), pp. 40, 47. In this essay the author takes his cue from Carlo Aymonino et al., *La città di Padova*, Officina Edizioni, Rome, 1970. Scolari gives an exhaustive picture of both Italian and foreign contributions to the discipline, making particular reference to the school of the French geographers and historians, who can rightly be called the inventors of this type of study. Scolari's essay is important also because it accurately describes the distinctions between the specific contributions of Aldo Rossi and Carlo Aymonino, thus helping to discredit the image of a "Tendenza" (the name given to the architects who followed those design and theoretical suppositions) with a totally compact center.

<sup>5</sup>In the consideration of the formation of Aldo Rossi's thought, the call to the specificity of tradition and to the role of history is very important. Without this, in fact, it would be impossible to understand his overall message. Rossi clarifies this point when he declares: "I am often asked why only historians give us a complete picture of the city. I believe the answer is that historians are concerned with the urban artifact in its totality." *The Architecture of the City*, trans. Diane Ghirardo and Joan Ockman, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1982, p. 57. In this regard, it is worth remembering that at the end of the 1950s Italy was the scene of a heated polemic concerning the role of history. This was one of the first conscious episodes of opposition to the degeneration and exhaustion of the themes of the modern movement. We refer to the polemic concerning the neoliberty that took off from the pages of *Casabella* (no. 215), then under Ernesto N. Rogers's direction, when *La Bottega di Erasmo* by Roberto Gabetti and Aimaro Isola was published. On that occasion, the curses of modernist orthodoxy were hurled against Italy (cf. Reyner Banham, "The Italian Retreat from Modern Architecture," *The Architectural Review*, no. 747 [1959]). For an exhaustive discussion of this matter, see C. D'Amato, "La ritirata italiana dal Movimento Moderno," and F. Cellini, "La polemica sul neo-Liberty," both in *Controspazio*, 9, nos. 4-5 (1977), pp. 50-51, 52-53, respectively. At that time we defended, in different roles and from different positions, the role of history in design: Paolo Portoghesi, "Dal neorealismo al neoliberty," *Comunità*, no. 65 (1958), and Aldo Rossi, "Il passato e il presente della nuova architettura," *Casabella Continuità*, no. 219, (1958).

<sup>5</sup>A. Rossi, *Architecture of the City*, p. 32.

In this regard, see: Galvano della Volpe, *Critica del gusto*, 2nd ed., Feltrinelli, Milan, 1963. This text must be considered fundamental for Italian architects as the starting point of any discussion in those years of the "specific," starting out from a historical-materialistic conception of the idea of art. It was the GRAU group that most coherently carried on a debate strictly within the discipline using those general indications. On the general themes of this group, cf. Claudio D'Amato, "1964-1978: Storia e logica nella progettazione del GRAU," *Controspazio*, 9, nos. 1-2 (1979), pp. 4-9, 40 (English translation: "Classical vs. Modern: Essay on GRAU's work," *A+U*, no. 12 [1978]). At that time, the discussions about the "disciplinary specific" covered the totality of the arts, beginning with a general aesthetic outlook. One of the most powerful vehicles for the affirmation of this new culture was the relationship between architecture and cinema. In this regard, see Galvano della Volpe, *Il verosimile filmico e altri scritti di estetica*, Editori Riuniti, Rome, 1962. It should be noted that Aldo Rossi himself has always underlined the importance of the cinema in the development of his ideas.

Vincent Scully, Jr., *Louis I. Kahn*, Braziller, New York, 1962 (Italian edition: Il Saggiatore, Milan, 1963). This text is another fundamental tool for the affirmation of the new culture. Through Scully's book, attention began to focus on Kahn's work; this situation led, especially in Italy, to the flowering of a real "Kahnian school;" but perhaps more significant was the rise of both a specific (and no longer ideological) criticism of the modern and a revived attention to historical studies in an operative key (in the first place, Hadrian's Villa and late-antique architecture, inexhaustible mines of compositional laws).

Rudolph Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, Alec Tiranti, London, 1962 (Italian edition: *Principi architettonici nell'età dell'Umanesimo*, Einaudi, Turin, 1964). Emil Kaufmann, *Architecture in the Age of Reason: Baroque and Post-Baroque in England, Italy and France*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1955 (Italian edition: *L'Architettura dell'Illuminismo*, Einaudi, Turin, 1966). The interest stirred up by Kahn's work immediately called attention to those historical studies that confront the object of study by investigating compositional laws. Thus, there was a renewed interest in both late-antique architecture directly related to the experience of Kahn and in the great themes formulated by the architects of the Renaissance, especially Palladio's work (cf. Wittkower's interpretations of the compositional schemes of the Palladian villa and those of the "architects of the Revolution" (Ledoux, Boullée, Lequeu). As a result of Kaufmann's studies that exhaustively treated the compositional techniques of the "Renaissance-Baroque system," there was a real flowering of studies and publications on the architecture of the Enlightenment. Particularly significant in this regard is Rossi's introduction to *Etienne-Louis Boullée, Architettura. Saggio sull'Arte*, Marsilio Editori, Padua, 1967. In this essay, Rossi set forth a nucleus of ideas that would remain with him. It is

worth noting that Rossi had this text republished in the catalogue to the show he put together at the XVI Milan Triennial in 1981 (cf. *Architettura/Idea*, ed. Daniele Vitale, Alinari, Florence, 1981, pp. 23-36).

<sup>8</sup>See Paolo Portoghesi, *After Modern Architecture*, chap. 9, "The European Horizon," pp. 90-107.

<sup>9</sup>Ludovico Quaroni, *La Torre di Babele*, Marsilio Editori, Padua, 1967.

<sup>10</sup>Aldo Rossi, Introduzione, in Quaroni, *La Torre di Babele*, p. 13. While speaking at debates and conferences, Rossi has never failed to point out this "critical continuity" with the masters of Italian architecture. In 1979, on the occasion of the celebrations for the tenth anniversary of the magazine *Controspazio* held at the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca in Rome, Rossi stated: "One of the reasons I decided to speak here was to be able to meet Mario Ridolfi, one of my masters—through a distant connection—even if it would be difficult to explain this briefly—and likewise Ludovico Quaroni, who may not even want me as a distant pupil, but whom I nonetheless consider my teacher" (from the tape recording of the debate, May 10, 1979). Moreover, regarding this "critical continuity" of the great themes of architecture and the city, around which the "Italian school" has always worked in a most original manner, I would like to mention an early and little-known text by Ludovico Quaroni, whose title is very similar to that of Rossi's more famous book: Ludovico Quaroni, *L'Architettura della Città*, Sansaini, Rome, 1939.

<sup>11</sup>Aldo Rossi, Introduzione to Quaroni, *La Torre di Babele*, p. 12.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 15. To conclude the discussion of Rossi's debt to his teachers, reference must be made to Giuseppe Samonà for his text *L'Urbanistica e l'avvenire della città*, Laterza, Bari, 1959.

<sup>13</sup>There has been thus far no really important and complete text on this remarkable figure in Italian architectural culture. For a general outline, see Paolo Portoghesi, *Dopo l'architettura moderna*, chap. 7, "L'Italia in Ritirata," pp. 81-83 (English edition, chap. 7, "Italy in Retreat," pp. 34-75).

<sup>14</sup>Saverio Muttori, *Studi per una operante storia urbana di Venezia*, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, Rome, 1959, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 5. Muttori's text represents both a point of arrival and the preface to the entire successive development of his thought. Having taken over the chair of *Composizione Architettonica* at the University of Rome, Muttori inaugurated "a clear disavowal of the tradition of the modern movement . . . not only a lucid theoretical denunciation of the contemporary crisis, but also a proposition for a restructuring from the bottom up of architectural theory and practice, based on an ambitious 'scientific' theory of urban development as typological development" (Portoghesi, *After Modern Architecture*, p. 42). The studies on Venice were followed a few years later by an analogous volume in Rome: Saverio Muttori et al., *Studi per una operante storia urbana di Roma*, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Rome, 1963.

<sup>16</sup>Carlo Aymonino, born and educated in Rome, arrived in Venice

from Rome, where he had become a university lecturer in *Composizione Architettonica*. Aymonino was quite familiar with those texts by Muratori at the base of a heated polemic that resulted in both the first student takeover of the architecture schools and in the consequent division of the *Composizione* course.

<sup>17</sup> Between 1964 and 1966, the course *Caratteri Distributivi degli Edifici*, directed by Carlo Aymonino, produced the following publications: Carlo Aymonino and Aldo Rossi, eds., *Aspetti e problemi della tipologia edilizia*, Venice, 1964 (see pp. 15–31, Aldo Rossi, "Considerazioni sulla morfologia urbana e la tipologia edilizia"); Carlo Aymonino and Aldo Rossi, eds., *La Formazione del concetto di tipologia edilizia*, Venice, 1965 (see pp. 83–92, Aldo Rossi, "I problemi metodologici della ricerca urbana"); and Carlo Aymonino et al., *Rapporti tra la morfologia urbana e la tipologia edilizia*, Venice, 1966 (see pp. 69–81, Aldo Rossi, "Tipologia, manualistica, architettura," and pp. 85–95, Aldo Rossi, "La città come fondamento dello studio dei caratteri degli edifici").

<sup>18</sup> Massimo Scolari, "Un contributo per la fondazione della scienza urbana."

<sup>19</sup> Aldo Rossi, *Architecture of the City*, p. 35.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>24</sup> Aldo Rossi, "Caratteri Urbani delle Città Venete," in Carlo Aymonino et al., *La Città di Padova*, Officina, Rome, 1970. Aldo Rossi, "Prefazione alla II edizione," in *L'Architettura della Città*, Marsilio, Padua, 1970.

<sup>25</sup> Aldo Rossi, *Architecture of the City*, p. 116.

<sup>26</sup> Franco Aprà et al., *L'Analisi Urbana e la Progettazione Architettonica: Gruppo di ricerca diretto da Aldo Rossi. Contributi al dibattito e al lavoro di gruppo nell'anno accademico 1968–1969*, CLUP, Milan, 1970. This book was produced during the student protest movement then engulfing the architecture schools in Italy. From this viewpoint, it can be said that Aldo Rossi's experience is even more important because it took place at a time when it was easy to see the themes of the discipline. On the situation at the Architecture School in Milan, see Massimo Scolari's analysis, "Avanguardia e Nuova Architettura," in Ezio Bonfanti et al., *Architettura Razionale, XV Triennale di Milano: Catalogo della Sezione Internazionale di Architettura*, Franco Angeli Editore, Milan, 1973, pp. 153–187, especially pp. 168–170.

<sup>27</sup> Aldo Rossi, "L'obiettivo della nostra ricerca," in Aprà et al., *L'Analisi Urbana*, pp. 13–20.

<sup>28</sup> Ezio Bonfanti's important essay dates from this period: "Autonomia dell'Architettura," *Controspazio*, 1, no 1 (1969), pp. 24–29.

<sup>29</sup> Nothing organic has yet been written on the role of *Controspazio*

and on its various editorial trends. I would in any case like to refer to what Portoghesi had to say in this regard at the above-mentioned debate during the decennial celebrations of *Controspazio* (see note 10): "Gregotti once wrote a letter saying that *Controspazio* was really more Bonfanti's and Scolari's magazine than it was Portoghesi's. I have never received a greater compliment, because I believe that in certain cases, in order to fight a battle seriously, we must find out what ties us to others. I consider *Controspazio* a vehicle at times for personal meditations. But above all, I consider it a guarantee of the defense of intellectual freedom in architectural research. We should not forget that in that period this magazine fought a battle for the recognition of the importance of Aldo Rossi's work: it was a bloody and necessary battle, like that fought to defend the necessity of meditating on the architectural specific at a time when there was a tendency to put architectural research to one side."

<sup>30</sup> Ezio Bonfanti, "Elementi e Costruzione. Note sull'architettura di Aldo Rossi," *Controspazio*, 2, no. 10 (1970), pp. 19–28.

<sup>31</sup> Ezio Bonfanti, *ibid.*, p. 26. On the successive evolutions in Tafuri's positions, see Scolari "Avanguardia e Nuova Architettura," p. 165.

<sup>32</sup> Aldo Rossi, "L'obiettivo della nostra ricerca," in Franco Aprà et al., *L'Analisi Urbana*, p. 14.

<sup>33</sup> See "Cronaca di una polemica," *Controspazio*, 3, nos. 10–11 (1971), pp. 2–11, with contributions by Carlo Melograni, Franco Berlanda, Renato Nicolini, Aldo Rossi, and Paolo Portoghesi.

<sup>34</sup> See Bonfanti et al., *Architettura Razionale*.

<sup>35</sup> For a history of the *Tendenza* from its beginnings to its formation over the years, see Massimo Scolari's accurate reconstruction in *Avanguardia e Nuova Architettura*. Scolari gives not only the history of the group but also a definition centered on the refoundation of the discipline, and he unites all those who consider themselves part of the movement: "For the *Tendenza*, architecture is a cognitive process which, by itself, in the recognition of its autonomy, today imposes a refoundation of the discipline; it refuses to treat its own crisis with interdisciplinary remedies; it does not follow and immerse itself in political, economic, social, and technological events only to cover up its own creative and hence formal sterility, but seeks to understand them in order to be able to act clearly, and not in order to shape these events, or to submit to them" (p. 162). This is, therefore, an ample "work program" capable of accepting differentiated formal contributions. But the term *Tendenza* actually indicates, especially in Italy, the school of Aldo Rossi, or a figurative-stylistic area that takes off from the formal principles of Rossi's architecture.

<sup>36</sup> Aldo Rossi, Introduction to Ezio Bonfanti et al., *Architettura Razionale*, p. 18.

<sup>37</sup> In organizing the exhibition *Architettura/Idea* for the XVI Milan Triennial (see note 7), Rossi presented a project in line with this vision. He describes it thus: "a wall with many doors; from each door, one enters a corridor, and from here, a single room. In the room is the sought-after object."

# Autonomous Architecture:

## “The Work of Eight Contemporary Architects”

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### An exhibition of architectural drawings

Dates:

December 2, 1980  
through January 18, 1981

Location:

Fogg Art Museum,  
Harvard University

Sponsor:

The Harvard  
Architecture Review

Exhibitors:

Aldo Rossi  
O M Ungers  
Rodolfo Machado  
& Jorge Silvetti  
Diana Agrest  
& Mario Gandelsonas  
Mario Botta  
Peter Eisenman

The idea that architecture is an autonomous discipline has been rediscovered recently and has become the subject of some discussion within the profession. This exhibition presents the work of eight architects who in their designs and writings have helped bring about the resurgence of interest in this idea. All the drawings on display, however diverse in many important respects, reflect an approach to an autonomous architecture.

The term *autonomous architecture* refers to the notion that architecture has a particular quality, an essence, which is specific to it and which distinguishes it from the other arts. Architecture is regarded as a separate endeavor, a discipline, complete with principles and norms internal to itself. The exhibit illustrates eight architects' concern with the discipline of architecture, their attempts to define and clarify its fundamentals, and their creation of new work that is consciously rooted in the discipline.

Perhaps the purest approach to an autonomous architecture is based on the idea that the essence of architecture resides in the formal relationship of the elements of a building to one another. Those architects who subscribe to this approach strive to design buildings that represent only the consistency and logic of a chosen formal organization. Consequently, the form, which is generated from strictly formal considerations, may not appear to have been determined by the usual factors that relate architecture to man and context: function, scale, site, symbol, and so on. The architecture becomes an independent object, complete within itself, autonomous. Thus the autonomy of the architecture is a result of a method of production that places primary importance on the consistent formal structure of the design.

Whereas architects who practice this formal approach try to divest their works of any associations with culture, other architects create an autonomous architecture by focusing on these culturally inherited qualities that are specific to architecture. These architects study the nature and meaning of specific elements such as columns, doors, and walls. Rather than obscure the identities of these elements, as was

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often the case in buildings of the modern movement, these architects emphasize the unique and overtly architectural qualities of the elements. The various ways in which columns are presented in this exhibition exemplifies this type of investigation. In much of the work (such as Silveti and Machado's "Theory of the Production of Architecture" and Rossi's "Domestic Architecture") the column assumes a variety of formal relationships and symbolic meanings and combines with other elements to form entrances, axes, and facades. Although its appearance varies considerably, the column always refers back to its basic condition as an architectural element.

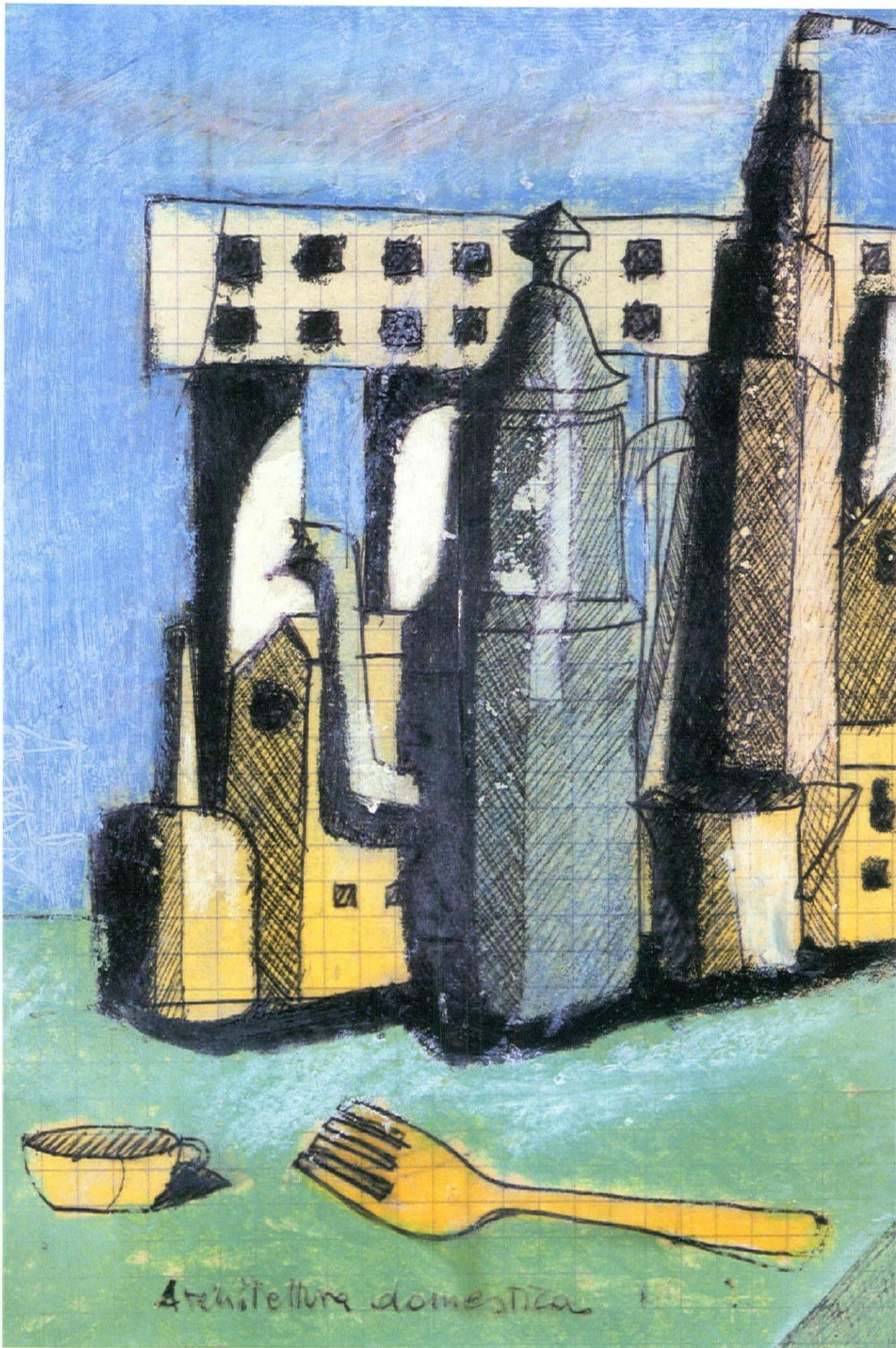
The determination of the norms, conventions, and traditions that are a part of the discipline of architecture necessarily involves an analysis of the history of architecture. The intent of the architects who engage in this analysis is not to find sources for a new eclecticism (as it is for many of the architects who have been associated with the term *post-modernism*) but to abstract certain threads of continuity, certain fundamental principles, that underlie the mass of facts contained within the history of architecture.

The abstraction of basic principles from history is often achieved through an analysis founded on a theory of typology. This theory is based on the idea that the form of a building can be rooted in, and refer to, an abstract, a priori idea of form known as the building type. It is possible to categorize buildings according to their reference to a particular type. Those buildings that refer to the same type have certain essential qualities in common despite differences in specifics related to style, function, or context. Although Gothic and Renaissance churches are of a different style, for example, both refer to the basilica plan type. Similarly, though the Fogg Museum and the Boston Public Library serve different functions, both are based on the palazzo type. The type is general and constant; it transcends the particular and the temporal. Many of the drawings in the exhibition illustrate the use of typology as a means of ordering history and as a basis for generating new work.

Inevitably, the study of history and building types leads

architects to a study of the city, because the city is the context in which the history of architecture unfolds. Architecture and the city are linked in an essential bond; each influences the form of the other. An analysis of the structure of the city can help explain the emergence of building types, for often a particular type has developed in response to a particular urban condition. Paradoxically, however, our ability to "read" the type, that is, to refer a particular building or model to an abstract type, does not depend on the simultaneous appearance of the urban condition that is responsible for the emergence of the type. Consequently, the type, in its abstraction and in its independence of context, achieves an identity, a wholeness, and an objectlike quality not unlike that which results from the purely formal approach to an autonomous architecture. The difference is that the object that represents only its own structure asserts its autonomy from within, independent of any effort from us, while the type ironically achieves its autonomy from without, dependent as it is on our ability to read its reference and transcendence.

The relationship between type and context is one of the primary themes in the exhibition. In the work of Rossi, Ungers, Silveti and Machado, and Botta, an assumed relationship between type and context is in some way modified or altered. The drawings depict types abstracted from a particular context, types relocated to new and unusual contexts, and types assembled in juxtaposition, creating a new, internal context. All of these manipulations have in common the effect of "making strange" the image of the type, provoking in us a new consciousness of our ability to recognize its appearance. Such manipulations are just one example of a process of transformation that can be used to produce new architecture, the meaning of which is rooted on the body of knowledge that constitutes the discipline of architecture.



Domestic Architecture

Magic Marker and oil crayon on paper, 1974

# Aldo Rossi

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Aldo Rossi's drawings illustrate various building types found in the city. For Rossi, a comprehensive understanding of architecture is impossible without an analysis of the form of the city. The buildings he depicts in his drawings are types that have developed in relation to a particular urban context. The arcaded building and the tower, both common subjects in Rossi's sketches, are examples of types whose meaning derives from the role that each plays in the life of the city.

Rossi's intention is to clarify the qualities that are specific to a given type as well as to comment on the role of architecture in the city. He achieves this by creating a collage of building types in a neutral setting. By abstracting the buildings from an urban context, Rossi paradoxically emphasizes those elements that have developed in response to the city. When we see an arcaded building removed from the context of the street, the form of the arcade itself becomes conspicuous.

Rossi draws neither particular buildings nor particular contexts; rather, he draws from his memory of

buildings. Memory filters out the contingent and emphasizes those essential characteristics that reappear in all buildings that refer to a given type. This exclusion of the conditional and inclusion of the essential are perhaps responsible for the timeless and surreal quality of some of Rossi's drawings.

Implicit in Rossi's attitude toward typology is his belief that, over time, architectural forms accumulate new meanings that are layered over those which correspond to the building's original function. We can understand the towers and arcades in his drawings without knowing their context or function. In "Domestic Architecture," Rossi juxtaposes several buildings with a seemingly out-of-scale teapot. The pot, itself a typical form, is a metaphor of an architectural type. As the title implies, Rossi explores the possibility that the teapot, drawn at the scale of the buildings, has been transformed into a piece of domestic architecture. Thus the form of the teapot assumes a new meaning which is not based on its original function.

*Editors*

## Excerpts from IAUS Catalogue 2

Aldo Rossi

Now it seems to me that everything has already been seen; when I design I repeat, and in the observation of things there is also the observation of memory. I design my projects with a discrete sense of affection for each one but I reduce them to things that surround me: country houses, smoke stacks, monuments and objects, as if everything arose from and was founded in time; in this beginnings and endings are confounded.

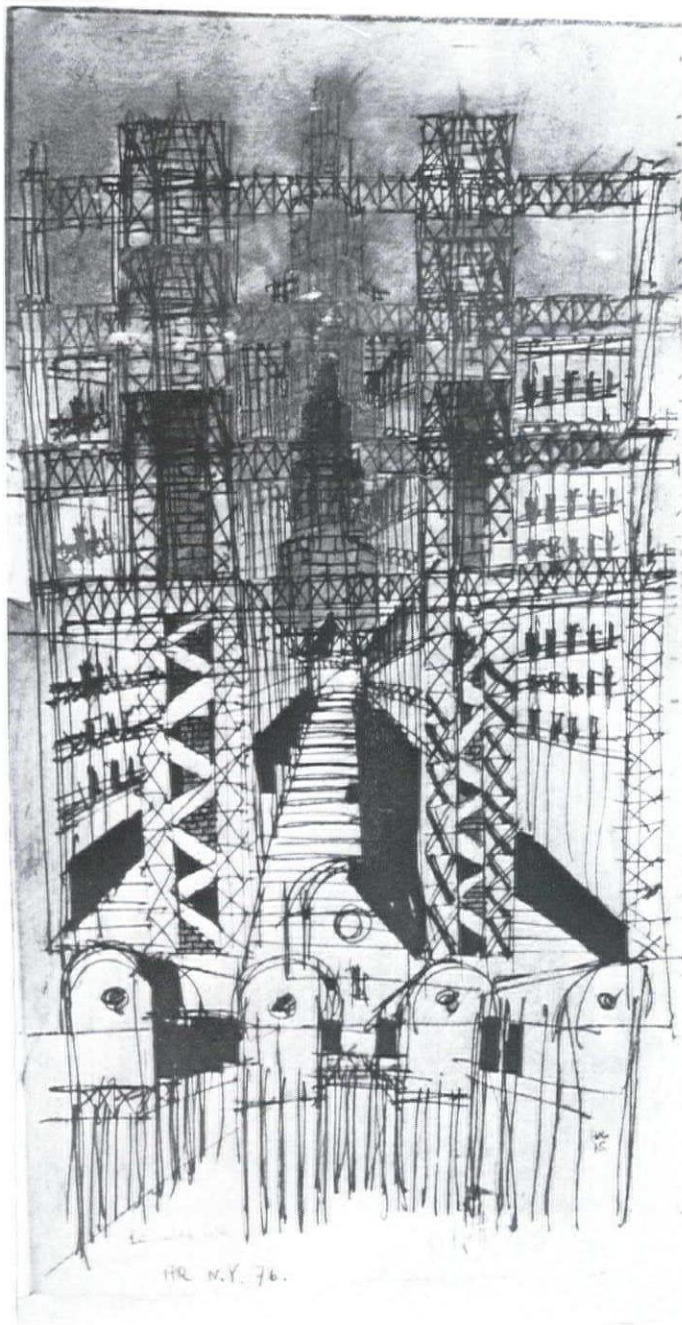
Or perhaps my designs are a long story, of scenes that are repeated with variations, as with Hopper's paintings where gasoline pumps, urban houses, and nighthawks are

pages from the same American story, equal but with slight variations.

The recent work is also free of memory. This gives the projects a provocative character. They can easily be reproduced, and they offer a discomforting sense of something *already seen*.

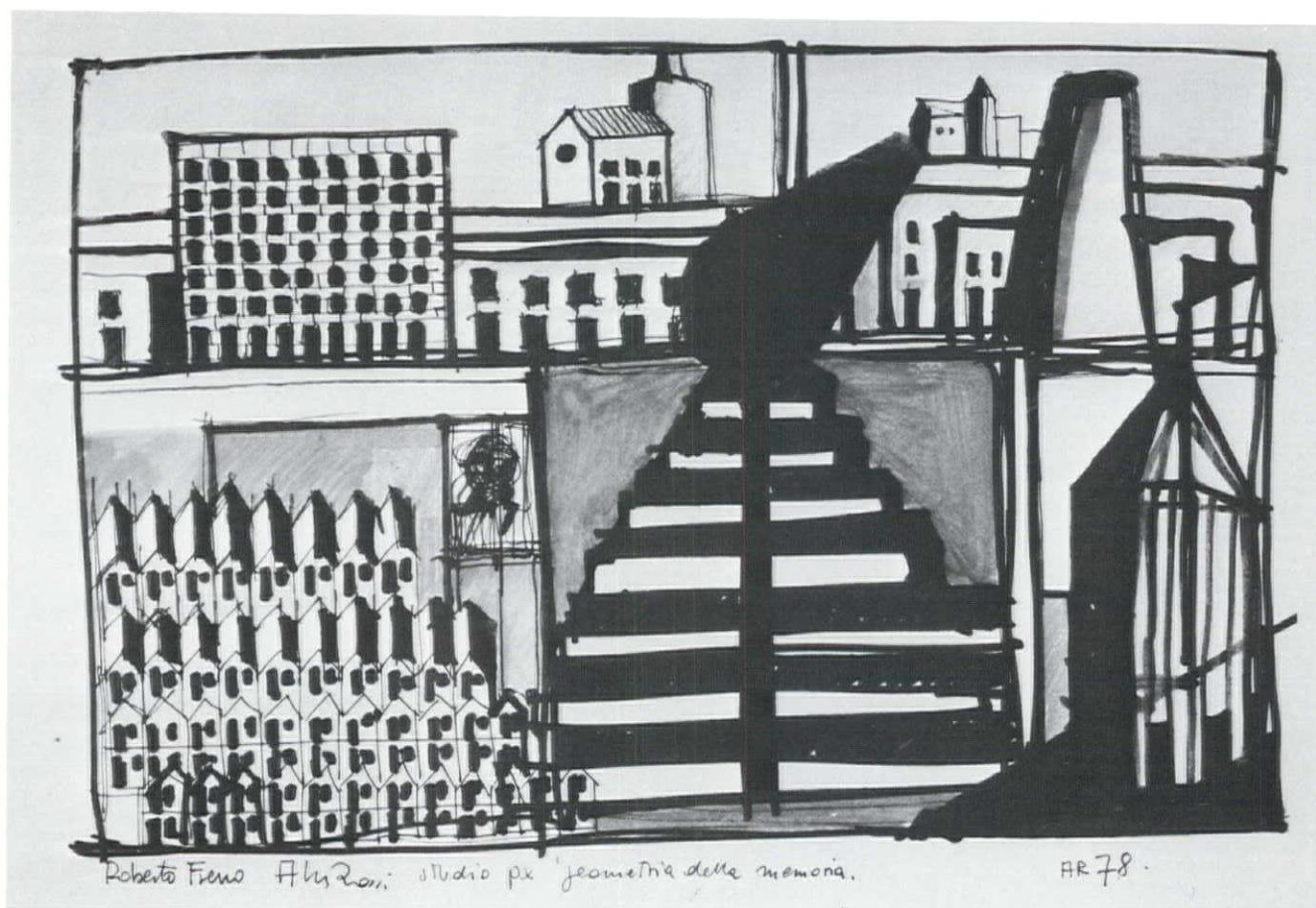
In my design of a *unite d'habitation* for the Gallarate quarter of Milan, there is an analogous relationship between it and certain engineering constructions, the typology of the external gallery, and the feeling I have always had for old Milanese houses, where the gallery is a form of life saturated with everyday

history and relationships. In looking at these diverse elements, I always associate them with this building, even to the extent that I am now unable to design a new residential building; I am tied to it almost as if I were imitating myself. This is so not because I imitate a building which has by now long been part of my experience, but because the motifs with which I began have remained constant. No work, independent of its own technique, is able to liberate itself entirely from its original motifs; here the artist more or less knowingly accepts repetition. In the best of cases it can lead to a process of perfection, or it can lead to an involution.



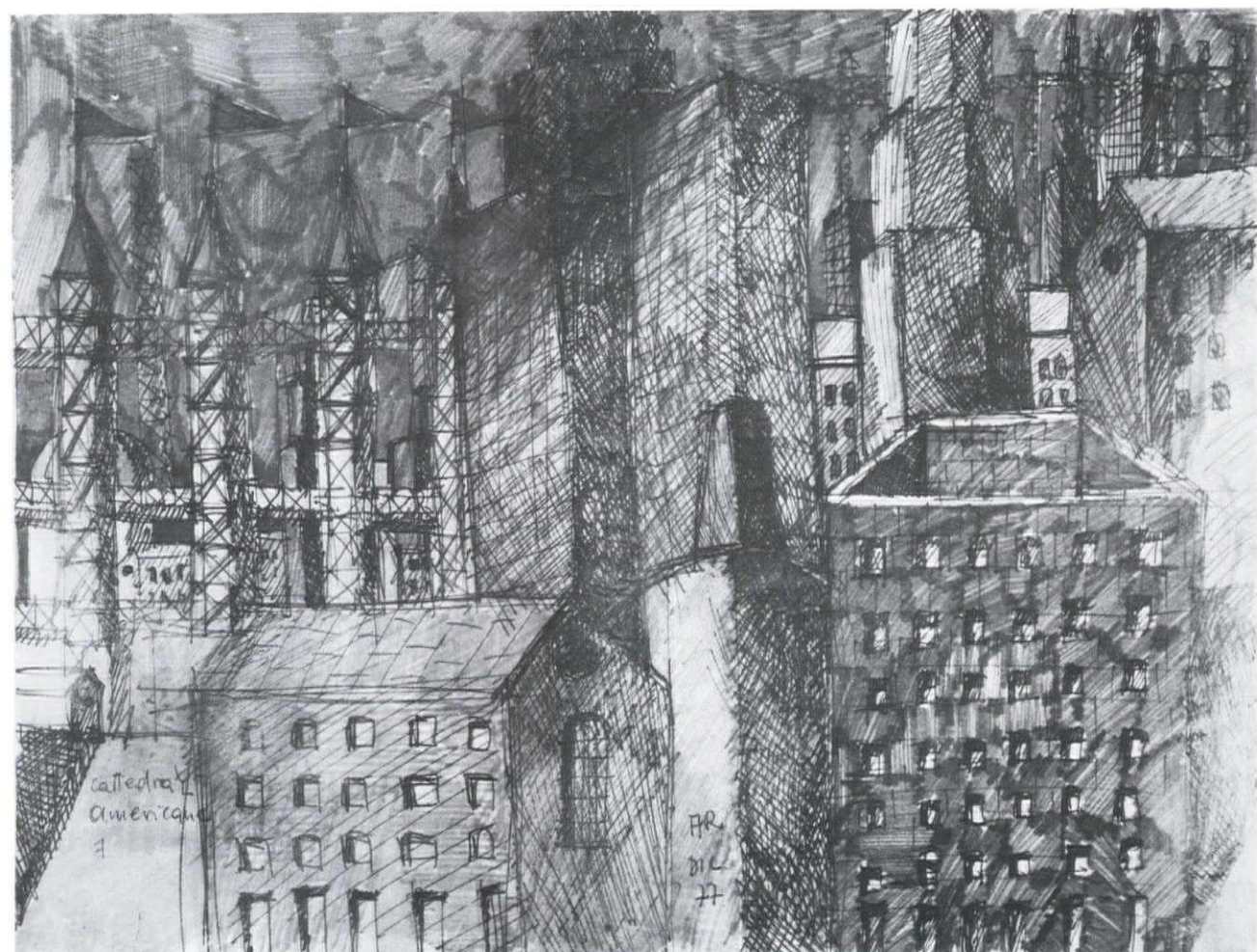
Souvenir of Coney Island

Color on Xerox, 1976



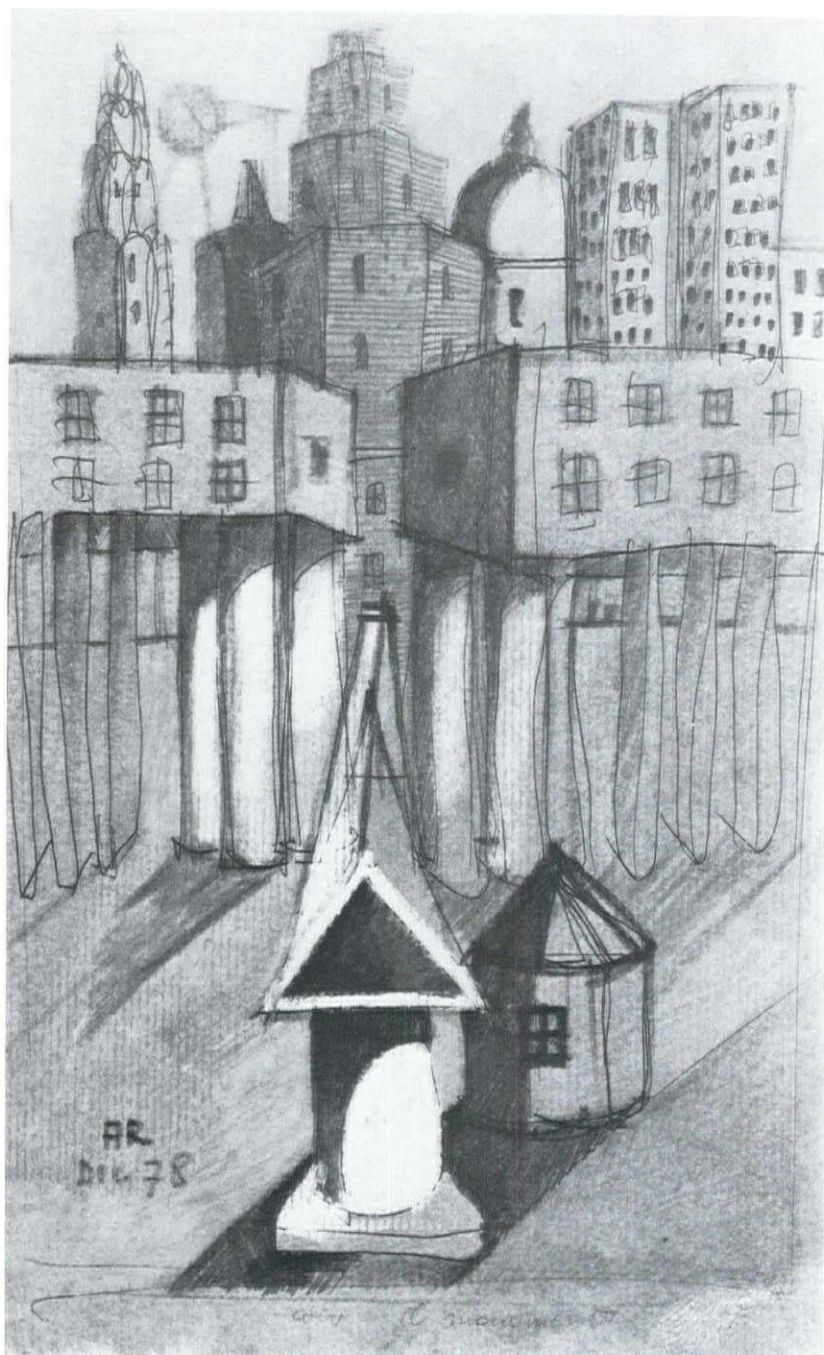
Study for Geometry of the Memory

Magic Marker and oil on paper, 1978



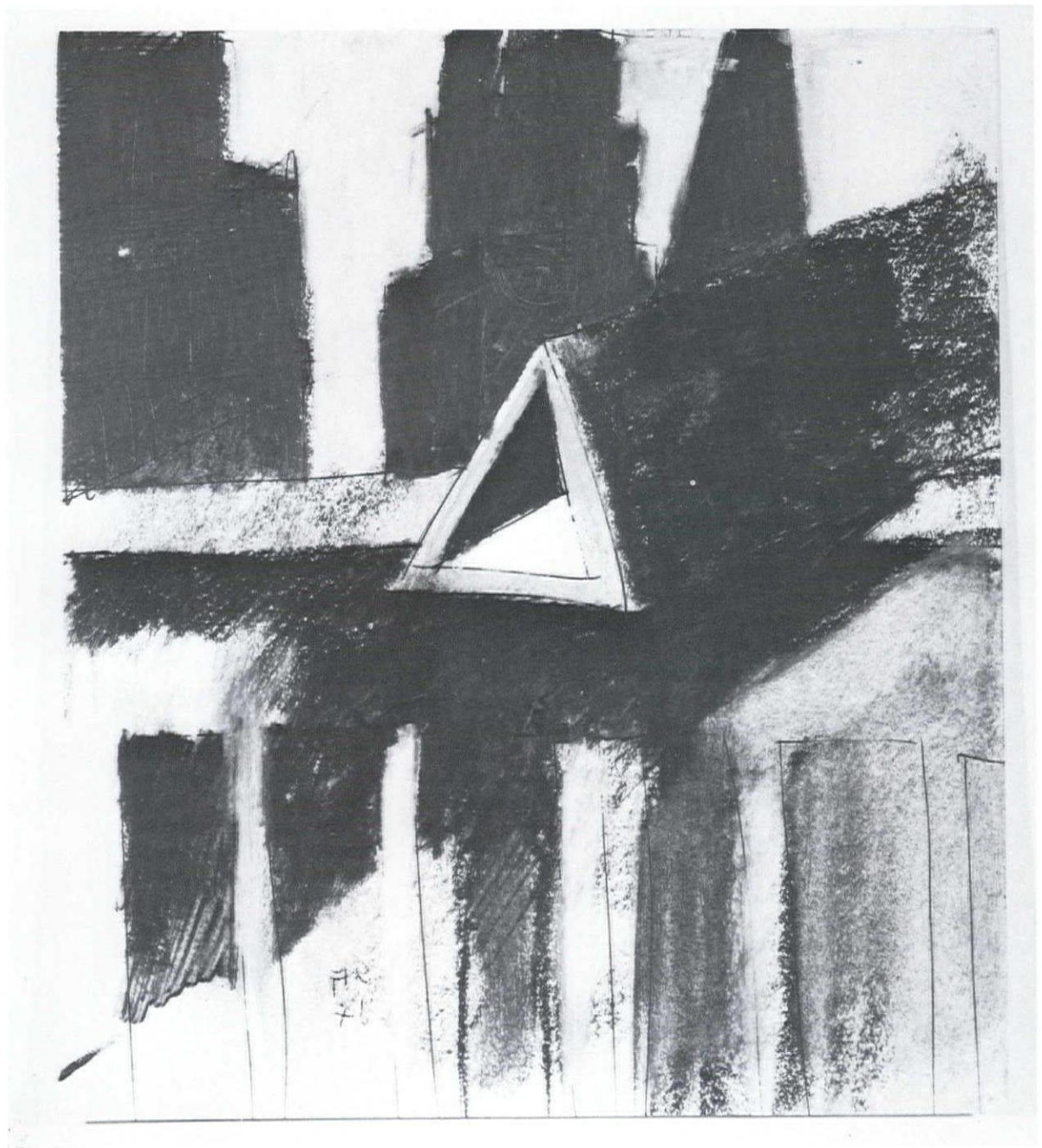
American Cathedral

Magic Marker on paper, 1977



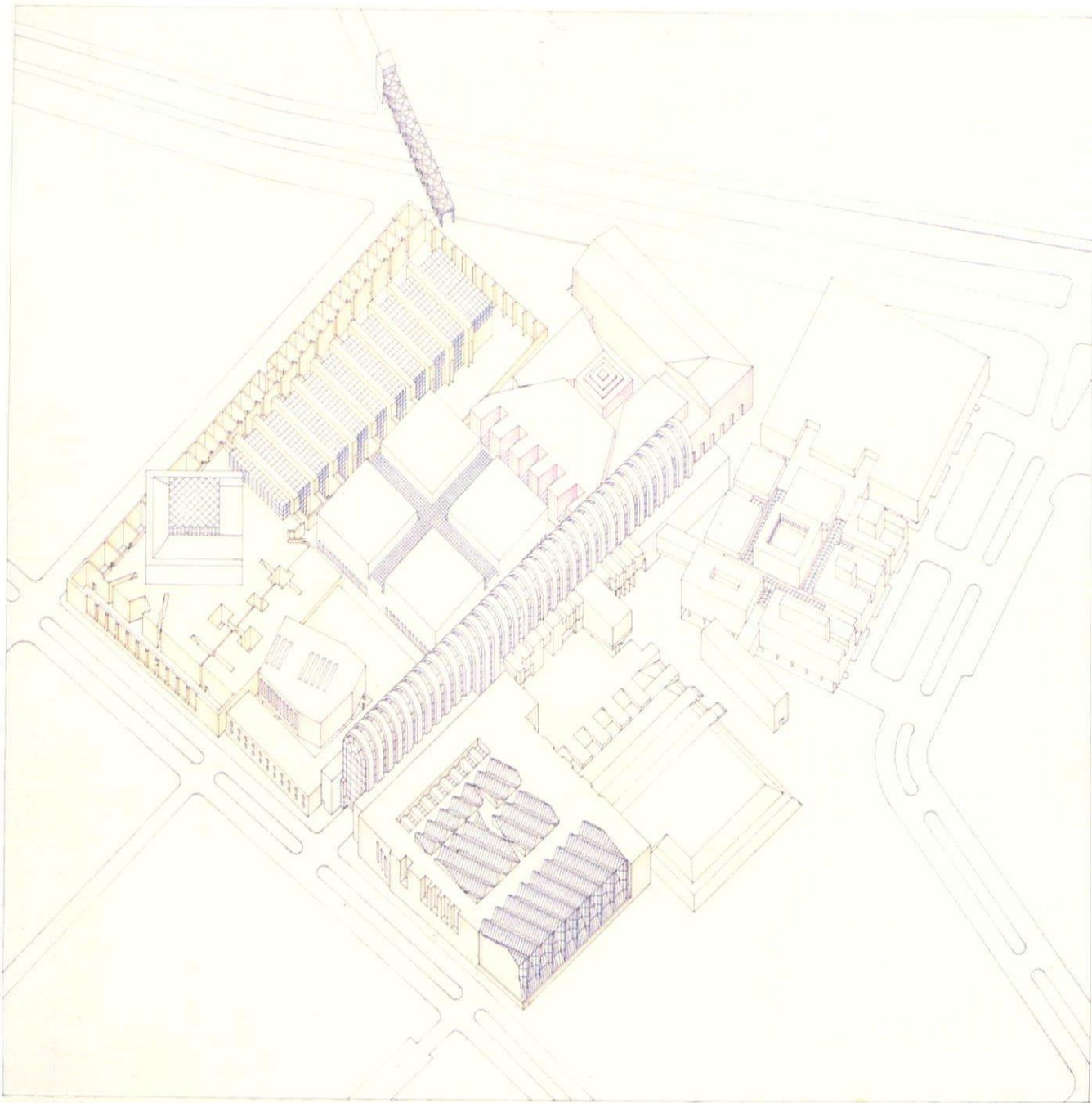
The Monument

Magic Marker and oil crayon on paper, 1978



Urban Composition with Red Tower

Magic Marker and oil on paper, 1975



# O M Ungers

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O M Ungers has referred to his own work as an "architecture of the collective memory." Drawing on the philosophy of Jung, Ungers says that one source of meaning in architecture is its ability to symbolize images and ideas contained within the collective memory. Like the typical forms drawn by Aldo Rossi, the architecture of the collective memory refers to an ideal that transcends the temporal meanings related to style and function.

For Ungers, the architecture of the collective memory is realized in the city, the place where forms, symbolic or archetypal ideas, and images are found. By recalling these forms, a city collectively remembers its past and ensures a continuity of culture over time.

In his own work Ungers assembles urban forms and spaces he has recalled from the conscious and the unconscious. His numerous designs for small fragments within the city can be thought of as "metaphors of cities," because they contain in microcosm the typical

forms found in all cities. Each element in Ungers's assemblage symbolizes a particular architectural image. The assemblage as a whole is a collection of diverse symbols that vie with each other for recognition. Ungers's "city of memory" is thus a pluralist vision in which meaning is derived from the dialectical relationship of the diverse architectural images that are recalled.

As a microcosm of the urban context in which it is sited, the design is a "city within the city." The individual elements of the design simultaneously relate to the larger context of the existing city and to the internal context of the design itself. At the larger scale, the elements symbolize their counterparts that exist in the fabric of the city; at the local level, the individual elements engage each other in a dialogue of symbols. Considered individually, each piece of the design represents a particular type and assumes a singular identity. By virtue of the singular reference, the elements assume a quality of completeness. Ultimately,

## Excerpts from Architecture of the Collective Memory

Oswald Mathias Ungers  
*Lotus International 24*

... (The Roman emperor) Hadrian—being a great admirer of the Greek civilization—reassembled his memories from his travels around the empire in his country house at Tivoli near Rome. The house—a collection of places—is more an empirical city of places the emperor had seen and wanted to remember, than a single villa. As an archaeologist, an admirer of masterpieces of the distant past, Hadrian recollected in his villa at Tibur replicas of classical monuments and so assembled the most brilliant moments of history.

Hadrian's villa might be seen as the end of the age of creation but it also is the beginning of the age of classicism, highlighting the richness of cultures consecrated by the veneration of generations. It is the first evidence of an architecture of memory, collecting set-pieces from history, that had left traces in his mind, juxtaposing temples and canals from Egypt, caryatids from Greece, and places described in myths and sagas. The central place of the villa is the library. Hadrian's retreat, a place filled with the 'knowledge of antiquity.'

The villa reassembles the idea of an ideal city, a humanist city, a place for the arts and sciences, a

miniaturized Universe, where humanist ideals are gathered in a 'classical' environment. In the same sense as the villa relates to events of the past it acts as a model for the future—not as a purist statement or a homogeneous system—but as a place filled with memories of the collective, as an object full of secrets and surprises, a 'monumentum memoriam,' as in the Latin sense of the word 'moneo,' meaning to remember.

A recollection of places: that was Hadrian's concept of the city; each place with its own character and identity competing with the place next to it, contradicting but also mutually enriching. It was a pluralist concept, every building placed, conceived, designed and built following its own rules and orders. Every part of the city hides a discovery, is designed as a unique location; it is an assembly of events, of pieces and fragments, conflicting, interacting, complementing and hence condensing the urban context. Hadrian's villa, epitomizes the Roman city as an idea; it is the antithesis to Hippodamus' all-embracing organization of the grid, which orders the Greek cities of Miletus and Priene.

Even more so than the student

housing in Enschede (the student hostel in Enschede, designed by Ungers in 1963), the architecture of memories—the environment of recollection—is the theme and the content of the design for the Museum Tiergarten in Berlin from 1964. As the Enschede project assembles the general aspects of the city, the museum project refers to a more specific precedent; consisting of housing blocks, streets and plaza it reinforces, highlights and epitomizes the city of Berlin. The design of the different museum-blocks reflects the historical spectrum, reaching from an almost rural courtyard building to the design of a block within the block and the most refined interior. The museum complex reassembles historical antecedents, memories, and events of the city or of places related to the objects to be exhibited.

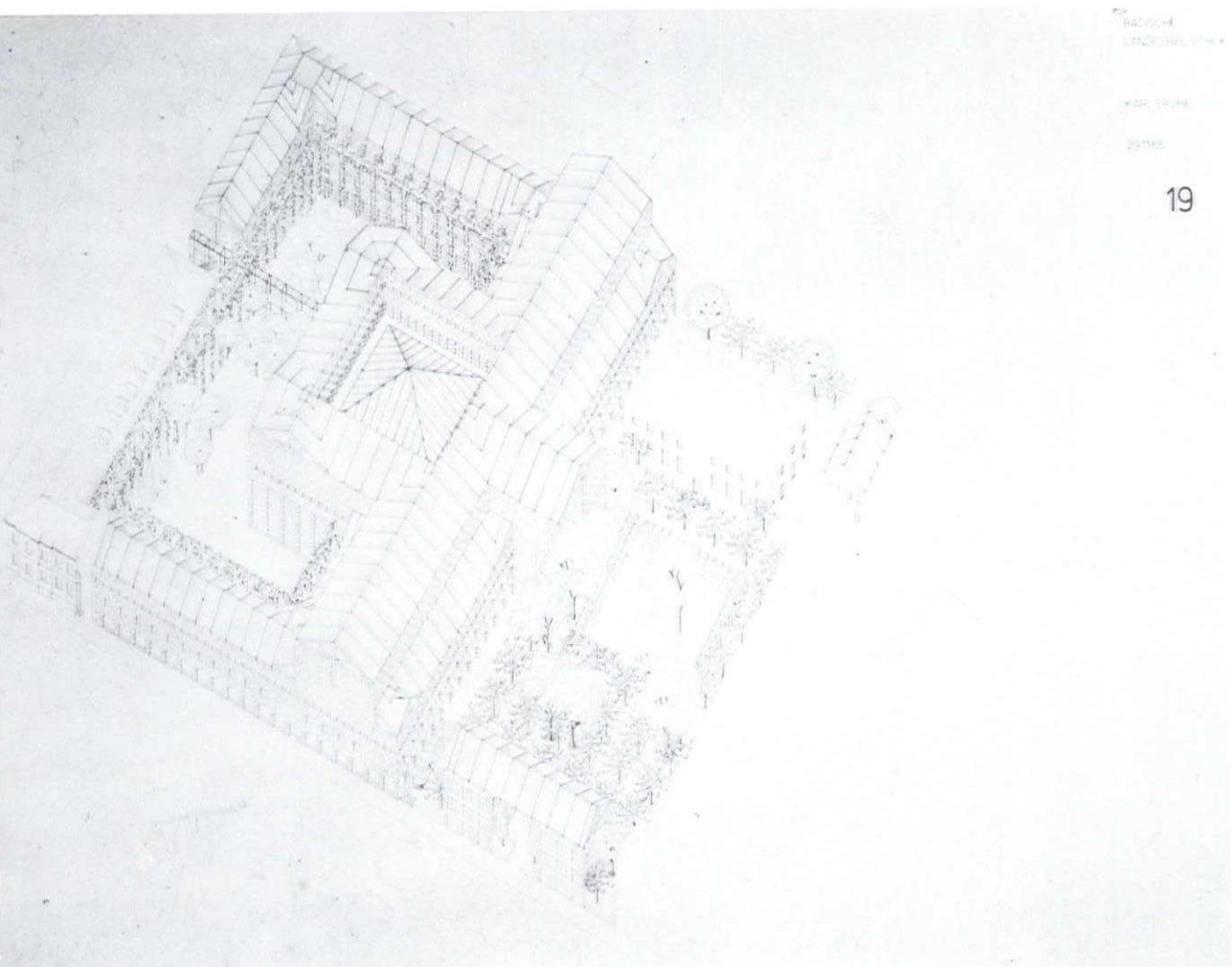
The museum is conceived as a 'city of the mind' in which places from the past are projected into a visionary future. In such a 'city' the elements, formed and transformed by conscious and unconscious memories, represent archetypes which are 'universally human and enjoy a suprapersonal validity.' (C G Jung)

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the correspondence between the element and its counterparts in the city collapses, so that in the end the element symbolizes only itself. Each element consequently becomes an autonomous object, complete within itself and self-referential. When considered in the context of the "city within the city," the identity of each element is relative to the identities of the surrounding objects. The singular and unique aspects of each type are established and reinforced by the assemblage, the forum in which the differences among the various objects is first discernible.

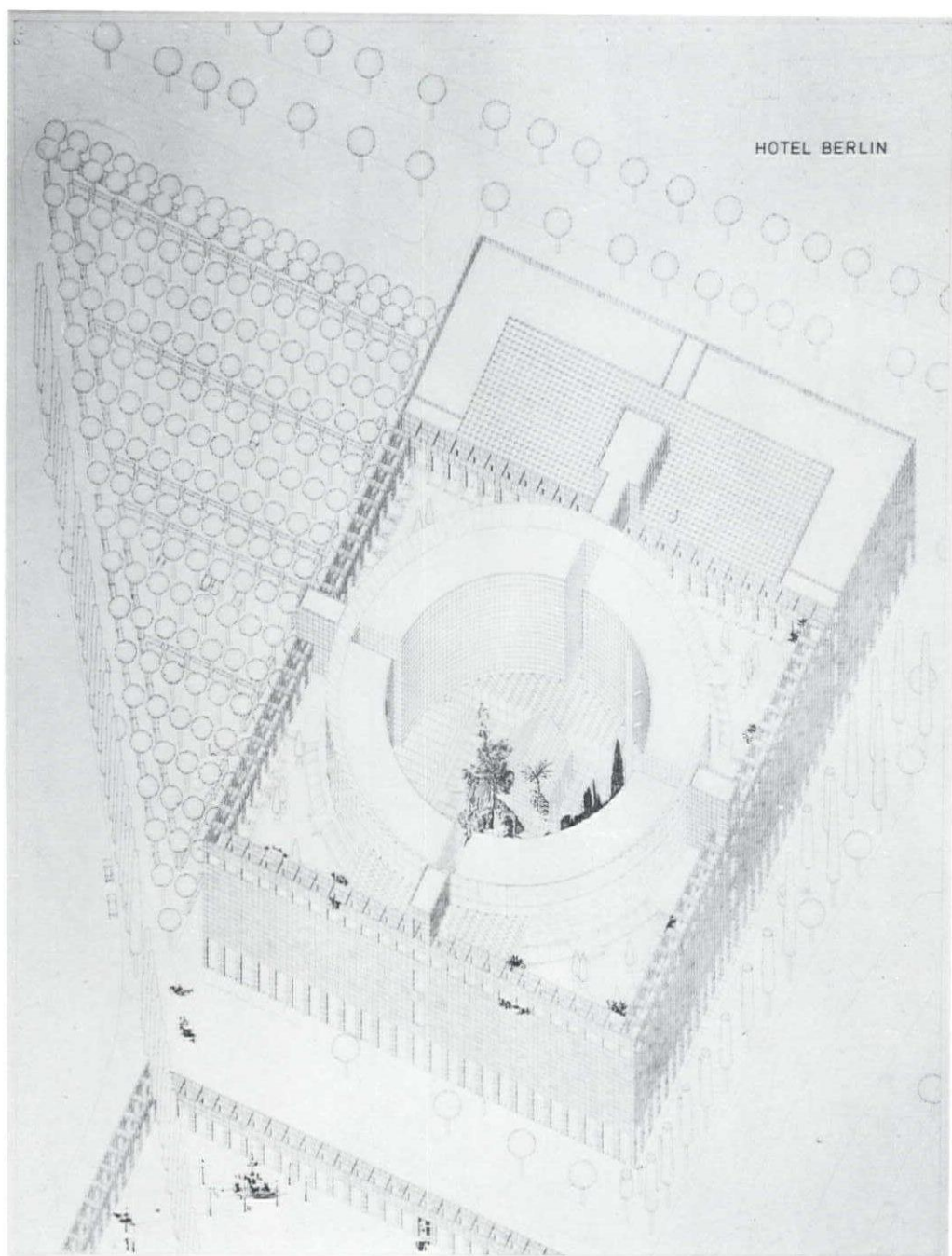
Ungers's design for the Tiergarten Museum in Berlin exemplifies the "city within the city." Each building is thematic, referring to a typical urban form. The individual objects are self-referential; they do not seem to respond to a particular site condition. The idea of the central building, for example, is the crossing of two urban streets, a theme that is not suggested by the immediate context. As discussed in relation to Aldo Rossi's work, the presentation of an urban form

abstracted from its usual context serves to emphasize the particular nature of that form. Thus, in the central building at Tiergarten, the image of the two crossing streets is especially powerful.



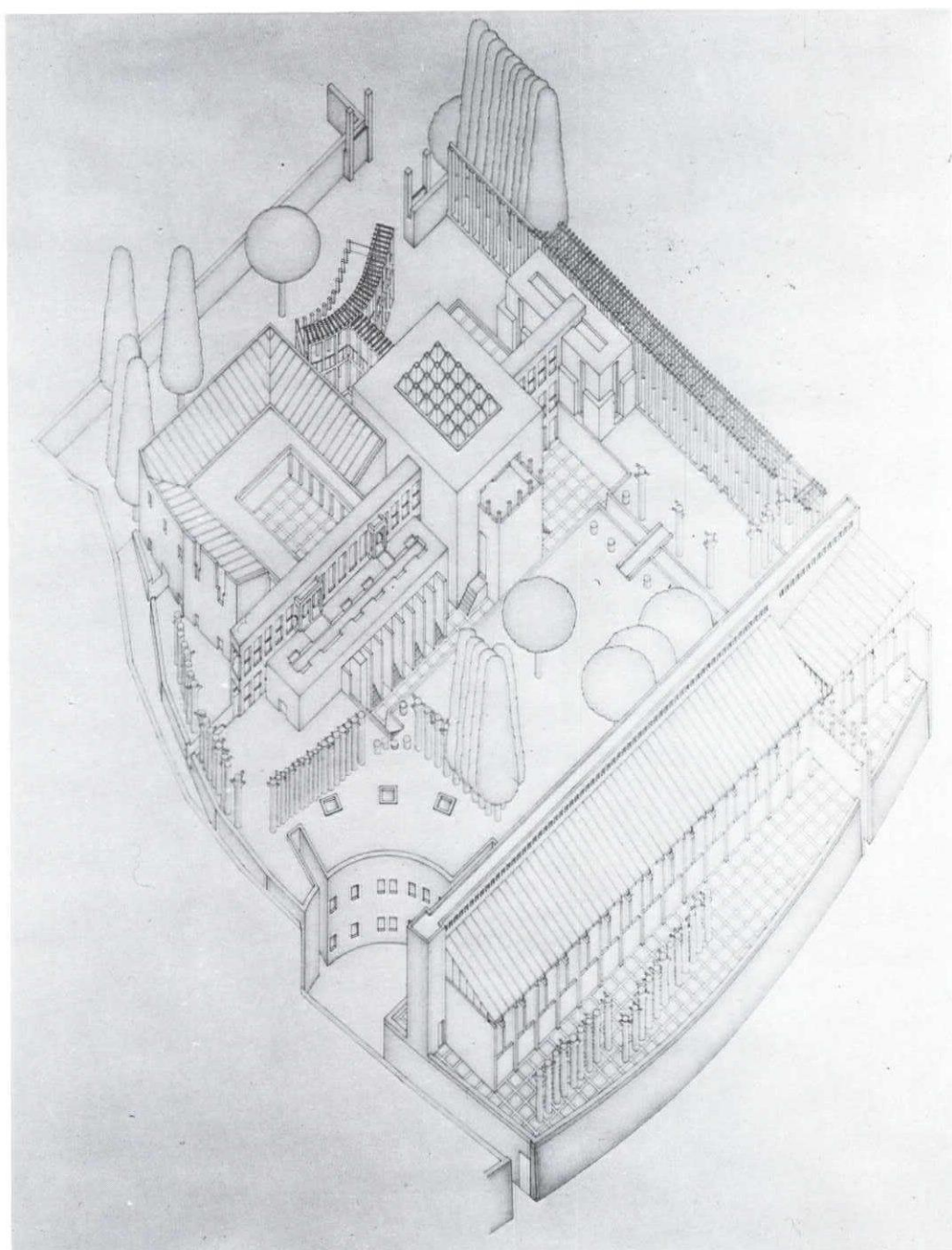
Badische Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe

Axonometric



Hotel Berlin

Axonometric, 197



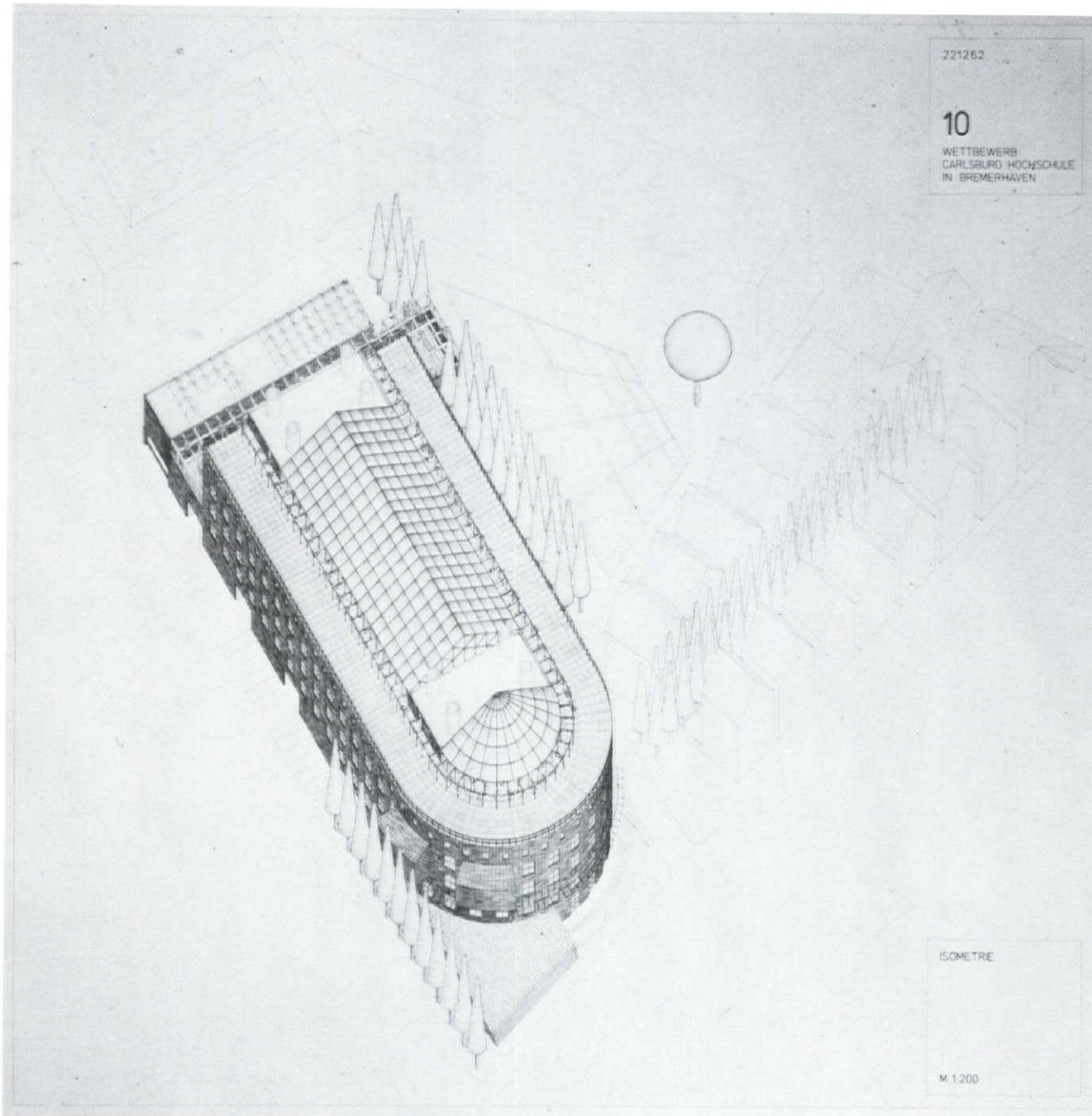
Competition Entry for the German Embassy at Rome

Axonometric, 1965

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WETTBEWERB  
CARLSBURG HOCHSCHULE  
IN BREMERHAVEN

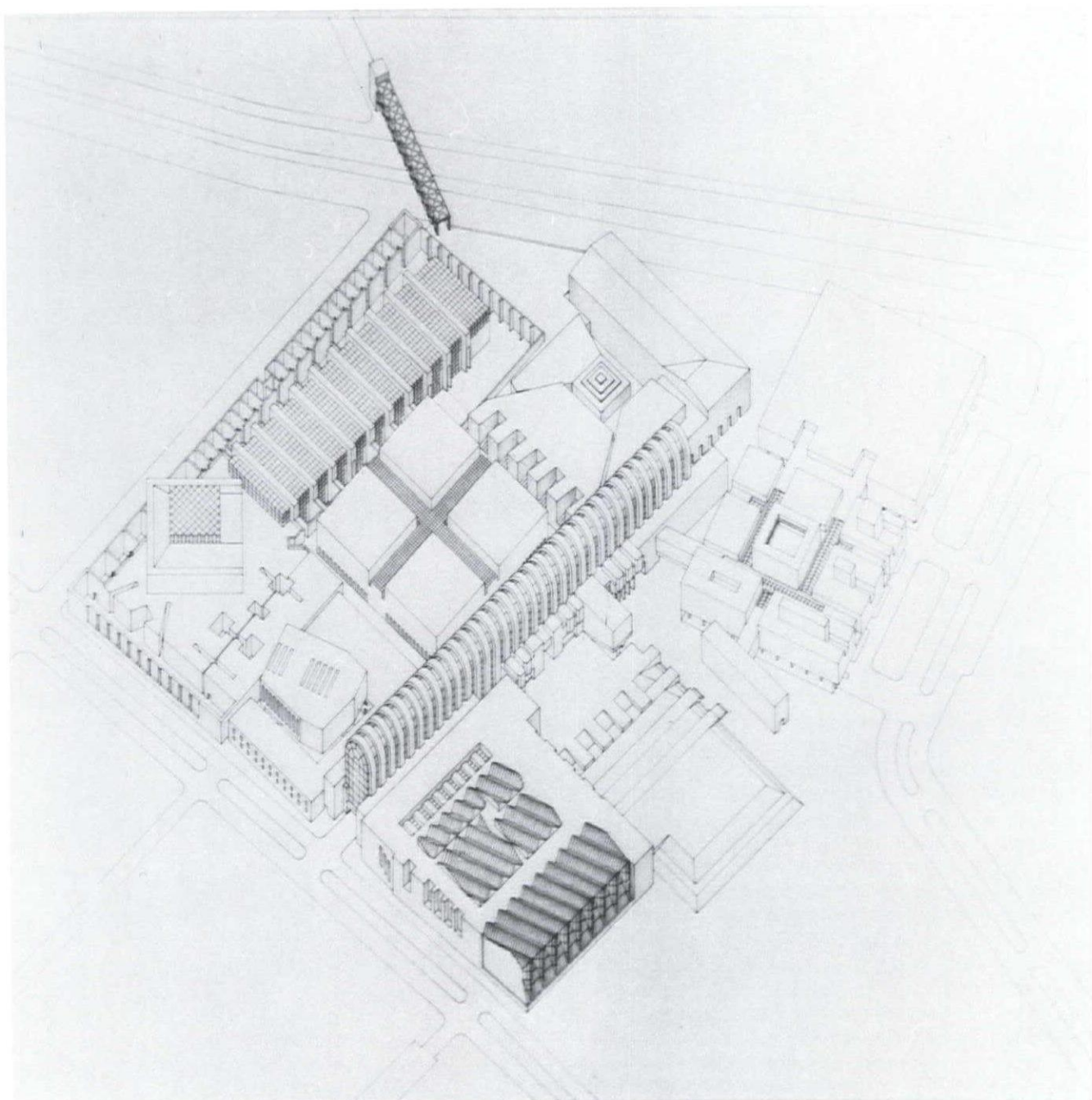


ISOMETRIE

M 1:200

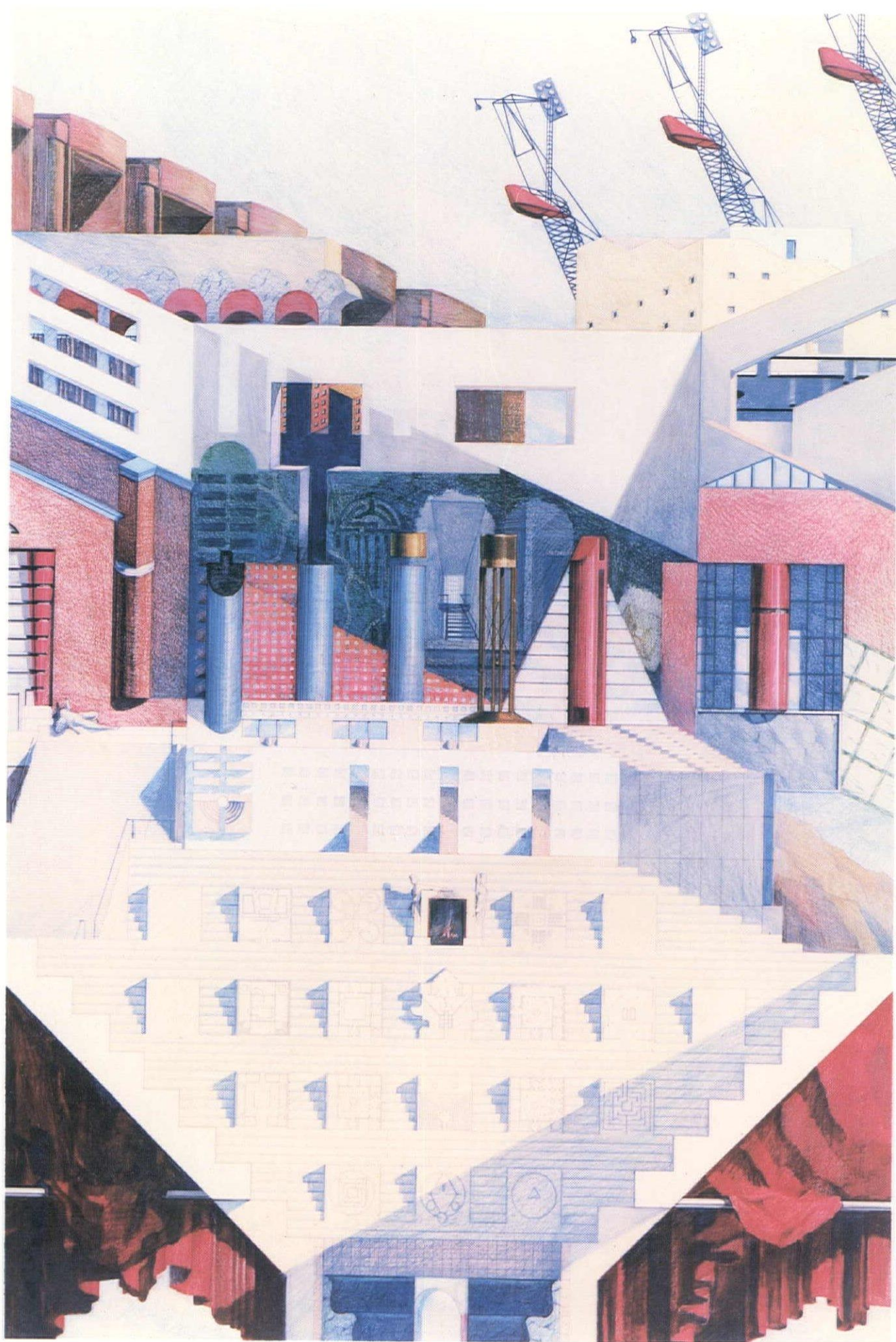
Competition Entry for Carlsburg Hochschule in Bremerhaven

Isometric, 1979



Tiergarten Museum, Berlin

Axonometric, 1964



# Rodolfo Machado & Jorge Silvetti

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In this exhibition, Rodolfo Machado and Jorge Silvetti elaborate on their belief that architecture exists as a discipline—a distinct body of knowledge comprising known conventions and meanings rooted in precedent. In their work these conventions are manipulated to create new forms and meanings. The existing conventions and meanings provide a necessary background and frame of reference for the understanding of the new forms. In fact, Machado and Silvetti suggest that it is impossible for architecture to escape the reciprocity between old and new: “We are what we know and forms come from forms.” This method of production, in which new forms are created and understood through an understanding of the forms from which they derived, is proposed in opposition to one that relies solely on style or casual figurative reference.

In the drawing “A Theory of Production of Architecture,” Silvetti illustrates the operation of transformation, using as his subject matter several of his

and Machado’s projects. These projects, a “known” set of forms, are collaged to produce a new context. Elements such as a planter and an apartment tower are drawn at the same size and juxtaposed such that their old meaning is blurred and their “latent attributes and qualities” become visible. With respect to this interpretation, Silvetti’s drawing is reminiscent of those by Aldo Rossi. The purpose of their drawings is essentially a didactic and they can be regarded as architectural criticism rather than as representations of specific pieces of architecture. Rossi’s intention is to enhance our understanding of various building types. To this end, he represents these types removed from their urban context, thus emphasizing their essential characteristics. Silvetti’s intention in “A Theory of Production of Architecture,” on the other hand, is to represent a method of production, one based on the transformation of known meanings. He collages particular pieces of architecture to create a new urban context in which the individual projects appear as fragments. Our reading of the forms, seen in this new

## About this Exhibition

Rodolfo Machado and  
Jorge Silvetti

There have been two basic criteria for the selection of examples of our work for this exhibit.

First, to use the opportunity of an exhibit at the Fogg Museum to present unpublished, unknown work, and second to present a sample of the different endeavors in which we are engaged as architects.

Thus we chose very recent work only (indeed, all of the work presented here was done in the last 9 months), and three 'types' of design:

- 1) presentation drawings done for an architectural commission that has recently been completed,
- 2) an entry for an international

- competition,
- 3) a special piece designed for an exhibition.

As such the first is a type of drawing that represents with maximum accuracy the reality of the intervention. The second a set of drawings (or better, 'representations') that stress idea and image, and which ostensibly intends to convince. The third, a text and a drawing that are intended both as discourses on theory and criticism, that aim to contribute to the clarification of the current state of architectural thought.

All of them are 'representations', most are drawings, that is to say,

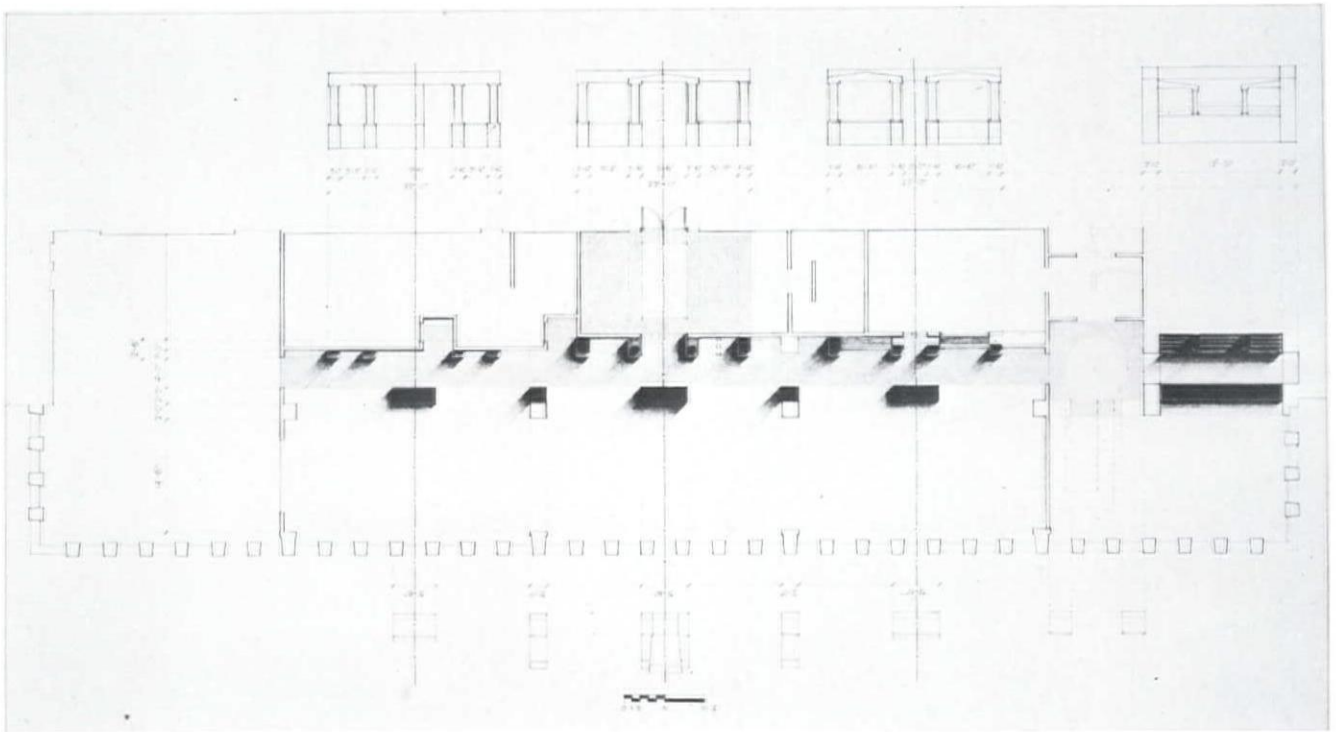
'illusions'. Perhaps by presenting three different types of representations addressing different aims, we stress the importance of 'representation' in the production of architecture. At a moment when 'drawings' have become fashionable like the revival of the classical style, it is important to focus the discussion about their role more precisely. Although they are a means to an end (and the justifications about their present status as works in themselves is at best dubious), drawings are at the same time the locus of the creative moment, the only evidence of the idea of what does not yet exist, the tool that defines unmistakably who is an architect and who is not.

context, begins to change. Most notably, the stair from the "Fountain House" project, which occupies the central position in the drawing, is transformed from an isolated object within a pure cube into a space that connects the various urban fragments. This new reading of the stair is dependent on its reference to the piazza, a known type, and possibly to the specific model of the Spanish Steps.

"A Theory of Production of Architecture," must be seen, then, not as a representation of architecture but as an illustration of an approach to the making of architecture. This interpretation is suggested by Silvetti's method of representation. Just as the individual projects are represented in a way that results in ambiguous readings and new meanings, so too the drawing itself is spatially ambiguous, allowing for more than one reading. Silvetti has used certain conventions of drawing (perspective, axonometric, shadowing) to create the illusion of depth. However, he has used these conventions in a manner that subverts our usual reading

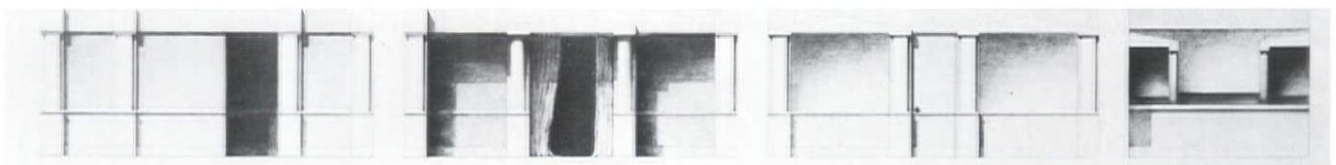
of them. Diagonal lines of perspective and axonometric blend into those of plan and elevation so that two- and three-dimensional readings of the drawing coexist. As a two-dimensional representation, the drawing remains simply a reflection of the known—a collage of individual projects. It is only when we interpret the diagonal lines as representing depth that the transformation is completed, that the stair is seen as a dynamic urban space. This double reading of space, as either flat or deep, reinforces the double reading of the stair as either isolated object or infill piazza. On both levels, then, the drawing represents Machado and Silvetti's belief that new architectural form is generated through a manipulation of architectural conventions and precedents and that both readings, old and new, must necessarily coexist.

*Editor:*



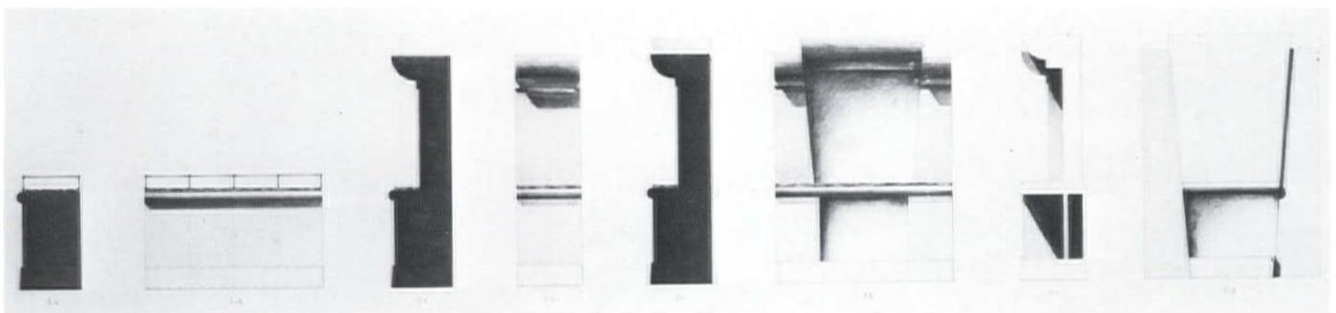
The Downtown Club

Plan, 1980



The Downtown Club

Facades, 1980



The Downtown Club

Furniture, 1980

## The Downtown Club— State Street Bank.

A renovation of the dining facilities of a prestigious Boston institution. Construction completed during the summer of 1980.

The problem consisted mainly of systematizing and giving character to a rather innocuous and disorganized large space at the top of one of downtown Boston's skyscrapers.

A few simple, classical devices permitted the resolution of the stated problem.

First, local symmetries, by which the neutral intercolumnar spaces acquire sense. Second the idea of facades as architectural and

iconographic devices to qualify each space implied by the symmetries. Third, the choice of a precise iconographic theme of 'clubby' reminiscences, which is reiterated in four variations to respond to local irregularities of the existing walls and to accommodate diverse types of art to accommodate diverse types of Club (prints, sculptures, ship models). Each facade generates then its own specific space as well as responds to particular functional and existing constraints.

They also generate a 'public' area, the circulation, which is flanked on the other side by discreet, free

standing pieces of furniture. Depending on the point of view of the observer, while sitting in the dining area the facades pull each space together, generating the sense of 'room,' whereas while circulating they generate continuity that is reinforced by the design idea of the pieces of furniture: a continuous, extruded mahogany 'moulding' that has been 'sliced' to permit access to the dining areas as well as to allow the light of the panoramic views to illuminate the circulation and to accent the relief of the facades.

Drawings by James Favaro and John Gardner

## ON THE QUESTION OF THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST

The current controversy about the presence of the past in architecture needs clarification. There are many interpretations that confuse some recent stylistic manifestations with more fundamental issues about what the production of architecture is or should be. It could be said that the authors of those generally nostalgic manifestations regard style as the simplest of elements — and stylistic work as the most powerful of manners — to conjure the cherished presence, sometimes at the cost of displacing their products away from the realm of architecture; simultaneously, these authors disregard the possibilities inherent in another kind of work, profoundly architectural in nature, which acts as carrier and demonstration of the conceptual continuity and permanency of architecture. The aforementioned controversy is related to figurative choices, where “the presence of the past” can be literally checked. However, most of these literal figurative changes recall in tone, in mode and in effect the typical avant-garde operation of inversion as an opposition to an immediate precedent. Since most of the ideological tennets of Modern Architecture seemed to have been exhausted in the sixties the proponents of the “modern” stand have had to blatantly resort to history in order to assure the continuity and survival of those ideas. These manifestations contain all the avant-garde ingredients; as such, they contain also their own rapid self-demise; they soon become the prey of modern society’s most peculiar trait: the consumption of symbols.

Against these easy, banal avant-garde operations, we would like to present a more substantial premise: rather than attempting a critique of Modern Architecture based on inversion — with the consequences of shock, controversy, alienation of both artist and public and a certain, quick collapse into kitsch — we would like to see a critique of the present state of architecture based on more solid and general notions about the production of form and the production of meaning. From this perspective the idea of the “presence of the past” is a foundation and an inevitable beginning: for we are what we know and forms come from forms. The act of production is an unavoidable one of transformation of the known, and it is only through this process that mutations can occur and eventually novelty result.

Our stand, therefore, is not stylistic; for better or worse the present problems cannot be solved as a matter of style. Through our projects we would like to discuss more fundamental principles against which architectural performance should be checked — a test that only history can substantiate. Thus we have suspended the controversy about Modern Architecture and we have incorporated whatever part of it is valuable into our own “historical resources”. Since, therefore, the presence of the past is inevitable as well as unequivocal, its discussion and controversy should be dismissed, and the continuity of the avant-garde tradition stopped, in order to concentrate directly on the production of an architecture that effects its own clarification by resorting to principles that are beyond style.

Rodolfo Machado and Jorge Silvetti  
Boston, April 1980

We would like to thank the assistants that have helped in the production of these drawings: Tarek Ashkar, Charles Crowley, James Favaro, Michael Gabellini, Peter Loggren, Stephen Wanta and Daniel Wheeler.

The Presence of the Past

La Biennale di Venezia, 1980

### La Biennale di Venezia, 1980

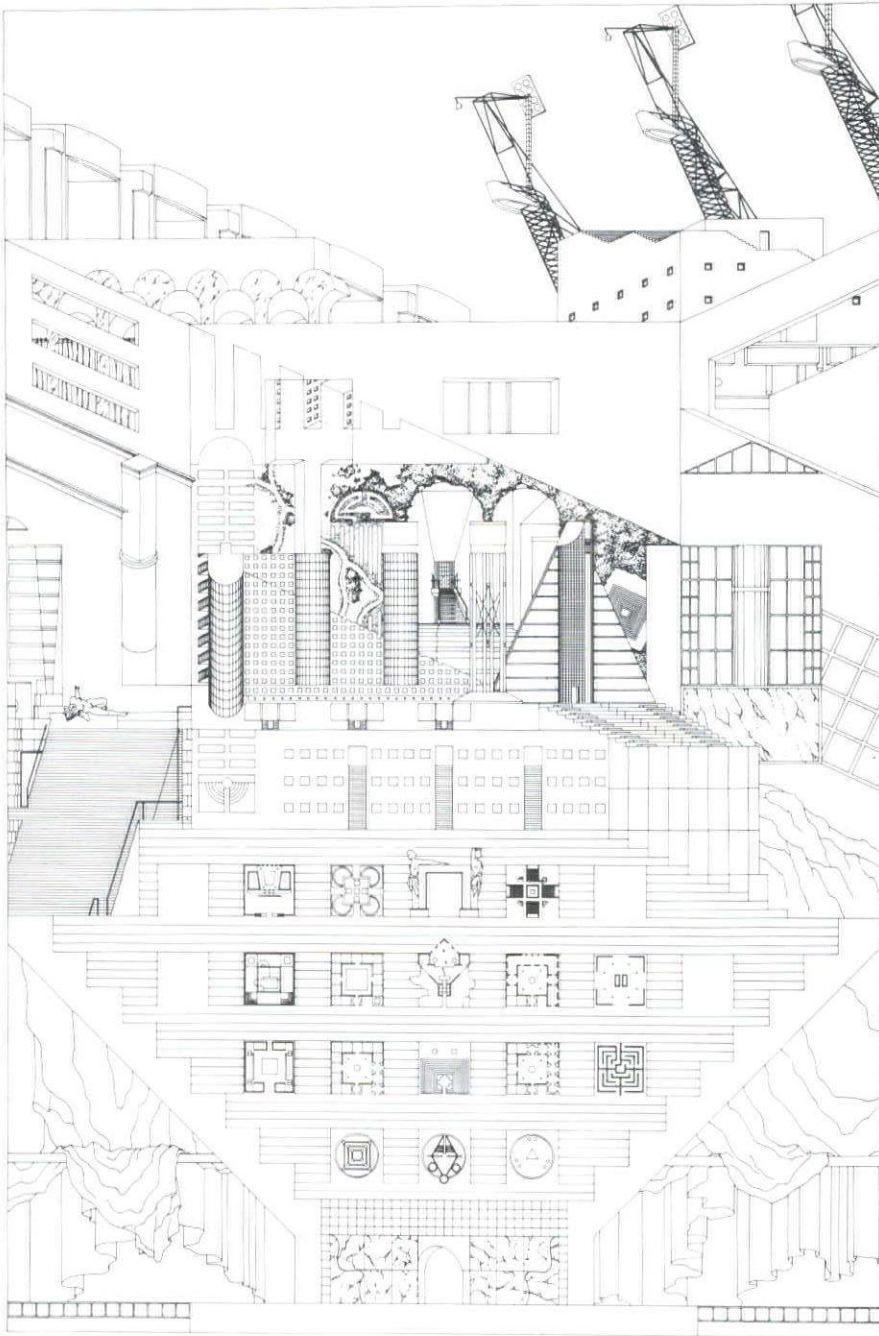
These two panels are part of a set of ten exhibited at the Venice Biennale this summer as part of the American participation. The general subject of the exhibition was *The Presence of the Past*, and it is the first time that the Biennale devoted an entire section to architecture.

The two panels included here are concerned with the exposition of ideas and positions rather than with examples of our design work (which is the content of the other eight panels for the Biennale not included here).

The first is a text that states our position with respect to the theme of the exhibition, and with the current trends and fascination with historicism, revivalism, classicism, etc.

The second is a drawing entitled *A Theory of Production of Architecture* and subtitled *Autobiography, 1970–1980*. In this we collaged our design work of the decade just ending (works we did individually, together and in association with others). More importantly, it is the conception and the technique of

assemblage and representation used that we are interested in exhibiting. As a true painterly object we would like to let it speak for itself. It was conceived, assembled and drawn originally by Jorge Silvetti. There are three rendered versions of it: the one here, ink line drawing on mylar (executed by James Favaro); the one at the Biennale in Venice, prismacolor on card stock (colored by Daniel Wheeler); and the one at the recently held *America Draus* exhibition in Helsinki, Finland, black pencil on strathmore (executed by Peter Loggren).



# HEADQUARTERS OF DOM-SICHERHEITSTECHNIK GMBH & CO KG

BRÜHL · COLOGNE · GERMANY

## THE SITE PLANNING

We propose an object building centrally located allowing for a maximum height of thirty meters, we have chosen to render it physically isolated from the existing buildings, but it is of course easy to imagine enclosed built connectors — under, on, or above ground — added without detriment to our design quality and character. The site planning has been developed with the use of strong, simple, immediately understandable and practical principles of organization. The existing parking lot has been extended, while the new wide access road leading to the security gates offers to the visitor an impressive view of the building across a large open stone paved area with references to both, the grand honor courtyards of the past and the equally grand industrial parks of the present.

Particular square (its corners materialized by four tall light poles directed towards the dome), marked circle (partially materialized by the edges of the conical surface leading to the building and the simultaneous location of floor drainages on that line), centrality (marked by the dome) (frankly (of the approach) and axially (of the building): these are the means of organizing and, more importantly, of conveying directly and unequivocally, feelings of timeless quality, accuracy, geometric precision and formal beauty with which the DOM products are infused. The East-West axis structures the proposed and it could, in due time, determine future development. For instance: our building could be treated as the "head" of a linear structure to be, or just as one of a series of buildings linearly arranged. As it is presented here, the last event along the axis — the steps from cafeteria to the ground level — could lead to some garden structures to be used for the relaxation of the people at DOM.

## THE BUILDING

Its conception has followed similar logic and geometric premises: it is a building endowed with the formal characteristics of tall buildings, consisting of three major parts, a rectangular base, a cubic body and a domed head.

The base will have a solid appearance; its solidity is achieved with carefully joined insulated and anodized aluminum panels with co-planar glass windows. The body is faced with a gridded curtain wall in semi-reflective glass applied on a one meter square module. The dome is finished with highly polished stainless steel panels. These three elements — which in a typologically purified reduction of a tall building should have been stacked one on top of the other sharing a common center containing the vertical circulation — are displaced towards the front of the building, consistently, the double cylinder of the two



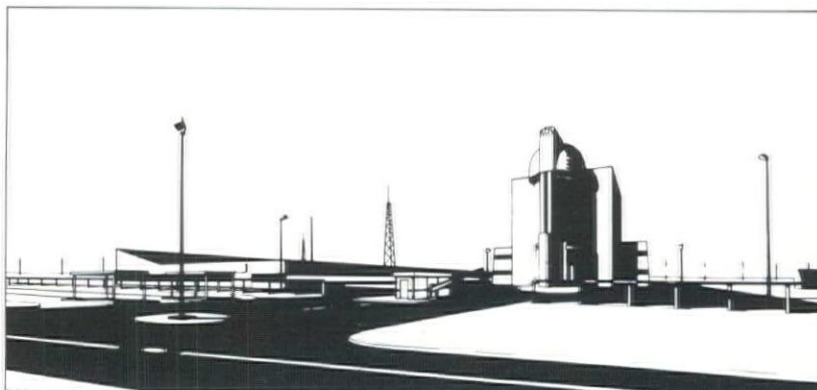
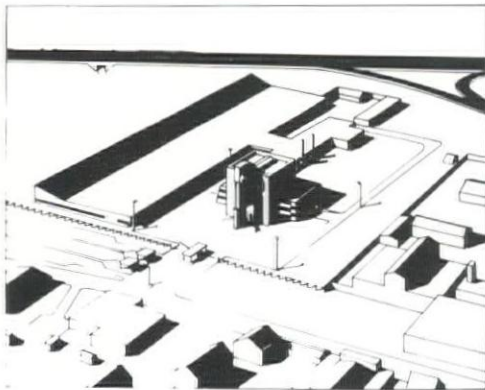
elevator shafts is also moved, exposed, its center stepping at the dome's edge. This formal displacement produces three noticeable results: first, an interpenetration of pure, prime solid forms; second, it produces a unique and unforgettable image, an image that is not capricious or unmoderated but an image whose configuration derives from the industrial design vocabulary of DOM; and third, this operation generates a workable modern office building endowed with a special central space — a series of terraces — that could be furnished to facilitate interaction among the building users. From a distance — from the freeway or from the surroundings — this "movement" of the building's parts will not be perceived and the building will acquire a vertical, beacon or tower-like configuration.

As the plans demonstrate, the building is flexible and can accommodate a variety of specific programmatic functional requirements. The plans as labeled here illustrate one of several possible functional schemes: Let it suffice at this point to describe at some length the role of the dome. The dome contains the Product Presentation Room, but, more than that it is a small corporation's museum, keeping records and proudly displaying, for clients and public relations, past and present products, the history of their technologies, the memorabilia of DOM's personalities, etc. A didactic room, if one wishes so, the house's public "office," the memory of the development of products of which to be proud. The domed room can be reached by elevators or through the cylindrical staircase from the sixth floor, emerging into it in a dignified fashion. Through a window opposite from the elevators and opening under the skylight one can look down into the building's central space and see the land beyond. The dome carries the DOM sign and in so doing, through the interplay of its significant elements — the word and the form — achieves maximum content, maximum symbolic effect.

## THE CONCLUSION

The means of production of this design are simple yet rich. The image is unique and strong, perhaps of an unrepeatable quality. The building's technology is of the standard kind for the finest corporation headquarters in Germany today. The building "speaks" in a clear and convincing message.

The image has been produced with an understanding of both, the pragmatic and symbolic requirements and of the commercial use to which such an icon should lend itself: i.e., the building could become a logo in itself. Finally, the building is certainly charged with formal reverberations of the best moments of German architecture as well as with the seductive culture of the best, most developed corporate house of today.



DOM Competition

Perspectives, 1980

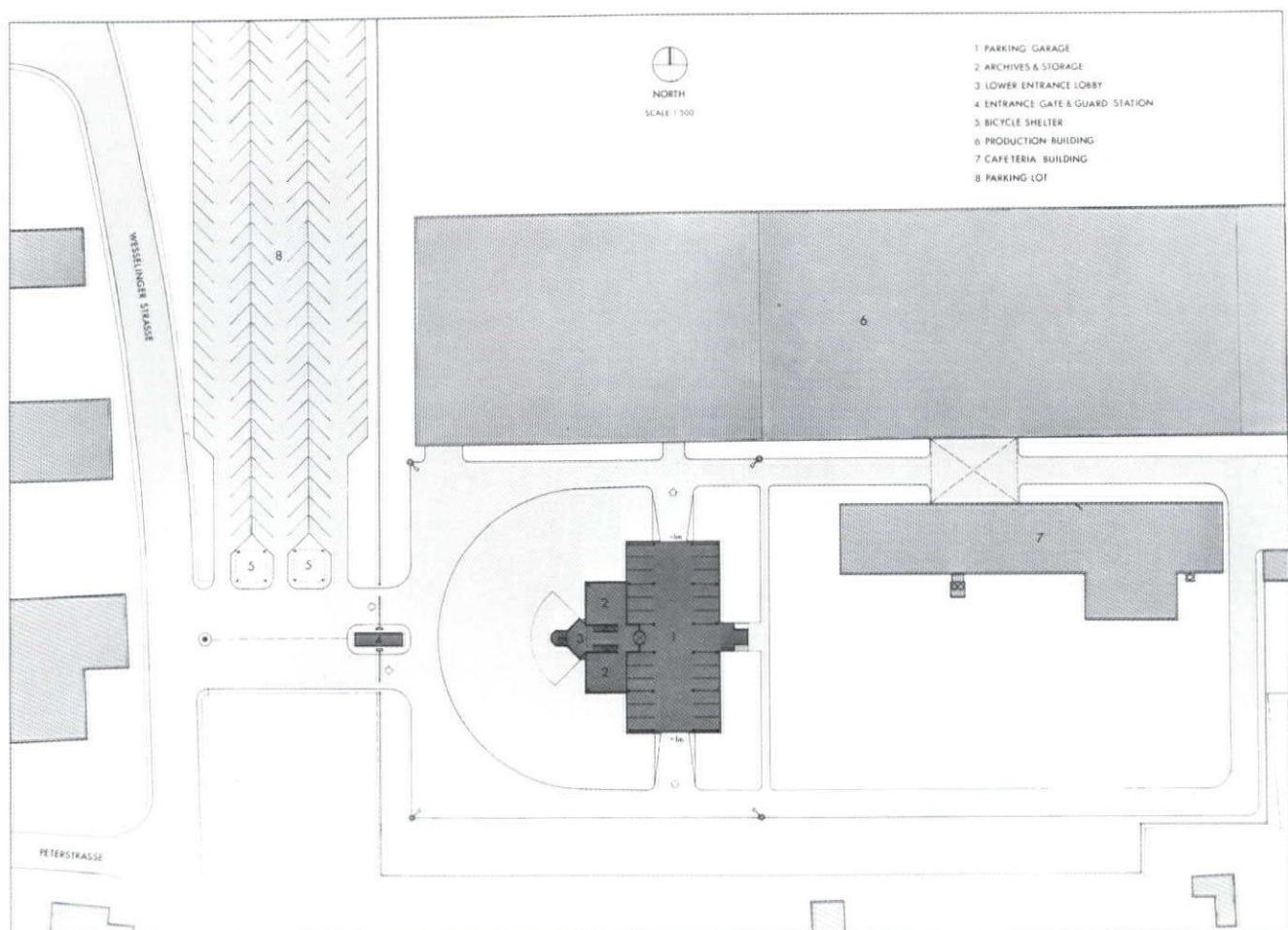
## DOM-SICHERHEITSTECHNIK New Administrative Headquarters, Bruhl Cologne, West Germany.

International competition held in October 1980. By invitation to 50 architectural firms over the world.

As stated in the invitation and competition rules, the programmatic and functional specifications "have been voluntarily simplified at this stage of the design to focus architects' creativity more on general concepts than on functional constraints." The organizers were interested in the symbolic and image aspects of the proposals, and they specifically state in the competition rules: "The architecture of the building and its

outstanding quality should strike the spectator at first glance. It should, moreover, evoke a visual and psychological feedback, infused with reminiscences from DOM's advertising approach, centering around the following features: accuracy, security, protection, shiny appearance, advanced technology, symbol for metal, discreet functionality, formal beauty.

"These symbolic features should not be apparent only to visitors or to Wesselingstrasse pedestrians, but also to motorists on the near-by highway. For this to be possible, the



DOM Competition

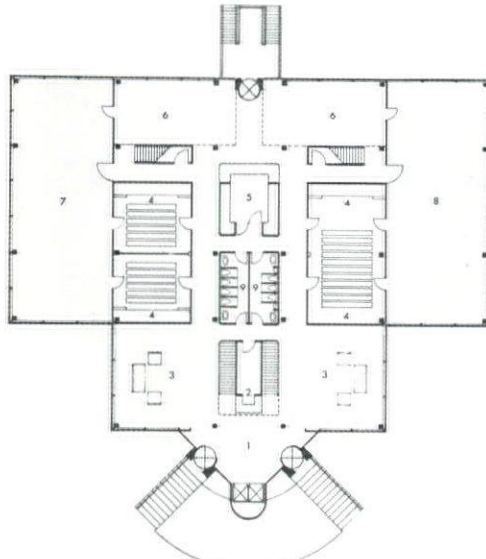
Site plan, 1980

new building will have to stand out in its environment. A DOM sign should be integrated into the architectural composition.” (their current logo)

A text describing the idea and design is in the exhibit, which consists of all the panels submitted for the competition (size and content were strictly specified). This entry was awarded an honorable mention.

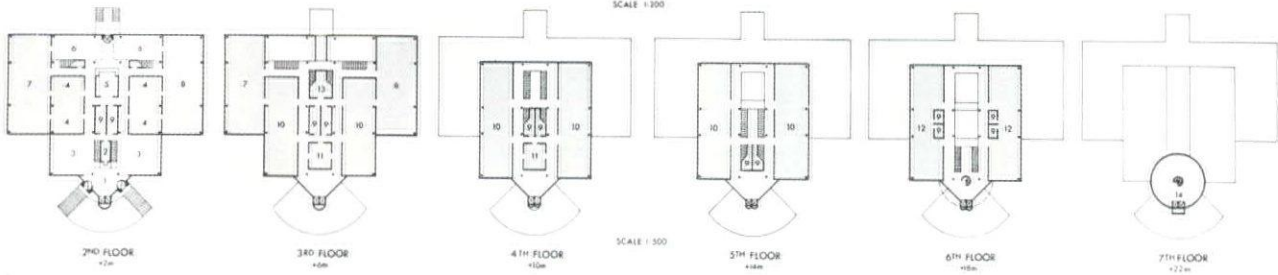
Drawings by James Favaro and Daniel Wheeler; model by James Smith

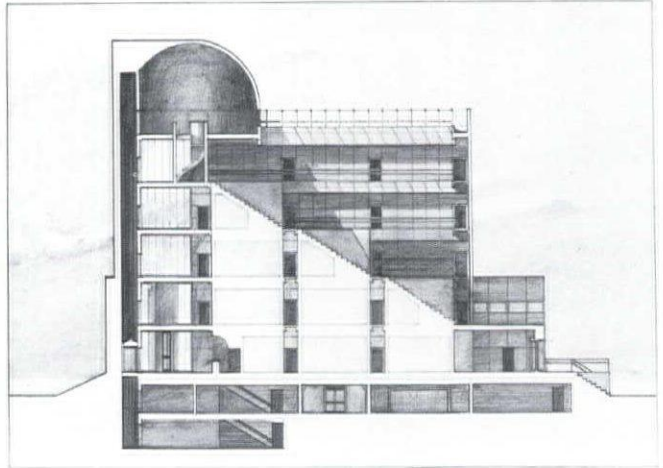
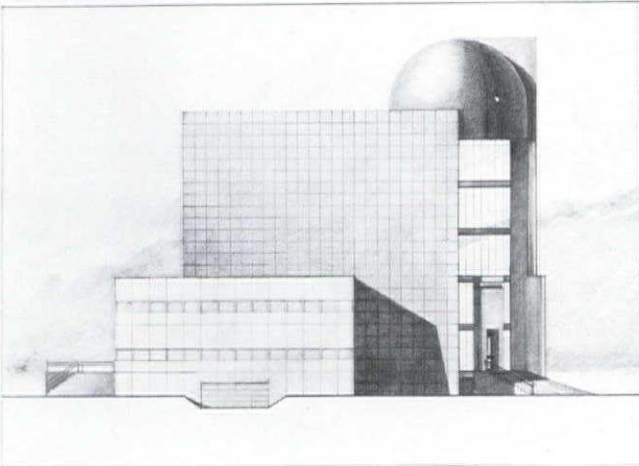
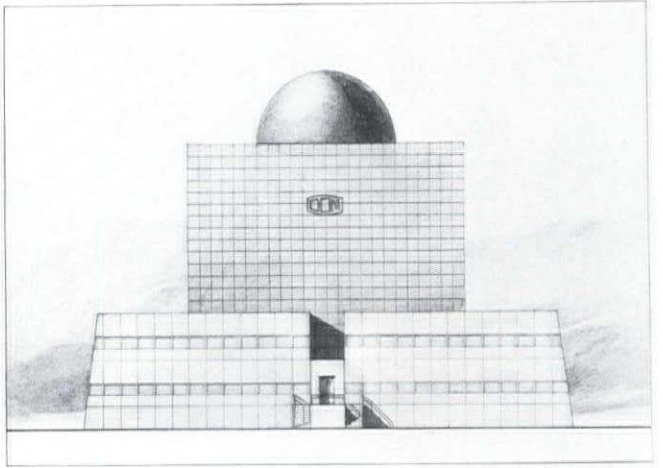
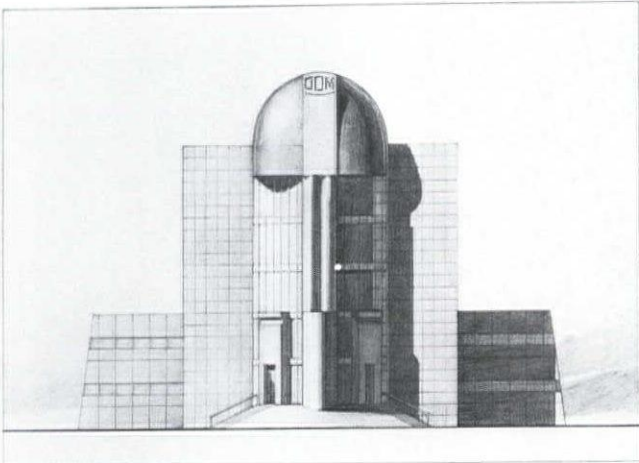
TOTAL GROSS AREA 3100 m<sup>2</sup>



- 1. MAIN ENTRANCE LOBBY
- 2. RECEPTION HALL
- 3. RECEPTION HALL
- 4. TRAINING CENTER
- 5. KITCHEN
- 6. CAFETERIA
- 7. DESIGN DEPARTMENT
- 8. ACCOUNTING
- 9. BATHROOM
- 10. SALES DIVISION
- 11. MEETING ROOM
- 12. DIRECTOR'S OFFICE & COMPUTER ROOM
- 13. STORAGE
- 14. PRODUCT PRESENTATION

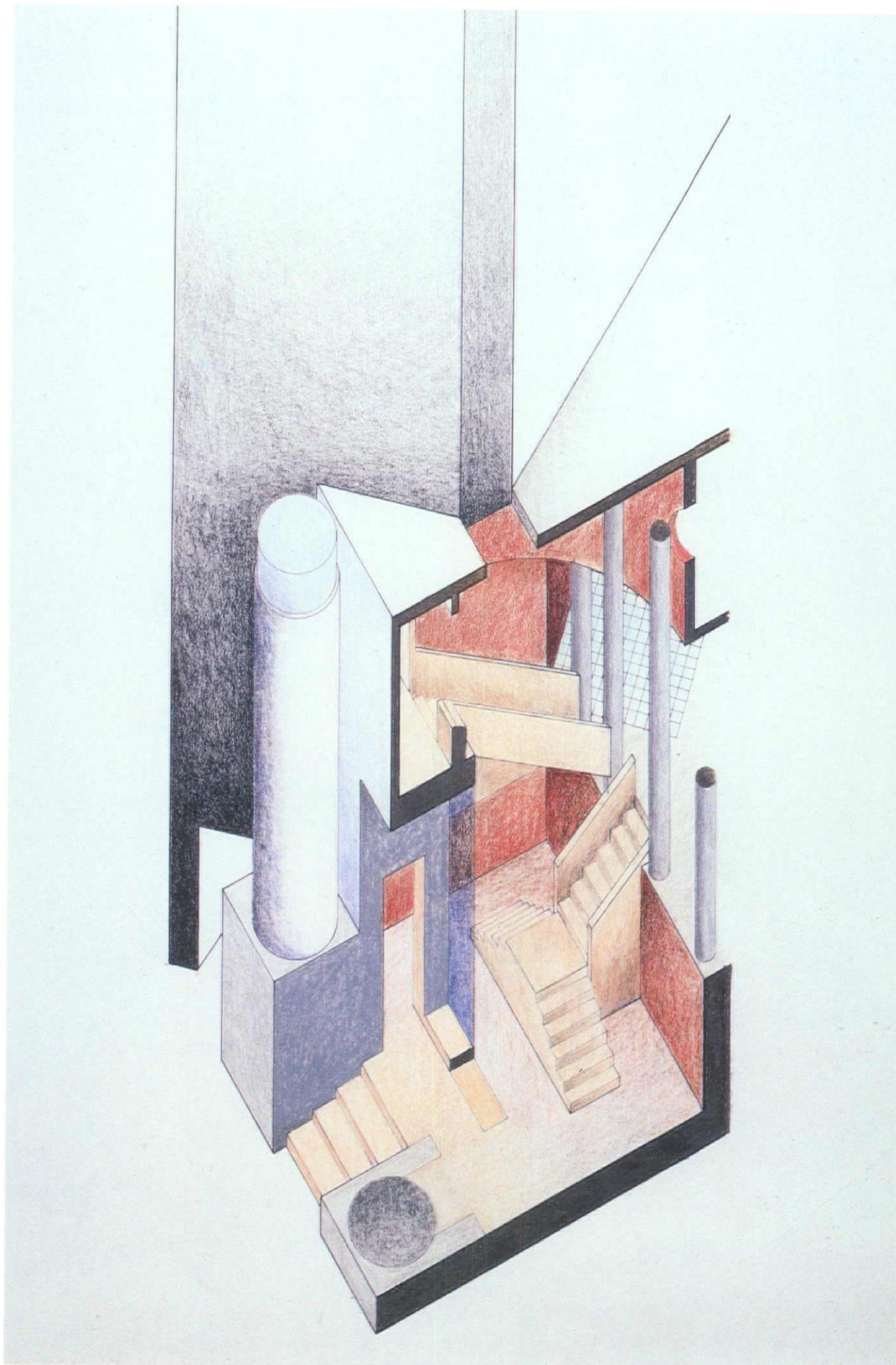
ENTRANCE LEVEL  
(2ND FLOOR)  
SCALE 1:300





DOM Competition

Facades and section, 1980



Building 3, Alsine

Axonometric: Foyer, 1977

# Diana Agrest & Mario Gandelsonas

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The three buildings represented by Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelsonas are investigations into the relationship between architecture and the city. Each design is a proposal for a type of party-wall building. In each case, the distinguishing feature of the type is an architectural device that evolved in response to a particular urban condition. In these three proposals, the architectural features that distinguish the types are the light well, the building setback, and the corner entry. These devices, which developed in response to the need for light and access, are typical among buildings sited on the city grid.

In each of the designs, Agrest and Gandelsonas use the distinguishing feature of the type as a point of departure for the development of a formal theme. The light well is thus transformed into a court, the setback becomes a collage of three facades, and the corner entry generates a sequence of spaces along a diagonal axis. Because the architects superimpose formal themes on these typical devices, the buildings accumulate new meanings that

are rooted in their references to specifically architectural elements and combinations of elements (that is, the courtyard, the facade, and the architectural axis).

The architects manipulate the distinguishing feature of the type to investigate meaning on a level besides that of the architectural element itself. In Building I, for example, a central axis ties together the front and back pieces of the building. The axis, a traditional formal theme, is transformed in response to the functional requirements of the program. The end bay of the symmetrical facade contains the vehicular access to the parking level. Thus, behind the symmetrical facade there is an asymmetrical disposition of the elements of the program. This functional asymmetry is reflected in the treatment of the axis. Movement along the axis is obstructed by a series of elements: stair, (blue) column, and elevators. The double curved stairway further emphasizes the need to move off the axis. One side of the axis and one run of the stair is favored because the axis has been shifted off center in response to the

# Three Buildings

1977

Diana Agrest and  
Mario Gandelsonas

This project, for three buildings located in different areas of the same city, deals with the problem of the relationship between architecture and the urban context.

It has been a tradition for many years to design individual buildings without considering their particular contextual insertion. For us it is precisely this context—not just the immediate physical context, but also the more general context of the city—that determines the design of buildings. And what makes the context of the city recognizable is its building typology as much as its monuments: a typology that sometimes develops through history as a result of cultural and economic determinants, and other times is generated by building codes.

Our project deals with these issues, since the three buildings respond to the same type: the urban type *par excellence*, the building between party walls, with all the constraints and limitations of the building code. The three buildings represent different aspects of the developments and transformations that take this type and the code as points of departure, they also

develop the notion that they are part of a larger context—relating to the other buildings by juxtaposition, accumulation, reference. These buildings are fragments of a discourse already established among buildings in the city.

Each building takes one aspect of the type and/or the code and produces a particular transformation. Also, each building is considered as more than one building; in the first case, one building is set in front of another and connected through a courtyard with a vertical circulation; the second case uses the set-back law to generate recessed 'buildings'; while the third case develops the condition of interpenetration, where one building is literally designed inside another.

In Building 1, a punched box placed in front of a slab structure with a curtain wall facade marks the difference between base, shaft, and top, emphasizing the urban quality of the base with an arcade, and the symbolic importance of the door, designed in an urban scale.

In Building 2, three 'buildings'

are juxtaposed in such a way that they allow a formal and symbolic sequence to develop. Starting with a curtain wall facade, fragments are extracted and become windows of a second facade, which are fragmented or exploded to create a third facade of punched windows, producing an ambiguous change of scale.

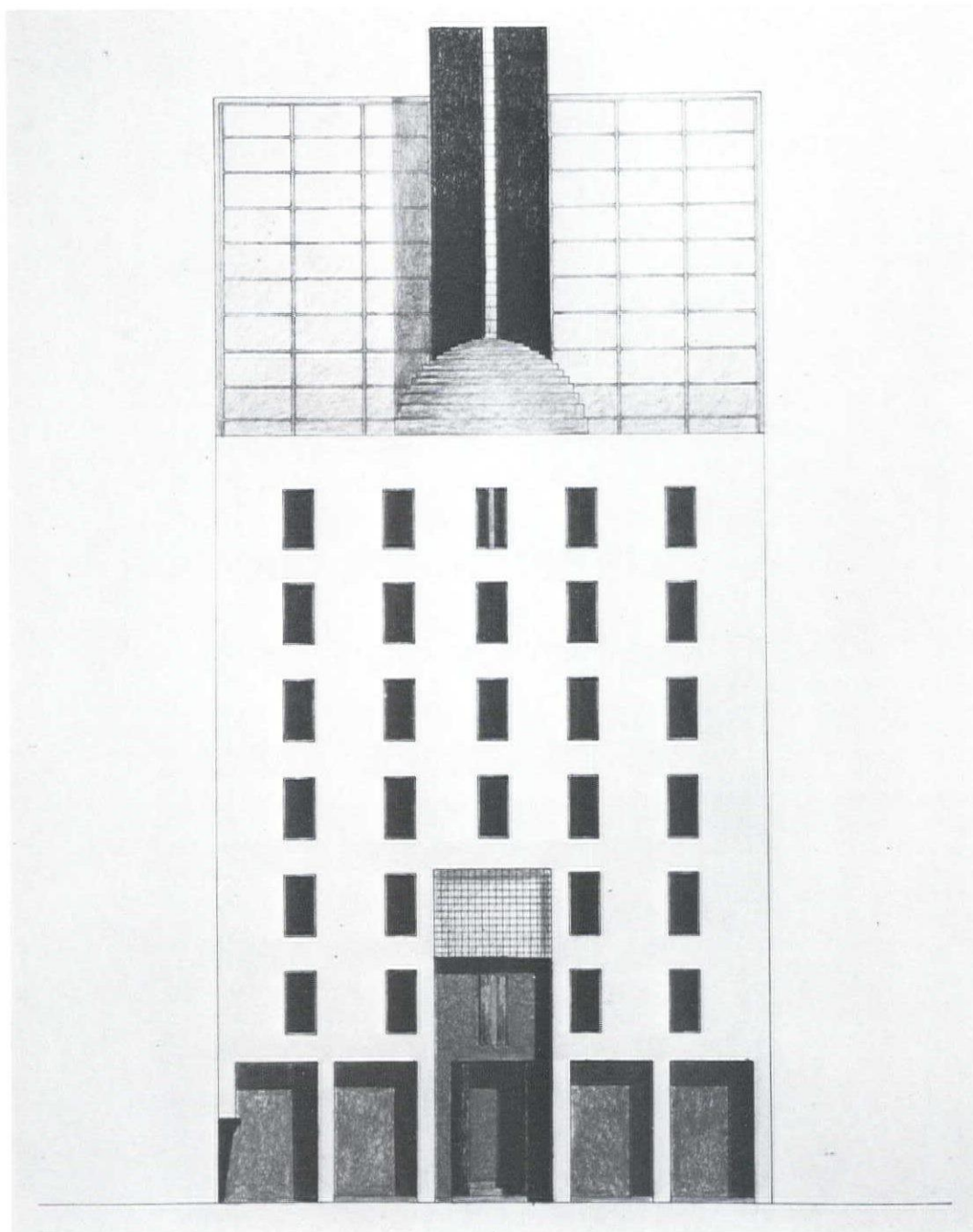
In Building 3, two 'buildings' interpenetrate each other: an office building and an apartment building with a central courtyard 'broken' in two corners—producing a sequence of three spaces that begins with a strong symbolic door articulated with monumental 'columns'.

This project attempts to confront the contradiction between theory and practice without reducing it to only one of these terms. It neither plays a 'pure' theoretical game, which does not acknowledge the complexity of reality, nor does it adopt a 'pure' pragmatic attitude in which the architect quite often forgets the cultural role of architecture—as not only the reflection but also the creation of culture. Therefore it is our aim to incorporate cultural issues in an eminently commercial operation.

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asymmetry introduced by the parking ramp. The glass block strip in the floor articulates this favoring and also serves to recenter the axis and reestablish the symmetry.

The manner in which Agrest and Gandelsonas use various architectural elements to define as well as to block the axis emphasizes the particularly architectural nature of these elements. This is illustrated in the treatment of the columns in the stair lobby. The paired red columns frame an axis in a traditional way. The blue column, situated between the red columns, blocks the axis and opposes the function of the red columns. This conflict sets up a dialogue between the three columns, articulating the way in which these elements assume meaning in relation to each other and to the axis they define.



Building 1, Medrano

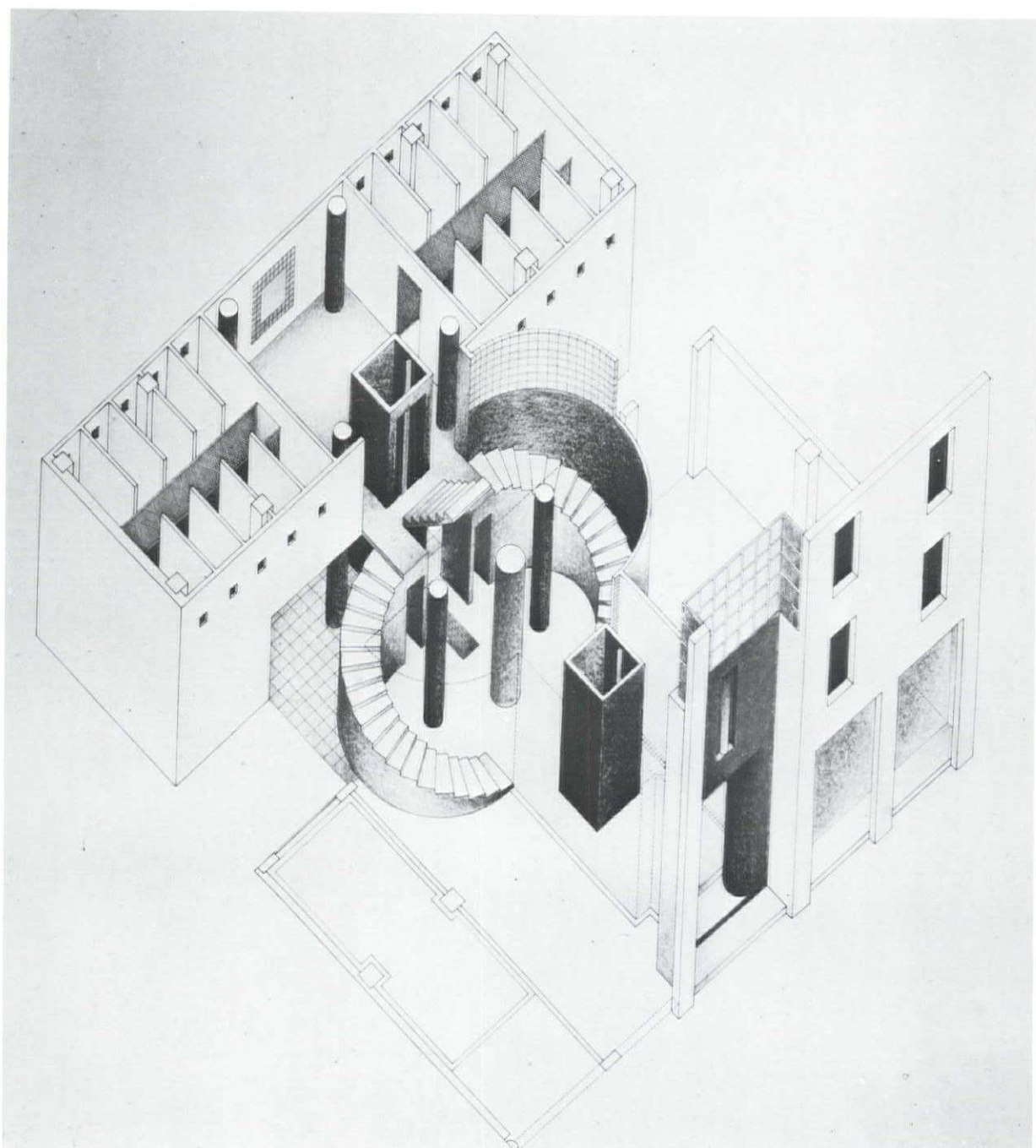
Elevation: Front Facade, 1977

## Building 1

Following the idea of establishing a relationship between buildings and between the buildings and the city, Building 1 becomes two buildings juxtaposed. One is the front lower building treated as solid, with perforated windows and an arcade at the base. The programme requirements, which do not allow for a strict formal sub-division, are

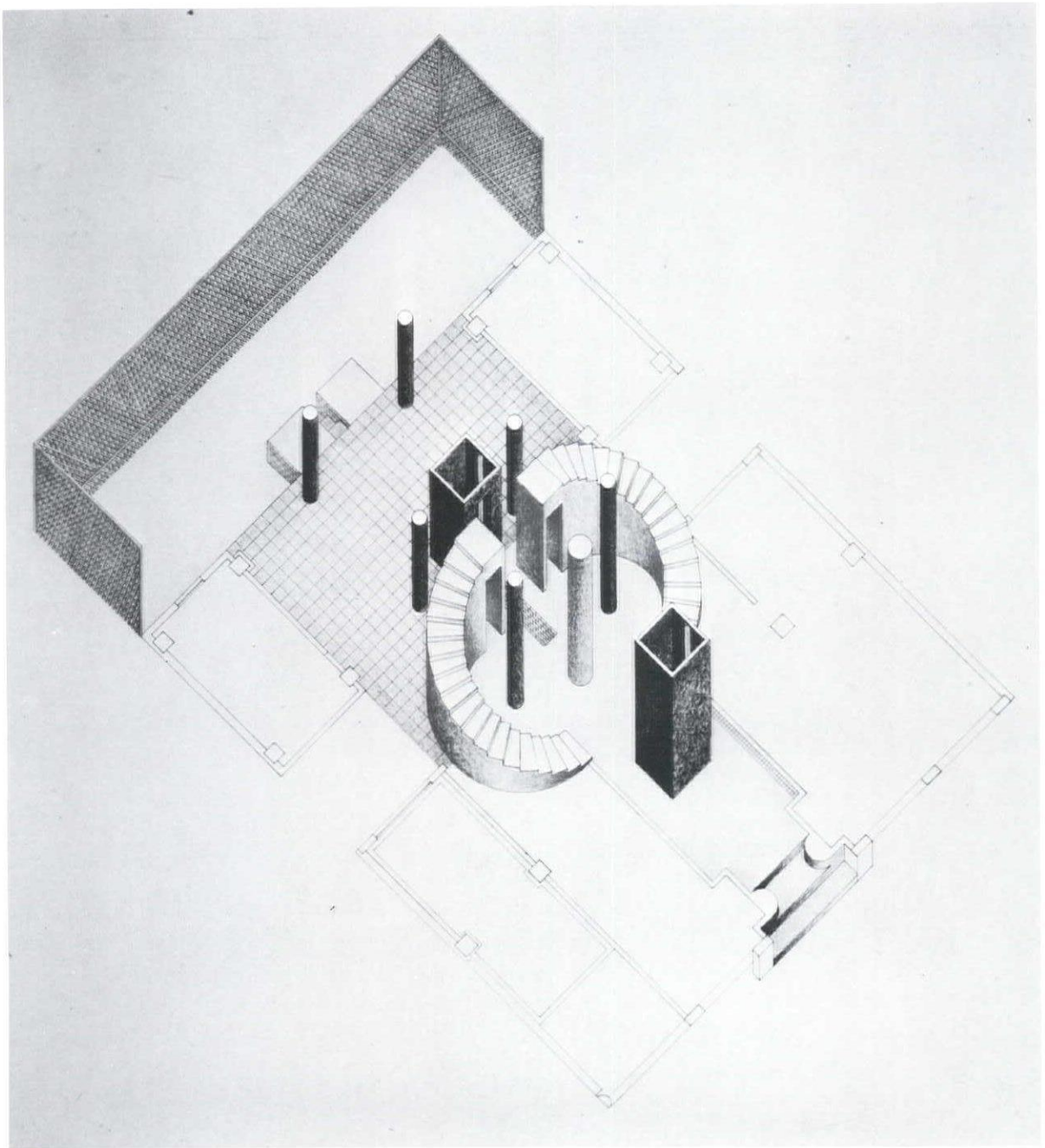
marked by the different columns at the corner. A portal, engaging the first three floors, marks the public aspect of the building, as opposed to the usual practice of denying the door as an important element in architecture. Thus, the facade reveals at some points the internal structure of the building and conceals it at others. The second

building is the taller curtain wall building in the back. The two buildings are separated by a courtyard and connected by the public space—a sequence of elements which traverse the building from the street to a small garden in the back. A double stair articulates the two buildings at the point of disjunction.



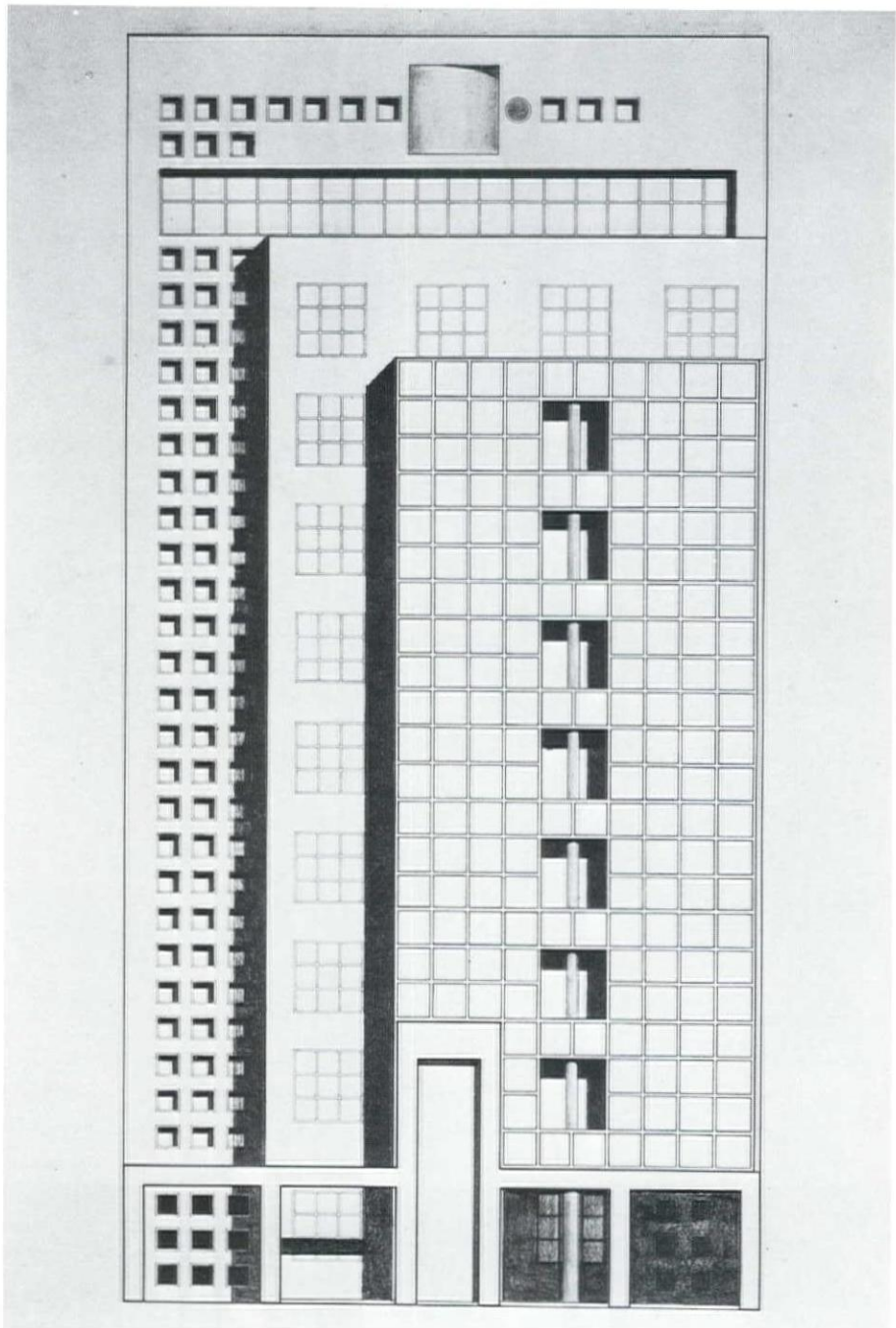
Building 1, Medrano

Axonometric: Articulation between front building and back building at second level, 197



Building 1, Medrano

Axonometric: sequence of public space, 1977



Building 2, Ugartxe

Elevation: Front Facade, 1977

## Building 2

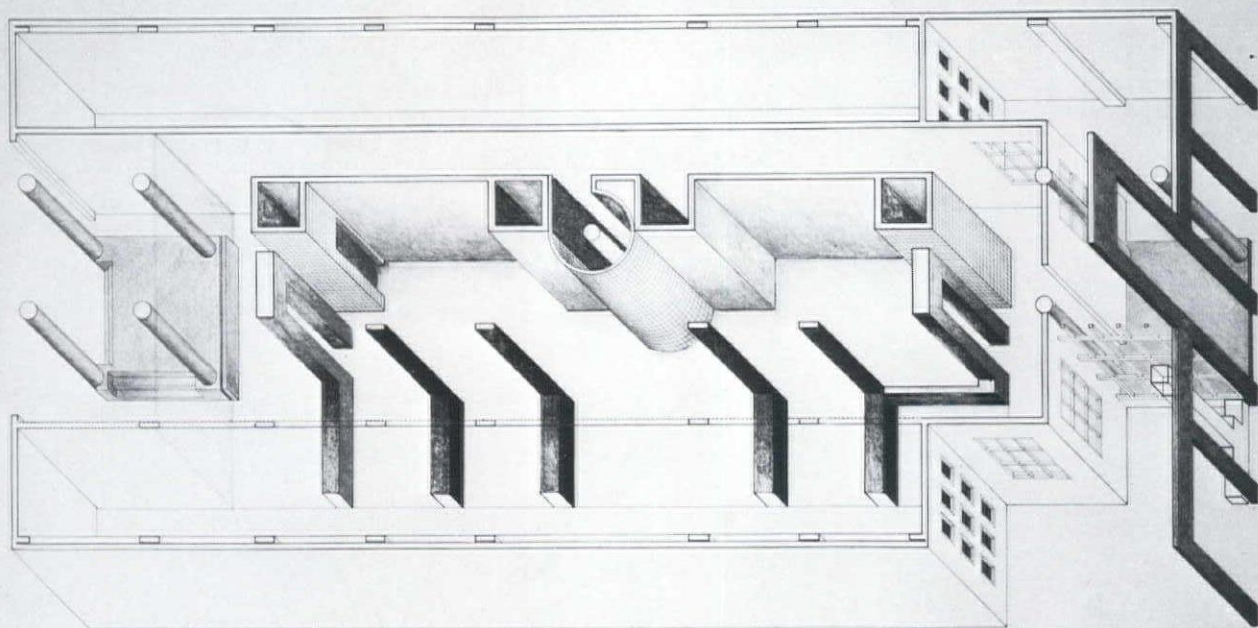
This is a more elaborate building form from a syntactic point of view.

In this case the building becomes three superimposed buildings. This results from the interpretation of the building code, which requires that the building be set back at a certain height. The building has been set back on the vertical plane, thus creating the effect of three buildings represented by three facades. These facades have been treated as though each belonged to a building with its own axis of

symmetry. Each one in turn refers to a different surface and scale treatment. The first is a curtain wall, where the scale is hard to read.

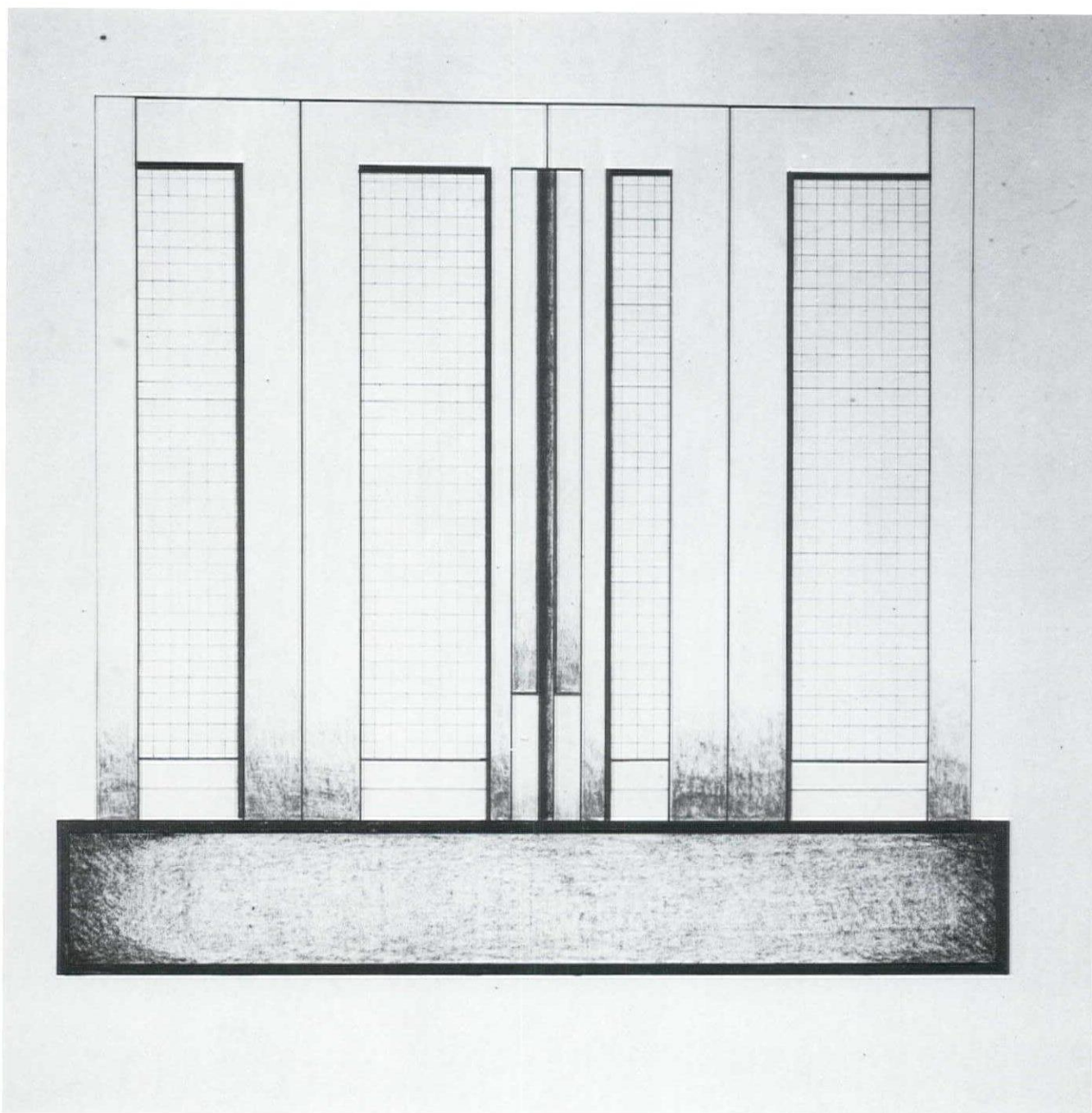
The middle one has square windows using the same grid of the curtain wall (these represent the true scale of the building). The third facade is a punched wall with windows at the scale of one of the modules of the curtain wall; this one completely distorts the scale, for there are nine windows to one room. The axis of symmetry of each facade is not too

obvious, since the superimposition is marked by elements such as a column, a window or a door. Although the facade is asymmetrical, it becomes symmetrical at the ground floor level to emphasize the entrance. The formal organization of the facade and the volumetric forms originated in the internal organization of the apartments, where the articulation of the various axes and the superimposition of the three buildings become elements that organize the space.



Building 2, Ugartrche

Axonometric: Sequence of public space, 1977



Building 3, Alsine

Unfolded elevation of a courtyard, 1977

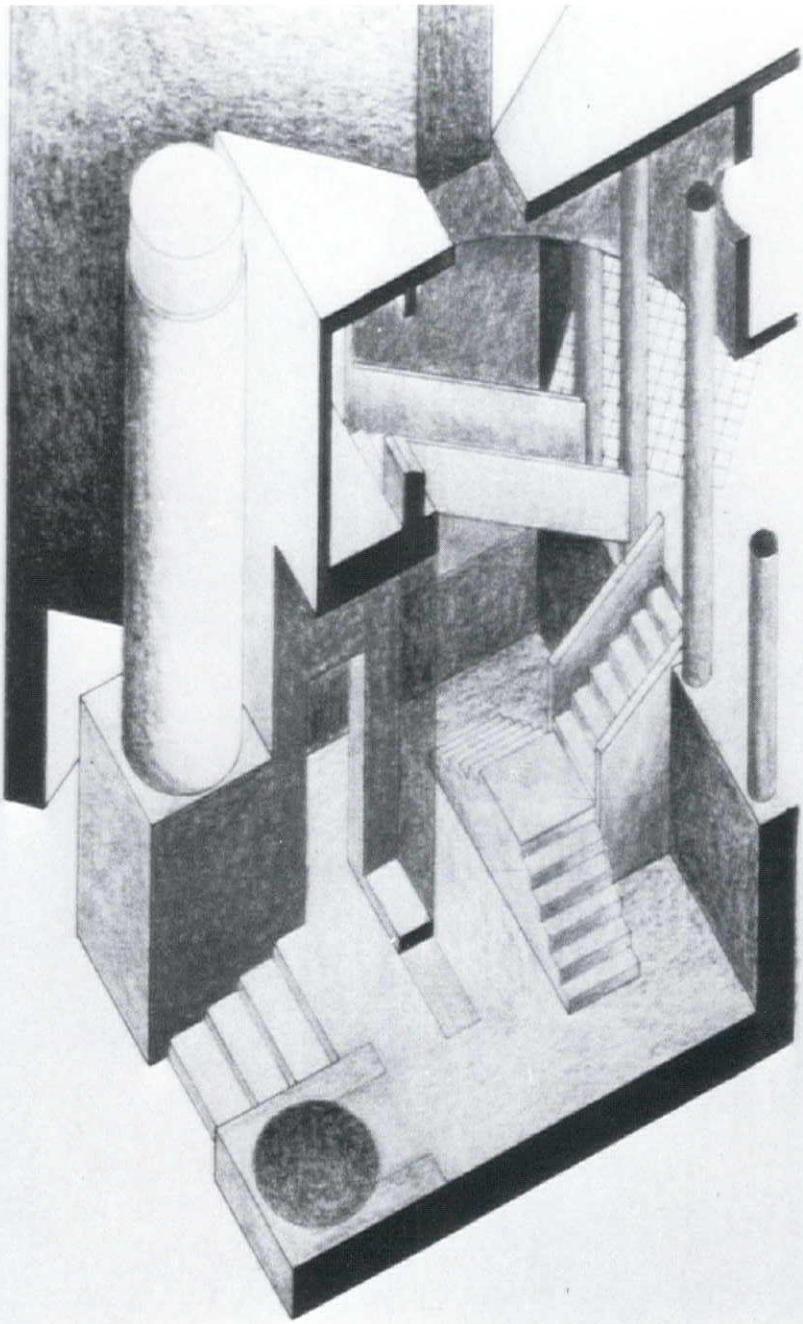
### Building 3

As a corner site this represents a special condition of the building code. Corner buildings have a long tradition in the development of the apartment building as a type, particularly since the 19th century. In some cases the building just wraps around the corner and is adapted in plan, and doors are placed on the sides. In other cases the corner has been used to place the entrance to a shop at the ground floor. In other cases some

monumental element has been placed at the corner.

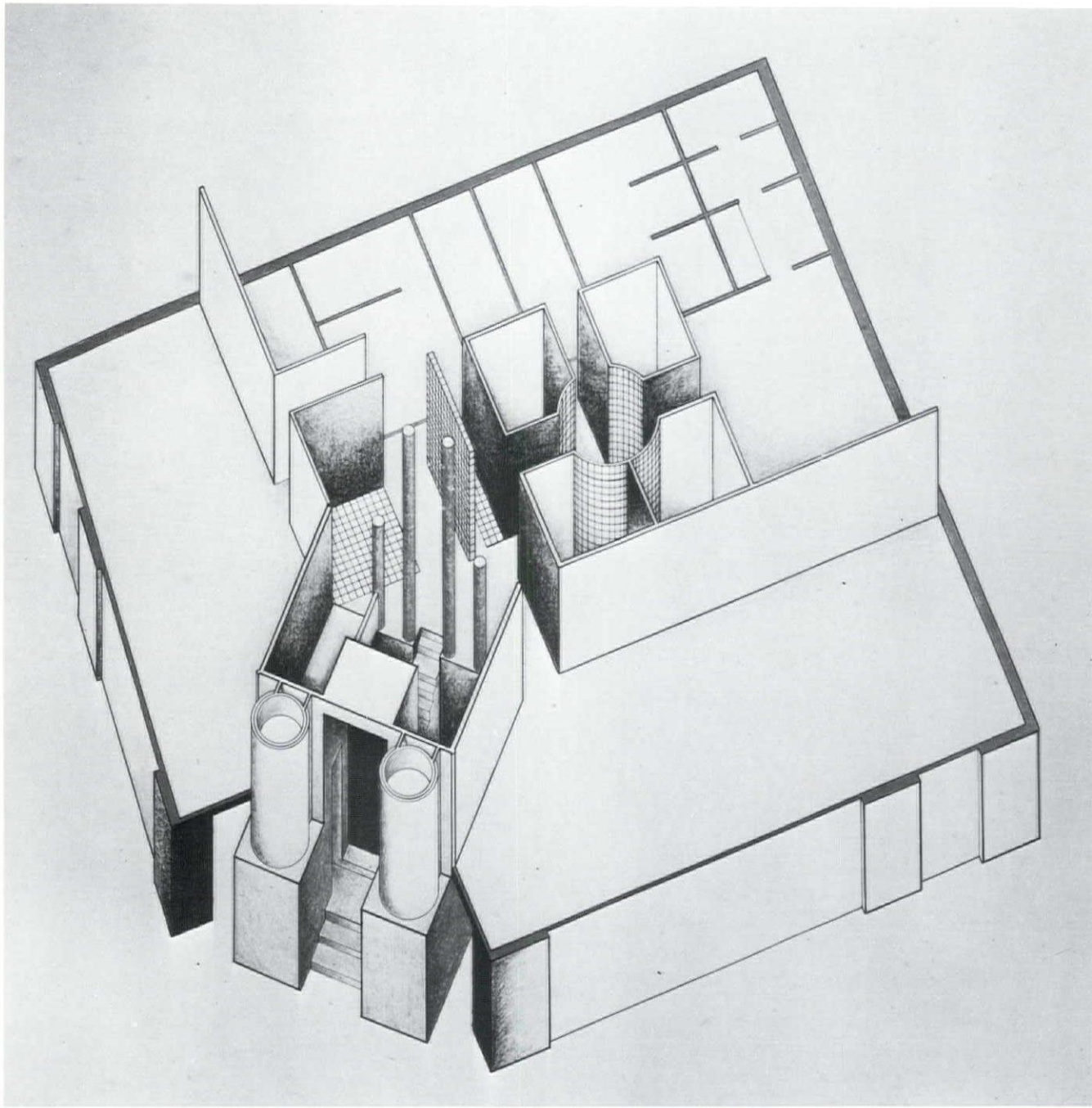
This building does two things at once. It is a corner building addressing the issues that are implied by that particular condition, and it is a courtyard building. Instead of partitioning the open space requirements of the code they are added in order to make one major courtyard. Thus, the corner not only relates the

building to the street, but also articulates the courtyard. The building is therefore broken at the corner, which is emphasized by the vertical rupture. As with Building 1, this building is, in fact, two buildings, but this time for programmatic reasons—it is one building within another. Up to the third floor it is one type of building with a multiple-use programme, and from there up it is another type with apartments.



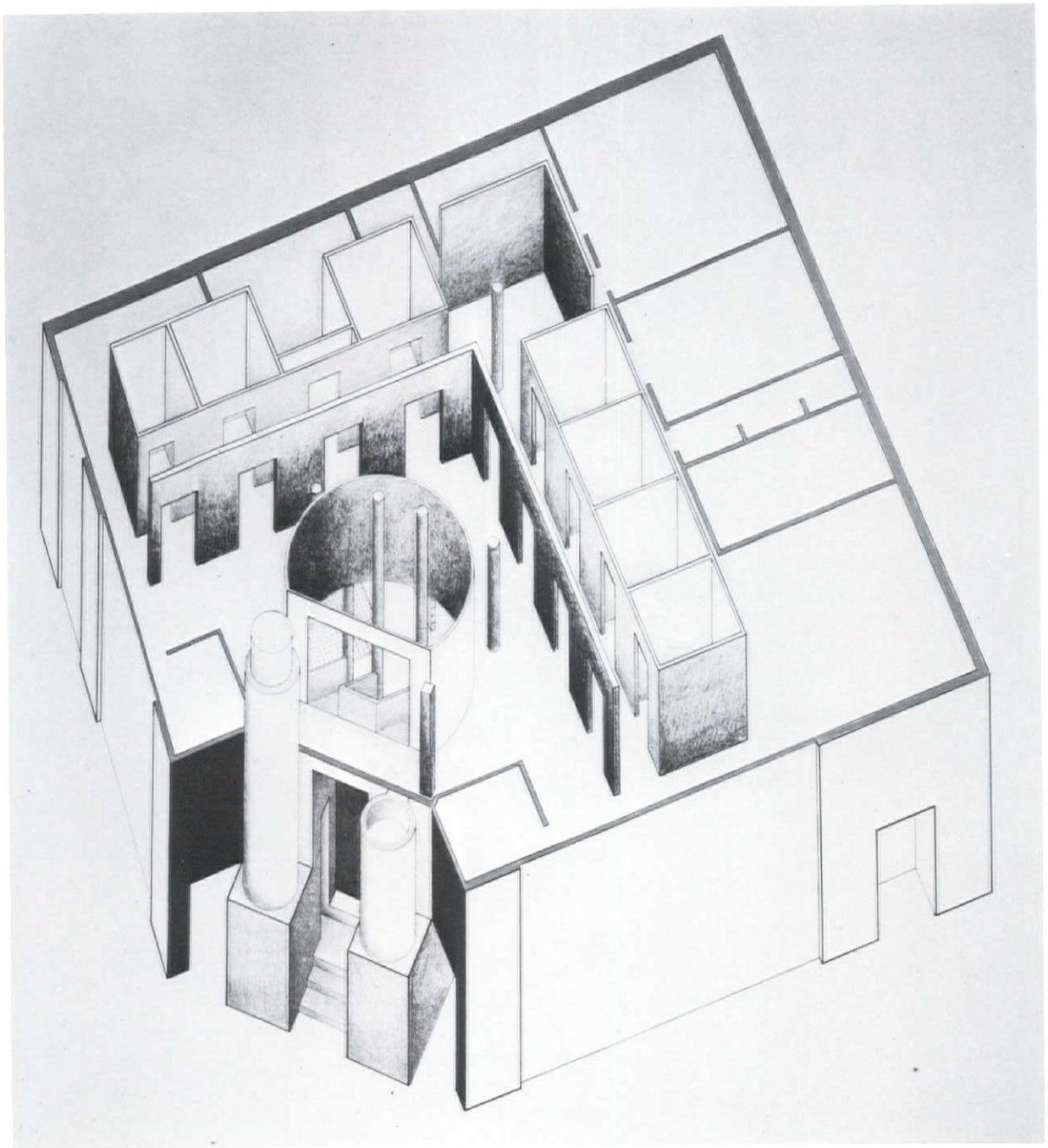
Building 3, Alsine

Axonometric: Foyer, 1977 (detail)



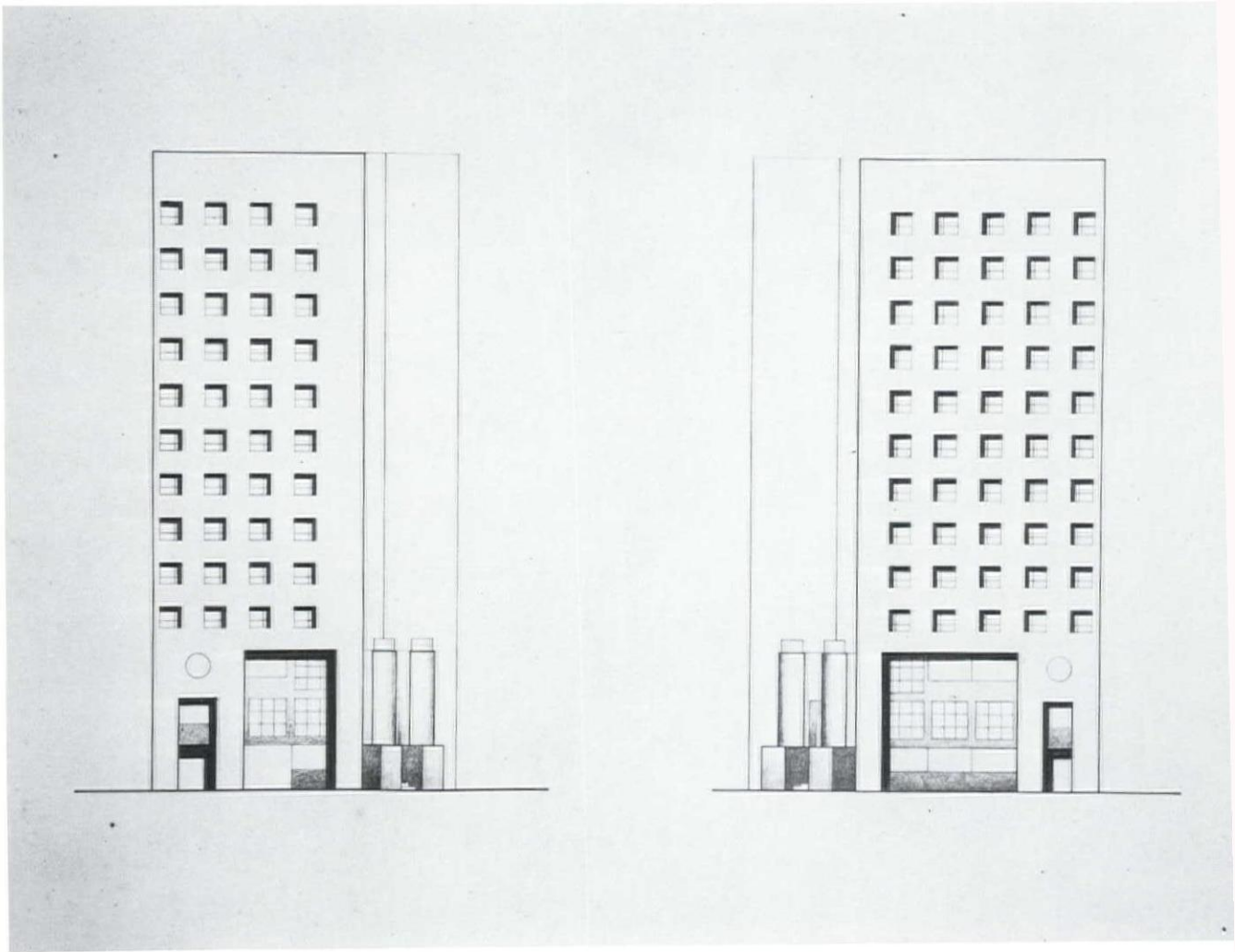
Building 3, Alsine

Axonometric: Plan of second floor, 1977



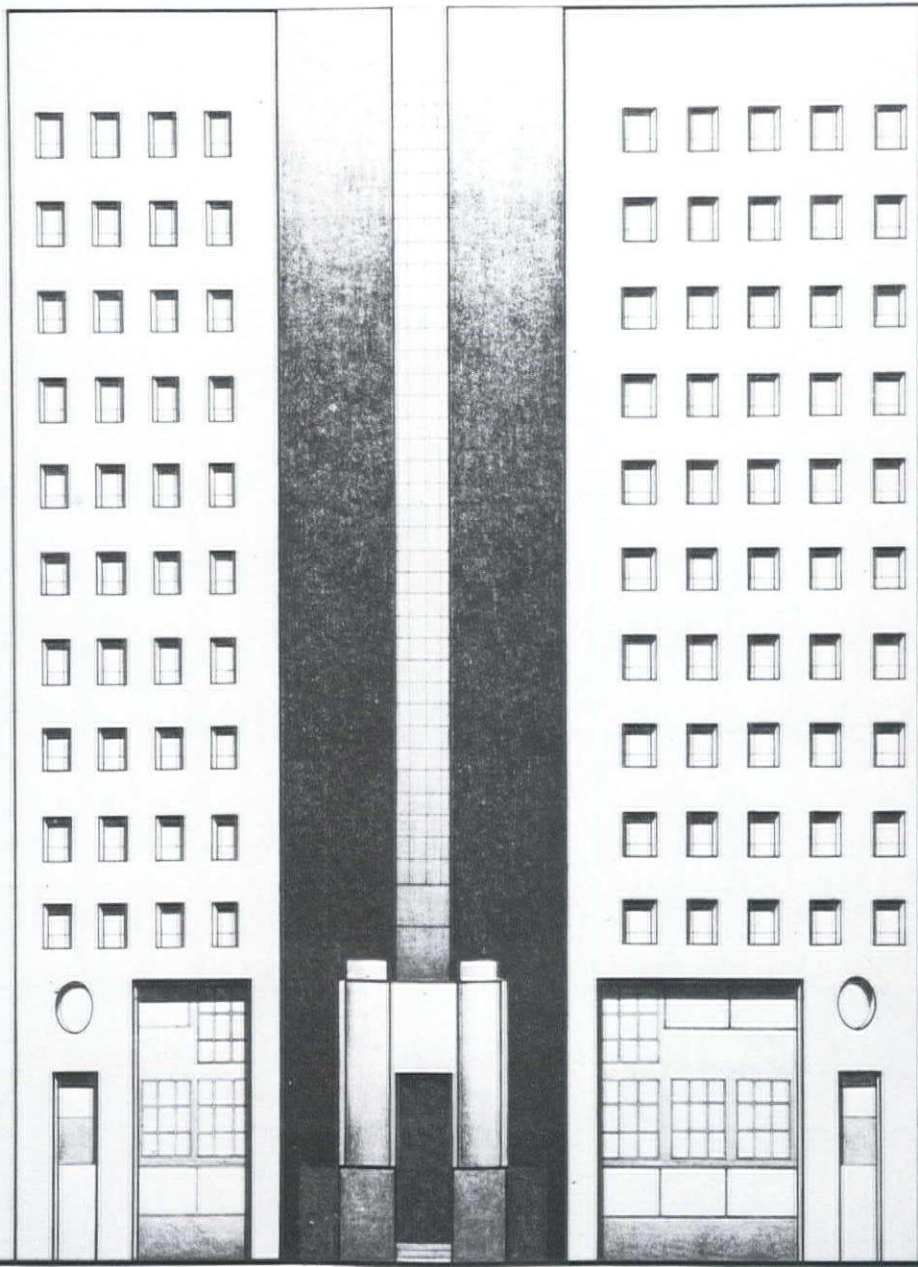
Building 3, Alsine

Axonometric: Plan of third floor, 1977



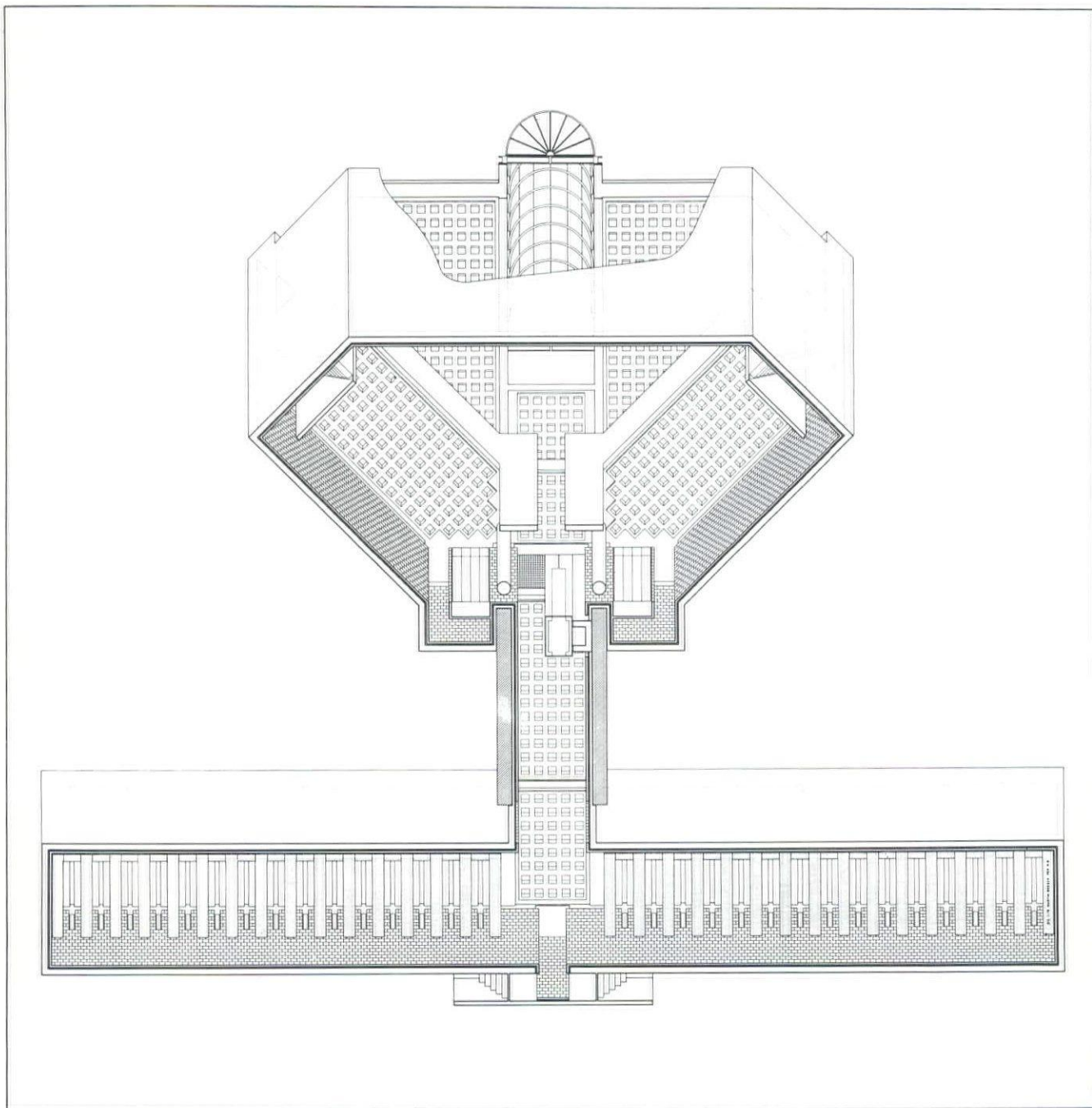
Building 3, Alsine

Side elevation, 1977



Building 3, Alsine

Elevation: Front Facade, 1977



# Mario Botta

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In much of the work in this exhibition, our recognition of the urban nature of a building does not depend on any knowledge of its context. Rather, our ability to recognize the urbanity of a building is attributable to its reference to a particular urban type. Mario Botta's work possesses this referential quality while it is also sensitive to a particular context.

The building materials and imagery of Botta's architecture recall the vernacular of Ticino, while the forms and the individual architectural elements simultaneously refer to urban types. The transformation of the Liggrignano farmhouse at Morbio Inferiore illustrates Botta's dual concerns.<sup>1</sup> The courtyard is a space that is based on the urban type while the walls are constructed of brick commonly used in the Ticino countryside. The facade of the stable, flanked at either corner by a massive brick column, also illustrates Botta's simultaneous concern for context and type. The use and treatment of brick and wood relate to the vernacular of Ticino, while the facade has a distinctly urban and

monumental quality. The idea that a building represents a face to the public realm derives from the urban conditions of street and square.

The stable facade exemplifies another theme in Botta's work: the transformation of conventional elements and their usual combinations. The steel columns that emerge from the top of the brick columns to support the roof expose the nonstructural nature of the brick front. Yet the brick columns and wall maintain their architectural significance despite their structural irrelevancy. As architectural elements, the brick columns can be interpreted as silos, as fortress towers, or simply as columns.

Botta performs a similar transformation on the fireplace and the window in the outdoor room. The lack of enclosure undermines the functional roles of these conventional elements: the fireplace as a source of heat and the window as a source of light. Yet the elements maintain a meaning that transcends the original

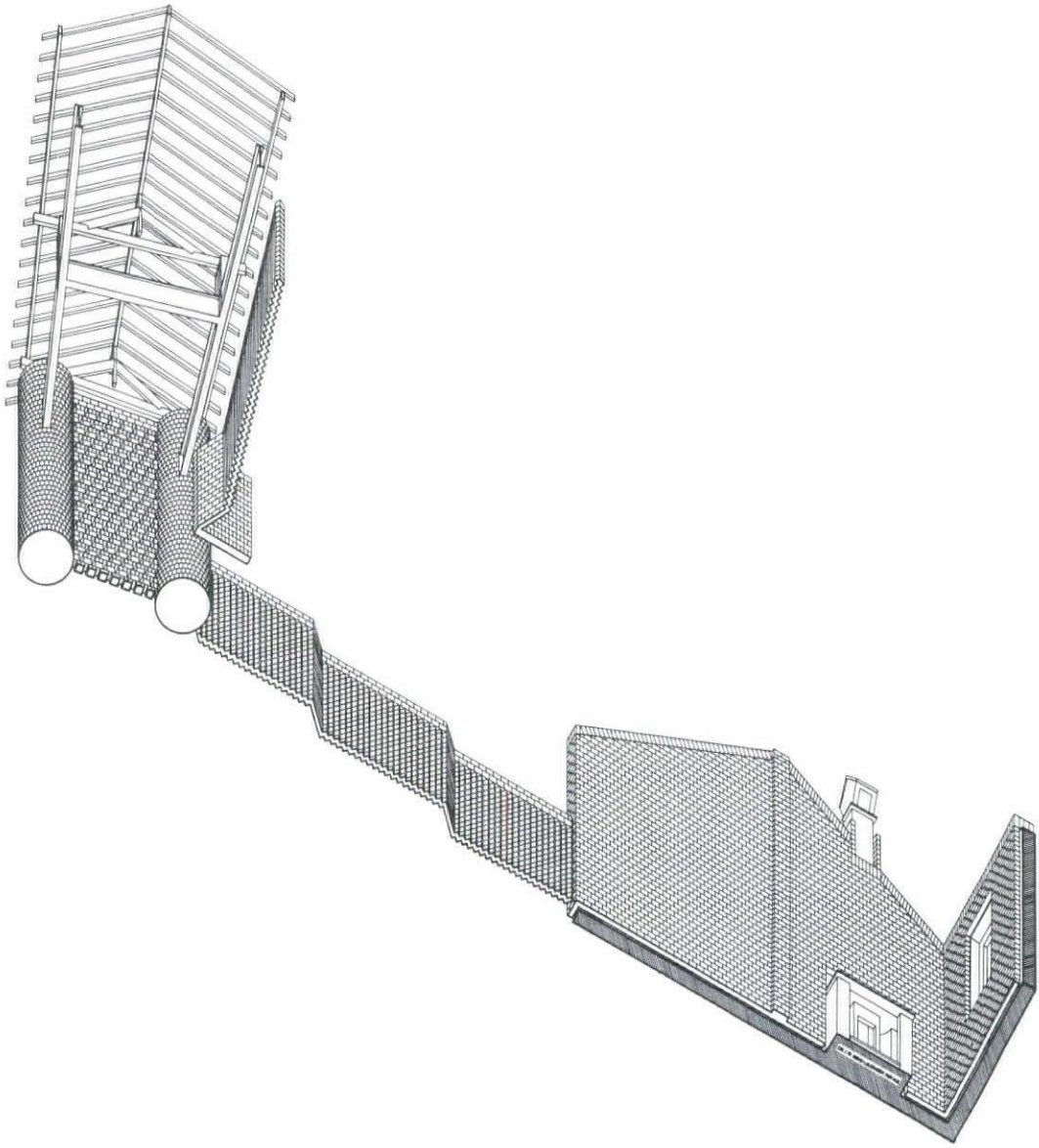
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function. The fireplace, for example, is still a symbol of domestic security. By denying the functional roles of the brick columns, the window, and the fireplace, Botta brings out the deeper architectural meaning of these elements.

*Editors*

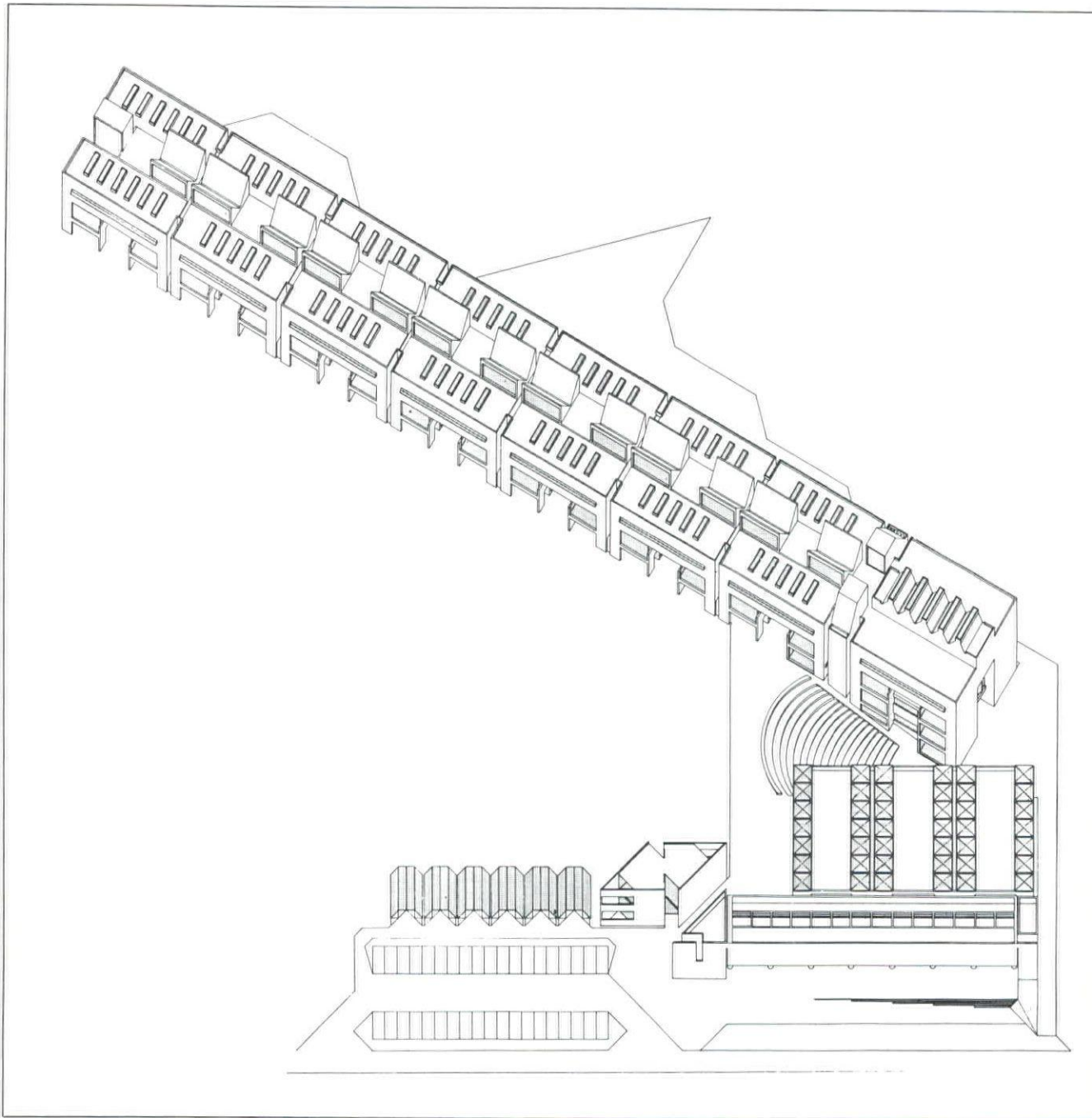
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1 The farmhouse consists of three parts: the house, the stable, and the courtyard. A block of the house that extended along the back of the courtyard was largely removed and replaced by a brick wall. The diagonal wall in the right rear corner was left as a fragment of the removed block. This wall combines with the rear wall of the court and the back of the house proper to form an outside (unroofed) room. The stable was extensively remodeled with a new facade and a new roof.



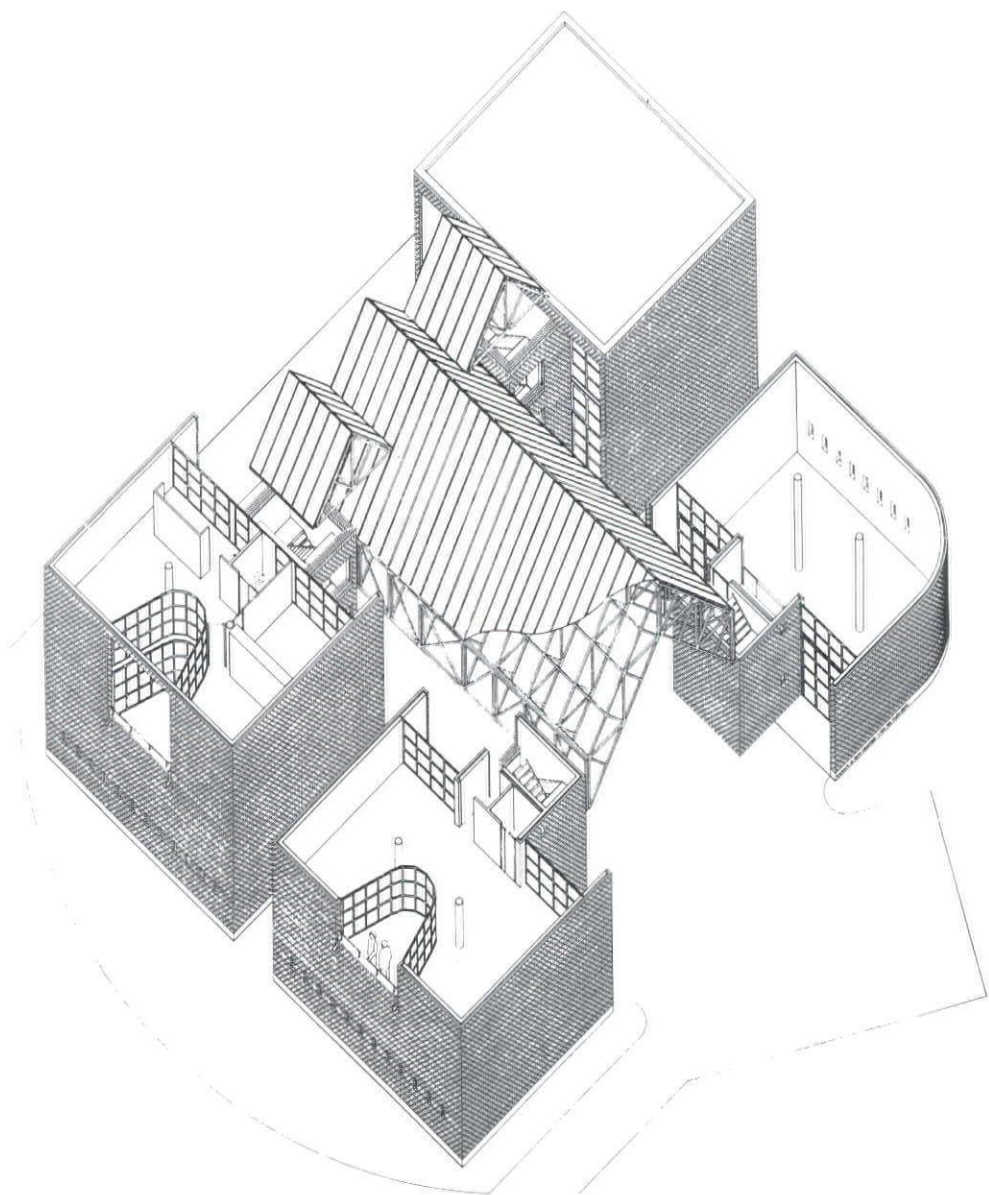
Transformation and Re-use of a Farmhouse at Ligrinano

Axonometric, 1979



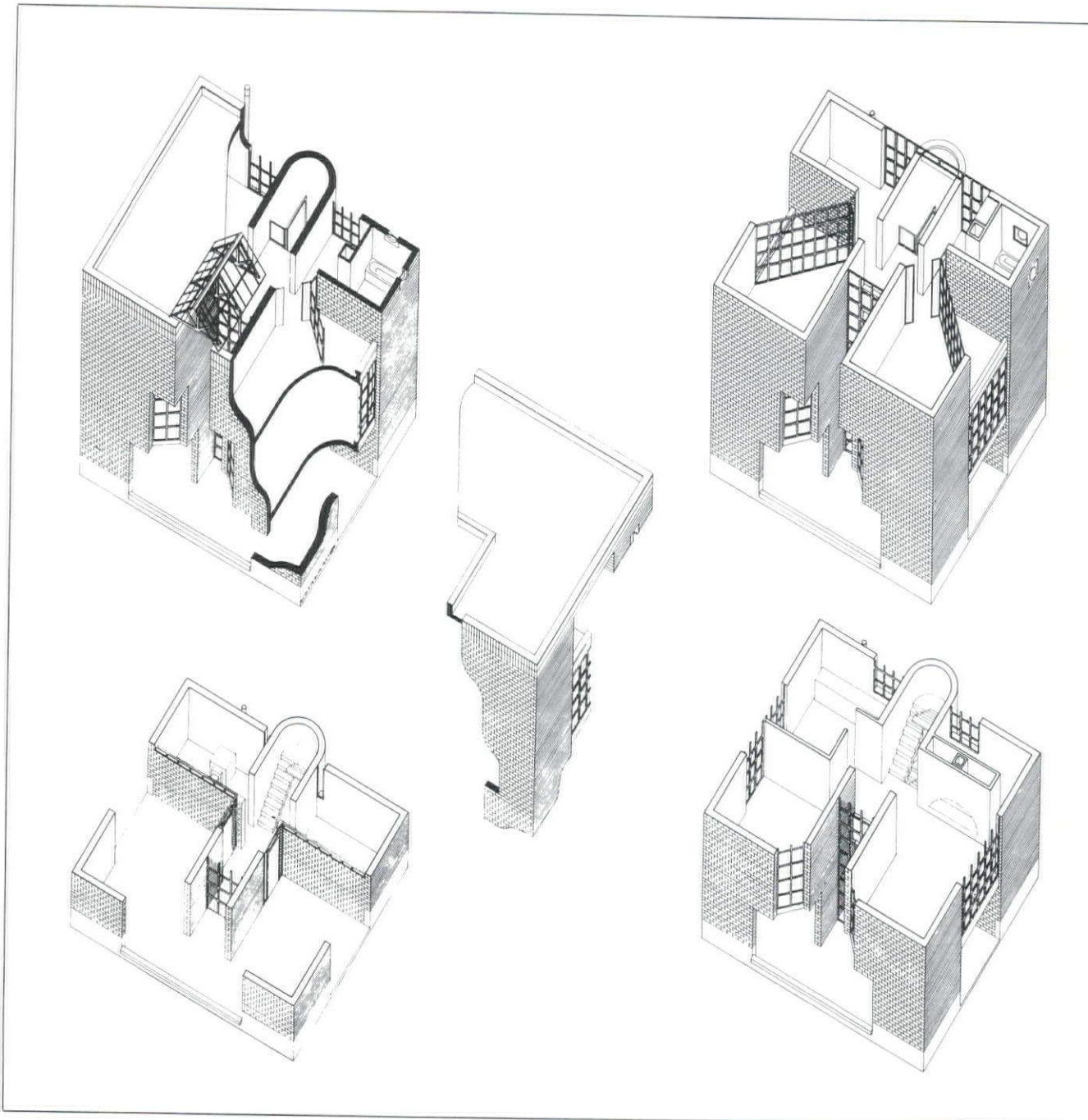
Secondary School of Morbio Inferiore

Axonometric, 1977



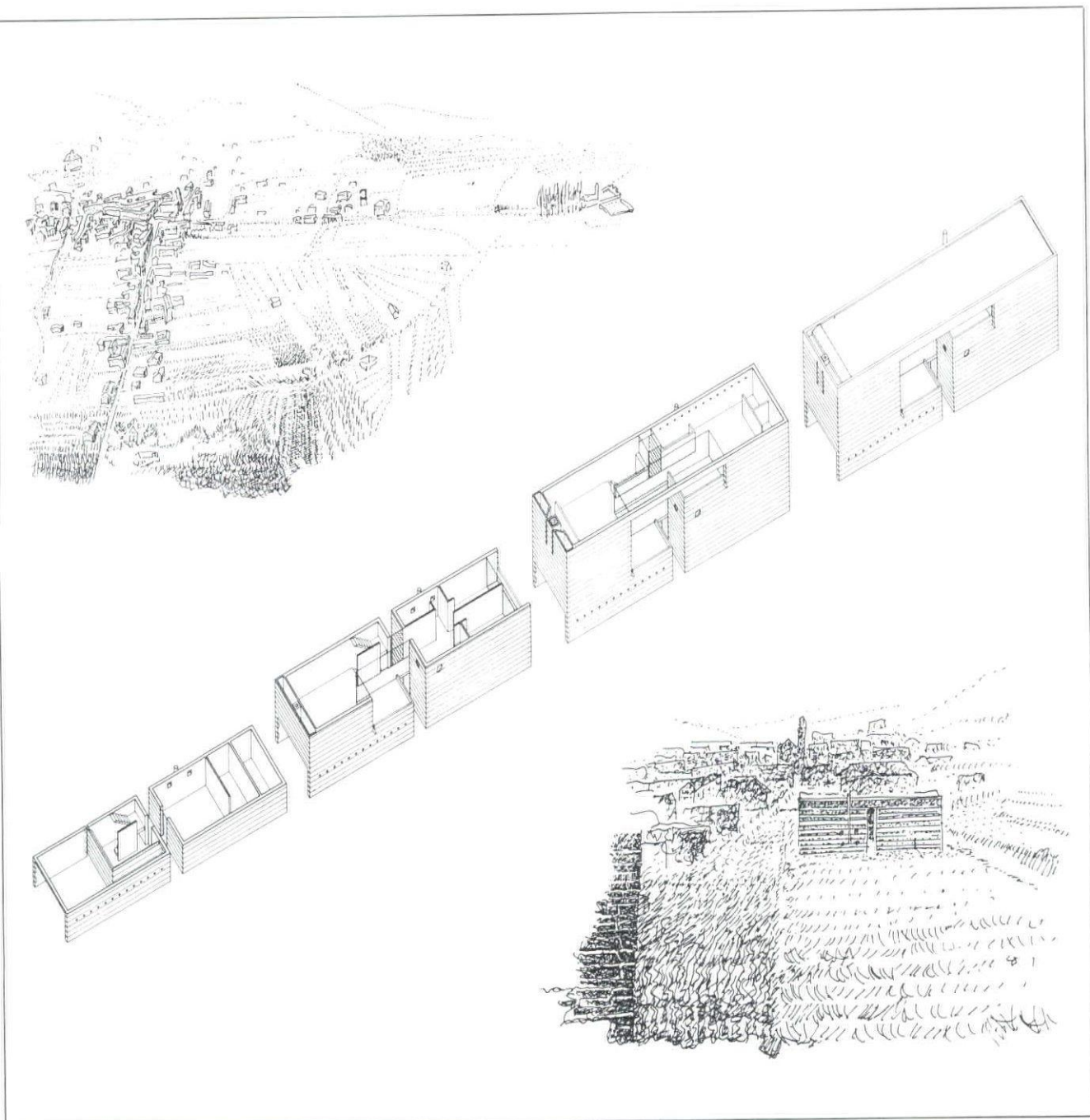
Craft Center at Balerna

Axonometric, 1979



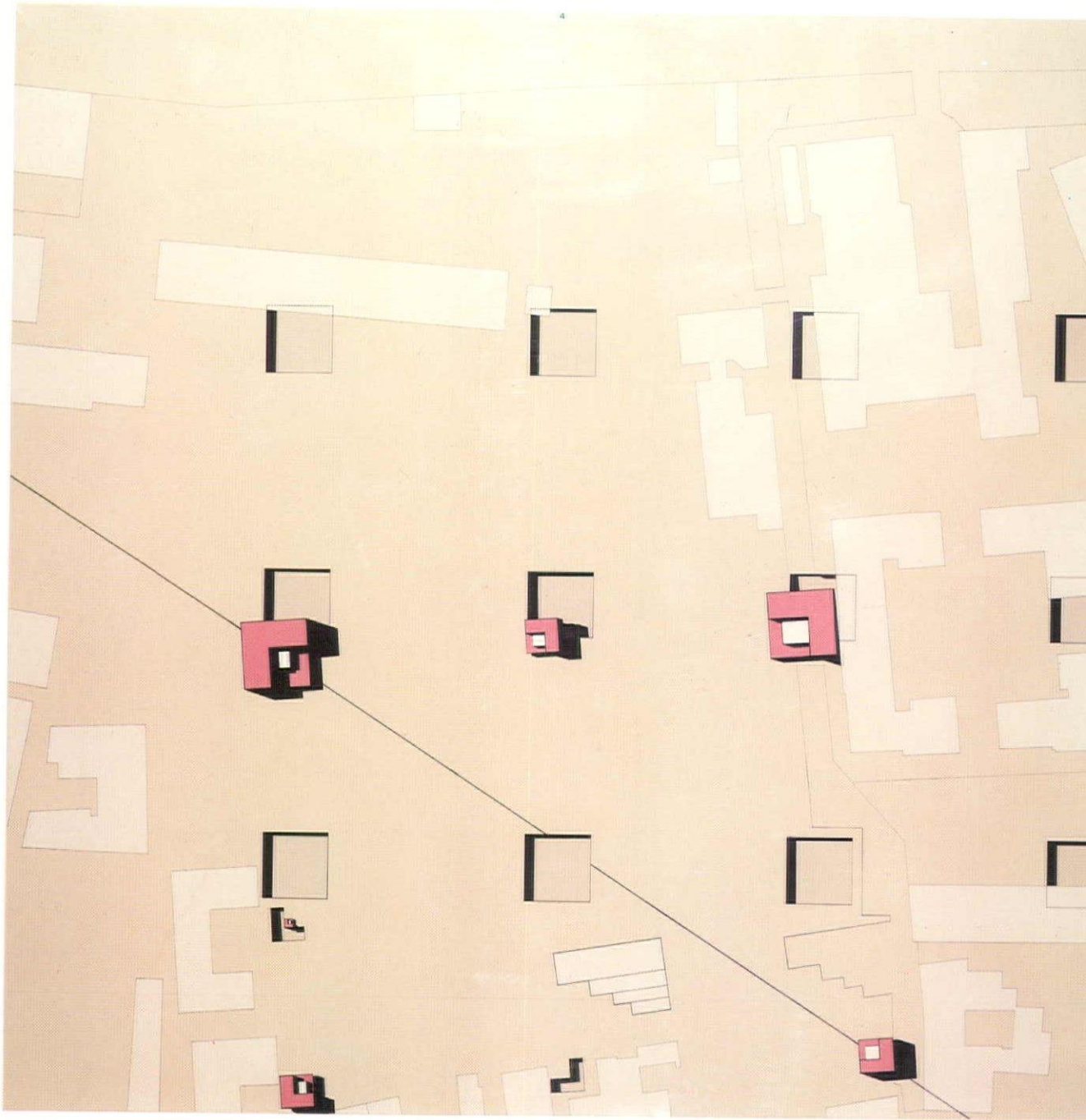
One Family House at Pregassona

Axonometric, 1980



One Family House at Ligornetto

Axonometric, 1976



# Peter Eisenman

In the other work in the exhibition, meaning is rooted in the history of architecture. In his project for the Cannaregio district in Venice, Peter Eisenman demonstrates a different approach to meaning in architecture. The objects he places in Venice have no history or known context; they cannot be understood as transformations of a remembered type.

As the point of departure for his proposal, Eisenman extends the grid of Le Corbusier's Venice hospital project as a series of voids superimposed on the fabric of the city. For Eisenman, Le Corbusier's hospital, planned for an adjacent site on the Cannaregio but never executed, is "one of the last anguishes of heroic modernism." Eisenman's reference is to the belief that man could reshape society through modern architecture. This belief is basically anthropocentric, for it assumes that meaning in architecture is always related to man.

A consistent theme in Eisenman's work, one that he investigates further in his design for Venice, is the

articulation of the object nature of architecture. He emphasizes the formal meanings and essences in architecture which exist independent of history, culture, or man. The objects that Eisenman places on the site illustrate this idea: they are all the same form reproduced in different sizes; the larger ones contain shells of the smaller ones. Through this manipulation of scale, Eisenman produces an ambiguous functional (that is, anthropocentric) reading of these objects. Thus, it is unclear whether they are house, model of house, or mausoleum for house. The juxtaposition of different scales makes it difficult for us to name and thereby give meaning to these objects. The fact that the same object can at once be seen as a house, a model of a house, and so on, indicates that the level of meaning that relates form to function, or form to man, is basically arbitrary. The essential meaning of these objects precedes man's relationship to them. Because they cannot be understood in relation to anything outside of themselves, these objects can be interpreted as the most extreme statement of the autonomy of architecture.

# Three Texts for Venice

Peter Eisenman

Three prevailing 'isms' of architecture all involve nostalgia, malaise involving memory—modernism, a nostalgia for the future; post-modernism, a nostalgia for the past; and contextualism, a nostalgia for the present.

## Text One: The Emptiness of the Future

The Cannaregio is the site of Le Corbusier's Venice Hospital project,—one of the last anguishes of heroic modernism. The hospital program is symbolic of modernism's remedial ideology. Its complete grid is superimposed on the irregular context of Venice.

Text One continues the imposition of Le Corbusier's grid on the entire Cannaregio. This grid is articulated as a series of voids—holes in the ground. These holes are potential sites for future houses or potential sites for future graves. They embody the emptiness of rationality.

## Text Two: The Emptiness of the Present

The second text constructs several objects which appear to be part of the existing context—contextual objects. Upon close examination these objects reveal that they contain nothing—they are solid, lifeless blocks which seem to have been formerly attached to the context. On the ground is the trace

of their movement, their detachment from life. They leave a trace, mark the absence of their former presence; their presence is nothing but an absence.

Text Two also constructs a second series of objects. These objects deny the existing context in order to establish the primacy of the context of the voids. While all the objects have the same form, the form of a house, they appear at three different scales. The first object is smaller than a house, the second is the size of a house, the third is larger than a house. The three different scales do not only change the way man possesses objects in terms of their physical presence but even in the way they are named. The first object is about five feet high. It is smaller than a man—it is usable by him to the extent that he can crouch in it and it provides shelter. But is it a house or a model of a house? The second object is the size of a house. But inside it contains the shell of the first object and nothing else. The first object is a replica of the exterior of the second object. Is it a house, or a tomb for itself, or for a model of itself, or for a real object? If it is a mausoleum, then the first object, the five-foot 'house', is no longer a model of something real, but a reality itself, no longer a model of something else but something in itself. The fact of the change in name, house to mausoleum, changes the reality of

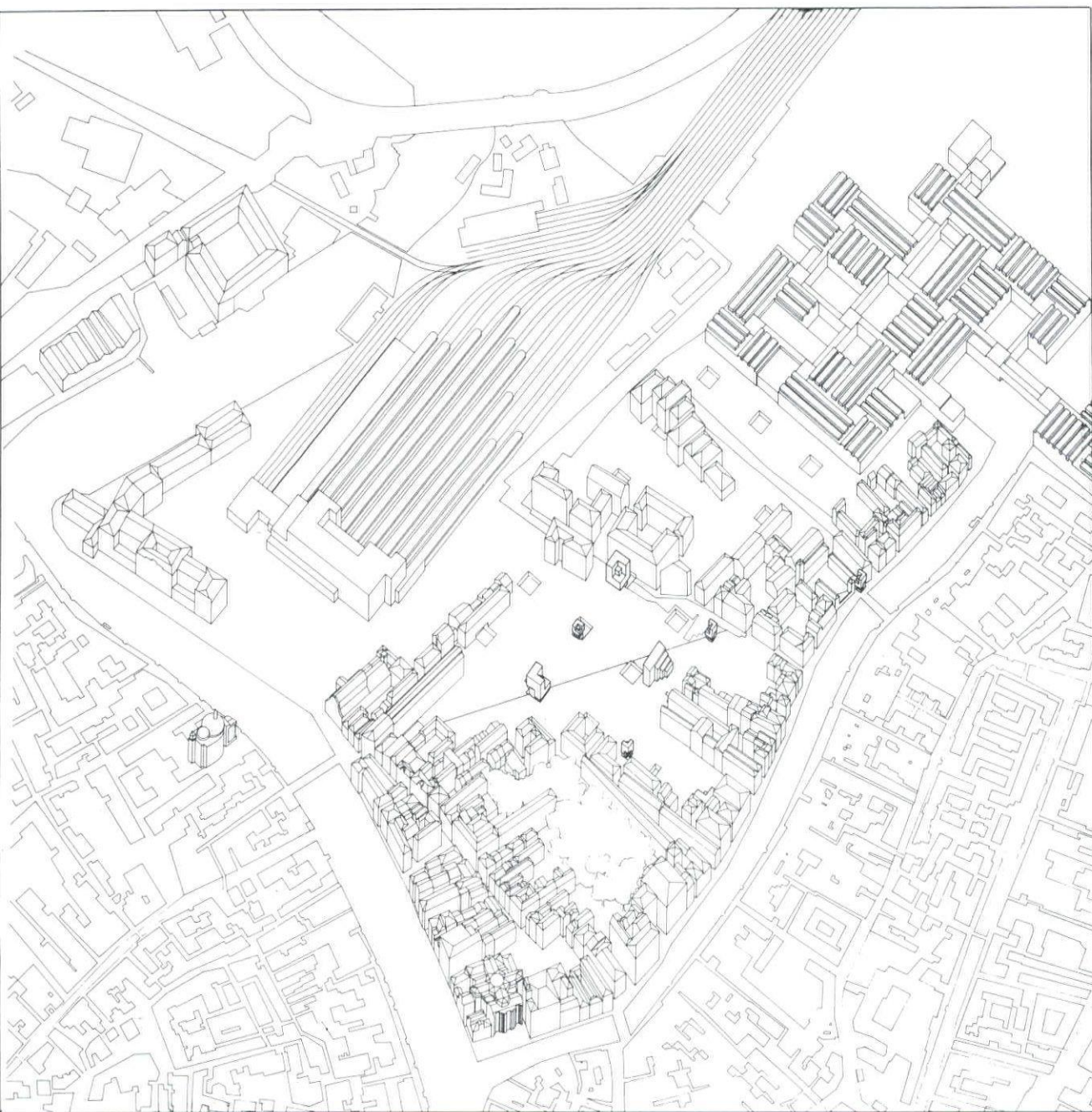
the first object from model to house. The third object is twice the size of the second object. Inside it contains the second object containing the first object and nothing else. How is it named? It is not the scale of a model, a house, or a mausoleum. Can it be a museum of houses or a museum of mausoleums? The question is, which object is the house, if in fact one of them *is* a house; which one is the 'correct' size; which one is the real object? Since both of the larger objects contain a smaller version of themselves, is the smallest object the real object and the larger object merely containers for the smaller? The three objects together stand at the limits of architecture both in terms of their scale and their naming.

## Text Three: The Emptiness of the Past

The third text constructs a diagonal line in the ground. This line is the topological axis of symmetry for the objects and a physical cut in the surface of the earth. The earth's surface is peeled back slightly, as if the skin of some unknown body, suggesting that there is another level, some 'inside' which cannot forever be suppressed by or submerged under the rationality of an axis. It suggests something that may erupt and that perhaps will not stay down—the unconscious or the shadow of memory?

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Eisenman's design gives the impression that these objects literally have a life of their own. They have crawled out of the ground and have begun to move through Venice. This impression is consistent with Eisenman's conception of the architect as an archaeologist who uncovers forms that already exist. Similarly, in his concern for the constant and timeless nature of the type, Rossi implies that the architecture is more important than the architect. Indeed, both Rossi and Eisenman believe that there are certain architectural qualities (for Rossi determined by culture, for Eisenman determined by the structure of form) that are transcendent and are independent of the architect. They are the qualities that constitute an autonomous architecture.



Project for the Cannaregio in Venice

Site axonometric, 1978



Project for the Cannaregio in Venice

General site plan, 19



Project for the Cannaregio in Venice

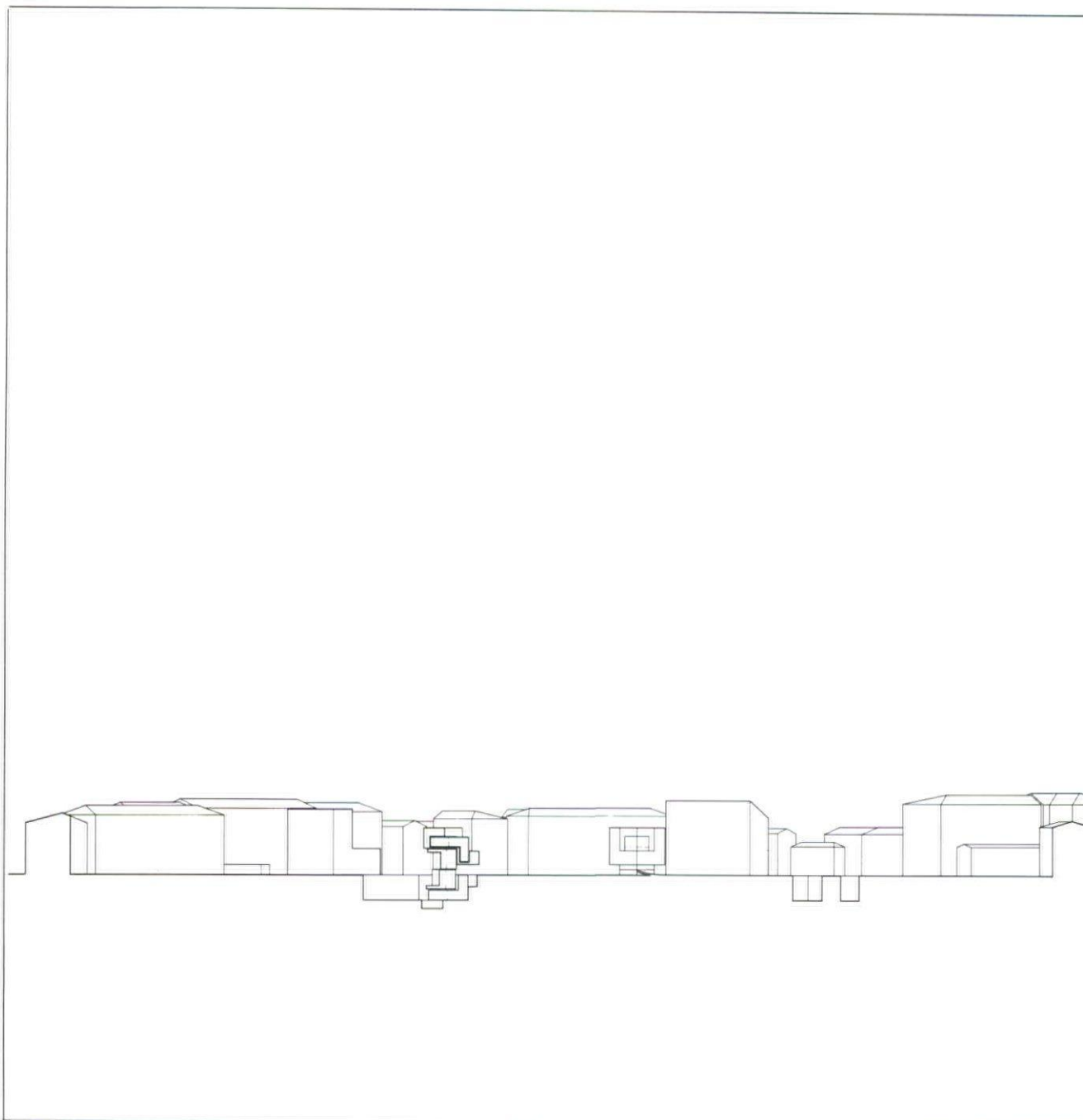
Detail site plan, 1978



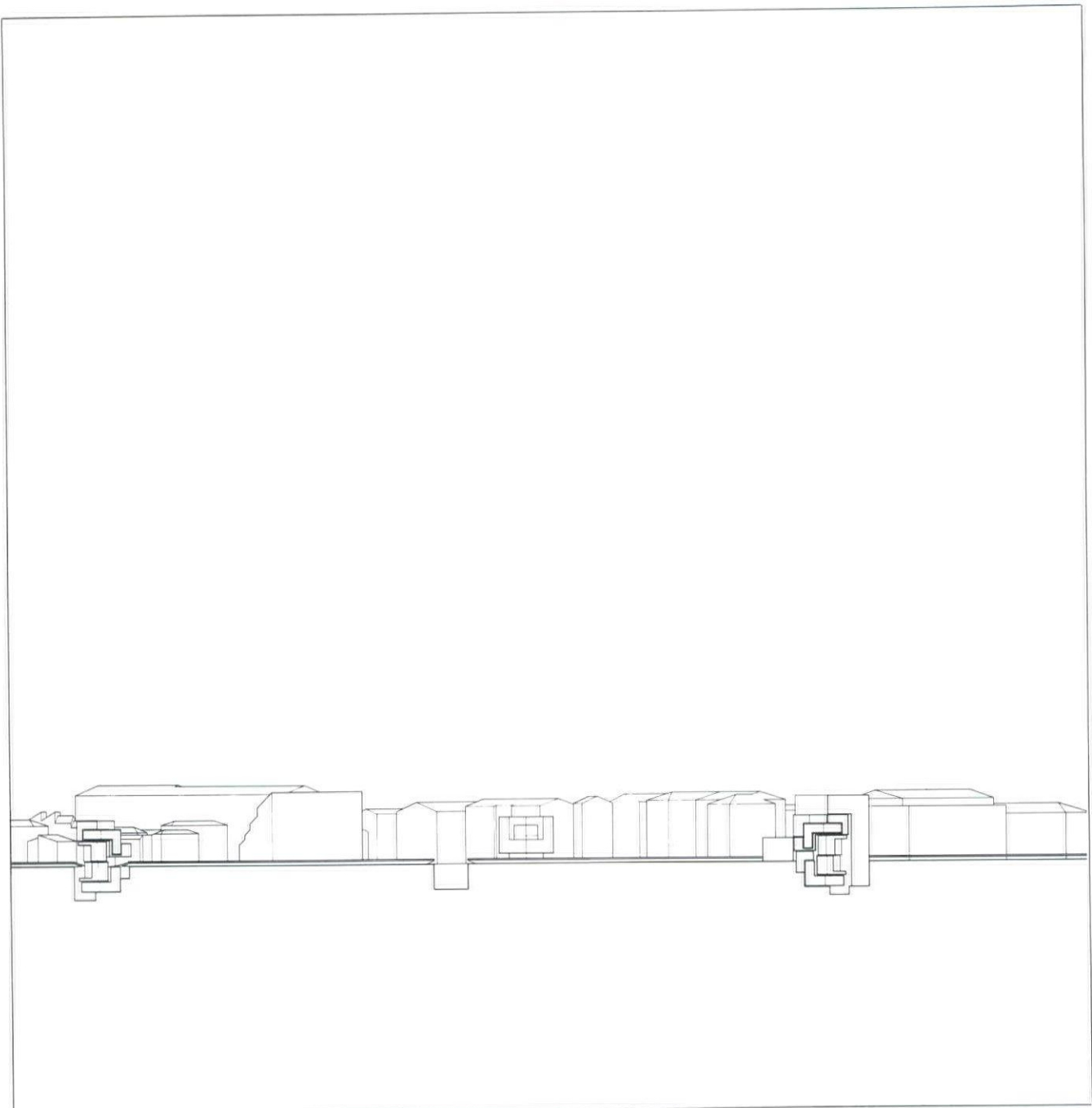
Project for the Cannaregio in Venice



Site plan, 1978



Project for the Cannaregio in Venice



Section, 1978

# Notes on Contributors

## Claudio D'Amato

Born in Bari, Italy, December 22, 1944  
Lives in Rome, where he has a professional office.

Degree from the School of Architecture, University of Rome, 1971.  
Has taught there since 1971.

Received the UNESCO Diploma for Architectural Restoration, 1974.

Has been an editor of *Controspazio* since 1974. Author of numerous articles and essays on the history of architecture and on the theory of design. Has carried out various studies in urban analysis—among them, *L'Area Prenestina* (with Antonio Paris), Rome, IRESM, 1976.

On the editorial board of DAU (*Dizionario Enciclopedico di Architettura e Urbanistica*) edited by Paolo Portoghesi, Rome: Istituto Editoriale Romano, 1968–69, vols. 1–6.

Author, with Francesco Cellini, of *Le Architetture di Ridolfi e Frankl*, Rome: De Luca, 1979. Currently editing the complete edition of Mario Ridolfi's drawings.

Exhibited at the "First International Exhibition of Architecture" of the Venice Biennale, 1980. Editor, with Francesco Cellini, of the Biennale catalogue. Set up Mario Ridolfi's one-man show at Biennale. Editor of successive editions of Biennale catalogue.

In 1982, won first prize in the competition for the "Redesign of the elevation and ground floor of the Micciche Building in Scicli, Sicily.

## Peter Eisenman

Peter Eisenman, AIA, is a founder of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS) in New York and was its director from 1967 to July 1982.

In addition to his accomplishments as the director of the IAUS, he has been active in promoting architectural discourse through *Oppositions*, of which he is editor. His articles have appeared in that publication and in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, *Architecture and Urbanism*, *Casabella*, and many others. His first book, *House X*,

was published in 1983, and his second book, *House of Cards*, is scheduled to be published in 1984.

As an architect, Eisenman is perhaps best known for his series of house designs, numbered I–X, 11, 11a, and E1 Even Odd. His past projects also include design work on the low-rise, high-density Marcus Garvey housing project in New York. In the summer of 1980 he opened his own firm with partner Jacquelin T. Robertson. The firm won a competition in Berlin for a 200-unit mixed residential and commercial complex, which will be a part of the International Building Exhibition of 1984.

He has been selected to participate in several international competitions for Venice, Berlin, and Minneapolis. In 1976, he was one of eleven architects who represented the United States at the Venice Biennale. His work has been exhibited and is in the collections of many museums, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. He has received a Guggenheim Fellowship.

He has taught at the Universities of Cambridge, Princeton, Yale, Cooper Union, and Harvard. He received his B.Arch. from Cornell University, his M.Arch. from Columbia University, and he has an M.A. and a Ph.D., both in design theory, from the University of Cambridge, England.

## Liane Lefavre

Liane Lefavre studied psychology and comparative literature at McGill University. She has been working in the area of cultural history with special emphasis on architecture. In collaboration with Alexander Tzonis she has published numerous articles in architectural magazines and scholarly journals. She is on the editorial staff of the Dutch bimonthly review *Bouw*. She is currently completing *Documentary History of Architecture, 1000–1800*.

## Daniel Libeskind

Daniel Libeskind heads the Department of Architecture at the Cranbrook Academy of Art. Born in 1946 in Lodz, Poland, he first studied music at the Lodz Conservatory and continued his musical education in

Israel after winning the America-Israel Cultural Foundation Fellowship. On moving to America in 1960, he became interested in architecture as a result of his involvement in mathematics and painting.

He studied at the Cooper Union School of Architecture in New York, where he received a B. Arch. *summa cum laude*. He gained his Master of Arts degree in the History and Theory of Architecture from the School of Comparative Studies, Essex University, England, with a dissertation entitled "Imagination and Space."

He has taught at the Universities of Toronto and Kentucky, the Polytechnic of Central London, and he was a Unit Master at the Architectural Association in London. Since 1978, he has been the Head of the Department of Architecture and architect-in-residence at the Cranbrook Academy of Art.

His writings and work have been published in numerous catalogues, publications, and journals and have been translated into Finnish, Swedish, Italian, French, and German. A monograph of his work entitled "Between Zero and Infinity: Selected Projects in Architecture" has been published by Rizzoli International, New York, 1981.

#### **Mark Mack**

Mark Mack was born in Judenburg, Austria. He attended the Technical Highschool for building in Graz and went on to the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna (1969–1973). After graduation in 1974, he went to New York to work with Hausrucker, Inc. on a rooftop study for New York City, and he also worked for Emilio Ambasz on various projects. In 1975 he moved to the West Coast where, in 1977, he founded The Western Addition, an organization devoted to fine architecture, and in 1978 he formed a partnership with Andrew Batey. Since 1978 he has been an editor of *Archetype* magazine. In 1981 he was a lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley, architecture department.

I would like to thank Kyle Thayer and Andrew Batey for their constructive help in putting these words into focus.

#### **Thomas L Schumacher**

Thomas L Schumacher was born in New York City in 1941. He received his B. Arch. from Cornell University in 1963, and a master's degree from Cornell in 1966. From 1967 to 1969 he was a Fellow in architecture at the American Academy in Rome.

He taught at Princeton University from 1972 to 1978, and since 1978 he has been Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of Virginia.

Mr. Schumacher's written work has appeared in *Casabella*, *Parametro*, *Architectural Design*, *Archetype*, and *Oppositions*. He is the author of a book on the Danteum project, *Il Danteum di Terragni*, published in 1980, and a second edition entitled *Terragni e il Danteum*, published in 1983.

#### **Alexander Tzonis**

Alexander Tzonis is Crown Professor of Architectural Methodology at the University of Technology of Delft. From 1967 to 1980 he taught at the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University. He studied and taught at Yale. His writings include *Towards a Non-Oppressive Environment* (distributed by MIT Press, translated into French, German, Spanish, Japanese and Dutch) and the *Shape of Community* (Penguin Books), with Serge Chermayeff. He has directed several research projects and has acted as consultant to the United Nations Habitat Conference. He has been the editor of a multidisciplinary series on the manmade environment for Penguin Books and is a General Editor of *Architectural Archives* (Garland Press). He is currently on the staff of the Dutch review *Bouw*.

# Credits

## Editorial

Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederich Etchells, Praeger, New York, 1974.

## LeFaivre, Tzonis

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## Mack

1. Marc Antoine Laugier, *Essai sur L'Architecture*, 1755, frontispiece. 2. W.S. Heckscher, *Goethe and Weimar*, 1961. 3. Stockholm Cemetery Administration. 4. Esther McCoy, *Five California Architects*, Praeger, 1975, p. 51. 5. Vincent Scully, Jr., *Louis I. Kahn*, George Braziller, 1962, p. 73. 6. Leon Krier, *Drawings*, AAM Editions, Brussels, 1981. 7. Aldo Rossi, A&U, No. 65, Tokyo, 1976. 8. *Progressive Architecture*, January 1980, cover. 9. Courtesy of the author. 10, 11. Steven Holl, courtesy of the architect. 12, 13. Hodgetts/Mangurian, courtesy of the architects. 14-17. Batey & Mack, courtesy of the architects.

## Schumacher

1. Catalogue of the exhibition. 2. Piacentini, *L'Architettura d'Oggi*, 1932. 3. *L'Architettura e il Razionalismo Durante il Fascismo*, Catalogue, 1976. 4. Courtesy of the author. 5. *Archivio dello-Stato*, Sezione Partito Nazionale Fascista. 6. Courtesy of the author. 7. Bruno Zevi, *Ommagio a Terragni*, Etas/Kompass, Milan, 1968. 8-16. Courtesy of the author. 17. *Dante's Divine Comedy*, trans. Barbara Reynolds, Paradise, London, 1962.

## Eisenman

1. Elena Bassi, *Palazzi di Venezia*, La Stamperia di Venezia Editrice, 1976, p. 304. 2. *Palazzi di Venezia*, p. 303. Drawing by V. Coronelli. 3-7. Courtesy of the author. 8. *Palazzi di Venezia*, p. 301. 9-10. Courtesy of the author. 11. *Palazzi di Venezia*, p. 300. 12-15. Courtesy of the author. 16. *Palazzi di Venezia*, p. 345. 17. Courtesy of the author. 18. *Palazzi di Venezia*, p. 345. Drawing by V. Coronelli. 19-21. Courtesy of the author. 22-23. Vincenzo Scamozzi, *L'Ida della Architettura Universale*, pp. 248, 263. 24. Hadrian's Villa. 25. Houses of Parliament

Competition entry, Charles Barry. 26. Palladio. 27. Courtesy of the author. 28. *L'Ida della Architettura Universale*, p. 263. 29.-33. Courtesy of the author. 34. Le Tarouilly. 35-37. Giuliani Frigerio. 38-54. Courtesy of the author.

## D'Amato

Courtesy of the author.

## Exhibition

Aldo ROSSI  
Italian 1931-  
Souvenir of Coney Island, 1976  
Color on xerox  
Loan: Courtesy of the Max Protetch Gallery

Study for Geometry of the Memory, 1978  
Magic marker and oil on paper  
Loan: Courtesy of the Max Protetch Gallery

Urban Composition with Red Tower, 1975  
Magic marker and oil on paper  
Loan: Courtesy of Rosemarie Haag Bletter, Martin Filler, and the Max Protetch Gallery

American Cathedral, 1977  
Magic marker on paper  
Loan: Courtesy of Steven Harris and the Max Protetch Gallery

The Monument, 1978  
Magic marker and oil crayon on paper  
Loan: Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel H. Lindenbaum and the Max Protetch Gallery

Domestic Architecture, 1974  
Magic marker and oil crayon on paper  
Loan: Courtesy of the Max Protetch Gallery

Diana AGREST and Mario GANDELSONAS  
American 1944- American 1938-  
Building 1, Medrano; Elevation; front facade  
Colored pencil on paper, 1977  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

Building 1, Medrano; Axonometric: sequence of public space from the street through the building to the garden, 1977  
Colored pencil on paper  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

Building 1, Medrano; Axonometric: articulation between front building and back building at second level  
Colored pencil on paper, 1977  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

Building 2, Ugarteche; Elevation: front facade  
Colored pencil on paper, 1977  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

Building 2, Ugarteche; Axonometric; sequence of public space  
Colored pencil on paper, 1977  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

Building 3, Alsine; Unfolded elevation of a courtyard, 1977  
Colored pencil on paper  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

Building 3, Alsine; Axonometric: foyer  
Colored pencil on paper  
Loan: Mr. and Mrs. Dick Frank

Building 3, Alsine; Elevation: front facade, 1977  
Colored pencil on paper  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

Building 3, Alsine; Side elevation, 1977  
Colored pencil on paper  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

Building 3, Alsine; Axonometric; plan of second floor, 1977  
Colored pencil on paper  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

Building 3, Alsine; Axonometric: plan of third floor, 1977  
Colored pencil on paper  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

Mario BOTTA  
Swiss 1943–  
Secondary School at Morbio Inferiore; Axonometric, 1977  
Reproduction of ink drawing  
Loan: Courtesy of the artist

One Family House at Pregassona; Axonometric, 1980  
Reproduction of ink drawing  
Loan: Courtesy of the artist

Craft Center at Balerna; Axonometric, 1979  
Reproduction of ink drawing  
Loan: Courtesy of the artist

One Family House at Ligornetto; Axonometric, 1976  
Reproduction of ink drawing  
Loan: Courtesy of the artist

Transformation and RE-use of a Farmhouse at Liggrignano;  
Axonometric, 1979  
Reproduction of ink drawing  
Loan: Courtesy of the artist

Library in the Capucin Convent at Lugano; Orthogonal projection,  
1979  
Reproduction of ink drawing  
Loan: Courtesy of the artist

Oswald Mathias UNGERS  
Born in Germany, lives in Germany and the United States 1931–  
Tiergarten Museum, Berlin; Axonometric, 1964  
Colored pencil on paper  
Color rendering by Sibylle Ungers  
Loan: Courtesy of the artist

Badische Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe; Axonometric  
Colored pencil on paper  
Color rendering by Sibylle Ungers  
Loan: Courtesy of the artist

Hotel Berlin; Axonometric, 1977  
Colored pencil on paper  
Color rendering by Sibylle Ungers  
Loan: Courtesy of the artist

Competition Entry for the German Embassy in Rome; Axonometric,  
1965  
Colored pencil on paper  
Color rendering by Sibylle Ungers  
Loan: Courtesy of the artist

Competition Entry for Carlsburg Hochschule in Bremerhaven;  
Isometric, 1979  
Colored pencil on paper  
Color rendering by Sibylle Ungers  
Loan: Courtesy of the artist

Peter D. EISENMAN  
American, 1932–  
Project for the Canareggio in Venice; General Site Plan, 1978  
Ink and colored paper on gold paper  
Loan: Courtesy of the artist

Project for the Canareggio in Venice; Site axonometric, 1978  
Ink and colored paper on gold paper  
Loan: Courtesy of the artist

Project for the Canareggio in Venice; Site plan, 1978  
Ink and colored paper on cream paper  
Loan: Courtesy of the artist

Project for the Canareggio in Venice; Detail site plan, 1978  
Ink and colored paper on cream paper  
Loan: Courtesy of the artist

Project for the Canareggio in Venice; Section, 1978  
Ink and colored paper on cream paper  
Loan: Courtesy of the artist

Project for the Canareggio in Venice; Site model, 1978  
Wood and Plexiglas  
Loan: Courtesy of the artist

Rodolfo MACHADO and Jorge SILVETTI  
American 1942— American 1942—  
DOM Competition; Perspectives  
Photograph of ink drawing  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

DOM Competition; Site plan  
Photograph of ink drawing  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

DOM Competition; Plans  
Photograph of ink drawing  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

Theory of the Production of Architecture  
Ink on mylar  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

The Presence of the Past; Text  
Photograph  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

Theory of the Production of Architecture  
Photograph  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

Theory of the Production of Architecture  
Photograph  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

The Downtown Club; Facades  
Black pencil on Strathmore paper  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

The Downtown Club; Furniture  
Black pencil on Strathmore paper  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

The Downtown Club  
Black and red pencil on Strathmore paper  
Loan: Courtesy of the artists

#### Exhibition

1. Excerpted from Aldo Rossi, *Aldo Rossi in America*, trans. Diane Ghirard, Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, New York, distributed by MIT Press, Cambridge, 1979. 2. Courtesy of the architects. Text first appeared in 'International Architect,' v. 1, n. 1, Fumehurst Ltd., London, 1979, p. 41-49. 3. Excerpted from O. M. Ungers, *Architecture of the Collective Memory*, 'Lotus International,' n. 24, Gruppo Editoriale Electa S.p.A., Milano, distributed by Rizzoli International Publications Inc., New York, 1979, p. 5-11. 4. Courtesy of the architects. 5. Courtesy of the architect.